

Graphic Power

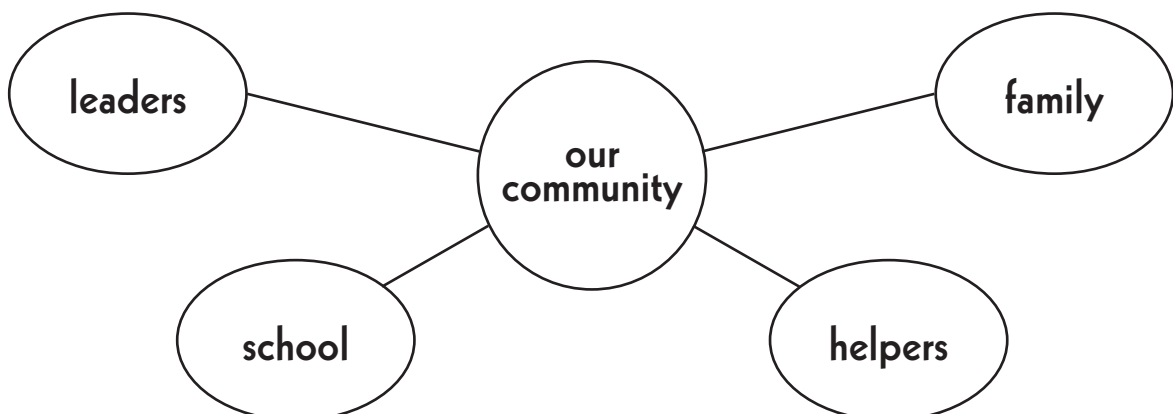
Graphic organisers can be used to:

- represent information or associations
- delineate important information
- enhance recall
- relieve boredom
- provide motivation
- help us to recall important information

Graphic organisers are teaching tools that appeal to all types of students. They help visual learners see what you are trying to convey and provide a structure that helps children with limited attention spans stay focused.

They are also outstanding assessment tools, providing you with a concise blueprint of a student's understanding of a concept and, in turn, of a student's ways of thinking. For example, you might ask students to use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast two characters in a story. The graphic organiser will show you what the students know and remember about the characters, and clue you in on their grasp of a story's meaning.

As educators, we are encouraged to integrate content and not teach subjects in isolation. A graphic organiser enables us to show and explain relationships between content and sub-content and how they, in turn, relate to other content areas. For example, when brainstorming about our community, we can ask students to relate community to family members, helpers and leaders. The following web shows this relationship.



Connecting with Bloom's Taxonomy

In 1956, prominent educator Benjamin Bloom, along with a group of educational psychologists, classified levels of intellectual behaviour that take place in the learning process. Bloom's Taxonomy is one of the most commonly used thinking skills models. The graphic organisers presented in this book are designed to facilitate the six levels of thinking Bloom identified, as outlined in the revised taxonomy: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating.

According to Bloom, the majority of test questions students encounter require only the recall of information. As you will see, graphic organisers offer teachers a variety of techniques for students to apply critical and creative thinking, rather than just remembering and regurgitating facts. In order to foster creative and critical thinking in students, educators need to rethink how they teach, and look for methods of instruction and assessment that flex these higher levels of thinking. Graphic organisers provide students with rigorous intellectual workouts and are great tools for encouraging kids to think about their ways of thinking.

One way to help students become aware of their thinking is to have them develop critical and creative thinking skills charts (originally formatted by John Samara of the Curriculum Project and Jim Curry of The Learning Institute). To introduce this idea, explain that *remembering* is knowing something, *understanding* is comprehending something, and *applying* is using what one knows and understands. As students grasp these concepts, talk with them about the more challenging levels of thinking. *Analysing* means breaking ideas into separate, smaller parts. Students analyse when comparing and contrasting. Most students know and understand the idea of evaluating, but also include decision making and problem solving in this category. Finally, *creating* is another word for creative thinking; some teachers prefer to use the word *synthesis*, as identified by the original version of the taxonomy. Talk about imagination and its possibilities.

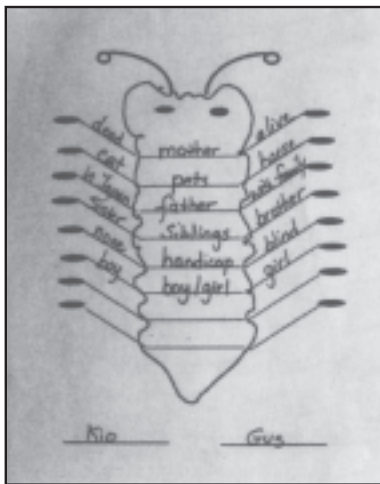
In the examples here, you will see how Molly and Danny, both year twos, show their understanding of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Both Danny and Molly have a basic understanding of the six levels of knowing. They can take a concept and apply it to the taxonomy. They are aware of the type of thinking they are doing. The more they know about their thinking, the better they will become at it.

