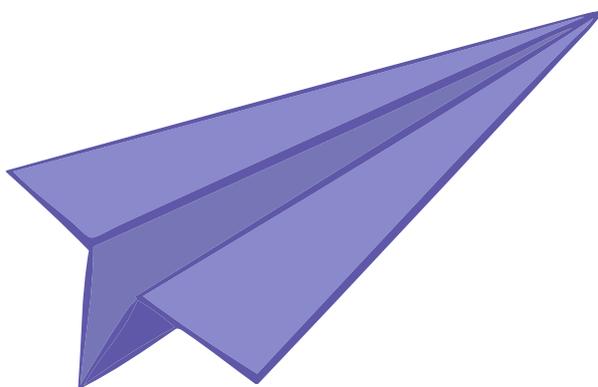


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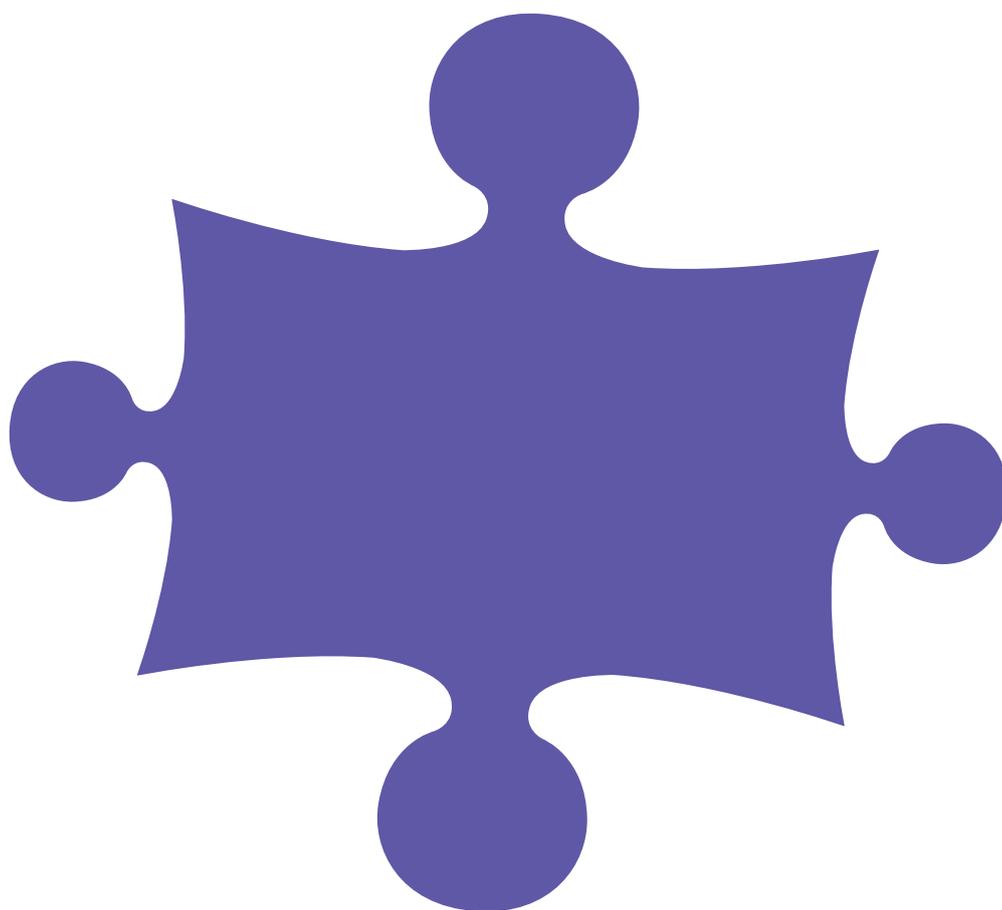
CREATIVE THINKING IN LITERACY & LANGUAGE SKILLS



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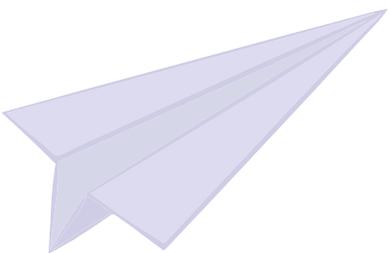
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100 activity idea submissions

Credits



About this publication

During the development of the Creative Thinking in Literacy and Language Skills (CTILLS) project, a number of strategies were invoked to provide a comprehensive overview of how creative thinking is, and can be used in the classroom.

One of the measures utilised by the project team was to solicit responses from teaching colleagues throughout various parts of Europe. Through responses to personal invitations or accessing and completing the online 'best practice' submission form, each partner was responsible for collecting a minimum of thirty 'best practise' examples of creative thinking inspired / influenced teaching and learning (total = 120).

While each partner achieved their target of responses, the team were ultimately faced with a very large collection of 'ideas' that could be used within a wide range of teaching and learning situations; a management strategy was required.

The team carefully evaluated the submission with a view to identifying a number of submissions that could be adapted and shared within the same format as those activities provided in the four-volume training package, deemed 'ready-to-use'.

Activities

It was decided that each of the four project partners would select five activity ideas to be adapted in this way, and these twenty (5 x 4) activities are presented here in detail.

Each activity has a title and includes information relating to the primary creative thinking method exploited by the activity, as well as the various aspects of language and literacy learning that it addresses.

In addition to the main creative thinking inspired activity, there is often guidance on developing extended activities for learners. In most cases these activities demand higher levels of competency / understanding

or require greater learner autonomy. They should be considered as starting points from which you are encouraged to develop your own context-relevant activities.

Background information is often included in the form of guidelines, to ensure that all trainers / teachers are able to deliver each activity with confidence.

Creative Thinking methods

The primary creative thinking method employed in each activity is described with sufficient detail to facilitate that activity.

While couched within a specific activity, you should note each underlying methodology for use within your own resources, keeping in mind that the various creative thinking methods are designed to be flexible and interchangeable. Re-combining methods to achieve effective creative thinking 'routines' can be very rewarding, as it demonstrates a developed working understanding of the field.

For further explanations of any creative thinking method you are advised to make reference to the accompanying Training Guidelines.

What about the others?

From the original 120+ submissions, those not selected for comprehensive publishing are included at the end of this publication in a form, that we believe, will facilitate use by teachers with perhaps some additional research and / or planning.

Typically these remaining activities are presented as a description containing enough information to allow them to be developed for your own particular context(s).

Nursery rhyme problems

Original idea contributed by	Susan Musgrove
Creative thinking method	Brainstorming
Primary skills addressed	Speaking, Listening
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	None

Overview:

The beginning of many creative thinking exercises is a 'problem'. Despite the negative connotations often associated with this word, in creative thinking terms a problem is actually an opportunity to stimulate creative ideas. Problems in creative thinking terms can be classified with terms such as 'general world problems', 'immediate problems', 'design and innovation problems' and 'closed problems'. With the exception of this final type of problem, these problems offer the potential to generate completely new or innovative solutions.

Identifying a problem to work with can be a challenge in itself, which is why this particular approach to generating creative thinking is such a valuable one. Essentially it suggests that rather than introducing arbitrary problems to your learners, that you exploit existing problems present in texts* that are familiar to your learners. This may mean considering problem opportunities that exist in a current or recent studied book, or a play or film that your learners have recently seen. It may be something else that you are confident is familiar to most or all of your learners.

Although primarily for use with younger learners, though they can be used with learners of any age, nursery rhymes offer a rich source of familiar ready-made problems that can be exploited to serve creative thinking idea generation.

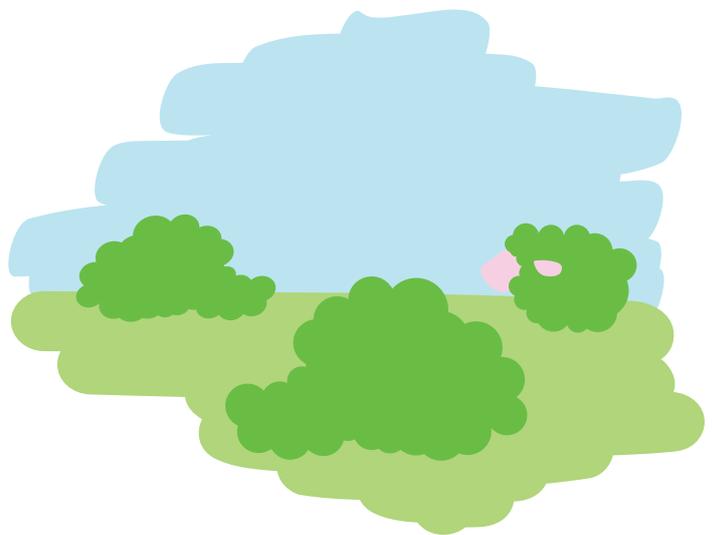
**Texts in this context can be anything from written forms, to films, radio, TV, visual imagery, theatre etc.*

Activity:

In the well-known nursery rhyme 'Little Bo Peep', the unfortunate Bo Peep loses her sheep and we are left to rely on the notion that they may come home themselves, if left alone. However, it is difficult to imagine a commercial shepherd relying on this possibility and we may imagine that a better solution would be for Bo Peep NOT to lose her sheep in the first place, and therein lies our problem:

How do we prevent Little Bo Peep from losing her sheep?

Erecting a fence around them may be one idea, probably the first and very obvious idea. However with brainstorming that applies 'quotas', requiring a set number of alternative responses, demands that your learners will generate more interesting and potentially original ideas.



To achieve this goal you are advised to follow a formal brainstorming process, which is outlined below. It is suggested that brainstorming is undertaken in groups of between three and six learners. You may have multiple groups working on the same problem simultaneously.

Brainstorming guidelines:

- Define the problem / question / objective etc. In this example the problem to solve is how to stop Little Bo Peep losing her sheep.
- Set a time limit for the session (or round). One to two minutes should be sufficient, though if it is the first time you have used formal brainstorming with learners, you may wish to increase the time slightly. Try to find a time that allows the quota to be met.
- Decide on a Quota that you feel you can meet and that will be challenging. A quota of between five and ten ideas would work well for this problem.
- Generate and record ideas until you meet your Quota (or the time runs out) - don't be tempted to judge and reject ideas as they emerge.
- Evaluate ideas at the end of the session or round, recognising the value of 'initial ideas' that could be developed into viable solutions with a little more focused thought.

This is an important stage as some ideas may sound a little crazy to start with, but could have hidden potential.

Following each round of idea generation, including the final evaluation stage, each group should make a short verbal presentation of their 'best' or most interesting solution, to the members of other groups. The group spokesperson can be rotated over a number of rounds of idea generation, ensuring most or all learners get a chance to take this role.

