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UNESCO Chair
on Visual Anticipation
and Futures Literacy
towards Visual Literacy



IMPROV-STORYTELLING

This tool recalls the surrealists' automatic writing and their non-sense images. The surrealists employed improvisation as a technique to tap into the subconscious mind and unleash creative imagination. Their intention was to embrace spontaneous, unfiltered methods of creation, make sense of the world around them, and generate unexpected imagery and ideas for social transformation. Through improvisation, surrealists aimed to reveal hidden desires, fears, and associations buried in the subconscious. To this end, they created artworks that challenged conventional notions of reality and invited viewers to explore the mysteries of the unconscious mind.

The tool **aims** to:

- Make apparent the decisive role each individual narrative holds in the collective.
- Underscore how collective narratives and phenomena evolve randomly and as a consequence of single interventions.
- Encourage active listening and collaboration, and thus hone communication skills.
- Support learners to generate novel and unexpected ideas.
- Cultivate imagination, adaptability and flexibility, enabling learners to adjust to changing circumstances and respond effectively to unexpected situations.

How to apply it

Surrealists used techniques such as “automatic writing”, or the “exquisite corpse” to generate unexpected imagery and ideas. Storytelling can be equally visual or written and requires teamwork. Both techniques



facilitate memories, fears, needs, expectations, assumptions and anticipations to emerge; provide exploration material in relation to the topic under examination; and generate rich discussions.

Automatic writing: While discussing the topic under examination, facilitators choose a keyword or a short phrase/statement, write it on a piece of paper and hand it to a random learner. Learners have to contribute with a spontaneous thought or phrase prompted by what the previous person shared and pass it to the next one. Facilitators need to insist that learners are spontaneous and do not censor their thoughts regardless of how odd they might seem. At the end, a volunteer reads the co-created story. Facilitators ask learners to give feedback and discuss the outcome.

Exquisite corpse: This is a process where learners assemble diverse words and images. The storytelling can start with an image related to the topic under examination. Each learner sees only a small part of what the previous person contributed, assuming what the invisible part might be, and adds a phrase or/and uses coloured pencils and materials to draw their thoughts. When all learners have contributed, the observation of the result brings into the discussion the power and role of perceptions and assumptions, as well as communication gaps that prevail in the public sphere due to the diverse level of information we all have, as well as to the different perceptions we carry.

Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools

The “Improv-storytelling” tool combines effectively with “BABEL”, the “Visuality Iceberg” and the “Sensing instead of Making Sense” tools.

