

Text mapping

Mapping the verbal topography of a text, using emphasis tools and other markers

Text mapping has been with us for a while. It was invented by Tony Clifford in the early 1990s as a way of exploiting the extraordinarily diverse marking effects available in a word processor.



Text can be:

- **Bold**
- *Italic*
- Underlined
- **Highlighted** (15 colours)
- **Coloured** (about 40 colours)
- In a specific font (have you ever counted how many are available on your computer?)
- **A specific font size**
- Superscript or subscript

The amazing thing is that at least seven of these effects can overlap on one word without obscuring legibility:

Still legible

The above word is simultaneously: Bold, Italic, Underlined, Highlighted yellow, Red, Rockwell and 20 point. And you can still read it!

If you can mark text so well, you can assign meanings to each feature. The classic routine is to write the key at the foot of the page – though other possibilities for this application will be suggested later in the Unit.

 Notes

Suggested activity outline

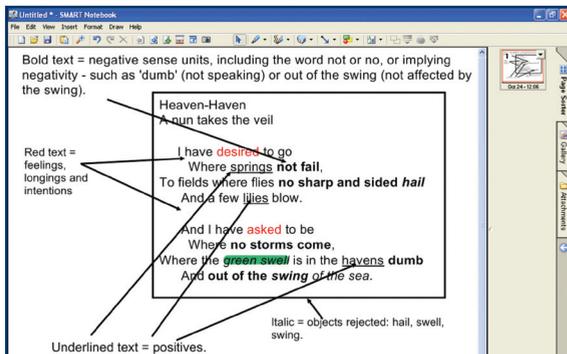
This lesson activity should be used in conjunction with the SMART Notebook™ file 'Text Mapping.notebook'.

- Select a set of texts that have a variety of interesting features.
 - Work on one text as a model for the class, discussing which words follow the same pattern, and for each pattern, discuss what mark would be appropriate. For example, emphasis might be carried by font-size (the more emphatic, the bigger the font) and emotion might be indicated by colour or font. Underline/bold/italic could be assigned to word classes. Don't, whatever you do, stick to existing classification schemes: this is one big chance to be inventive and for pupils to come up with their own meta-language to analyse the text. If someone says, "There are lots of negatives in this text", assign a marker to negatives. The only rule is that the key must refer to an objectively discernable pattern.
- At this demonstration stage, you can use extra text boxes and arrows to mark how the map is working on the screen.
 - Once you are sure that everyone has grasped the principle, issue another text. If you are working in an ICT suite, each machine can load the text. Work in groups of three. The task is to map the text, writing the key at the foot of the page every time a new feature is discovered and marked.
 - Allow between 25 and 30 minutes, (shorter time if the exercise has become well practised) and then call each group to the front to present their maps by loading their work onto the whiteboard.
 - You will be amazed at the richness of fresh insight and enthusiasm this exercise generates.

SMART specific

The SMART Notebook software is a very useful text-mapping application in itself. It won't allow Microsoft® Word-type highlighting, but to compensate you have the marker tools and pens.

This is what the demo session might look like:



The arrows are great for an onscreen demo but they look completely chaotic and get in the way of reading the text. One solution is to use the arrows as shown, but then, keeping in 'Page Sorter' view, add as many new pages as there are items on your key (in this example, four). Use a fresh page for each key item. At the top of this key-page, write the definition (e.g. Red text = feelings). Under the definition, brainstorm examples from the analysed text, and the implications of the pattern that has been discovered. The great thing is that the software allows you to jump instantly between the text being mapped and the individual key-pages.

Extension activities

Use the same key to map two texts, for instance the same news item taken from a tabloid and a broadsheet. The tracking of emotive terms would be fascinating!

Try opening texts – the beginning of 'Bleak House', the opening lines of the 'Eve of St Agnes', the first paragraph of 1984. Authors attempting to establish scene very often use language in definite, vigorous ways to kick-start the narrative.

Resources

You can find the texts of 'Bleak House' and 'The Eve of St Agnes' online:

'Bleak House':

www.online.literature.com/dickens/bleakhouse

humwww.usc.edu/dickens

'The Eve of St Agnes':

www.bartleby.com/126/39.html

www.darsie.net/library/keats_st_agnes.html

'1984' is more difficult to source and it may be quicker to scan the extract you want from the book and convert it to electronic format using the OMR (optical mark reader) function which all modern scanning software includes.

Notes

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