While this is primarily a speaking and listening exercise, written activities can be introduced if they are better suited to your learning focus. Writing the solution is an obvious application of the result, though other forms of writing such as a design specification, a rationale for rejecting certain ideas, or even a commentary on the thinking process, are all possibilities. Forms of written expression maybe traditional essay style responses, though forms such as news reports, blog posts or even Tweets for Twitter publication, could be included.

Extended activities:

While the example(s) provided here will readily work with younger learners, remember that for older learners you can normally identify problems or situations that need resolution in a wide range of texts, as suggested above.

As an extended activity, whether for younger or older learners, ask your learners to think about familiar texts with a view to identifying inherent problems or situations. Ask them to write a list of the problems they identify.

These user-identified problems can be good starting points to work with in further idea generation sessions with the current learners OR as a 'bank' of problems to use with other groups that are familiar with the same texts.

Additional nursery rhyme problems (as examples):

- **Ding dong bell** – How can we rescue Pussy from the well?
- **Little boy blue** – How can we make sure the boy who looks after the sheep stays awake?
- **Rock-a-bye baby** – How can we stop the cradle from falling OR protect the baby within when it does fall?
- **Tom, Tom, the piper's son** – How can we prevent Tom from stealing a pig* from the shop or market?

**The 'pig' in the rhyme is generally considered to refer to a small pastry with an apple filling.*



Alter ego author

Original idea contributed by	Mark Bailie
Creative thinking method	Changing perspective
Primary skills addressed	Writing
Secondary skills addressed	Comprehension
Resources required	Lists of people

Overview:

We would probably accept that many famous authors have a certain writing style, or what we may call a writing signature; we can often identify the work of certain authors by reading a few pages or a chapter of a book. Some famous authors take on pseudonyms, presenting their 'alter egos', in order to challenge and change their natural writing style and personal point of view. One very recent case of an author adopting a pseudonym to do exactly this, is the Harry Potter author J. K. Rowling, who assumed the pseudonym of Robert Galbraith from 2013. This allowed Rowling to navigate a completely different direction in her published writing.

Activity:

This activity is a fairly simple activity for creative story writing, though the principle can be applied to any form of writing, from an essay to a news report.

The first task is to set a writing task for your learners. This may be a fictitious piece of writing or it could be based on a response to a current news story, event or recent learner experience. Quite often a title is sufficient to start a story, while a little more information may be required for other forms of writing.

Once the task has been set and your learners have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the task, you should then introduce 'alter egos' for your learners to assume in undertaking the task. This can be achieved by having a list of names or personas with assigned numbers (perhaps 1 -50) and ask your learners to select a number, without seeing the list.

Creating a set of cards for this exercise may seem a little excessive, but once you have created a set, you can re-use them for many other randomly assigned persona activities. It may be worthwhile to do this.

Typically there are two types of lists that you can produce, one with actual people, expressed by their names, and the other a list of people 'types'. If you wish to be more abstract you could possibly have a list with objects, emotions or moods etc. While these final ideas may be extremely effective for creative thinking, they will require a level of trust from your learners, which may not be apparent during initial activities.

List one could include people like:

- Queen Elizabeth II
- Buddha
- Abraham Lincoln
- Lady Gaga
- Russell Brand

List two could include people 'types' like:

- A policeman
- An orphan
- A criminal
- A princess
- A refugee

Once each learner is in possession of their alter ego, they can begin the writing task from the perspective of this person. For a story the person may be a central character, if the writing is based more on factual events, then the writing should reflect the perceived attitudes or opinions of the alter ego. It is important to remind learners that they are not writing from their own perspective. Some learners will find this liberating, while others may find it challenging.



Changing perspective method:

The method of 'changing perspective' effectively encapsulates the key principle of creative thinking, which is to alter or disrupt the often-predictable vertical thinking that we all apply in most situations. In demanding 'something different', creative thinking forces us to re-think what we know through a wide variety of methods. Changing perspective in its simplest form is to re-imagine a situation from the position of someone (or something) else, and it can be an excellent tool to stimulate creative writing.

Extended activities:

While taking an alter ego offers the potential to think about issues very differently, it is possible to construct a change of perspective based on each individual. Depending on the current age of your learners you may ask them to look backwards or forward in time, to see themselves as much older or much younger than they currently are, and to use this imagined or remembered situation to inform the perspective applied to the writing.

This can work well with writing based on personal events or situations, and may include such things as diary entries, letters to friends and loved ones, job applications, a travelogue etc.

In either activity you may be able to invite your learners to contribute to the tasks' construction. In the main activity you could ask your learners to nominate names or people types for your initial alter-ego lists or cards. In the extended activity you could ask your learners to suggest different types of personalised writing to use for the activity.



3. Collaborative writing

Original idea contributed by	Maria Stratinaki
Creative thinking method	What if?
Primary skills addressed	Speaking, Listening
Secondary skills addressed	Writing, reading
Resources required	Literary text (book)

Overview:

Identifying a starting point for creative writing can be difficult for some learners, and once identified it can be just as difficult to identify a particular direction to take a narrative in.

With a little bit of thought and management, we can provide opportunities for creative writing that provides both of the elements mentioned above: starting points and narrative directions. This activity utilises the 'what if?' creative thinking method, along with a form of collaborative writing. The creative writing element makes reference to online collaborative creation tools such as Google docs, though the collaborative element can be facilitated with the exchange of physical documents within a classroom.

Activity:

Introduce your learners to a short story by reading, or asking them to read the first chapter (or similar length) of the text. In deciding how much of the original text should be initially offered, you should aim to make a selection that provides a location / setting, time period, basic scenario and key characters.

Once your learners have familiarised themselves with the initial text you should ask them to imagine at least five options for where the narrative moves next by posing 'what if?' questions.

This may be quite challenging to begin with but with a little support and perseverance you will see that most people can grasp the concept of this creative thinking method. You may offer some examples similar to those below (inspired by 'To kill a Mockingbird'), though with the characters and situations that are relevant to the text that you are working with:

- What if Scout and Jem were completely orphaned and were subsequently looked after by Calpurnia's community?
- What if the Finch family had stayed in Britain and the story was set there instead of Alabama?
- What if Boo Radley came looking for the children with evil intent, after Jem touches the Radley house?
- What if Boo Radley really was how the children perceived him?
- What if the Finch family still owned Finch's landing, and were consequently rich?

Once your learners have each created their 5 'what if?' questions based on the text that you have supplied, they should each choose the one from their list that they think is the most interesting or appropriate as a point to continue writing a creative story from.

Working in pairs, each learner should exchange their selected 'what if?' question with their partner and then continue the story based on this proposition. For example, the story may need to continue based on the idea that Boo Radley comes looking for the children after Jem touches the Radley house.

Decide how much of the ongoing story should be written by each learner (a chapter, a number of pages or a word limit). Once the set amount of writing has been completed ask each learner to exchange their version of the story with their partner.

Repeat the process of creating 'what if?' questions (5 initially, then choosing 1) then ask each learner to continue their partner's story. Each document is passed back and forth between each partner to complete the subsequent section.

If the document is stored on a utility such as Google docs, the collaborative writing exercise can be set as out-of-class work, which may run over a number of days or weeks, providing that you are able to specify deadlines for the completion of each part.

Once you feel that a sufficient amount of writing has taken place, or the story comes to an end, something you can control by imposing a chapter limit for example, then you can compare the 'new' stories with the original.

'What if?' method:

'What if?' questions are a great way to generate new ideas in a wide range of situations, as they allow participants to really imagine any type of alternative to what is presented or apparent.

In a problem solving session designed to solve road traffic problems we might ask 'what if?' questions such as:

- What if we could only use cars on certain days of the week?
- What if we didn't need to travel?
- What if petrol was free but we charged for road-use time instead?

In a 'what if?' session you should always encourage your learners to be creative and NOT to only ask questions that they think they already have the answers for. Finding the answers should happen in a subsequent stage.

Extended activities:

To encourage autonomous learning, you can ask your learners to select their own texts as starting points, which could include familiar stories. The key to this approach working is to insist that the 'what if?' questions generate very different narrative directions, to force / promote completely new thinking.

It is possible for learners to undertake this exercise as a solo exercise, though collaborative writing will ensure that comprehension is tested and it will also act as a stimulus for originality.



Twitter narrative

Original idea contributed by	Jessica Woodcock
Creative thinking method	Associative thinking
Primary skills addressed	Comprehension
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Internet access

Overview:

Comprehension testing can become a little dull if we rely too much on question and answer assessment. An alternative approach to evaluating comprehension is to utilise alternative short-form writing. This type of writing exists in many forms from formal summary / précis, poetry / verse, news reports or bulletins, diaries etc.

One particular short writing form that has emerged in recent years is the 'Twitter Tweet', a short text bulletin with a maximum character length of 140 characters. It is both the restriction and opportunities that Twitter tweets offer that is exploited through this activity.

Activity:

The activity begins with the introduction of a story, offered to readers through in-class reading OR prescribed reading. From this story your learners should be assigned a character. It is possible that all learners are assigned the same character if one particular character dominates the narrative, as would be the case in a book such as Tarzan. In other cases multiple characters will contribute equally to the narrative and therefore multiple characters can be assigned to different learners.

The reading sessions continue and at the end of each session the learners are challenged with a number of Twitter tasks.

The first is to post a tweet that summarises the most recent reading, within the 140 word character limit. While the character limit makes it more challenging, it will help to focus attention on the essential information and/or events, while providing a useful tool to evaluate comprehension. Each tweet should include two or three hash tag references, as a way of summarising the key elements of the tweet.

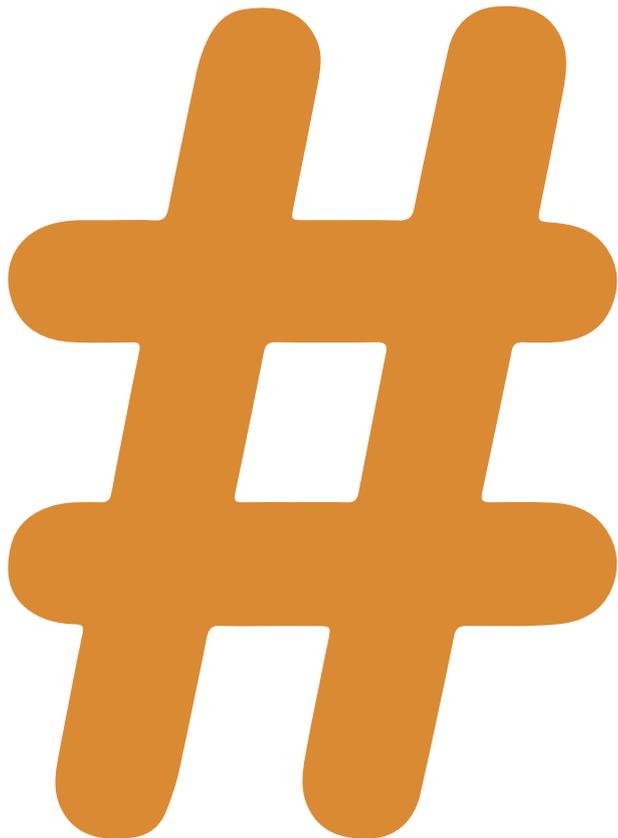
The second task is to post one or a number of tweets from the perspective of the assigned character, effectively giving the character an opportunity to publicly voice their thoughts in relation to recent narrative events. Encourage learners to speculate on future events, as a real-life tweeter may do.

