

FOR-PD's Reading Strategy of the Month



(Developed by Zygouris-Coe V., & Glass C., 2004)

Rationale:

A person's schema or knowledge structure can be regarded as the central guidance system in the comprehension process. An individual searches existing schemata to make sense of incoming information from the text. The degree to which this incoming information is consistent with the expectations generated from existing schemata determines the presence or absence of comprehension (Readance, Bean, & Baldwin, 2001, p. 41).

Reading also involves the interaction between the reader's knowledge, text variables, reader interest, and the quality of teaching. Additionally, the students' language facilities play a powerful role in comprehension (Readance, Bean, & Baldwin, 2001). According to Guthrie (2001), engaged reading is a combination of thoughtfulness and motivation. The Put Reading First definition of reading includes the development and maintenance of a motivation to read. Engagement in reading can "compensate for low achievement attributed to low family income and educational background." Engaged readers can overcome obstacles to achievement and become agents of their own reading growth (Guthrie, 2001, p. 2).

Graphic organizers help students construct meaning. The Venn diagram contributes to keeping students actively involved. It is a simple graphic organizer. The Venn diagram allows students to help structure the way they "think" about the similarities and differences between concepts. They work best when the students complete them, instead of having the teachers do it for them.

Steps:

The Venn diagram is normally used in a compare/contrast fashion. As an educator you will need to first select a topic for the Venn diagram. The Venn diagram is made up of two or more overlapping circles. It is often used in mathematics to show relationships between sets. In language arts instruction, Venn diagrams are useful for examining similarities and differences in characters, stories, or poems. In science, students could compare and contrast vertebrates and invertebrates. In Social Studies classrooms students could compare democrats and republicans.

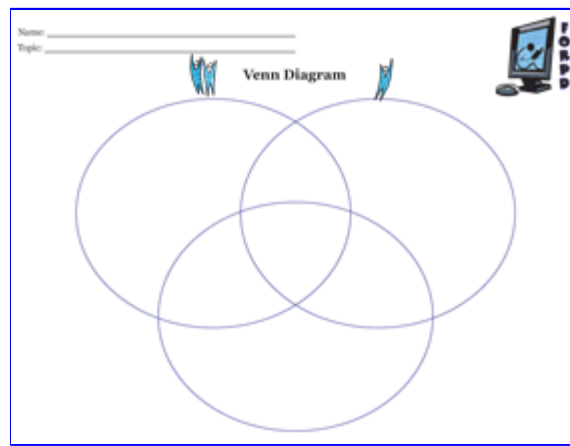
A simple way in which to introduce the Venn diagram is to have two students pair with each other to compare/contrast themselves. The students will then fill in the text areas of the Venn. Things that are different from one another go in the outside portion of the circles, and things the two have in common go in the "common" or overlapping area of the two circles.

Some questions to think about for the students to prompt their answers:

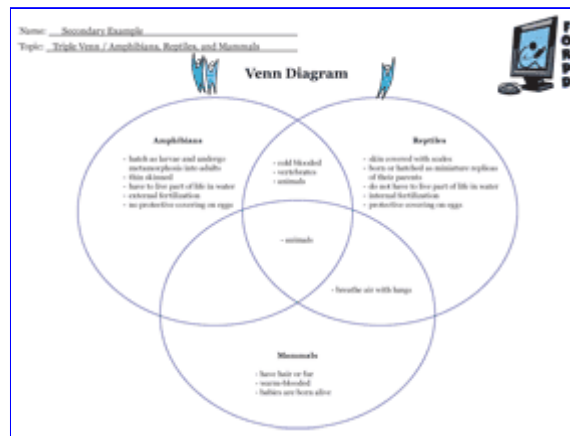
- What do I know about this topic?
- What are the 3 most important elements of this topic?
- What characteristics do the elements have in common?
- What characteristics do the elements not have in common?

How to Use the Strategy:

The Venn diagram is frequently used as a prewriting activity to enable students to organize thoughts or textual quotations prior to writing an assignment. This activity enables students to organize similarities and differences visually. If the students master the Double Venn diagram, there is a Triple Venn diagram as well. This enables the students to compare/contrast more than two characters, topics, settings, etc. You can access examples of the Triple Venn in the resource links below.



(Click on the graphic above to go to a pdf file of the Triple Venn Diagram worksheet or go to the [html file](#).)



(Click on the graphic above to go to a pdf file of the Animals Venn Diagram worksheet.)

Make sure you first **model how to use the strategy** to your students and **explain why** you chose the Venn Diagram.