It is helpful to use graphic organisers to give students exercises that target specific levels of thinking. If students become aware of their thinking processes, they can use each of them more deliberately. It's like playing basketball: If students fool around playing basketball, they may or may not become better at it. If someone coaches them and teaches them how to make a foul shot, they are aware of how they can become better players. If you want your students to become better at cause/effect relationships, then let them know they are doing cause/effect thinking. At the end of the activity, ask them the specific skills and skill levels they were using. You'll find you will have a lot more critical and creative thinkers at the end of the year. But watch out, you might hear someone say, "We haven't done any creative thinking lessons in a really long time. Can we do some webbing?"

Introducing the Bug Organiser:

A MODEL LESSON



The characters *Kio* and *Gus* are analysed on the bug graphic organiser.

Content of the lesson: *Kio and Gus* by Matthew Lipman

Thinking skill: Compare and contrast/analysing

Graphic organiser: Bug

The bug graphic is designed to compare and contrast two people, places or things. Common characteristics are written on the bug's body (centre lines); the descriptive words or phrases are written on the bug's legs.

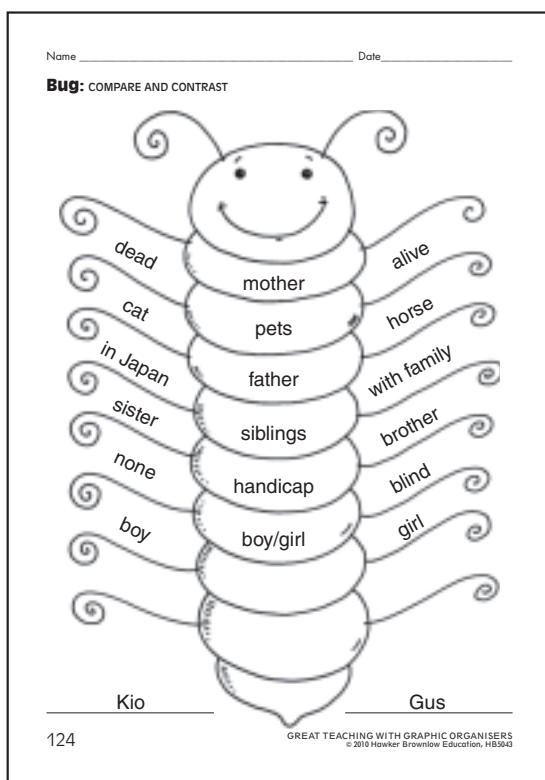
I place a transparency of the organiser on the overhead projector and hand out a copy of the bug organiser to each student. I explain to students that this is a graphic organiser used to compare two things, and that I'm going to show them how to use it.

I write the names *Kio* (the boy in the story) and *Gus* (the girl in the story) on the lines at the bottom of the bug.

Next, I invite kids to think about these characters, and how they are alike and different. Students offer that *Kio's* mother is dead, while *Gus's* mother is alive. So I write *Mother* in the centre of the organiser and the words *dead* and *alive* on the respective legs.

I ask, "What is another thing *Kio* and *Gus* have in common that we can compare?" "They both have pets," a student offers, and so we write *pets* in the centre, *cat* above *Kio's* name and *horse* above *Gus's* name.

"They both had a father, but one was not living with them for the summer," a student suggests. I write *Father* in the centre. "So where is *Kio's* dad?" I ask. The class calls out, "*In Japan*," and I record this phrase on the chart. On *Gus's* side I write *with family*.