All learners should subscribe to Twitter and follow their peers, though in the case of younger learners this can be achieved in a 'safe' environment by using paper forms of Twitter feeds posted to a board in the classroom.

Learners are asked to respond to tweets from other story characters, by way of entering a dialogue, OR to elaborate on tweets made by other learners in the role of the same character (where assigned characters are shared). Associative thinking is particularly important at this point.

Learners should express their appreciation of the writing of others by 'liking' and 're-tweeting' posts, something else that can also be achieved in the safe environment of a classroom through the use of paper-based Twitter messages.

The activity should last as long as the reading of the specific story continues, though of course it can be repeated for other stories.



Associative thinking method:

Creative thinking methods that employ forms of associative thinking do so by making connections with what is known or offered as a stimulus for idea generation. The most common form of associative thinking can be found in the game 'word association'. In the game a word is introduced and each player in turn has to make a quick response to something that is associated with the first word. For example the game may start with the word, 'glass', followed by 'water', followed by 'wet', followed by 'rain'.

The method relies on the human ability to make connections based on certain criteria, in this case association of characteristics.

Extended activities:

Once learners are familiar with Twitter you may suggest that those of an appropriate age maintain a personal Twitter account as part of their on going literacy or language learning. In such cases it may be useful to specify a minimum number of Tweets per week or even per day, a number that could be increased as confidences and competencies improve. In addition to tweeting personal events, encourage your learners to engage in the on going discussions to develop both their reading and writing skills.

For language learners Tweeting should be undertaken in the target language so try to encourage the following people tweeting in the target language; there are currently over 60 languages actively used on Twitter.



Celebrity conversations

Original idea contributed by	Anna Rabczuk
Creative thinking method	Changing perspective
Primary skills addressed	Speaking, Listening
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	

Overview:

While the primary creative thinking method employed in this activity is 'changing perspective', achieved in this case through active role-play, the activity also relies on a form of 'random input' in the way that it assigns characters to learners.

It is very easy for us as humans to approach situations from our own perspective, a perspective that has been developed through our own lives and experiences. It can be more difficult to look at a situation from a completely different perspective, though if we can achieve this it will allow for more creative ideas and or solutions to emerge. Despite it being first and foremost a language generating exercise, this activity can lead to a type of insight (or even enlightenment) that may not have happened without it. It can also support more introverted or less confident learners to speak through a different character.



Activity:

The first stage of the activity is to solicit the names / identities of 'famous' or significant people throughout history. The only rule is that it is likely that others in the group will know something about each person that is nominated. In most cases when this isn't the case, a little bit of internet research can be used to provide missing information.

Below is a sample list of people that would work well within such an activity. They are provided as examples though of course they can be utilised. Bear in mind that asking learners to nominate suitable people can be a useful warm-up exercise.

- Sigmund Freud
- Madonna
- Santa Claus
- Gandhi
- David Cameron or Jeremy Corbyn
- Elvis Presley
- Queen Victoria
- Genghis Khan
- Yoda (Star Wars)
- Barack Obama
- Margaret Thatcher
- Pablo Escobar
- David Beckham

Once you have a suitable list of names, transfer the names to individual cards OR use some other form of randomising technique.

Ask your learners to work with a partner or assign these partnerships yourself. Then assign one learner in each partnership a card containing one of the names (or assign this name in another way). At this stage you should check that this learner is familiar with the character that they have been assigned. If not, ask them to discuss with others or to engage in a short internet research session.

It is important that this learner is familiar with the attitudes, values, achievements / notoriety, political persuasion etc. of their assigned character. If time permits this important task could be set as a homework assignment. In such cases the following class can begin with a review of each character.

The second person in the group will assume the role of a specific person with an inquisitor role, such as a news journalist, a PR agent, a judge or barrister, a job interviewer, gossip column writer etc. It is the role of the inquisitor to decide what he/she wants to learn about their partner's character, from the perspective of the role they have been assigned. For example a news journalist will probably want to focus on broad newsworthy facts, while a judge will be concerned with detail in relation to the character's actions, and a PR agent may be looking for ways to exploit the marketing / promotion of the person.

It is important that the inquisitor's questions are not answered from the view or perspective of the learner, rather the learner should assume the identity of their assigned person, through role-play. It is not important for learners to mimic voices, but they should think about their statements and responses as if their assigned person was speaking.

At the end of each round of the activity the inquisitor should provide a verbal or written summary of the conversation, before new characters are assigned and the role in each partnership is reversed.

Extended activities:

In addition to the assigned inquisitor style approach to this activity, you can establish a more conversational scenario within the partnerships.

In this activity each partner is randomly assigned the role of a famous person (different for each partner). The format thereafter is that each partnership is provided with a topic to discuss from the perspective of their respective characters.

These topics may be deliberately controversial or related to events and situations that are relevant to your learners. Some example topics are provided below, though due consideration of age suitability should be exercised:

- Everyone should own a gun for their own protection.
- Same-sex marriages should be prohibited.
- Children should be able to choose whether or not to go to school.
- Pirating music should carry a prison sentence.
- The farming and consumption of meat should be stopped worldwide.
- Torture is an acceptable practice as an attempt to stop terrorism.
- Terminally ill patients should be allowed to use recreational drugs.
- All citizens should be micro-chipped to enable law and order surveillance.

Although primarily a speaking exercise, a range of written tasks can be added as a way of documenting the ensuing dialogues, or ones that use the conversation as a starting point for other activities such as short story writing, poetry, rap lyrics, speech writing etc.

To continue the extended activities, though dependent on your learners' abilities, you may challenge your learners to nominate their own topics of conversation, for use in subsequent role-play discussion or to use as a 'bank' or resources for other activities.

Good news, bad news

Original idea contributed by	VHS
Creative thinking method	Generation of alternatives
Primary skills addressed	Speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Writing, listening
Resources required	News articles

Overview:

The generation of alternatives is a creative thinking strategy which helps students analyse how different could the same situation be seen. Students learn to evaluate the situation and find the alternative possibilities. This toolkit can help students to think or write creatively by connecting ideas in unlikely ways.

The generation of alternatives is perhaps the simplest, and yet one of the most potent creative thinking techniques. Quite simply, if you (or your learners) commit to generating multiple ideas within a creative thinking situation, there is a much higher probability of arriving at a creative solution than simply stopping once 'a' workable solution is thought of. Typically, even with people that think they are acting creatively, the first workable solution generated is normally the one that is implemented. The generation of alternatives is one way of guaranteeing that this problem is addressed.

Activity:

For this activity you will need to gather some recent news headlines or other topical content. The idea is that you are able to present one or a range of 'news' statements that on the surface suggest either a 'good news story' or a 'bad news story'. Sometimes this will reflect bias in the editorial approach, but that is less important for this activity.

Select one of your news statements and present it to your learners. Ideally your learners will work in small groups within the class, adding an element of competition.

For each round of the activity, a quota (a set number) should be set for the amount of ideas that each group needs to generate, which will be the generation of alternatives. If you want to promote the competitive element (you don't have to) you could suggest that the group that reaches the quota first is the winning team, ensuring that other groups are given 'finishing places' (second, third, etc.) when they meet the quota. It is important that ALL groups meet the quota in terms of generating alternative responses.

From the starting point of the assigned news statement, implying either good or bad news, ask each group to generate as many ideas as they can to identify the opposite position of the story.

For example, if the 'bad news' statement is about the rise in petrol prices, ask your learners to think of a range of reasons to demonstrate how this could actually be 'good news'. It may promote healthier lifestyles by encouraging people to walk more, for the same reason it could reduce pollution, as petrol goes further the less aggressively people drive, it could reduce the amount of accidents (fatal or otherwise) that occur as a result of aggressive driving...and so on.



Over the course of a session a number of statements can be presented, which can lead to additional activities such as topical debates or role-play protest movements / actions. At the end of each session each group should evaluate and decide which of the suggestions is the most effective opposite to the original statement. They should present their decision to the rest of the class, attempting to make as compelling an argument as possible.

The key to this activity is to encourage learners to routinely move beyond the first idea that they have, and to become confident in exploring a range of options from which they can select from at a later stage.

Extended activities:

One of the most obvious extensions to this activity is to set up a debate in the class with teams representing the 'good news' statement and the 'bad news' statement.

However, alternative options are available depending on the particular skills that you wish to develop with your learners. The following list is suggestive and you are encouraged to adapt and/or develop the original idea for your own needs.

Acting: through role-play improvisational language can be developed. Starting from the 'good' or 'bad' news statement being declared by an 'actor', other 'actors' with pre-defined characters can engage in an improvised stage dialogue, with the purpose of communicating the opposite (good or bad news) message.

Writing: Using letter writing, to a friend or relative, the task is to deliver bad news (this doesn't work as well for good news), while making various points that soften the impact of the news by delivering good news elements. This activity should follow a generation of alternatives activity.

Comedy: Comedy is often used to deal with upsetting subject matter, as a way of getting people to avoid harsh realities. If you feel your learners are capable, ask them to think of jokes that say the opposite of the original statement. The generation of alternatives activity is the method of generating multiple jokes.

Idiomatic phrases

Original idea contributed by	VHS
Creative thinking method	Associative thinking
Primary skills addressed	Comprehension
Secondary skills addressed	Speaking, writing
Resources required	Collection of idioms

Overview:

An idiom is an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of its constituent elements, as in 'It's raining cats and dogs'.

Idioms are an important part of every language, although learning idioms is notoriously difficult for non-native speakers. For literacy learners you may find that the knowledge of idioms amongst native speakers is variable, often as a result of generational trends in language, with expressions moving in and out of 'fashion'.

Understanding idioms can help both language and literacy learners in developing very usable and authentic language elements.

Activity:

The starting point for this activity is to present a few well-known idioms, as a way of demonstrating what an idiom actually is.

Some common idioms in English that could be used are:

'It's raining cats and dogs' – meaning it's raining heavily

'Back to the drawing board' – meaning to start all over again

'Sitting on the fence' – meaning not choosing or making a decision

Of course you may choose to use others.

