

Investigating the Alphabet: A Study in Researching, Note-Taking, And Outlining Skills

Grade Level: 5th Grade

Presented by: Christine Nagle, St. Michael School, North Andover, MA, 01845

Length of Unit: On-going

I. ABSTRACT

Investigating the Alphabet is a yearlong project which teaches researching, note-taking, and outlining skills in a variety of ways while reinforcing the topics outlined in the Core Knowledge Sequence. It is an integrated unit incorporating activities involving language Arts, Math, Science, History, and Geography. Many of the activities will be incorporated into lessons being taught by the media specialists. This exciting unit is designed to help students learn how to distinguish important data while teaching them to organize and present their information so it can be utilized at any time. Best of all, this unit allows students to compile, construct and produce their own Book of Knowledge.

II. OVERVIEW

A. Concept objectives:

1. Students will be able to gather and organize information from different sources including encyclopedias, interviewing, computers, books, and magazines.
2. Student will be able (by the end of the year) to produce a proper research paper complete with cover page, outline, text, and bibliography.

B. Content to be covered from the Core Knowledge Sequence:

1. Language Arts
3. Writing and Research
4. Grammar and Usage
5. Poetry
6. History
7. Science
8. Math
9. Bibliographies

C. Skills to be taught:

1. Researching skills
2. Note-taking skills
3. Outlining skills
4. Writing process
5. Pre-writing
6. Rough draft
7. Revising
8. Editing
9. Publishing
10. Identifying main ideas and supporting details
11. Classifying and Organizational skills
12. Computer application skills

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE:

A. Teachers:

1. Hirsch, Jr., E.D. What Your 5th Grader Needs To Know. New York: Dell Publishing, 1995.
2. Kemper, Dave, Ruth Nathan, and Patrick Shebranek. Writers Express: A Handbook for Young Writers, Thinkers, and Learners. Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995, ISBN 0-669-38633-2.
3. Shebranek, Patrick, Verne Meyer, and Dave Kemper. Writers Inc: A Student Handbook for Writing and Learning. Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996, ISBN 0-669-38813-0.

B. Students:

1. Prior knowledge of fourth grade writing and research
2. Concept of writing a paragraph
3. Kemper, Dave, Ruth Nathan, and Patrick Shebranek. Writers Express: A Handbook for Young Writers, Thinkers, and Learners. Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995, ISBN 0-669-38633-2

IV. RESOURCES:

A. Books:

1. Research Made Easy by Ginger Carey
2. How to Write a Research Report by Kathleen Christopher Null
3. Learning to Write Reports by Hayes School Publishing Company
4. Calliope by Greta Barclay Lipson and Jane A. Romatowski
5. World Book Encyclopedia
6. Math on Call: A Mathematics Handbook by great Source Education
7. Forms for Report Writing by Jo Ellen Moore
8. Report Writing: A Focus in Social Studies and Science by Patrica Lewis and Peter Watson

B. Computer Programs:

1. The Print Shop Ensemble III
2. Encarta 96
3. World Book
4. The Multimedia Workshop

C. Forms:

1. Note-taking formats (Appendix A)
2. Outline Format (Appendix B)
3. Interview format (Appendix C)
4. Alphabet Letter Book description and contract (Appendix D)
5. Alphabet Letter Book entries guidelines (Appendix E)
6. Assessment Rubrics (Appendix F)

V. LESSONS:

Lesson One: How to Take Notes

A. Daily Objectives:

1. Lesson Content:
 - a. Students will explore note taking using the formats of webbing, mind mapping, outlining, and bulleted notes.
2. Concept Objective:
 - a. Students will be able to gather and organize information from different sources including encyclopedias, interviewing, computers, books, and magazines.

