SOCIOGRAM

A Sociogram is meant to show the relationships between characters and/or ideas. It is used as a reading strategy, but can be used to show relationships between organisms in science or ideas in history. In this visual diagram, where characters are placed on the page, in what proximity to each other, how thick lines are, and in what direction arrows are facing mean something. The meaning is the interpretation the author of the Sociogram gives to the placement he/she has chosen by the way he/she has interpreted the reading assignment. Sociograms are best assigned when an entire piece of text has been read so that the students are privy to as much information about characters as possible. It is a demonstration of students' understanding of the plot and the character development in relationship to the storyline. It is a great way to check for understanding.

To construct a Sociogram, give students a blank sheet of paper and explain to them the purpose of a Sociogram. Start by asking the class to list all of the characters from the reading down the left hand side of the paper. It helps to keep the list to the characters without which understanding of the story could not occur, if there are quite a few characters. You can do this as a class Brainstorm the first time you create a Sociogram so that students will be able to see how the visual works. Then ask students to decide who the main character is. Have them place the main character in the center of the page because he/she is the central character. Ask them to draw a circle around the main character's name. Then ask them to decide which of the characters is the second most important. Ask them to think about where the character should be placed in relation to the central character and why. Remind them that where they place this character is important. How close was the second character to the main character? If they say very close, then that character should be placed very close to the main character. But before you write their name next to the main character, ask them to think about what kind of relationship they had. Did one exert more power over the other or were they equal? If one was more powerful, them maybe the more powerful character should be placed above the other and close. If they were equal, them maybe they should be placed next to each other and close. Once you have agreed upon the placement. Ask students to draw a circle around the name of the second character. Then tell them that they are going to draw a line between the two characters that represents their relationship. If the relationship was very strong, then the line might be thick and dark. If the relationship was close but weak, them maybe their line should be dotted or shaky or very thin. Let them decide. Then draw in their line. Now, ask them if the relationship was mutual. If both characters felt the bond of the relationship, then they will draw an arrow on both ends of the line, which indicates reciprocity. If only one character felt attached to the other, then the arrow should go from that character to the other, but maybe there is no arrow pointing back to indicate that the relationship was not mutual. Finally, ask the students to use one or two words to describe the relationship and write them above the line between the two characters (e.g., romantic love, mutual hatred, brotherly love, sister, enemies, etc.). Here comes the tricky part, every time the students add a new character to the visual, they must connect them to all of the characters. So placement becomes very important. Suppose the third character was very close to the main character but had no relationship to the second character. Where should he/she be placed in relation to both? Model for students three or four characters. Then allow them to take off on their own or in groups. Remind them that how they place characters, the lines they draw, and their description of the relationships matter. All characters must be charted and their relationship to each other depicted. Yes, it gets messy. That's good, as long as students can explain what they have done. Below you will find an incomplete example of a Sociogram, as an example of what could be done. The important piece of the project is to have students present and explain their reasons for the way they have created the relationships between all characters.

SOCIOGRAM EXAMPLE
FOR ROMEO AND JULIET

Romeo, son to Montague
Juliet, daughter of Capulet
Tybalt, nephew to Lady Capulet
Mercutio, kinsman to the Prince, and friend to Romeo
Lady Capulet
Lord Capulet
Lady Montague
Lord Montague
Nurse, to Juliet
Escalus, Prince of Verona
Paris, a young nobleman, kinsman to the Prince
an old man, of the Capulet Family
Benvolio, nephew to Montague and friend to Romeo
Petruchio, a (mute) follower of Tybalt
Friar Lawrence, Franciscan
Friar John, Franciscan
Balthasar, servant to Romeo
Abram, servant to Montague
Sampson, servant to Capulet
Gregory, servant to Capulet
Clown, servant to Capulet
Peter, servant to Juliet's nurse
Page, to Paris
Apothecary
Three Musicians

Prince Escalus

Lord Montague

Lady Montague

Lord Capulet

Lady Capulet

LOVE
Romeo Juliet
mother/daughter
acquaintances
Nurse
employer/employee