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Mind Mapping as a Process-Oriented Scaffold for Senior High School English Continuation Writing: A Pedagogical Framework and Case Illustration

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Abstract

This Continuation writing in China's senior high school English examination requires students to read an incomplete story, understand its conflict, infer motives and relationships that are not fully stated, and write a coherent ending from two given paragraph opening sentences. This paper develops a literature-based teaching framework that uses mind mapping as a process scaffold. Before writing, an evidence map separates source facts, reasonable inferences, and planned events, and helps students select a feasible route. During writing, a paragraph map turns the route into clear moves and supports checks on source alignment, causal coherence, emotional development, and paragraph function. After writing, a revision map reconstructs the actual draft so that missing links, repetition, imbalance, weak source connections, and sudden emotional changes can be found. The 2022 National College Entrance Examination (New Gaokao Paper I) English task about David and a cross-country race is used as a classroom example. The paper argues that mind mapping is most useful when teachers explain the reasoning behind nodes and links, require source evidence for major plot choices, connect mapping with language support and assessment, and gradually reduce guidance. The framework is a conceptual teaching model, not proof that mind mapping alone improves examination scores.

Keywords

Mind mapping; Continuation writing; Process writing; Instructional scaffolding; Integrated writing

1. Introduction

Writing in a foreign language is difficult because writers must handle ideas, organization, language, purpose, and readers at the same time. In China's senior high school English curriculum, these demands are related to language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability, which are identified as four parts of English subject core competence (Ministry of Education of the People's

Republic of China, 2020). These demands become especially strong when reading and writing are combined in one task.

Continuation writing is such a task. It has been described as an approach to writing practice that combines reading comprehension with writing (Wang, 2012). The writer reads an unfinished text and continues it in a way that fits the earlier content. In a study of 203 secondary students, continuation-writing scores correlated with written expression ($r = .680$) and reading comprehension ($r = .458$), showing significant relationships with both abilities (Wang & Qi, 2013). Ye and Liu (2023) describe the story-continuation task as requiring writers to read an incomplete story of approximately 350 words and produce a continuation of approximately 150 words. In the examination format discussed in this paper, students write two paragraphs from two supplied opening sentences. The continuation should be imaginative, but it must also agree with the source story, the given openings, and basic narrative logic.

The continuation writing task is therefore more than a test of vocabulary and grammar. Students must identify the unresolved problem, understand character relationships, infer motives, follow emotional change, and plan the functions of two paragraphs. They also need language that fits the source. A grammatically correct continuation may still be weak if events lack a clear cause, a character's emotion changes too quickly, or the ending gives a lesson that is not shown by the story.

Time pressure makes these problems more serious. Some students start drafting before deciding what the story is mainly about. Others list events without explaining why one leads to another. Some add accidents, sudden success, or long speeches because these ideas are easy to produce, even though they do not fit the source.

Mind mapping is often used as a visual planning method. A mind map starts with a central topic and develops main themes and related ideas through branches (Buzan & Buzan, 1996). In continuation-writing lessons, branches may represent characters, conflict, emotions, events, and useful language. However, a map does not improve writing by itself. Students may copy a template, spend time on decoration, or add many ideas without judging them.

The important question is therefore how a map supports reading, planning, drafting, and revision. This paper presents a three-stage framework that treats mind mapping as a flexible scaffold before, during, and after drafting. It is based on theory and previous research. It does not report an experiment or claim that the framework alone raises examination scores. The following sections review the foundations, explain the task demands, present the framework, apply it to the 2022 David task, and discuss classroom use and limitations.

2. Conceptual and Empirical Foundations

2.1. Writing as a Recursive Process

The first foundation is the cognitive view of writing. Flower and Hayes (1981)

described writing as interaction among planning, translating ideas into text, and reviewing, not as a fixed order of pre-writing, writing, and editing. Writers may plan while drafting or change an earlier goal after noticing a problem. Hayes (2012) later reviewed writing models and gave greater attention to factors such as working memory, motivation, transcription, and the task environment. These models show that writing is not a simple movement from plan to final text.

Continuation writing is especially demanding because the developing text must be checked against the source story, the two supplied openings, the intended ending, available language, and the time limit. An interesting event may need to be removed if it conflicts with a character's earlier behavior.

Ye and Liu (2023) identified six interacting processes: source reading, comprehension monitoring, planning, language monitoring, narration monitoring, and continuity evaluation. Their study shows that writers may return to the source during planning, drafting, and evaluation instead of reading it only once. Source use therefore remains part of the whole writing process.