Once you are confident that your learners appreciate the 'non-literal' meaning of idioms, you can move on to the next part of the activity. For this you will need to have a number of idioms printed on strips of paper or small cards. For this exercise try to find less common idioms for use. A small number of internet searches should enable you to compile this list.

Asking your learners to work in small groups, assign each group three idiomatic phrases from this more obscure collection and ask them to choose one idiom that none of the group have heard before, or know the actual meaning for. An element of trust is required here. If none of the three idioms are new to the learners, offer others from your list.

Once each group has at least one 'new' idiom they should engage in a brainstorming activity to try and determine what the phrase means. A quota of between four and eight responses should be set to ensure each group stretches their thinking.

As well as the 'true' meaning of the idiom, you could challenge your learners to imagine the most creative meaning. A higher quota may be needed for this.

Once each group has satisfied the quota set for the brainstorming exercise, share the responses and reveal the actual meaning.

The final and more creative stage of this exercise is to challenge your learners to conceive their own idioms using an 'associative thinking' process.

For this you will need to introduce a stimulus, which could be a word or a concept (for example 'book' or 'ignorance'). From this initial stimulus each group should list as many associations that they can make relating to the starting point. For example, the word 'book' may generate associations such as intelligence, literate, story, relaxation, library, pages, words, reading, picture etc.

Any of these associations OR the original word could be the starting point for creating a new idiom, along with its meaning. The following are examples only, based on the illustration above:

'Someone of few pages' – meaning easy to read

'A walking library' – meaning to possess a lot of knowledge

'Tear out the last page' – meaning to prevent someone discovering or understanding the outcome of something

Following this method, ask your learners to create at least three idioms for each stimulus presented. At the end of the session the newly created idioms should be read out by members of each group, with other members of the class tasked with working out what each new idiom means.



Extended activities:

Once all of the newly created idioms are known to the class (a formal record could be kept), set your learners a writing task. This could be a short story, poem or even a factual piece such as a news item.

Within this piece of writing ask your learners to try and incorporate a number of the new idioms that the class have created. In evaluating the work, something that could be accomplished through a peer exercise, assess how 'naturally' each idiom fits into the composition and whether or not 'context' supports the 'right' interpretation of each idiom.

My apartment

Original idea contributed by	VHS
Creative thinking method	Brainstorming
Primary skills addressed	Speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Writing, listening
Resources required	Paper, scissors, pens & glue stick

Overview:

This exercise is designed to challenge the vocabulary of learners. It relies on their creativity while using a pen and paper to express their imaginative thoughts.

Following the formal steps of brainstorming, your learners will need to solve the problem of designing or 'creating' a dream apartment, utilising the language and drawing skills that they possess. Drawing introduces another mode of expression that relies on a different type of brain function and providing additional opportunities for creative expression. It is important to stress to learners that drawing 'quality' in any conventional sense, is not the goal. Rather drawing is used to communicate ideas and those that feel nervous about drawing should be reassured on this point, as you may find that communicating through drawing is something they may not have done since they were children. Indeed, it may be worth reminding people of how confidently and naturally they drew as children; sadly, it is something that many adults 'grow' out of.

Activity:

To begin this activity, you should set a theme for the exercise, one that is associated with the idea of an apartment, house, or maybe a more elaborate dwelling such as a chateau or a castle. You will find that many of the topics are just as relevant to the largest and smallest dwellings, though of course the styles and opportunities for creative application may vary considerably.

Example topics could be things such as: furniture, gadgets, floors and walls, appliances, luxury items, necessities; or linked to specific rooms such as: kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms, hallways or dens.

Once a topic has been decided the learners (working in small groups...not alone) should engage in a formal brainstorming session with a defined quota for the number of responses. For most activities the quota should be above ten responses per group, perhaps more, to ensure that learners move some way beyond the obvious and conventional responses.

Show either a picture of an interior room or an exterior of the building and ask your learners to consider this as a starting point for the exercise. On a large sheet of paper (preferably A3) ask each group to sketch out the interior of a room within the building, ready to insert the various items that are conceived during the brainstorming. The first stage of the brainstorming should be verbal, with responses offered simply written down by a chosen scribe. It's important not to start editing any 'bad' ideas at this stage, just write all responses down.

Once each group has reached its quota of responses you can allow for discussions to evaluate the responses for their suitability to the task, remembering that this is a 'creative thinking' activity. This implies that the chosen elements should perhaps not all be expected or conventional, encourage difference as much as possible.

When this 'edited' list is complete provide additional paper for your learners to draw elements from their list of items. If possible, provide gridded paper as this may help in drawing geometric elements. Colour can be added to drawings if you wish. Once completed these drawings should be cut out and arranged to fit into the original space. Avoid gluing the pictures in place until the complete composition has been decided.

Note that for this drawing exercise, the scale of the drawn elements is a factor. Learners should be advised to try and make drawings of items at relational sizes appropriate to the 'real world'. Using a ruler and making light construction lines on the paper may assist in this task.

When the visual composition is complete ask each group to label their 'design', including short descriptions or explanations of the elements and the choices made by the group. Once this is complete hang the various designs on a wall or other surface, to create a small exhibition with the work fairly well spaced out.



Allow the learners to walk around the room and look at the designs from the other groups, encouraging them to make notes about elements that they may not understand or that they feel require a 'better' explanation.

Finally ask each group to stand by their own work and in turn allow each group to take questions from the other members of the class. The objective for each group is to justify their decision making, though this does not have to be in a conventional sense.

Brainstorming method:

- Define the problem / question / objective etc.
- Set a time limit for the session (OR a quota)
- Decide on a Quota that you feel you can meet and that will be challenging, pushing creative ideas
- Generate and record ideas until you meet your Quota (or the time runs out) - don't be tempted to judge ideas as they emerge
- Evaluate ideas once the time is up, recognising the value of bridging ideas, which may need development through more conventional thinking

Extended activities:

While it is proven that brainstorming is a more productive activity when undertaken by a group, individuals can still follow the formal process of brainstorming alone. This does require a certain amount of discipline, though if written evidence is required it will help learners to follow all of the steps.

Ask each learner to choose a room in their own room and to make a simple sketch of its interior WITHOUT the current items inside it. Assign each learner a 'topic' to consider for this space design challenge, perhaps something different from the in-class exercise. For example; if 'furniture' was used in the class, you could assign the topic of 'gadgets' for this activity.

From this point the learner should follow the same process, bringing their completed composition back to class for display and/or discussion.

Theme park

Original idea contributed by	VHS
Creative thinking method	Random input
Primary skills addressed	Speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Writing, drawing
Resources required	Paper & pens

Overview:

Amusement parks can be traced back to the end of the 19th century, when enclosed areas containing a wide range of attractions, shows and rides were first popularised. The amusement park set a blueprint that was later updated to encompass attractions built around a particular theme, the modern theme park. Into Despite some people mistakenly considering Disneyland in California to be the first 'Theme park', it was pre-dated by a number of other sites, including 'Santa Claus land' (Indiana U.S.A), which opened in 1946; Disneyland first opened its doors to the public in 1955.

However, it was Disneyland that fully captured the imagination of a global public and popularising the concept of a 'theme park'.

Theme parks now exist representing a wide range of themes and/or characters, including Harry Potter, Lego (building blocks), Gulliver's travels, Dinosaurs, Space...and many more.

The key to designing a 'theme park', as opposed to an 'amusement park', is that the attractions, rides and shows are linked by their relation to the theme. This provides an excellent opportunity for applying creative thinking within a fun design process.

Activity:

For this activity it is advisable to ask your learners to work in small groups of between four and five people. The interaction between different members will improve the quality of the creative idea generation, as well as accelerating the subsequent developmental thinking.

To introduce the activity, you should discuss the notion of theme parks with your learners. Ask them to tell you what the difference between a theme park and an amusement park. Ask them to give examples based on their experiences. Try to elicit responses and descriptions that reinforce the idea that the contents of a theme park are all interrelated based on the overarching theme.

Ask your learners to list all of the types of attractions they can think of from personal experience and general knowledge of theme parks, amusement parks and even travelling fairs. This list should be kept as a reference for the later activity.

Next you should introduce a theme for each group, assigned randomly. For this stage of the exercise you have a number of options. You could generate a list yourself, in advance of the session. Printing the items of this list on separate cards would offer a good method for random input, with each group 'blindly' selecting a card from a small pack. Alternatively, you could ask your learners to nominate themes, with or without the knowledge of the subsequent activity. Not knowing what they're suggestions will be used for will avoid the temptation to elect conventional themes. A third method could be to take the day's newspaper and identify themes via the various headlines. While this last method will generate very unconventional themes, it may offer the best starting point for very creative outputs.

The following list is a suggestion of possible themes for use, though you are encouraged to generate your own, even those linked with issues relating to the class:

- Love and romance
- The Olympics
- A recently read book
- Horror
- Education
- Child safety
- Music

Once each group has a theme to work with, the next stage of the process is to list associations with this idea, as many as possible. For example, if 'horror' is the theme, the following associations may be listed: films, monsters, Dracula, Frankenstein, knives, murderers, axe, torture, blood, death, books, frightened, screaming, being chased, sinister, distressing, werewolves, haunted houses, ghosts & spirits, curses, myths etc.

With this list of associations your learners should start to design their theme park, thinking about the type of attractions they listed earlier AND the horror associations (in this case at least).



Continuing with the example above, if a rollercoaster has been listed as a theme park inclusion, it may be designed as a pursuit ride (based on people being chased in horror films), with the pursuing car coming ever closer to the rider, invoking a sense of peril. The name, sounds, shapes and colours of the ride should fit into the broader theme of 'horror'.

Each group should design a minimum of five attractions for their theme park, accompanied by drawn design if time allows and learners are able and willing to do so. The final stage of the activity is for each group to present its theme park design to the wider class, paying attention to explaining how the random input theme was processed and finally led to the final design.

Random input method:

Random input is a very potent creative thinking method, despite being one that is very easy to introduce.

However, the key to this method really working is to apply a form of associative thinking to generate two lists, one in relation to the problem and the other in relation to the random input stimulus.

In this exercise theme park design is the problem. The first list generated is one made by the learners by applying associative thinking to list as many things as they can think of connected to theme parks.

The second list is based on the random input stimulus, which at this stage is unrelated to theme parks. Once this second list of associations has been created your learners will soon make connections between the two lists, resulting very different ideas to those that would have emerged via conventional thinking.

Extended activities:

This activity will promote a lot of visual thinking as we recall environments such as theme parks primarily via a visual memory. Whether or not learners have made drawings, they will have visualised many elements within their minds.

