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UNESCO Chair  
on Visual Anticipation  
and Futures Literacy  
towards Visual Literacy



## THE FIVE MIRRORS

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century surrealists attempted to dive into the unconscious mind and the ‘absurdness’ of dreams by creating images with recognizable and familiar elements but arranged in bizarre ways. Surrealists proposed a novel way of expression, aiming to challenge perceptions and free the human mind.

The “Five Mirrors” tool uses a variety of surrealistic images, artworks or / and dixit cards, and encourages learners to critically explore the own underpinning needs, aspirations and fears, and comprehend how they envision possibilities. The name of the tool implies that images act as mirrors to the learned norms, reflecting and solidifying, at the same time, frameworks of thought, emotion, and cultural conditioning among individuals.

The tool **aims** to:

- Encourage learners to use their imagination and become aware of how images, even ‘absurd’ ones, speak to them.
- Make learners articulate their views on the topic under examination and become aware of the needs, aspirations, and fears that guide their thoughts and actions.
- Support them to discover the underpinning assumptions their narratives carry as well as the ensuing anticipatory patterns they project.
- Expose them to diverse perspectives by showing how different individuals interpret the same image in unique and varied ways.
- Foster empathy through collaborative discussions.



## How to apply it

Facilitators can compose a collection of printed or digital/online material either by using surrealistic artworks or dixit cards, or both. Facilitators present a different and random image to the learners each time they ask one of the following questions:

1. This image (an X surrealistic image) is about how you define [the THEME under exploration] in the present. What do you see in this image that describes how you understand and feel about it?
2. This image (an Y surrealistic image) is about how you wish to ideally define [the THEME under exploration]. Describe how this image relates to your ideal version.
3. This image (an Z surrealistic image) is about the worst-case scenario of [the THEME under exploration]. Describe what might be the worst-case scenario for you, based on what you see.
4. This image (a W surrealistic image) is about how you can best work around the worst-case scenario of [the THEME under exploration]. Describe how you would meliorate it the best way you can, based on what you see.
5. Re-define the worst-case scenario considering especially the last 2 cards.

Learners write down their answers before sharing them with the group. This practice ensures that their input has not been influenced by the reactions of other group members or modified according to what has been said before them.

## Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Five Mirrors” combines effectively with the “Sensing instead of Making Sense”, the “Identity Triangle”, the “Stage”, the “Frame”, the “Visuality Iceberg”, and the “Reframing Concepts” tools.

