A series of mappers take the file, encoded as a list of words by reduce-map-word, and make intermediate lists. Each mapper gets a subset of the data.

The intermediates are combined into a single list in an arbitrary order.

The list is arbitrarily reduced to a single value using the input reducer.

The output emerges for the user to view or use. The output type depends on the input reducer. Because the list and the reduction is arbitrary, the output can sometimes be unpredictable!

'(appearances of "to" in "phrases.txt" is 3)