3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will start to distinguish important details.
 - b. Students will begin to learn how to write a correct bibliography.
- B. Materials:
 1. Note-taking and outlining forms (Appendix A & B)
 2. Bibliography format found in the Writers Express book
 3. Core Knowledge Topic for the month of September and October
- C. Key Vocabulary:
 1. Topic
 2. Subtopic
 3. Supporting details
 4. Webbing
 5. Mind-Mapping
 6. Outlining
 7. Bulleted notes
 8. Bibliography
- D. Procedures/Activities:
 1. Explain the difference between topic, subtopic and supporting details.
 2. Explain how to use the different forms for taking notes and outlining (Appendix A & B).
 3. Model one sample for each form and post it on a bulletin board entitled Note-Taking Skills.
 4. Using your Core Knowledge Topics for the month of September and October, have students practice in class a variety of note-taking skills.
 5. Introduce the correct format for writing a bibliography.
 6. Have students practice by creating a bibliography for their textbooks.
- E. Assessment:
 1. Student Samples of Note-taking

Lesson Two: Introduction to Alphabet Letter Book Unit

- A. Objectives/Goals:
 1. Lesson content:
 - a. Students will select a letter from the alphabet to focus on throughout the entire year.
 2. Concept Objective:
 - a. Students will be able (by the end of the year) to produce a proper research paper complete with cover page, outline, text, and bibliography.
 4. Skill Objective:
 - a. Students will understand that by the end of the year they will have created their own book of knowledge on the letter of their choice.
- B. Materials:
 1. Two pocket portfolio folders (two for each student)
 2. Description of unit and alphabet letter book contract (Appendix D)
 3. Three pieces of white paper (8 ½ x 11) for each student
- C. Key Vocabulary:
 1. Alliteration
 2. Autobiography
 3. Dedication
 4. contract
- D. Procedures/Activities:
 1. Pass out and explain unit description (Appendix D)
 2. Pass out two folders to each student.
 3. After explaining unit description, have students sign book contract and paste it to the cover of their working folder.

4. On the first sheet of white paper, have students create a cover page including on it their name, grade, teacher's name, the letter they chose and an illustration.
 5. Explain the terms alliteration and dedication.
 6. Read some examples of each term.
 7. On the second sheet of white paper, have students create a dedication for their book using the letter they chose as the primary sound.
 8. Explain the difference between autobiography and biography.
 9. On the third sheet of paper, have students create an autobiography page including their full name, age, school, hobbies, favorite subjects, and at least one important accomplishment.
- E. Assessment:
1. Rubric guidelines for student project (Appendix F)

Lesson Three: Alphabet Letter Book Entries:

- A. Daily Objectives:
1. Lesson content:
 - a. Students will continue to explore ways of taking notes.
 2. Concept Objective:
 - a. Students will be able to (by the end of the year) to produce a proper research paper complete with the cover page, outline, text, and bibliography.
 3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will compose a variety of research materials into a book, which can be utilized at any time for different forms of writing.
 - b. By the end of the year, students will learn how to gather information using an assortment of resource materials.
 - c. Each month students will add three or four pages of research and note taking to their book.
 - d. Students will produce a proper research paper complete with cover page, outline, text and bibliography using at least three resources.
- B. Materials:
1. Supply of white paper (8 ½ x 11)
 2. Supply of note-taking and outlining forms (Appendix A & B)
 3. Bibliography format found in Writers Express
 4. World Book Encyclopedias
 5. World Book CD-ROM
 6. Encarta 96 CD-ROM
 7. Print Shop Ensemble III CD-ROM
 8. The Multimedia CD-ROM
 9. Student copy of book entries for each month (Appendix E)
 10. What your 5th Grader Needs to Know
- C. Key Vocabulary:
1. Collage
 2. Tongue twister
 3. Transformation
 4. Concrete poetry
- D. Procedures/Activities:
1. Explain to the students that each month they are assigned three or four activities to complete.
 2. All completed assignments should be stored neatly in their show case folder.
 3. Explain the Alphabet Letter Book entries guideline (Appendix E)
 4. Each month, hand out the activities in which you would like the students to work on. Try to coordinate the activities so that they go along with what you are currently studying each

month. One activity should require a great deal of research and should be done in the school library. The other two or three activities should be fun and creative activities and should require very little research.