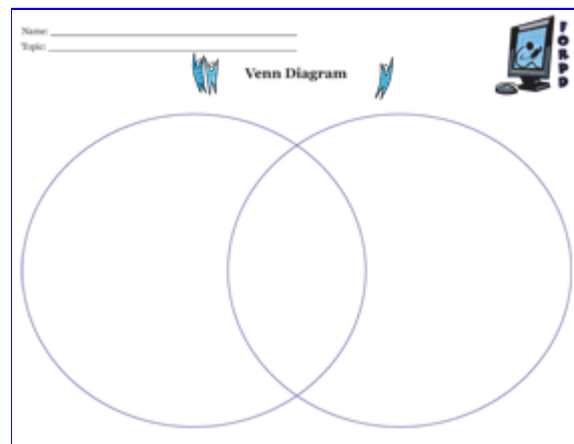
Ideas for Assessment:

One of our goals in reading is to maximize students' interaction with text—the more students get involved actively with text, the higher the probability of them constructing meaning from text. If a Venn diagram reflects the current state of knowledge of someone about a specific topic, there is reasonable doubt to state that a Venn diagram by itself is neither right nor wrong. Each student might produce a different Venn that reflects his or her own content knowledge. If the cardinal Venn diagram elements are characteristics of the given topic, then the basic assessment elements would be:

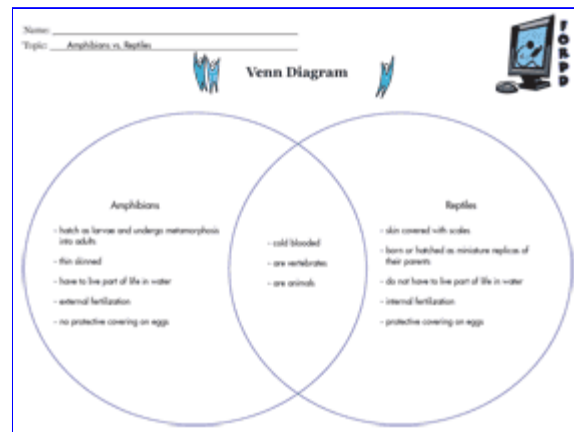
- Concepts: Are the more important topics in the Venn?
- Relations: Do relations connect topics correctly? Are they divided properly?

Something else to keep in mind while assessing Venn diagrams is the indirect effects of using graphic organizers in student overall content knowledge development. Here are some examples of indirect effects.

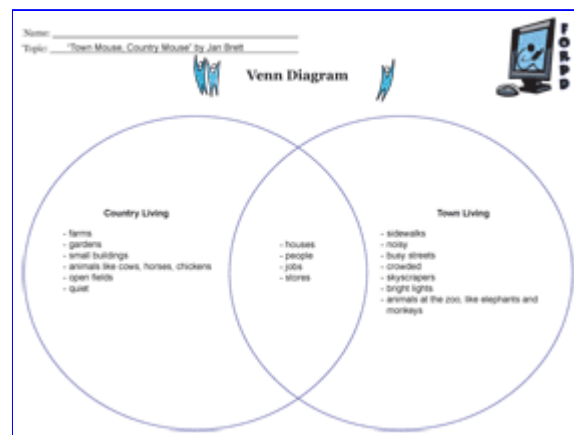
- *Depth of processing.* Students are exceptionally attentive—not just interested—due to the explicit nature of Venn diagrams, both for evaluation and presentation.
- *Enhanced preparation.* The individual nature of the Venn provides additional incentive to prepare the students when they know beforehand that a class assignment will be a Venn diagram.
- *Students are motivated.* When asked to produce collaborative Venn diagrams, the students' interaction leads to deep processing and critical thinking.



(Click on the graphic above to go to a pdf file of the Venn Diagram worksheet or go to the [html file](#).)



(Click on the graphic above to go to a pdf file of the Amphibians vs. Reptiles Venn Diagram worksheet.)



(Click on the graphic above to go to a pdf file of the "Country Mouse, City Mouse" Venn Diagram worksheet.)

For more informative links on the Venn Diagram reading strategy:

<http://www.lpg.fsu.edu/charting/InstructionalStrategies/howto-tactics/ht-k1ccvenn.asp#UseInLesson> - an amazing description of the Venn diagram and ALL of its possibilities.

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/readquest/strat/venn.html> - offers several types of Venn Diagrams

http://teachers.teach-nology.com/web_tools/graphic_org/venn_diagrams/ - as a free Venn diagram generator

<http://www.venndiagram.com/> - a more complex Venn diagram generator

<http://www.graphic.org/venbas.html> - for a nice, simple way to introduce the Venn diagram to students

<http://forpd.ucf.edu/strategies/stratVenn.html>

<http://www.graphic.org/venexp.html> - for a description of the Venn Diagram Expanded

http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/readquest/pdf/venn_summary.pdf - Venn diagram with summary lines

References

Florida Online Reading Professional Development. (2004). Lesson 10. University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL. Available: <http://www.itrc.ucf.edu/>

Guthrie, J. T. (2001). Contexts for engagement and motivation in reading. *Reading Online*, 4(8). Available: http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=/articles/handbook/guthrie/index.html

Havens, L., Maycumber, E., and Santa, C. (1996). Project CRISS. Creating Independence Through Student-owned Strategies. Secondary Education. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.

Readance, J. E., Bean, T. W., & Baldwin, R. S. (2001). *Content area literacy: An integrated approach*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.



[Go to Adobe PDF instruction page.](#)

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