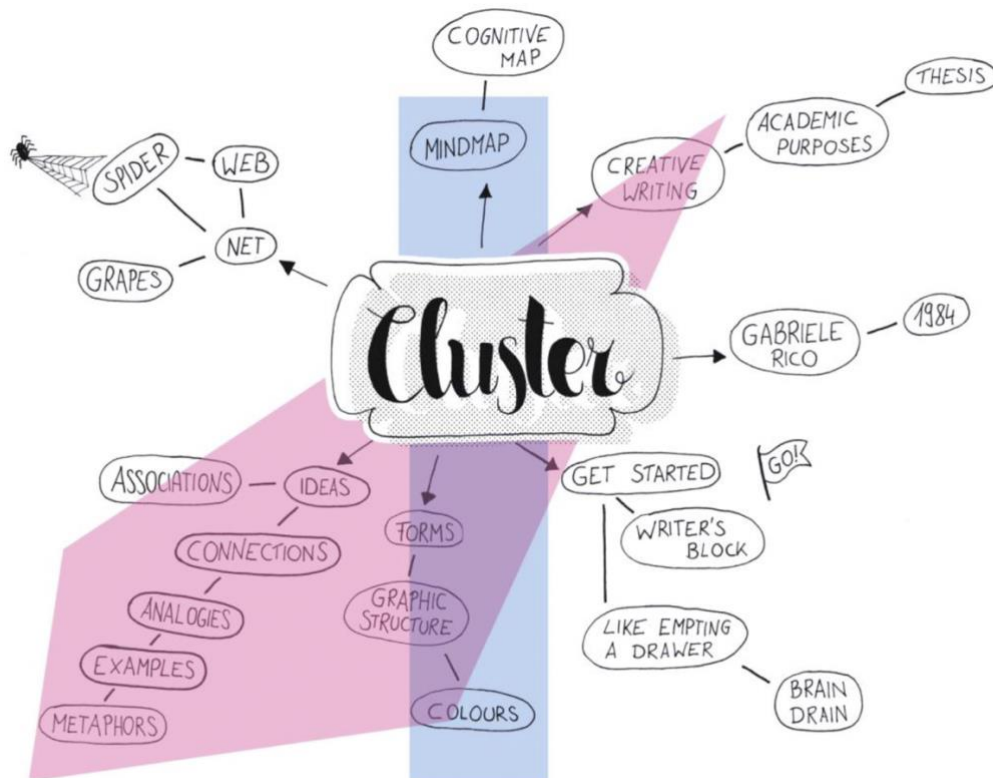# Clustering

Clustering is a structured, graphical form of brainstorming (Rico 1998). It is a method grounded in the idea that thinking and writing processes become more effective when different brain regions are activated and work together simultaneously. Thus, visualizing associations between concepts helps us understand relationships among key terms and generate unexpected ideas. This method can also help you get an overview of your existing knowledge of a topic.

Instructions:

- Choose a term or concept and write it in the middle of a piece of paper.
- Decide on a time limit and set a timer.
- From the central term, create chains of association: write down the first term that comes to mind, then a term that is related to it, etc. Try not to censor yourself—there is no right or wrong. Circle all the terms and connect them. If you start stray too far from the central term, return to the middle and start a new chain.
- If you'd like, add colors or illustrations to your cluster. The cluster can be hierarchical or chaotic—wherever your brainstorming takes you.

References:
Girgensohn, Katrin/Sennewald, Nadja. Schreiben lehren, Schreiben lernen. Eine Einführung. Darmstadt 2012, p. 105.
Rico, Gabriele L. Garantiert schreiben lernen. Sprachliche Kreativität methodisch entwickeln – ein Intensivkurs. Reinbek bei Hamburg 1998, pp. 27-28.
Original illustration from Raisig, Shawn/Vode, Dzifia. "A workshop to help students integrate sources into their writing." In Journal of Academic Writing vol. 6, no.1 (2016): pp. 233.