5. With the help of the computer teacher, have students format their own diskette to save their work from the computer.
6. Explain to the students that they are creating a book; it is important that each entry be on its own page. They need to leave at least a half-inch margin for it to be bound.
7. Alphabet Letter Book Entries include the following:
 - a. Create an informational outline on a Native American or Native American Tribe that starts with your letter.
 - b. Create a transformation of your letter using The Multimedia Workshop.
 - c. Create a collage of your letter using as many different styles, color and sizes found in Print Shop Ensemble III.
 - d. Create a tongue twister using your letter as the initial sound and then illustrate it.
 - e. Research a historical person or event from either the Renaissance Era, Reformation Era, England's Golden Age or The Russian Reformation Era.
 - f. Create an informational web.
 - g. Research the name of an insect, amphibian, reptile, bird, mammal and fish and create an informational mind map for each entry. Use the information you gathered to write a one-page paper on how they differ.
 - h. Create a grade appropriate math word problem for addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and fractions. Remember that your word problems must focus on the letter you have chosen.
 - i. Geography page – list and tell the location for at least four countries, towns, rivers, lakes, cities, states, etc. that begin with your letter.
 - j. Literary page- research the names of three books that begin with your letter and write a brief statement/summary describing the book. Then find the names of two authors whose last name begins with your letter and list three books that each wrote (make sure you tell the type of book. For example fiction, nonfiction, mystery, poetry, etc.)
 - k. Research a scientist whose last name begins with your letter and create an informational outline telling about the person's life and his/hers contribution to science.
 - l. Using the information you gathered, create an acrostic poem on the person.
 - m. List fifteen bulleted facts on an historical person whose last name begins with the letter you chose. What important role did he or she play during either the Civil War or the Westward Expansion? Create a poster on the computer honoring your person.
 - n. Make a poster showing your letter in different languages such as American Sign Language and/or hieroglyphics.
 - o. Math pages – research five mathematical terms that begin with your letter and give a definition with an example for each entry.
 - p. Design on the computer (using Multimedia), an original cartoon character based on your letter. Write a one -page essay describing your cartoon character.
 - q. Computer page – research at least six computer terms and/or programs that begin with your letter and give some brief bulleted facts for each entry.
 - r. Science pages – research ten science-related words that begin with your letter and create an information web explaining each word.
 - s. Research a musician or artist whose last name begins with your letter and create an informational outline telling about the person's life and accomplishments.
 - t. History page-find at least four history related terms and create a mind map for the following: Exploration, Civil War, Westward Expansion, and Feudal Japan.

- u. Create an interesting fact page by interviewing at least three different people to find all sorts of trivia – ex. Names of money, computer games, food, clothes, toys, etc.- illustrate some of the facts.
 - v. Research as many sports or sports related words using your letter and list some bulleted facts about each one.
- E. Assessment:
1. rubric guidelines for student project (Appendix F)

VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY

In late April, early May, students will select one entry from their collection of research materials and formally write a three-five-page research paper using at least three resources.

VII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

See pages following bibliography

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Carey, Ginger. Research Made Easy. New Jersey: Good Apple, 1996. ISBN 1-56417-846-3
Core Knowledge Sequence: Content Guidelines for Grade K-8. Virgins: Core Knowledge Foundation, 1998.

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Lewis, Patricia and Peter Warson. Report Writing: A Focus on Social Studies and Science. Missouri: Milliken Publishing Company, 1991. ISBN 1-55863-240-9

Lipson, Greta Barclay and Jane A. Romatowski. Calliope. California: Good Apple, 1981. ISBN 0-86653-025-8

Moore, Jo Ellen. Forms for Report Writing. California: Evan-Moor corp., 1994. ISBN 1-55799-286-X

Null, Kathleen Christopher. How to Write a Research Paper. California: Teacher Created Material Inc., 1998. ISBN 1-57690-332-X

Shebranek, Patrick, Verne Meyer, and Dave Kemper. Writers Inc: A Student Handbook for Writing and Learning. Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996. ISBN 0-669-38813-0

