



George Rowley explores a new product which makes use of visual mapping to develop children's thinking skills and transform their teaching and learning.

Mapping the mind in pictures

Thinking with Pictures is a new KS1-2 title from Logotron that provides a flexible software framework for supporting model mapping in the primary classroom with a carefully selected set of keyword symbols. This is an approach that offers pupils a clarity of understanding that can only be achieved by visual representation.

The product comes with a range of curriculum-ready resources that enable teachers to quickly integrate the software into their teaching and create a stimulating classroom environment for their pupils.

Because it can be learner-driven as well as teacher-driven, it is effective in helping pupils to construct personal meaning and underpin their learning, irrespective of their ability or learning style. This can, for example, assist in challenging areas of learning such as literacy and the development of thinking and study skills. It can also help to support inclusion and the needs of gifted and talented pupils.

Modes

Model maps offer pupils a visual and aural way of showing and explaining what they are thinking. A map can be viewed in any of three ways:

- Mapping mode enables users to get all their thoughts down in one place before mapping the categories and connections between their ideas. This helps pupils develop their information processing skills, allowing them to sort, classify, sequence and compare and contrast data.
- Outline mode can be used by pupils to quickly create maps or to move items around, and they can also use it to help categorise their thinking. It allows more confident thinkers to try a different way of working.
- Presenter mode is where pupils can view the map when they are using it to illustrate topic work or ideas.

Live hyperlinks, notes and voice annotations can be added to a map, while links can play a recording, jump to a website or reveal extra text, allowing subjects to be examined in more detail. In addition, a text-to-speech function provides aural feedback to support a wide range of learning styles. A real-time spelling checker signals misspellings and offers suggestions for correct spelling.

A click of the mouse switches to picture mode to extend or alter the map collaboratively on screen as part of a topic introduction or summary. Parts of the map can be collapsed or expanded to help focus a presentation. It is also possible to tile-print maps to very large sizes for classroom wall display. In other words, a map can be printed across any number of pages. Crop marks are printed on each page, so all that is needed is scissors and glue to reassemble many pages into a single sheet.

Rebus symbols

One advantage that *Thinking with Pictures* has is that the Widgit Rebus concept symbol set is incorporated. This bank of images is a powerful tool for those special needs pupils who rely on symbols to communicate, and it can also allow all children access to a range of keyword concepts which can provide clues to remembering key facts and unravelling their own thought processes. As the user types, the panel shows which symbols connect to the words used: click on a symbol and it is inserted into the map, helping to add meaning. The set also comes with a variety of templates, which are grouped into subject areas including:

- literacy – e.g. planning a story;
- science – e.g. solids, liquids and gases;
- geography – e.g. climates.

These templates can help teachers with such





tasks as planning the curriculum, support writing tasks, class assemblies and school trips. This will also assist pupils in organising their own thoughts and ideas, making it easier for them to develop their enquiry skills.

The software can easily be used to support pupils to participate effectively in a group. It is ideal for collaborative use on a PC or interactive whiteboard, especially in Presenter mode, which allows a map to be discussed and demonstrated. Besides printing the map, pupils can export their work into other applications, for instance, a word document to use as the basis for further writing.

Further resources are available from the website www.logo.com/twp such as Why Model Map, Useful Links and Template Overview which allows teachers to view a number of animated guides that will take them through the templates available with the *Thinking with Pictures* software.



Where can it be used?

- *Thinking with Pictures* can be usefully applied to almost any subject area at any level of attainment.
- It is ideal for collaborative use on a large screen or interactive whiteboard, especially presenter mode, which allows a map to be discussed and demonstrated.
- It can help learners deal with facts and knowledge, memory and retrieval, language and thinking and individual and social forms of learning.
- It can have a positive impact challenging areas such as literacy, thinking skills development and boys' writing.
- It supports inclusion of all pupils and also can offer extension for the gifted and talented.
- The brainstorm mode allows users to get all their thoughts down in one place before mapping categories and connections between ideas.

The included 60-page Activity Guide provides a valuable introduction to using mapping in the primary classroom. It not only explains how the software works but also includes practical and useful activities which can be used or adapted easily for use across the curriculum.

The company will soon be launching an equivalent product for secondary schools –

Cornerstone: Visual Thinking. This is a cross-curricular product supporting KS3–4 students in developing their examination, thinking, planning and presentation skills. Situations where model maps can help include: creative thinking, recall and retention of written material, planning and organising reports, essays and projects. It has similar features to *Thinking with Pictures*, such as the Mapping, Outline and Presenter views, text-to-speech function, a rich collection of clipart for use as idea symbols and a range of templates linked to the curriculum. *Cornerstone* also allows students to print their model maps to .pdf files and export them to text, *Word*, picture formats, *PowerPoint* or HTML for sharing.

■ George Rowley.

Information

For further information on either *Thinking with Pictures* or *Cornerstone* tel: 01223-425 558, email marketing@logo.com or visit www.logo.com

Both products are supported by a 30-day money-back guarantee, free technical support and can be purchased using COL eLCs.

Prices start from £49 for *Thinking with Pictures* and £99 for *Cornerstone*.