To extend this activity you can invite the students to design a poster for their theme park. The poster should conform to the same thematic treatment as the attractions within the park, utilising the second list that was created in the class. The first list of theme park associations, can be replaced with associations relating to posters and poster design, though this will invariably be a shorter list.

Dream pet

Original idea contributed by	VHS
Creative thinking method	Brainstorming
Primary skills addressed	Speaking, listening
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Paper & pens

Overview:

While 'brainstorming' is probably the most commonly taken approach to creative thinking, it is often enacted without formal parameters or guidelines. A reminder of the formality of the process can assist in generating more creative (not to mention plentiful) ideas.

In this activity learners need to think about how a 'dream pet' might look and/or act, and what characteristics it might possess.

To facilitate this task, it is intended that learners participate in formal brainstorming sessions, as it is key to effective creative thinking success to establish formal and conscious processes. It is perfectly reasonable to say that 'for the next 10 or 15 minutes, we should all focus on creative ideas, putting aside the logical and rational selections that we normally make'.



Activity:

The central task is for your learners to each 'design' a dream pet, perhaps through a sophisticated genetic engineering process. It is up to the learners to interpret the notion of a 'dream pet', as it may mean different things to different people.

Begin the brainstorming session by exploring what this term may actually mean and what people would like from their dream pet. Encourage learners not to start editing and/or judging responses at this stage and also encourage to think very differently and not to be constrained by convention.

At the end of the allotted time OR the attainment of a set quota (perhaps 15 ideas), ask each group to review their responses one at a time. For each response suggested the group should apply a more logical approach to assess whether the characteristic is a positive or negative thing overall.

For example, a suggestion may be that the pet is silent (avoiding the annoyance of a barking dog or mewing cat) may be a negative if you want the pet to alert you to certain situations, such as an intruder or the need to go to the 'bathroom'. It may be decided that this suggestion is not so useful after all.

Also ask learners to qualify characteristics that may be ambiguous (promoting specific language use). For example, the suggestion that this pet will 'make dinner for me', may result in a diet rich in carrots, and not much else, if the pet rabbit prepares dinner to its own tastes. This characteristic may need to be refined to 'making dinner according to my instructions'. To facilitate this action, the pet may also need to be adapted anatomically, as rabbit paws will be limited in using kitchen utensils, size could be a problem too. Don't forget though, that a bigger rabbit will eat more and potentially make more of a mess around the home, unless it's been designed otherwise.

Each group should design a minimum of five attractions for their theme park, accompanied by drawn design if time allows and learners are able and willing to do so. The final stage of the activity is for each group to present its theme park design to the wider class, paying attention to explaining how the random input theme was processed and finally led to the final design.

The brainstorming session can be repeated a number of times until each group is confident that they have a workable 'blueprint' for their pet.

The subsequent task is to prepare a presentation to present their dream pet idea to the boss of the genetic engineering company. This part can be played by you as the teacher or a responsible learner. It could be alternated between members of different groups.

It could be useful to introduce the full context of the task at the beginning, providing a type of role-play scenario. You could inform the learners that the boss of the company has given a 30 minute time limit to include brainstorming and evaluation of the ideas before the presentation.

This type of 'pressure' can in fact be positive in a creative thinking situation, as it forces people to act (or think) a little irrationally, or at least unconventionally.

Extended activities:

As an extended activity, or set of activities, we can assume that the boss of the company was happy with the suggestions generated for a dream pet.

As the learners are now familiar with the format and requirements, extended activities can introduce other 'dream' concepts. There is a list below for reference, though you should consider your own context for learning and consider whether this offers any opportunities for designing 'dream' outcomes.

Dream home

Dream school

Dream job

Dream holiday

Brainstorming method:

- Define the problem / question / objective etc. In this example the problem to 'design a dream pet'.
- Set a time limit for the session (or round). One to two minutes should be sufficient, though if it is the first time you have used formal brainstorming with learners, you may wish to increase the time slightly. Try to find a time that allows the quota to be met.
- Decide on a Quota that you feel you can meet and that will be challenging. A quota of between five and ten ideas would work well for this problem.
- Generate and record ideas until you meet your Quota (or the time runs out) - don't be tempted to judge and reject ideas as they emerge.
- Evaluate ideas at the end of the session or round, recognising the value of 'initial ideas' that could be developed into viable solutions with a little more focused thought.

This is an important stage as some ideas may sound a little crazy to start with, but could have hidden potential.

Following each round of idea generation, including the final evaluation stage, each group should make a short verbal presentation of their 'best' or most interesting solution, to the members of other groups. The group spokesperson can be rotated over a number of rounds of idea generation, ensuring most or all learners get a chance to take this role.

While primarily a speaking and listening exercise, written activities can be introduced if better suited to your learning focus. Writing about the solution is an obvious application of the result, though other forms of writing such as a design specification, a rationale for rejecting certain ideas, or even a commentary on the thinking process, are all possibilities.



Aphorisms

Original idea contributed by	Myriam Cruciano
Creative thinking method	Challenge assumptions
Primary skills addressed	Comprehension
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Internet access

Overview:

Writers often use quotes to emphasise important points or to provide different perspectives on issues. This ability to inspire new perspectives gives quotes the potential to stimulate our brain into producing new ideas.

One of the maxims of nineteenth century English author William Thackeray was “The two most engaging powers of an author are to make familiar new things and familiar things to do again.”

Quotes or aphorisms have the power to stimulate us to consider ideas and concepts that we might otherwise overlook. This can be a useful starting point in encouraging learners to generate multiple ideas and/or responses to a situation, which is crucial to successful creative thinking.

The term ‘aphorism’ relates to a pithy (or expressive) observation made by someone than contains a general truth. Examples include:

‘If you don’t control your mind, someone else will’
John Allston

‘Dream as if you’ll live forever. Live as if you’ll die tomorrow’ *James Dean*

‘Minds are like parachutes, they only function when they are open’ *Thomas Dewar*

Activity:

Using a site such as www.aphorismlist.com, gather together a selection of aphorisms and produce them individually on small cards of strips of paper.

With your learners working in small groups of between three and five people, randomly assign each group an aphorism.

The first task for your learners is to try and identify whether or not there are any aspects of the aphorism that can be challenged as being ‘assumptive’. For example, this could be challenging the idea that our minds are like parachutes, leading to questioning what if our minds were like other things, such as drains, helicopters, plant seeds. In each case a new aphorism could be created offering a similar, yet different ‘truth’, such as ‘Our minds are like plant seeds, we need to water them with knowledge for them to grow and flower’.

This response would come after posing the question ‘what if our minds weren’t like parachutes and were more like plant seeds?’, leading to ‘how would this work as an aphorism?’. Before deciding on this final response your learners would need to explore all of the possibilities that our minds being like plant seeds would present. There are probably more interesting solutions than this example.

The activity can be repeated many times with different aphorisms, with the objective of the class creating a set of completely ‘new’ aphorisms. These new aphorisms could be compiled in a short document or posted on walls around the classroom or school building. Remember that all existing aphorisms had their origins somewhere

Extended activities:

The extended activity in this case provides a very different exercise to the main activity, though it develops an understanding and knowledge of aphorisms.

For this learners will need to have access to lists of aphorisms, such as the website listed above. Encourage your learners to source their own lists of aphorisms online, as the more aphorisms available to your learners the more they will be able to choose from.

Provide your learners with a number of goods and services to advertise. These can be anything you think of OR things that are related wither to your learner group of aspects of the common environment (the school, institution etc.).

Once each learner has a selection of goods and services to advertise they should select appropriate aphorisms or quotes to use within an advertising campaign.

For example, if the service to advertise was an estate agency (house seller), the aphorism offered to us by Charles Schulz via his popular character Snoopy, might be appropriate:

'If we do not like where we are we can move, we are not trees'

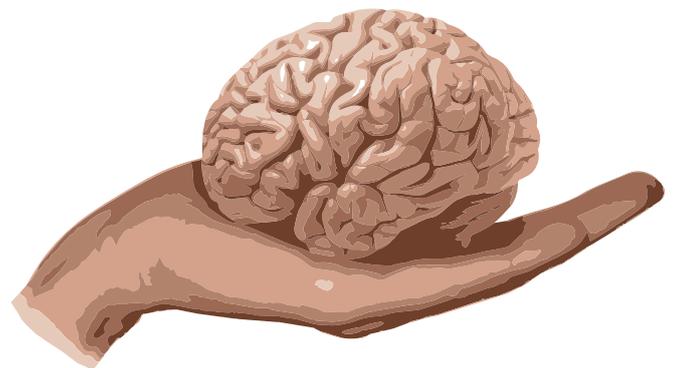
The following is a list of goods and services for use in the extended activity, though you and your learners are encouraged to generate your own lists for this activity:

- Hit man (paid assassin)
- Electricity company
- Tattooist
- Bread
- Inventor
- Expensive chocolate
- Beautician
- Bicycle

Challenge assumptions method:

Challenging assumptions is a very important tool in creative thinking, particularly useful in questioning well-held beliefs or principles. While it is not guaranteed to provide alternative approaches or ways of thinking and doing, it is surprisingly consistent in doing so. In this activity the following stages of the method can be applied:

- Create or identify a "truism" that relates to a practice or situation.
- Identify and report the assumptions made in the sentence. Things that may initially sound true, but on inspection could be questioned.
- Once part of the statement is identified as questionable (assumptive), proceed by posing a 'what if?' question, deliberately moving in a different direction.
- After posing a 'what if?' question, think about how this question / proposition could be resolved. Set a quota for the number of responses in each case.



Store designer

Original idea contributed by	Massimo Di Prima
Creative thinking method	What if?
Primary skills addressed	Comprehension
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Internet access

Overview:

The design and layout of stores, particularly the required walking routes in supermarkets, has become something of a science. Large supermarkets will locate regularly purchased 'everyday' objects in strategic locations to ensure that customers will encounter other items that the supermarket hopes they will purchase on impulse. Of course this kind of design is based on an idea of the typical consumer, who the supermarket will have determined is the primary shopper in a household.

The following exercise relies on brainstorming to generate a range of ideas to be used within a supermarket layout design activity, though it begins in each round with a 'what if?' question to challenge conventional thinking.

While there is an element of creative thinking involved in the activity, which relies on group discussion and negotiation, the subject matter will also support language learners in developing new vocabulary, as well as stimulating literacy learners in spontaneous communication.



Activity:

The activity should be introduced to your learners via an internet 'research' session, with the objective of understanding the basic principles of supermarket layout design. Around half an hour should be allocated for this initial enquiry, with learners encouraged to take notes and discuss their finding with group members.

Once you are confident that your learners understand the principles of supermarket layout design, you can task them to undertake a supermarket design exercise.

It is suggested that to begin with you take an existing supermarket as an example and ask your learners to identify how a strategy has been applied to the design of the shop layout. It should be possible to identify how the principles above have been applied.