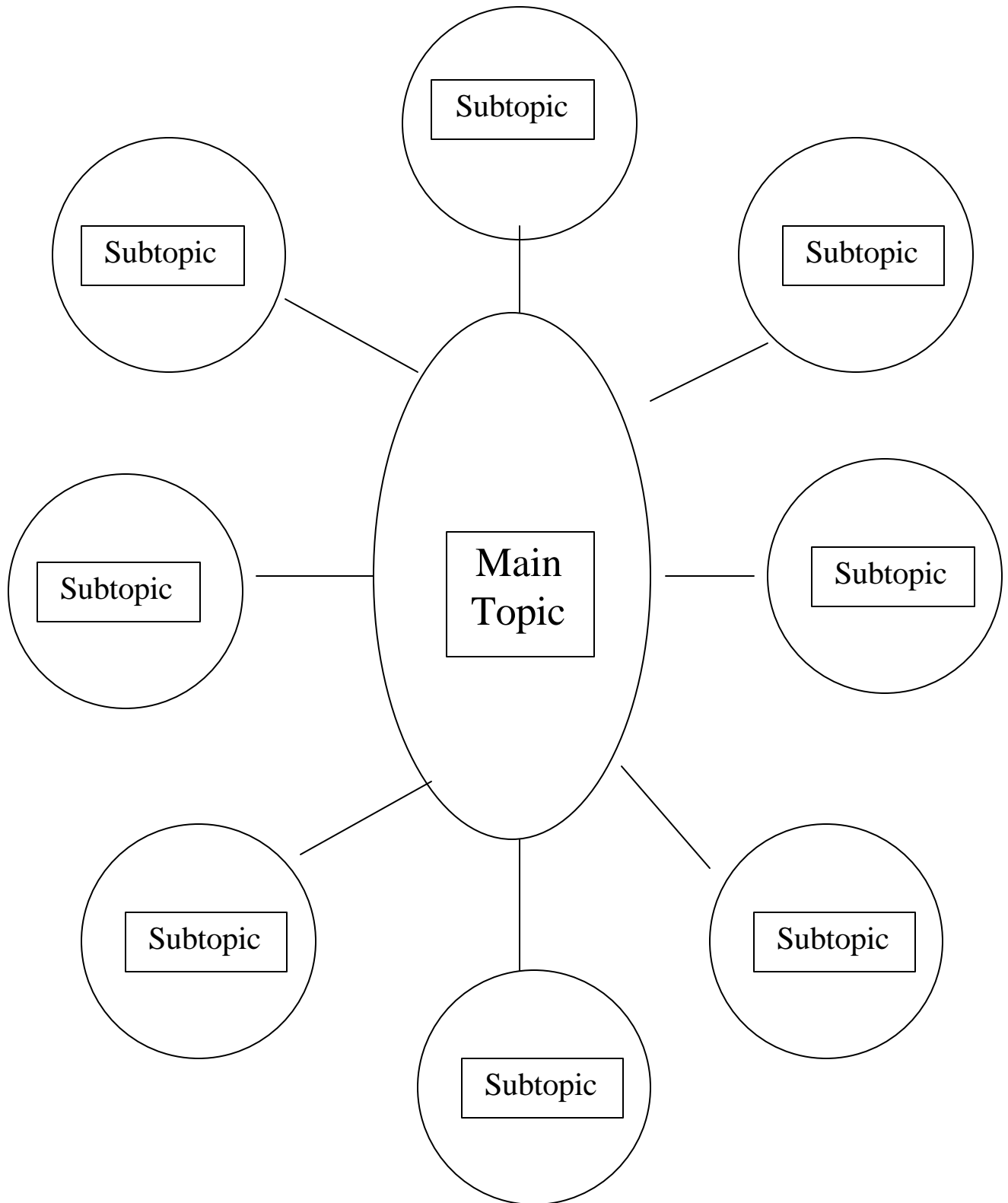
The Multimedia Workshop. Windows version, CD-ROM. California: Davidson and Associates, Inc., 1995.

The Print Shop Ensemble III. Windows 95, CD-ROM. California: Broderbund Software Inc., 1996.

World Book 1997 Multimedia Encyclopedia. Deluxe Edition. California: world Book IVID Communication Inc., 1997.