And so the lesson continues. The students compare siblings, the fact that *Gus* was blind and *Kio* could see, and noted that one was a boy and one was a girl. I make an effort to let the students generate the attributes to compare; I want them to get a feel for the

Introducing the Creative Problem Solving Grid

A MODEL LESSON

Content of the lesson: Fairytale unit: *Jack and the Beanstalk* by Steven Kellogg

Thinking skill: Problem solving/evaluation

Graphic organiser: Creative problem solving grid

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Name _____ Date _____

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING GRID

Problem	Random word:	Random word:	Random word:	New solution
<i>Jack and the Beanstalk</i>	Sailboat	Colours	Bananas	
Jack's poverty	Work as a cabin boy and sail away.	He steals golden eggs.	Jack can trade the beans for bananas.	The punishment for stealing is being a cabin boy and eating bananas.
Jack steals	If Jack lives on a boat, he will have less opportunity to steal.	Jack sees things through rose-coloured glasses and no longer feels a need to steal.	Jack gets indigestion and loses his zest for stealing.	Jack reinvents himself, moves on, and has respect for himself.
Dysfunctional family	More socialisation and communication between Jack and his mum.	Mum goes to art therapy.	They should eat food with lots of vitamins so that they feel good.	They should make a plan to create family harmony.

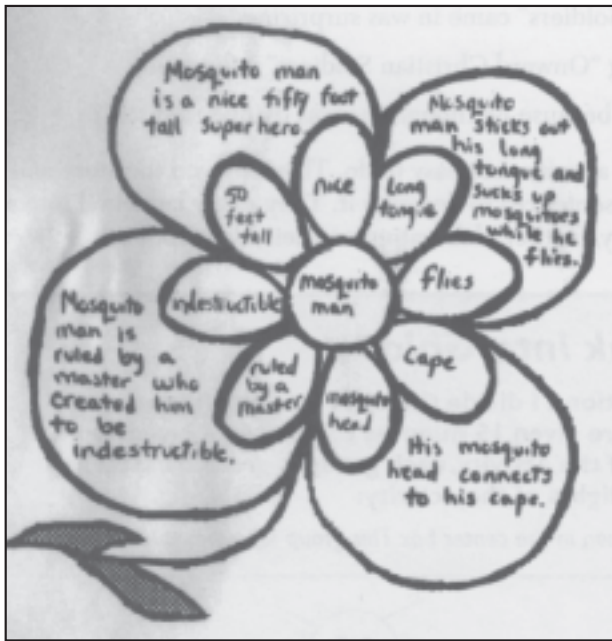
GREAT TEACHING WITH GRAPHIC ORGANISERS
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The creative problem solving grid is an excellent organiser to use when identifying a problem or problems in a story and coming up with an alternative ending. In this way, the organiser serves as a way to review the content. Before introducing this organiser to the class, I have them practise doing a forced association. In this introductory lesson, I take the basic concept “boat” and ask students how a boat is like a “lip”. Students come up with the following responses: *you can kiss both of them;*

they both make noise; they both can sink; they both can be painted; you can bite both of them; they both move; they both can split; they can be big or small; they both get wet; they both have round edges; and they both have a top and bottom. I take about three or four minutes to do this activity. Once I have them hooked, I tell them they will use the same skill when they use the creative problem solving grid.

1. I read *Jack and the Beanstalk* to the class.
2. I ask students to choose three nouns. They choose sailboat, colours and bananas.
3. I pass out the creative problem solving grid and tell them to write the three words in the squares across the top of the grid. In the first square they write *Jack and the Beanstalk*.
4. Now I tell them that we are going to solve the problems in the story. In order to do this, we need to look at more than one problem that occurs in the story. They identify three problems in the story: *Jack's poverty*; *Jack steals*; and *dysfunctional family* (apparently they did not think Jack's relationship with his mother was very good).

Flower Power



Flower graphic describes Mosquito Man.

Though a different design, the flower pattern works the same way as the butterfly. The topic to be elaborated upon is placed in the centre of the flower. The related ideas are placed in the petals around the centre of the flower. The ideas in the petals connected by the larger petals are combined to form one detailed sentence. The sentences are placed in the outer layer of petals.

A year four class invented superheroes to solve local problems. For this class, a superhero named Mosquito Man solves the “crime” of too many mosquitoes. Of course, the superheroes have superpowers.

You can see that many ideas have been used to create a more complete description of this superhero. Decisions are made about who this character is before actually writing a sentence about him. Students can use these ideas in a story. Many times, the sentences are just interesting enough to get the students motivated to write.

Year Twos Elaborate

A year two literacy group used the flower graphic to elaborate on Leviathan, the whale in the story *Kio and Gus*. Everyone in the group had read the story and knew about Leviathan. Because the students had used the butterfly graphic organiser many times in the past, they decided that they wanted to try out the flower design.

Year twos elaborate on the whale, Leviathan.

1. Leviathan is placed in the centre circle.
2. Students generate the following words to describe Leviathan: *generous, nice, good, birthmark, whale, save, awesome, beautiful, grey, helpful.*