Cognitive and emotional demands also matter. Wang et al. (2024) recruited 197 Grade 12 students and analyzed 182 valid cases. Their model showed that writing anxiety fully mediated the relationship between perceived cognitive load and story-continuation performance. The study did not test mind mapping, so it cannot show that mapping reduces cognitive load or raises scores. It does show that cognitive load, anxiety, and performance are closely connected in this task.

2.2. Scaffolding and Gradual Independence

The second foundation is scaffolding. Wood et al. (1976) described six tutoring functions: recruiting the learner's interest, reducing degrees of freedom in the task, maintaining direction, marking critical features, controlling frustration, and demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed. Support helps learners complete parts of a task that they cannot yet manage alone.

A mind map is a scaffold only when it guides useful thinking. A worksheet is not automatically a scaffold because it has branches or colors. Early in instruction, teachers may provide branches for evidence, character goals, conflict, emotional change, paragraph functions, and language choices. They should also model how to connect an inference to evidence and reject an unsupported plot. As students gain control, the prompts should become shorter.

The final aim is independent performance. A detailed classroom map should gradually become a few words, numbers, and arrows under examination conditions. The map should also remain flexible because different stories depend on different problems. A fixed template may encourage formulaic thinking.

2.3. Visual Representation and Its Limits

Eppler (2006) compared concept maps, mind maps, conceptual diagrams, and visual

metaphors as different tools for constructing and sharing knowledge. Mind maps are useful for generating associated ideas and grouping them in a hierarchy, while concept maps make labeled relationships more explicit.

Continuation writing needs both grouping and connection. A mind map can group evidence, motives, emotions, plot options, and language. However, branches alone do not clearly show time order or cause. Students may therefore add numbers, arrows, and short labels such as "because," "but," and "therefore."

A useful map has an accurate central problem, source-based choices, visible causal and emotional links, and different functions for the two paragraphs. It does not need many colors or pictures. Students who think more clearly through a linear outline should be allowed to adapt the framework. The purpose is to make reasoning visible, not to force one visual style.

2.4. Empirical Evidence and Necessary Caution

Research on mind mapping provides limited support across different tasks and learner groups. Farrand et al. (2002) reported a small advantage in delayed factual recall, but participants showed lower motivation than when using their preferred study methods. A technique may therefore help one outcome without being equally useful for every learner.

Tarin and Yawiloeng (2023) studied six Thai EFL learners, finding that mind mapping was used together with translating, memorizing, revising, and evaluating. Learners also reported benefits for vocabulary, writing processes, and attitudes. Because the sample was small and purposively selected, the findings are exploratory.

Wette (2017) used mind maps in a graduate writing course, finding significant development in the extensiveness and depth of students' formal textual knowledge, together with some evidence of progress in the rhetorical and process dimensions of genre knowledge. This suggests that mind maps can make changes in students' developing knowledge visible, but development may differ across dimensions.

Fu and Relyea (2024) conducted a pretest-posttest study of 55 Chinese eighth-grade students during a two-month narrative-writing intervention combining scaffolded instruction and mind mapping. The study did not include a control group. They reported significant improvements in lexical complexity, grammatical complexity, accuracy, and fluency. However, the absence of a control group, the small sample from a single school, the participants' age, and the focus on general narrative writing suggest caution when applying the findings directly to senior high school examination continuation writing.

Continuation-writing studies are also relevant. One study reported an alignment effect (M. Wang & C. M. Wang, 2014), while another examined development in accuracy, complexity, and fluency and found different patterns across measures (Jiang & Chen, 2015). These studies support close source engagement but do not test

mind mapping.

Xie and Zhu (2023) compared individual and collaborative planning among 62 Chinese university students. Individual planning produced greater lexical and syntactic complexity and slightly greater fluency, while accuracy did not differ significantly between the two planning conditions. The two conditions produced similar overall alignment effects, although differences were found in alignment at the word, phrase, and sentence levels. One possible pedagogical implication is to let students form an individual narrative route before comparing ideas with others, although this sequence was not directly tested in the study.

Ye and Liu's (2023) six-process model also supports returning to the source during planning, drafting, and revision rather than treating reading as a finished first step.

Overall, the literature supports a careful conclusion. Mind mapping may help organize information and make choices visible. Continuation-writing research supports close reading and purposeful planning. It does not show that a map alone causes better examination performance. The present framework therefore combines mapping with source reading, language support, feedback, and revision.

