Word webs are created by branching off from a major concept the related terms and concepts, much like a planet ringed with clustering satellites. The result is a graphic representation of the relationships among concepts and related terminology that approximates a cognitive network of related ideas, or a schema. These semantic networks help students explore and expand their associations with a central concept, thereby building schemata. Figure 5.8 provides a glimpse of a classroom teacher's effective use of a word-web strategy to preteach the critical concept of prejudice.

Darrell, preparing his 10th grade music students for a unit on The Orchestra, had them pair up for a strategy that combined word webbing and writing. Darrell walked around the room and gave each pair of students a photograph of a particular musical Instrument found in orchestras. He told students they would be responsible for brainstorming as many words as they could related to their Instrument. He further instructed his students to write the name of the Instrument on a piece of paper and circle it. Then he demonstrated on the board how they were to radiate lines off the circled term and write all the related words that come to mind. Tim and Darcy created the word web in Figure 5.9 for "piano".

Next, Darrell asked each pair of students to used their brainstormed words to create a diary entry, poem, rap, letter, memoir, dialogue, newspaper article, or some other form. When finished, students were asked to read what they had written to allow their classmates a chance to guess the Instrument. Tim and Darcy's poem based on their word web terms read:

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What kind of Instrument might I be,
I am a huge, heavy monstrosity.
I can harmonize, accompany, play solos with delight.
I have 88 keys in both black and white.
Sometimes I am upright or horizontal as I stand.
If I am horizontal, they call me a baby grand.
The keys strike strings which make a beautiful sound.
Playing chords and sweet tones can always be found.
So Chopin Is the master, we certainly must say,
because he wrote music for all of us to play.
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Both graphic organizers and word webs help students focus on the information you deem most important in the text. At the same time, they assist students in assimilating and clustering additional details.