Following this activity and with your learners working in small groups of between three and five people, set each group the task of designing a supermarket OR 'other' type of store layout. The reason for the 'other' type of store, is that for certain customers a supermarket in the conventional sense will not be appropriate. This can only be determined once a customer type has been assigned.

This is where the 'what if?' method is applied as the activity of designing a store layout is based a scenario that assigns a very different type of customer to the task. In doing this you should try to move away for conventional or predictable suggestions. Below are a number of example 'what if?' scenarios for this exercise, though you are strongly encouraged to consider your own alternatives:

- What if the store was designed for dogs or cats, to lead their owners into purchasing for them?
- What if the store was designed for a castaway stranded on a remote island, with one opportunity for shopping before being returned to their isolation?

- What if the store is designed for environmentalists, people are really against wasting the earth's resources?
- What if the store is designed for someone that does not speak the language of that particular country?
- What if the store is designed for witches, with very peculiar shopping lists?

Once a customer type has been assigned each group should engage in some idea generation, that aims to understand what the customer would want from a store, and why they would want these things. This exercise should produce a type of shopping list, which is a good starting point.

However, each group should consider how they can design a store that will encourage each customer to buy other items in the store, things that may not exist on their shopping list. This is where the strategic design element comes in.

Encourage learners to make drawings of the floor layout, including words alongside images for better communication. Refer to the five principles offered in this activity sheet, as well as information learners found online.

Once the exercise has been completed ask each group to post their store layout on the wall, allowing each group to review the work of others before each is presented to the class. The reason for reviewing designs prior to a presentation is so that learners will focus on visual communication, words and images on design sheets.

Extended activities:

The extended activity in this case relates to the selection of customer types. Trying to identify people with different needs and wants is not as easy it first sounds.

As a homework or extended classroom activity, ask each learner to identify at least five additional customer types that could be introduced or used in the main activity.

Once this has been done it will provide a useful library of 'assets' for subsequent delivery of the activity.

Key principles of store layout:

While it is likely that your learners will discover these principles for themselves, the following should be seen as the minimum principles to adhere to within the activity:

- **Consider the floor plan of the store.** While most supermarkets include straight aisles for presenting products, other areas can be created, such as a single-entry 'room' for products such as wine. This type of layout may work where there are product types with many different choices, allowing the customer to browse products without waling up and down different aisles.
- **Put necessities near the back of the store.** Consider those items that really stand out for your customer and ensure they are placed in positions that will not be missed.
- **Put new products (and seasonal items) in prime locations.** Again consider what would be 'new' or appealing to your designated customer, considering that for different customer 'types' this information will change.
- **Stock 'impulse' items near the cash desks.** These are likely to be less expensive than other items in the store. They can link to other purchases, such as batteries for electronic products. Depending on what you think your customers will purchase OR find appealing as a low-cost impulse purchase, consider this area as a valuable selling opportunity.
- **Use displays / advertisements to slow customers down.** Information about products and/or offers can be strategically located to effectively slow customers down in areas that you want them to spend more time in, to see more of the products that you think they will buy.



Constitution

Original idea contributed by	Francesca Esposito
Creative thinking method	Changing perspective
Primary skills addressed	Comprehension
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Constitutional document or summary

Overview:

The following activity is inspired by a project entitled 'Rights, duties and solidarity'. It is based on a dialogue scenario between the Italian constitution and Arab Islamic cultural heritage and was originally facilitated within the prison of Bologna.

From a starting point (premise) that constitutions and charters are responses to needs, the project sought to explore aspects of personal dignity and issues relating to the culture and heritage of individuals affected by such legal systems.

Activity:

To initiate the activity, ask your learners to make a written list of what they consider to be the ten most basic rights for themselves.

Once all learners have created their list the group / class should take a little time to process the results, aiming to generate a chart that shows the more common (high frequency) 'rights' listed, down to the more unusual (low frequency) suggestions. Discussion should be encouraged to establish which differently worded rights are similar or the same to others that may have been expressed differently. The chart should be posted somewhere visible within the classroom.

This activity can be completed by ranking the list of rights, with certain rights having greater value than others. This can be important for the following stage, as using 'weighted' responses can radically change the look of the resulting chart.

At this point learners should be encouraged to discuss the notion of a 'constitutional' framework. For this exercise you may wish to download and present a summary of such a framework, with the objective of realising the concept for your learners.

Following this discussion and when you are satisfied that your learners have a reasonable understanding of a constitutional framework, you should ask them to review the chart of previous responses and to use this as a basis for developing a 'constitutional framework' for the members of the class.

While it is likely that certain rights expressed are not important to all learners, it is important to encourage for these learners to try and view the rights expressed from the perspective of the person that made the suggestion(s). Discussion is encouraged to support this process, based on questions being asked of the person that submitted the basic right.

Extended activities:

In this activity the 'extended' activity can be just as significant and/or rewarding as the main activity.

To promote an understanding of other cultures the activity should be repeated, with the difference being that the initial stage of listing ten basic rights is undertaken from the perspective of 'another' known group.

For example, your learners may be asked to list ten basic rights from the perspective of Syrian refugees. In most cases this will require some internet research to be undertaken to try and understand what rights would be important to this group of people, and as a result what constitutional framework would serve this group as they enter and integrate with new societies.

The group to be considered in this final stage should be informed either by current affairs / situations OR arrived at through discussion with the group, keeping in mind that alternative groups may not always come from overseas, but may instead focus on older citizens, children, differently abled, etc. The key is to consider the constitution from a different perspective to the intrinsic perspective of each individual.

Changing perspective method:

The method of 'changing perspective' effectively encapsulates the key principle of creative thinking, which is to alter or disrupt the often-predictable vertical thinking that we all apply in most situations. In demanding 'something different', creative thinking forces us to re-think what we know through a wide variety of methods. Changing perspective in its simplest form is to re-imagine a situation from the position of someone (or something) else, and it can be an excellent tool to stimulate creative writing.



Sensory connections

Original idea contributed by	Annalisa Cardone
Creative thinking method	Random input
Primary skills addressed	Comprehension
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Containers with various materials

Overview:

Our everyday language is coloured by references to the five senses: 'I hear what you're saying', 'I see what you mean', 'That's a tasty car', 'I smell a rat!'. These phrases stimulate images that help us to communicate meaning and to increase comprehension. Just as our senses allow us to experience different stimuli, different sensory inputs can trigger our minds to move in directions that hadn't previously been considered.

Activity:

To start the activity, you will need to set a creative thinking task that your learners can take on. One suggestion is to plan for an end-of-year party, perhaps suggesting a themed event or specifying a party 'with a difference'. Of course you are encouraged to think about a creative thinking problem that may be linked to the studies / learning needs of your learners, or work with your learners on generating creative thinking problems.

The random input elements in this activity are based on a number of sensory stimulants, presented to the students in the following ways:

- Enclose something in a resealable container that has a particular smell, such as a strong cheese, coffee grounds, cleaning liquid, fragrant flowers. It is important that learners can lift the lid to smell the contents without seeing what it is.
- Place an object or substance in a box with a hole in the side, allowing your learners to reach into the box without seeing its content. Contents of the box could include things like a pocket watch, a vegetable, sand or pebbles, a tool etc.
- Present a photograph of an object taken at a very unusual angle or at very close range. The photograph should show some detail but must not reveal the complete object.
- Put multiple objects in an enclosed container (a small drum or tin) so that your learners cannot see the contents. What is important with the contents of this container is that when it is moved or rattled the contents make a sound. Items like nails, coins, rice, rubber balls, marbles etc. would work well in this instance.
- Fill a number of small pots with edible elements, such as salt or pepper, sweetcorn, mustard, sugar or syrup, chocolate powder. Provide hygienic tools for tasting the various elements.

You may choose to create all five sensory stimulants or a smaller number. As you will appreciate, some elements can be kept and re-used, while others need to be provided 'fresh' for each time you deliver the activity. Invite your learners to sample the various 'inputs', without revealing the source of each. As soon as a learner has experienced a sensory input, they should write down the first three words that they can think of associated with the sensation.

At the end of this exercise each learner will have up to fifteen words to use within the creative thinking activity. It may be a good idea to ask each learner to choose their five favourite words from their list OR the five words that they think best reflect their sensory experiences.

Each learner should now generate ideas in relation to the creative thinking problem, using one of their five words a starting point, demonstrating how each word is connected to the proposed idea. This phase of idea generation should be repeated for each word being used.

As with all random input and brainstorming sessions, the results should be considered as bridging ideas (needing further development) and the best ideas should be further developed into usable suggestions.

Extended activities:

As an extension to this activity ask your learners to think about stimulants to evoke ideas through the five senses. While you do not need to ask your learners to re-create the sensory apparatus, you can ask them to consider a number of 'good' resources to stimulate each sense in turn. For this exercise a quota of between five and ten ideas should be sufficient to promote elements of creative thinking (based on 'the generation of alternatives' method).

This exercise could be set as an out-of-class activity, with the results being shared with classmates on completion. The class could work towards determining the 'best' sensory stimulants for each sense, based on the frequency of suggestions or a class vote.



Random input method:

The technique of random input requires the introduction of any type of external stimulus to be considered within the context of a creative thinking problem (or opportunity). By simply adding a colour, word, number, picture etc., the human brain obediently begins to rationalise the previously unconnected elements in order to create connections, thus 'making sense' of their relationship. While it is a contrived activity and one that some creative thinking practitioners may first doubt, it proves time and time again to be a truly effective approach to formulating original thinking

Musical thoughts

Original idea contributed by	Filomena Collio
Creative thinking method	Associative thinking
Primary skills addressed	Listening
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Instrumental music

Overview:

Music can have a significant effect on our emotions and in turn it can help us to generate ideas. The centres of the brain associated with emotional responses are also linked to our ability to work creatively. Music has the power to stimulate these centres and helps us to produce ideas that we would not have produced without this aural stimulus. The following activity attempts to show you and your learners how you can capitalise on the brain's response to different musical inputs as a way of promoting creativity.



Activity:

This activity is linked to creative writing exercises that allow for emotive responses. Typically, this will include fictional story writing and/or forms of verse / poetry.

It is important to have a starting point from which all of the learners begin. For example, this may be reading the first chapter or even a section of a story that leads to a potential decision point, in which the continuing story could move in different directions.

For story writing ask your learners to listen to a particular piece of music, in silence. Be confident in allowing the music to last for at least a few minutes, allowing the learners the time to become engaged with the music in a relaxed and unhurried environment. Choose music that has the potential to stir emotions and conjure imagery, avoiding music that contains singing or identifiable lyrics, as the words can influence the outcomes.