3. Task Demands and Design Principles

A useful framework should begin with the decisions required by continuation writing. Four demands are especially suitable for visual support.

The first demand is evidence-based comprehension. Students need to separate three kinds of information: what the source directly states, what can reasonably be inferred, and what the writer plans to add. These categories are often mixed. For example, a story may show that a character is silent and avoids eye contact. A student may infer that the character feels ashamed or afraid, but the emotion is still an inference rather than a stated fact. A map can place the evidence and the inference on connected but separate branches. This allows imagination while preventing an interpretation from being treated as certain.

The second demand is causal and emotional coherence. A narrative is not only a list of events. An event grows from a motive or earlier action and changes what becomes possible next. Emotional change also needs support. When a fearful character suddenly becomes confident, the main problem is often not vocabulary but a missing cause. The map should therefore show a trigger, a visible response, and a result. Emotions should be connected to actions, dialogue, physical details, or thoughts rather than presented only as labels.

The third demand is paragraph control. The two supplied openings guide both the direction of the continuation and the division of content. Students need to decide what the first paragraph should develop and what must be left for the second. If the first paragraph solves the whole conflict, the second may repeat information or add an unrelated event. A map should give the two paragraphs different jobs.

The fourth demand is the connection between ideas and language. Students often

collect impressive expressions before deciding what the story needs. A better approach is to build a small language bank around planned functions, such as hesitation, physical effort, realization, a turning point, or restrained closure. Language is then selected because it serves a move in the story.

These demands lead to five design principles. First, the central node should state the unresolved story problem rather than a broad topic. "The race" is too general, while "Will David run despite his fear of embarrassment?" directs the planning process. Second, major inferences and plot choices should be linked to source evidence. Third, the map should show two or three possible routes and brief reasons for selecting one. Fourth, students should be free to change the map during drafting. Fifth, the post-writing map should reconstruct the actual draft rather than copy the original plan. These principles make mapping part of the writing process instead of a decorative pre-writing activity.

A further point is that these demands are connected. A weak understanding of the source can lead to an unsuitable plot, and an unsuitable plot can create language problems because the student tries to explain too much in too few words. Paragraph imbalance may also come from an unclear turning point. For this reason, the map should not treat evidence, emotion, plot, paragraph structure, and language as separate lists. The branches should show how one decision affects another.

The framework also needs to remain economical. Every node should answer a practical question about the continuation. If a detail does not affect the conflict, character choice, paragraph development, or language needed for a key move, it may not belong in the map. This rule helps students avoid overplanning and keeps the map useful under time pressure.

4. A Three-Stage Process-Oriented Mapping Framework

The framework includes pre-writing evidence mapping, while-writing paragraph mapping, and post-writing revision mapping. The stages are separated for instructional purposes, but writers can move back and forth among them. This flexibility is consistent with Flower and Hayes's (1981) recursive view of writing.

4.1. Stage 1: Pre-writing Evidence Mapping

The first stage begins with close reading. Students place the unresolved story problem at the center of the map. A broad label such as "friendship" or "the competition" is too general. A useful central node is a question: Will the character act despite fear? How will the misunderstanding be corrected?

The first branch records short source details that limit or support the continuation, such as earlier actions, relationships, emotional clues, setting limits, and foreshadowing. The second branch contains inferences. Each inference should be connected to a source detail, and uncertainty should remain visible. For example, "possibly embarrassed" may be linked to "would not look at the narrator."

Other branches show the character's goal, obstacle, and possible turning point. The turning point should grow from the source and make a new choice possible. It should not solve the problem through chance or an unsupported sudden change.

Students then develop two or three short routes and check each one: Does it fit the source? Is the emotional change believable? Does it connect with both openings? Can it fit the word limit? They select one route and briefly note why the others are weaker. This step changes brainstorming into decision-making.

The last branch is a small language bank with useful verbs, brief dialogue, physical signs of emotion, and transitions needed by the selected route. Students may adapt suitable source language, but they should choose expressions they can use accurately.

Teacher modeling should explain decisions. A think-aloud can show why one detail is evidence, why another is irrelevant, and why an attractive plot is rejected. Early feedback should focus on the central problem, evidence, cause, and feasibility.

4.2. Stage 2: While-Writing Paragraph Mapping

After selecting a route, students turn it into a paragraph map. The first paragraph usually develops the situation, deepens the conflict, and prepares a decision. The second paragraph develops action, consequence, resolution, and a short ending. These are guides rather than fixed formulas.