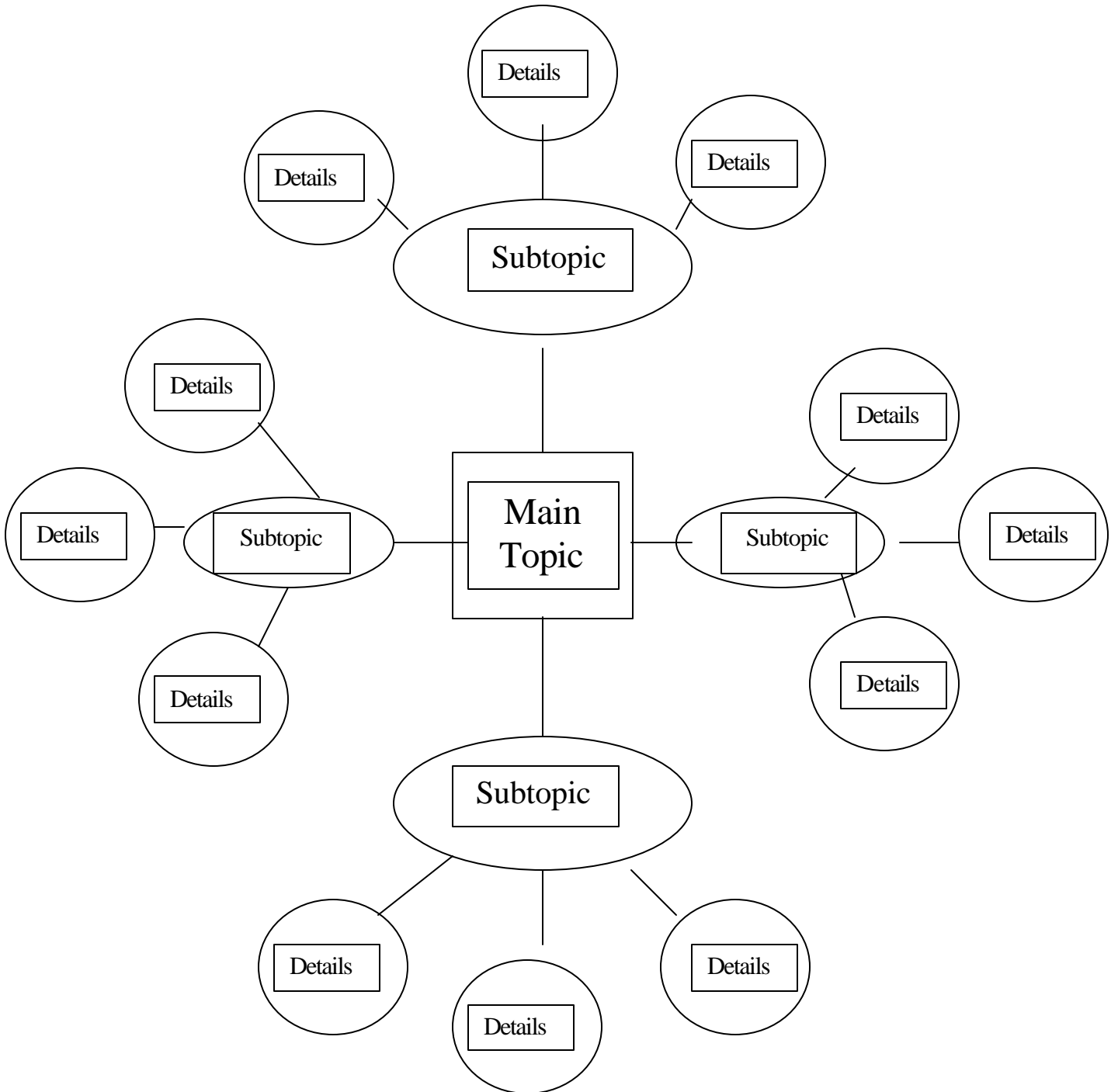
Appendix A: Investigating the Alphabet

Webbing



Appendix A: Investigating the Alphabet

Webbing



Appendix A: Investigating the Alphabet

Bulleted Notes

Bulleted notes contains a MainTopic with subtopics and details

Bulleted notes do not use complete sentences

Bulleted notes use a bullet at the beginning of each detail

Main Topic _____

Subtopic _____

- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____

Subtopic _____

- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____

Subtopic _____

- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____

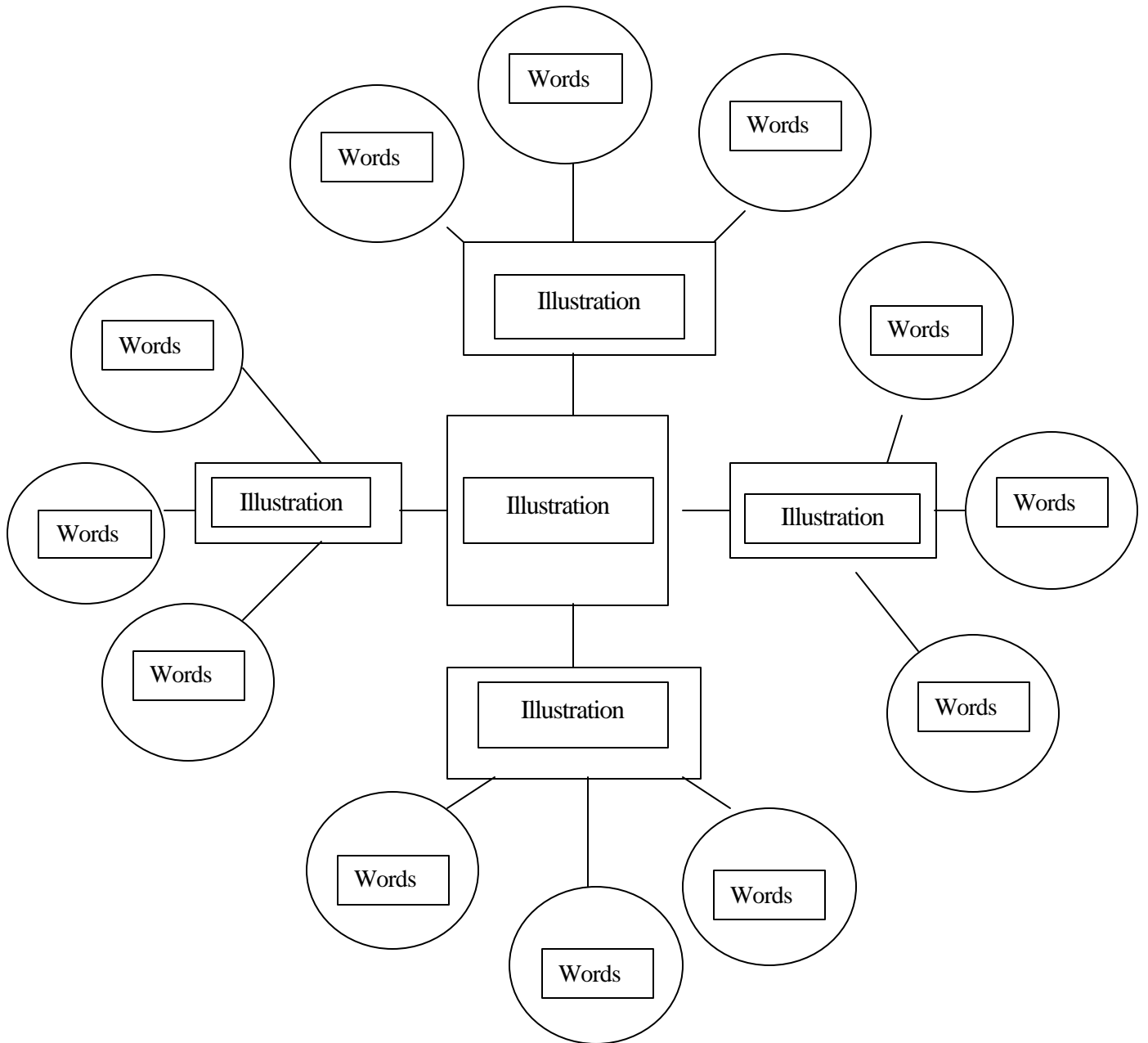
Subtopic _____

- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____

Appendix A: Investigating the Alphabet

Mind Map

Uses the same format as a web but contains illustrations for the main topic and subtopics. It uses only words for the details.



Appendix B: Investigating the Alphabet

Outline Format

Title: What your outline and research is about.

Thesis Statement: States the main idea and helps you focus on your paper. It is the last sentence to the opening paragraph of your paper

- I. Main Topic
 - A. Subtopic
 - 1. details
 - 2. details
 - 3. details
 - B. Subtopic
 - 1. details
 - 2. details
 - 3. details

- II. Main Topic
 - A. Subtopic
 - 1. details
 - 2. details
 - 3. details
 - B. Subtopic
 - 1. details
 - 2. details
 - 3. detail
 - C. Subtopic
 - 1 details
 - 2 details
 - 3 details
 - 4 details

- III. Main Topic
 - A. Subtopic
 - B. Subtopic
 - C. Subtopic

Appendix C: Investigating the Alphabet

Interviewing Sheet

Name of Subject: _____

Occupation of Subject: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Questions

Write the questions you wish to ask your subject. Remember to use who, what, when, where, why and how questions.