While the music plays ask your learners to write down:

- Emotions that the music evokes
- Adjectives that could describe the music of how the music makes them feel
- Verbs that could be assigned to this type of music
- Nouns that the music makes them think about

There is no upper limit to the number of words that each learner writes down while listening to the music, though at the end of the listening exercise each learner should choose the most significant word from each list...in their own opinion.

This new list of four words should be used as the basis of writing the next part of the story (in this example). The words do not have to be used in the new prose, for example the adjective 'dangerous' could be obvious through actions and situations without using the word, though they should be identifiable.

The first stage of the response is to write a short summary or plan of how the story will continue, before writing it in full.

The reason for this is so that you can play a different piece of music with the same task in mind, following the same process.

At the end of this stage your learners will each have two summaries or plans for continuing the story. You may decide to provide more musical stimulation or ask each learner to choose from their two responses. The final stage is of course is to write the subsequent stage of the story.

Extended activities:

The extended activity in this case is changing the format of the writing, using a form of verse / poetry as an intended written outcome.

A starting point should be specified to maintain some focus for the creativity, as simply 'doing anything' is generally not an effective goal for creativity. For poetry it may be sufficient to nominate a theme, while avoiding being too prescriptive of a left or right position in relation to the theme. For example, the theme 'nature' should not necessarily be prescribed as good and something to be preserved. While this would be a common and well-supported approach, it may prevent the learner responding fully to the musical stimulation.

Using the same theme repeat the creative thinking exercise with multiple and different soundtracks to generate different approaches to the final verse.

Associative thinking method:

Associative thinking is a powerful tool in generating new ideas, simply by making cognitive connections between available stimuli.

A simple example of this is word association, a game that most of us have played, though probably as children. A word is introduced as a starting point and in turn the players have to respond to word with something that is associated with it. For example, the word 'sea' may inspire the response 'water'. The game goes on with each player taking turns to respond to the previous word within an agreed time limit (maybe 2 seconds) and without repeating a word that has been said before.

While the human brain makes these collections relatively easily, with the pressures of time and avoiding repeating words forcing less obvious or unexpected responses, quite quickly the game, or at least the responses, can be quite far removed from the starting point.

In creative thinking situations it is often necessary to maintain the starting word or concept throughout the process, listing multiple associations with this starting point. Using the same example, the word (concept) 'sea' may lead to 'water', 'fish / fishing', 'pollution', 'ships', 'deep', 'holiday' and so on.

According to an object

Original idea contributed by	Dijana Bakarčić
Creative thinking method	Changing perspective
Primary skills addressed	Comprehension
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Structured visit & worksheet

Overview:

Taking a break from the classroom can be a very effective way to energise learners in their studies. This activity relies on your learners taking a class visit to a local museum, gallery, even an antique fair or second-hand market. You should be confident that your learners are able to identify at least five 'interesting' objects at the chosen visit site, in addition to being able to observe other visitors as they look around and interact with exhibition staff or vendors.

Activity:

Prior to your specific visit you should provide a worksheet for your learners, in order to provide a more structured experience. This is also important in ensuring that you have relevant information to use in the subsequent writing activity.

The worksheet should include the following (type of) learner tasks:

- Identify at least five objects that you find 'interesting'. Encourage learners to make images of the objects as well as describing them.
- Explain what each object is and what it is / was used for.
- Specify how old the object is (approximately for older objects) and what its origins are. For example, where does it come from and who might have made it?
- Spend time watching other people interacting with the object (including looking) and make notes about the things that they say or how they handle the object.

On returning to the classroom take some time to allow individual learners to share some of their recorded data with their classmates, as this will help in understanding the recorded data.

Next ask each learner to choose one of their five objects to use as the central element of a creative writing exercise. The decision should be based on how interesting the learner finds the object AND the other things that they now know about it, including how other people responded to the object.

The creative writing task can take different forms, though it is suggested that a comprehensive diary entry is used in the first instance. However, rather than each learner completing a comprehensive diary entry from their own perspective, it should be completed from the perspective of the chosen object, as though it was capable of thoughts and feelings like a human being.

The object may recount the particular day that the learner visited the site and encountered it, though invite learners to imagine what the object may think about its current place in the world to its previous place. If it is in a museum the comparison may be one of sadness, imagining a long period encased in a glass in an old building, while an object in a market may be imagining its new owners and new home. Ask your learners to include information that relates directly to the reactions of other visitors, based on the notes taken during the visit.

While the suggestions above can be shared with your learners prior to the task, the written element should not be overly prescriptive, allow learners to run free with their imaginations.

Once all of the diary entries are complete a small exhibition could be created using the written texts and the images of the objects.

Extended activities:

Ask your learners to create a second diary entry, only this time ask them to write the entry from the perspective from one of the people that they observed during the visit.

This task will likely require far more imagination to try and predict what the person may have done before and after the time they were observed, though any speculation should be based on things that were actually observed.

For example, if an old lady was observed with a shopping bag, the learner may speculate on what was in the bag and the experience of making the purchase before visiting the specific site. Equally the learner may speculate on what the person does with the contents of the bag after the visit; perhaps the bag contains a gift that will be presented at a birthday party in the evening.

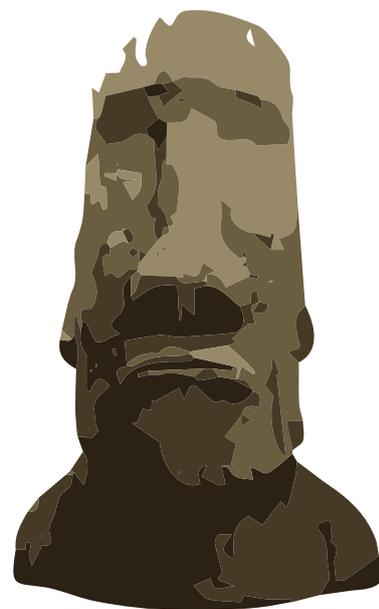
Key to this extended activity is to maintain the task of imagining a situation from someone else's perspective, as a way to generate ideas and thoughts that would not have occurred otherwise.

Changing perspective method:

It is very easy to only see the world around us through our own eyes, as this is certainly the most important perspective for each of us. Looking at the world through 'the eyes of others' is often seen as a very desirable characteristic, which we may refer to as 'empathy'. While some people are very good at appreciating situations from the perspective of others, others may need some practise.

In creative thinking terms this changing of perspective can be a very rich seam of ideas. For example, we may re-visit a familiar story and attempt to re-tell it from the perspective of a different character, other than the main protagonist(s). We often hear the story of the 'Three little pigs', told from the perspective of the pigs, in that we understand their need for security and shelter. We seldom hear the story being told from the perspective of the wolf, though writing this story from that position may result in a very different tale.

The key to making the 'changing perspective' method work in creative thinking, is to identify an interesting and/or alternative perspective to focus on. This activity provides some ideas in achieving this goal.



Acoustic environment

Original idea contributed by	Nataša Sajko
Creative thinking method	Generation of alternatives
Primary skills addressed	Listening
Secondary skills addressed	Writing, composing
Resources required	Simple sound editing software

Overview:

From one end of a country to another, the soundscapes can vary dramatically. While this might be down to the differences between an industrial centre that is sonically defined by the crash and clatter of heavy machinery, continuous road traffic noise and the busy chatter of the large population, or the tranquil air of a rural area, with silence broken by the calling of birds or the sound of animals in fields, even with our eyes closed we could tell which type of environment we are in.

However, to be more specific than this, we would need to go beneath the ambient sounds within an area or city, and start to listen to the more meaningful sounds being made by way of communication. The regional accents that can pinpoint a specific city or town, the region specific words that are used, or in some countries the different dialects. Alongside these are other sound signatures, such as songs and music associated within an area; for most people hearing the Beatles it's hard not to make an association with the UK city of Liverpool, which was their home town. Though other forms of art exist in terms of regional folk music, often narrating a part of an area's history, or music to accompany traditional dance and/or festivities.

While this list is not comprehensive, one could add region specific wildlife for example, the activity demands that your learners attempt to encompass a comprehensive range of sounds that could depict a city or region in sonic terms, creating what is termed the 'acoustic environment'.

Activity:

This particular activity is designed to be run over a number of sessions, as the various stages may take some time.

It would be useful to introduce the activity by presenting a series of audio clips that illustrate some of the suggestions listed in the activity overview. In a UK setting the difference in many sounds between Newcastle, London and the Scottish highlands, would provide useful sources of audio, as each of these three locations has a very different soundscape (naturally occurring sounds) as well as a different acoustic environment track (which includes all of the man-made sounds such as speech, song, media broadcasts etc.).

The key to the introduction is to encourage your learners to appreciate all of the different types of sound that make up the acoustic environment of a particular place, and after the initial introduction ask your learners to make lists of as many sonic elements that they can think of that could exist in and/or be associated with a particular place.

Once this has been completed ensure that you share all of the suggestions from the learner lists, creating a master list that includes all of the suggestions from across the class.

The next task for your learners, working in small groups of between three and four people, is to identify places that they wish to use for their audio comparisons. This decision should be based on your learners listing as many audio elements that they can think of that will define each area. If a defined area does not have many significant or unique audio signatures, another selection should be sought. Once a short list has been produced each group should narrow this down to one 'unique' region or city. Uniqueness in this case is determined by other groups within the class, meaning that each small group should be working on an area or region that is not being worked on by another group.

The next task is for learners to begin their research into the audio elements that are associated with their particular place. This research should include naturally occurring ambient sounds, ambient sounds created by human intervention, musical sounds, sounds associated with the local industries, significant musical influences, including folk and historical music, and most importantly, the accents, vocabulary, vernacular and language signatures of the place. In some cases, a place may have other audio signatures, such as the West End of London including theatre and musical performances, and in such cases these additional elements should be included.

The research should extend to collecting audio examples of all of the elements.

Once each group has collected their various audio signatures they should engage in an ideas generation activity to determine how this material can be represented to an audience. The brainstorming should be based on the generation of alternatives approach with a quota for ideas set at a minimum of fifteen ideas. While the very obvious ideas such as a play or a musical soundtrack will invariably be suggested, you really want learners to explore alternative ideas of expression such as comedy, improvisation, dance, randomised and/or spontaneous sound pieces, audience participation events, sonic poetry and so on. Keep in mind that these are merely suggestions and learners should really be pushed to stretch their thinking to arrive at unexpected forms.

Following the brainstorming all ideas should be evaluated on their merits / demerits, with a final form being agreed by the group. As a facilitator try to encourage learners not to default back to conventional forms, which will be a natural tendency and ongoing block to true creativity...encourage learners to be brave about their choices.