Each paragraph should contain only a few numbered moves, such as observation, question, disclosure, response, realization, decision, action, consequence, and closure. One node represents a group of sentences or a narrative function, not every sentence.

Emotion nodes should connect to something observable. Instead of only "nervous," the map may add "hands tightened" or "paused before answering." Dialogue should also change the situation by revealing a motive, correcting an assumption, or making a decision possible.

During drafting, students make three checks. The source check asks whether the character, relationship, setting, point of view, and tone still fit. The cause check asks why the next event happens and whether emotional change has a trigger. The paragraph check asks whether the current paragraph is doing its own job and leaving enough for the next one.

The map should remain changeable. Students may cross out a node, add an arrow, or change the order. When a map is treated as a strict contract, writers may force the draft to follow a weak plan. Under examination conditions, only numbers, arrows, and short labels are needed.

4.3. Stage 3: Post-Writing Revision Mapping

After drafting, students build a revision map from the text they actually wrote. This is necessary because the planning map shows intended meaning, while the draft

may communicate something different.

The revision map records paragraph functions, main events, emotional changes, source links, and the ending. Comparing it with the plan may reveal a missing turning point, repeated events, an unsupported emotional shift, or an overlong ending.

Revision follows three steps. First, students check source alignment and plausibility: do the characters, relationships, setting, and major events fit the source and the openings? Second, they check story logic and organization, including cause, emotional development, paragraph balance, and the link between paragraphs. Third, they revise language, including tense, reference, sentence structure, word choice, repetition, spelling, and punctuation.

Peer feedback can use the map. A reader may point to two nodes and ask what connects them. This may lead the writer to add evidence, change the order, or remove an event. One focused comment on source alignment, one on cause or emotion, and one on language may be more useful than correcting everything. A short reflection can also record which moves changed and what problem was found.

Across the three stages, the map changes its purpose. Before writing, it supports selection. During writing, it supports control. After writing, it supports diagnosis. Using the same map for all three purposes may hide important differences between the plan and the written text. Separate but connected maps make these differences easier to notice.

Teachers can also use the three maps as process evidence. An inaccurate draft may come from misunderstanding the source, choosing a weak route, or failing to express a sound plan. Looking only at the final text cannot always show where the problem began. The maps can help the teacher give more specific feedback and help the student understand whether the main difficulty was reading, planning, organization, or language.

5. Case Illustration: The 2022 David Continuation Task

The case illustration draws on the English continuation-writing task in the 2022 National College Entrance Examination (New Gaokao Paper I) (National Education Examinations Authority, 2022). The source story is about David, a student with a brain disease that affects his walking and running. He has not missed a single cross-country practice and always finishes, although later than the others. Before the race, the coach worries that children from other schools may laugh at him and lets him decide whether to run. The teacher-narrator then goes to speak with him. The first supplied sentence begins, “We sat down next to each other, but David wouldn’t look at me.”

The main challenge is psychological and relational, not athletic. A weak continuation may add an accident, a sudden victory, or a long speech. A stronger route stays close to the source and allows David to make the final choice.

The central node can be "David's choice: run despite fear or withdraw to avoid embarrassment." Evidence includes his physical difficulty, regular practice, the coach's concern, the narrator's supportive role, and his refusal to make eye contact. Possible inferences include embarrassment, fear of being watched, disappointment, and continued determination. These emotions should be linked to evidence or marked as uncertain.

David's goal may be to take part and complete what he has trained for, while fear of public failure is the obstacle. A believable turning point should not be a slogan from the teacher. The narrator can recognize David's effort and ask what the race means to him while leaving the choice in his hands. David may then understand that completion, rather than ranking, gives value to his practice.

Students can compare three routes. An unexpected victory is dramatic but not well supported. A pity route lets other people decide for David and makes him passive. An agency route lets him express fear, receive calm support, choose to run, and complete the race without winning. The third route best fits the source and the word limit.

The first paragraph can show David's discomfort, allow him to admit his fear, present a restrained response from the narrator, and end with a small sign that he is reconsidering. The conflict is not fully solved, but a decision becomes possible.

The second paragraph opens with the given sentence: "I watched as David moved up to the starting line with other runners." Only enough race detail is needed to show effort. Completion, not ranking, forms the climax. A final image, brief dialogue, or restrained reflection can connect the event with dignity and inclusion.

A small language bank for this route may include verbs for hesitation and effort, short reporting verbs for dialogue, and physical details that show emotion. The bank should remain limited. Its purpose is not to display difficult vocabulary but to help the writer express the planned movement from avoidance to decision and from effort to completion. Repeated words from the source may be adapted when they help maintain tone and character consistency.