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

Appendix D: Investigating the Alphabet

Alphabet Letter Book

Dear Students:

You are about to begin an exciting yearlong project on a letter of your choice. You will be learning how to take notes using a variety of resources and how to apply the information to different forms of writing samples throughout the year.

You will be given two folders. One folder will be a showcase folder and is to remain in school and will contain all completed assignments. The second folder will be a working folder and will contain all research materials you are currently working on.

Your folders and papers must remain neat and clean at all times. The reason for neat papers is because around late April, early May, you will be binding all your research into your very own Book of Knowledge. So, if at any time your papers become messy, torn, smudged, etc. you will have to redo them. If you need to get a new working folder, please let me know because you will need to paste a new contract to the front of the folder.

This project will be worked on in school and at home, so it is very important that all resources and materials be with you at all times and remain neat.

You will be assessed each month on the following criteria: neatness, work in class, all guidelines meet to the best of your ability, assignments completed on time, accuracy, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. I have attached the assessment rubric for you to use as your own checklist each month.

Your complete bounded book will be evaluated using the following guidelines: completion of book on time and overall quality for each section of the book based on creativity and organization.

It is important for you to remember that if at any point this year, you do not understand assignments that you ask for clearer directions. Remember the only uneducated question is a question not asked.

Have fun exploring your favorite letter of the alphabet.

Sincerely,

Appendix D: Investigating the Alphabet

Alphabet Letter Book Contract

I _____ have read and discussed with my teacher _____ the overall objectives and criteria for the Alphabet Letter Book. I agree to the following guidelines:

- ◆ To complete all assignments each month on time
- ◆ To keep all my papers neat – if not , I will agree to redo them
- ◆ To ask questions when I do not understand assignments
- ◆ To have my materials with me at all times
- ◆ To use the assessment rubric as my own personal checklist

Student's signature

Date

The letter I wish to focus on for the entire year is

Letter _____

Appendix E: Investigating the Alphabet

Alphabet Letter Book Entries Guidelines

Before beginning this incredible project check to make sure you have completed the following:

- * Picked the letter you wish to focus on for the entire year
- * Pasted your signed contract to the front of your working folder
- * Put your name and letter you chose on your showcase folder and stored it in the correct file box

If you have completed the above checklist, then you are ready to begin.

The entries to this book have been broken down into months. Each month you will be assigned three or four assignments to complete to the best of your ability. One assignment will require you to do some research before you can fully complete the assignment. The other assignments will require very little research, your imagination, and lots of creativity.

Keep in mind that you will be making a book. It is very important that you try to keep all your pages held the same way (either horizontally or vertically) and that you leave a margin for the binding.

Once you have completed an assignment, file it into your showcase folder. Remember to keep all papers very neat!

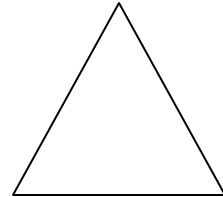
For each resource you gather information from, you will have to add it to your bibliography. Use your Writers Express to help you with the correct format. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask.

One last thing, try to challenge yourself!

Appendix F: Investigating the Alphabet

Alphabet Letter Book Monthly Assignment Rubric

Month: _____

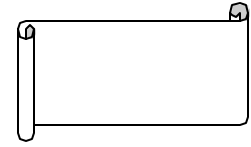


	Outstanding Quality 100	Quality 90	Very good 80	Good 70	Fair 60	Unacceptable 50
Neatness						
Work in Class, Library, & Computers						
Completed on time						
Accuracy (information)						
Spelling						
Capitalization						
Punctuation						
Completed to the best of your ability						

Comments:

Appendix F: Investigating the Alphabet

Completed Alphabet Letter Book



	Outstanding Quality 100	Quality 90	Very Good 80	Good 70	Fair 60	Not Acceptable 50	COMMENTS
Cover Page							
Dedication							
Table of Content							
Reading/ Vocabulary Section							
Writing Section							
Grammar Section							
Math Section							
Science Section							
History Section							
Art section							
Interesting Facts Section							