The revision map checks agency, emotional development, paragraph balance, and closure. Does David make the important choice? Is there a trigger between fear and action? Does the first paragraph prepare the decision while the second develops the result? Does the ending return to the scene rather than give a broad moral? This case shows that mapping should limit ideas as well as generate them. Creativity means developing the story in a fresh but source-consistent way.

6. Classroom Implementation and Assessment

Classroom use begins with clear modeling. The teacher can project a source text and build a map while thinking aloud. The explanation should focus on decisions: why the central problem is worded in a certain way, which details count as evidence, which inferences remain uncertain, why one route is rejected, and how language

supports a move. Students should see the map as an argument about the story, not a collection of words.

Guided practice can move through three levels. First, students complete a partly prepared map. Second, they answer short prompts such as “What is stated?”, “What can be inferred?”, and “What changes the character’s choice?” Third, they make an independent map under a time limit. Students who need support may receive sentence stems, while stronger students receive only a checklist.

Within the proposed framework, individual planning should generally come before peer discussion. Each student first prepares a short narrative route. Pairs then compare textual evidence, possible turning points, and paragraph functions. This sequence is a pedagogical choice partly informed by planning research, rather than a procedure directly tested by Xie and Zhu (2023). Each learner finally selects a route and writes independently.

Language support should be linked to function. Teachers can show how brief dialogue reveals motive, how physical detail shows emotion, and how a short ending closes a scene. Students should add only expressions that can be adapted accurately.

Assessment can occur before, during, and after drafting. Before writing, the teacher checks the central problem, evidence, emotional change, and feasibility. During writing, students may point to the current node and explain its function. After writing, the revision map and a short checklist guide self- and peer assessment.

A practical rubric can include source alignment, story coherence, paragraph control, language use, and revision awareness. The map should not receive a high separate score for appearance. Assessment should focus on whether key evidence is present, relationships are clear, a workable route has been selected, and the map supports revision.

A four-lesson cycle can cover evidence mapping, route comparison, paragraph mapping and drafting, and revision. In later cycles, support and planning time should be reduced. Digital tools are optional; paper may be more suitable for timed practice. The framework concerns reasoning rather than software.

Teachers should also explain when a map is no longer helpful. If students spend more time drawing than deciding, the activity should be shortened. If a learner already has a clear route, a brief outline may be enough. Choice can prevent mapping from becoming another fixed classroom requirement. The success of the framework should be judged by clearer decisions and stronger drafts, not by the number of branches students produce.

7. Limitations and Research Agenda

The framework has several limitations. First, it is a conceptual teaching model, not evidence from a controlled senior high school intervention. The reviewed studies differ in age group, task type, duration, and outcome measures. They support cautious teaching choices but do not prove that this three-stage procedure improves

Gaokao English scores.

Second, mapping may not suit every learner. Some students organize ideas more clearly through a linear outline. Third, a detailed map can take too much time, add mental demands, or draw attention to appearance. Fourth, mind mapping cannot replace source comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, or knowledge of narrative writing. It should remain one part of a wider teaching approach.

Future research should compare this framework with conventional outlines and unstructured planning in both classroom and timed conditions. Studies should examine total scores as well as source alignment, causal coherence, paragraph balance, accuracy, complexity, fluency, and revision quality. Process data could show how often students return to the source, change a route, or repair a causal link. Researchers should also ask which students benefit most, how much teacher modeling is needed, and when support can be reduced. Long-term research is important because the final goal is not better-looking maps but more independent control of reading and writing.

8. Conclusion

Mind mapping can support senior high school English continuation writing when it is designed around the decisions that writers must make. Its value does not come from decoration or unlimited brainstorming. It can help students separate evidence from inference, compare plot routes, organize paragraph functions, check causal and emotional links, and reconstruct a draft for revision.

The proposed framework treats mapping as a recursive scaffold. Before writing, an evidence map connects close reading with a feasible story plan. During writing, a paragraph map turns the route into clear moves and supports continuity checks. After writing, a revision map shows gaps between intended and written meaning and guides revision from content and logic to language. The David case illustrates how the framework can support source alignment, believable emotional development, and character agency.

For classroom use, teachers should model the reasoning behind each branch, require evidence for major choices, connect mapping with usable language, and gradually reduce guidance. Within these limits, mind mapping may help students move from impulsive drafting toward clearer, more reflective, and more independent continuation writing.

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