The final stage is to compose and present the acoustic environment piece, to include the various audio signatures. The works should ideally be presented to an audience that has not been part of the class activity, which may be done without fully explaining which place each piece is designed to represent. Feedback for such audiences may be useful in determining how successful each piece is.

Extended activities:

As an extended activity the initial stage of the activity (identifying audio signatures) can be repeated, though in this case the places can be different countries.

With the internet relevant research and identification of various sound forms should not be too problematic, though there could be some issues with understanding spoken language elements. While it is generally easy to find some introduction or language support material, if this is problematic then the sounds of languages may be identified as audio signatures.

Generation of alternatives method:

The generation of alternatives is perhaps the simplest of creative thinking methods to apply, yet it remains one of the most effective.

The basic premise is that rather than conceive one idea when faced with a creative thinking opportunity, a person commits to a pre-determined number of ideas; this number is called the 'quota'.

The rule is that the idea generation activity (such as brainstorming) continues until the quota of ideas is met. This process literally forces people to think of unconventional and unexpected ideas, even if some of them may sound a little silly to begin with, it's surprising how many of these may become creative solutions with a little bit of extra processing and thought.



Class story

Original idea contributed by	Jasmina Ramušćak
Creative thinking method	Associative thinking
Primary skills addressed	Reading, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Story opener (sentence)

Overview:

Most people have the ability to tell stories, though often this is overlooked as people do not always recognise that recounting their day, telling a joke or funny story, or sharing a memory is a form of storytelling. Quite often storytelling or story writing is seen as an academic exercise used to develop specific linguistic skills, when in reality it helps us in all aspects of communication.

This activity takes quite a simple scenario and method to develop ideas for creative writing, deliberately moving away from starting with a pen and a blank page. It relies on a form of thinking that in creative thinking parlance is known as associative thinking. This in itself also relies on what most people do instinctively when processing information.

Activity:

Arrange your class, or small groups within your class, into a circular configuration, conducive to an activity that relies on the participants taking turns. Start the activity by introducing a starting point for a story, which includes key information such as a place or a time or a central character, an object or a theme. You can decide on how many elements of these elements are required and which ones you wish to prioritise. The starting sentence should not be constructed so that it is not overly prescriptive.

One suggestion for a story starting sentence is to take an idea from current news or from a topic that will resonate with your learner group. Try to avoid story starters that are particularly gender biased or potentially 'alien' to some learners. Though this is worth stating, most stories can be quickly commuted away from ideas that learners find dull or uninteresting, a type of democracy prevails.

Once the sentence has been presented you should move around the group so that each learner can take a turn. Their task is to provide the 'next' sentence of the story. If this is the first time that you are conducting the activity you may allow learners infinite time to respond, though once learners are comfortable with the format a time limit should be imposed, as this is what will force unusual ideas to be offered.

When thinking about a suitable time limit you should be aiming for between thirty seconds and a minute, though confident learners could work with a shorter time limit of fifteen seconds.

Either you as the facilitator or a nominated 'other' should record each sentence as it is offered. There is no scope for going back and first responses should be recorded. To aid in the recording process a simple audio recorder on a phone or digital tablet can be used, though this requires a short period after the activity to 'write up' the story. You should determine what works best in your situation.

Either way the final story or part of a story should be presented as a continuous narrative. At this point the group should discuss making any changes to the story, perhaps to give the narrative more coherence or to explore a particular theme or idea. Care should be taken not to allow learners to discard too many of the associative thinking elements, though a balance can be struck.

The final agreed story should be written up as a finished piece.



Extended activities:

With your learners familiar with this particular story creation method you can ask them to think about appropriate and effective starter sentences. Offer the same kind of suggestions as using news articles, relevant topics, in addition to other ideas concepts or themes associated with their own lives.

As an exercise ask each learner to generate at least five story starter sentences that could be used in this type of activity. Encouraging learners to think about the various elements that need to be included before a story is told is the key learning benefit in this extended activity, though you can also encourage students to test out their own story starter sentences with other learners when back in the classroom.

Associative thinking method:

Associative thinking is a powerful tool in generating new ideas, simply by making cognitive connections between available stimuli.

A simple example of this is word association, a game that most of us have played, though probably as children. A word is introduced as a starting point and in turn the players have to respond to word with something that is associated with it. For example, the word 'sea' may inspire the response 'water'. The game goes on with each player taking turns to respond to the previous word within an agreed time limit (maybe 2 seconds) and without repeating a word that has been said before.

While the human brain makes these collections relatively easily, with the pressures of time and avoiding repeating words forcing less obvious or unexpected responses, quite quickly the game, or at least the responses, can be quite far removed from the starting point.

In creative thinking situations it is often necessary to maintain the starting word or concept throughout the process, listing multiple associations with this starting point. Using the same example, the word (concept) 'sea' may lead to 'water', 'fish / fishing', 'pollution', 'ships', 'deep', 'holiday' and so on.

Hidden word

Original idea contributed by	Dijana Bakarčić
Creative thinking method	Random input
Primary skills addressed	Comprehension
Secondary skills addressed	Speaking
Resources required	Internet connection

Overview:

For both language and literacy learners it is important to understand the 'different parts' of language, not least the different types of words and their potential functions. While a teacher can recommend or teach a pre-determined set of words to learners, which is often the case through structured language development, it can be useful for learners to 'stumble' across and learn about their own words. This approach is likely to reinforce the understanding of learners as the content has a more personal value.



Activity:

You should begin this activity by dividing your class into two groups. The reason for this is that words generated by one group should be completely 'new' or unknown to learners within the other group.

Within each initial group challenge all individual learners to generate a list of eight words. It is important that the list for each individual contains words that they didn't know before the start of the activity, or at least did not know the word type and meaning. To facilitate this activity, you are advised to introduce students to an online random word generation tool. One such random word generator can be found at www.watchout4snakes.com. While some word generators have additional functions that allow you to specify the type of word, it is important in this case not to use such a function.

Each student should use the random word generator until they have identified five words that are completely unfamiliar with, recording these words on a 'personal' list. The next task is for each learner is to find the definition for their words, along with the type of word that it is (noun, adjective, verb etc.).

Once each learner has completed this second task, the lists of one group (half of the class) should be exchanged with the lists of the other group, resulting in each learner now possessing five words that have been selected and defined by another learner.

Within each half of the class sub-divide this larger group into smaller groups of three to four learners and ask them to complete the following task in turns. Each learner should read their list of words to become familiar with the content, particularly the definition and the word type; keeping in mind that some words can perform more than one linguistic function. The first learner in the group should then give clues to the first word on their list to their small-group members, without referring back to the list, starting with the type of word.

They can provide a definition of the word along other clues WITHOUT saying the word or using its root in any form. Each learner has thirty seconds to provide the clues, at the end of which the other group members should try to guess the word. Learners take it in turns to provide clues and a score is kept until all words are exhausted, with the aim of allowing more words to be guessed.

Random input method:

The random input technique requires that an unplanned or unpredictable stimulus is introduced to a creative thinking situation, in which the creative thinker begins to make some type of connections between this new introduction and the creative thinking situation at hand. While it is a method that is often doubted when first encountered, after a few applications of the method most creative thinkers will adopt this method as a staple within their arsenal.

Determining the type of random input techniques to be used within an activity can also be a challenging and potentially creative activity. This aspect of the process will be undertaken by learners during the planning stages of this activity.

Extended activities:

Random word generators have huge potential to inspire and promote a wide range of creative activities, whether you and your learners use the very basic function or some of the more elaborate functions. Most are free and available online, though of course this does require an internet connection.

Without an internet connection other random word generators can be created utilising all of the written material that exists around us, from newspapers to books, advertising to instructions, we can always find collections of words.

To create a random word generator, we simply need to define a system of extracting a particular word from a text. For example, if we have a newspaper as our source of text we could state in advance that we will choose the fifth word in the fourth line on the third page. We then simply follow this location and identify a word. Alternatively, we might say (on a journey) that we will choose the second word on the first advertising billboard that we see.

Ask your learners, as an out-of-class activity, to specify at least five random word generator methods that do not rely on an internet connection. Each learner should provide a description of each random word generation method (similar to those above) and present the word(s) that each method generated. Additionally each learner should be able to identify the word type and definition of each random word that was generated.

Synonymous antonymous

Original idea contributed by	Nataša Sajko
Creative thinking method	Generation of alternatives
Primary skills addressed	Reading, speaking
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Sentence examples

Overview:

This activity is intended for enriching vocabulary while establishing semantic relations between words. It has the added advantage of developing grammar acquisition, particularly sentence structure and a variety of morphological forms. It is an activity that can be easily scaled to address group or individual learning needs and to be level appropriate.

The primary creative thinking tool used is random input, though in reality the random element comes with the assignment of particular sentences to individual groups. As the facilitator of the class you will be responsible for gathering together a collection of sentences for use in the activity, though in subsequent 'rounds', you could reasonably expect your learners to select sentences for use by other groups.

Activity:

Begin by assigning a number of sentences to learners working in small teams of between three and five people. While the content of the sentences is not critical to the activity, each sentence should be either a compound sentence or contain additional clauses (subordinate, conditional, relative etc.)

Before assigning the sentences to learners you should underline one or two words within each sentence, ensuring that they have scope to be adapted by using either synonyms or antonyms, though not necessarily both at the same time.

Once each group has their list of sentences they should consider each sentence in turn, attempting to generate as many synonyms or antonyms (as dictated by you) as they can think of.

Following each sentence adaptation each group should discuss how this one or two-word alteration changes the meaning of the sentence. The result of this discussion should be recorded along with a version of the adapted sentence.

Completing this activity for all assigned sentences (approx. five per group) should constitute one round of the activity. In this first round you should not allow learners to use a thesaurus, however, in the subsequent (second) round this restriction should be lifted.

While it is difficult to score this activity if each group received different sentences, if your groups received the same sentences then better scores are based on those that generate more alternative words (as synonyms or antonyms) within the first round of the activity.

After the first and second round, invite your learners to construct sentences for use with other groups. In this exercise the learners are responsible for creating sentences AND for identifying the words that are to be changed in subsequent versions. You may restrict the words to be changed to nouns, verbs or adjectives, to ensure has a fair chance of generating many alternatives.

Extended activities:

Provide your learners with a short text OR ask them to choose a section or passage from a book that they are currently reading.

Ask them to read the text and to then look at how words can be replaced with synonyms and antonyms to change the overall meaning. Care should be taken to avoid allowing the final text to become a nonsensical passage, though a successful piece will demonstrate significant changes.

Each learner should explain how they feel their adaptations have altered the meaning of their text.

LAZY
IDLE

100 activity idea submissions

1. To stimulate creative thinking, I place a great emphasis on trust and making the learners feel comfortable with trying 'different things', potentially making mistakes. To achieve this, I start by setting a simple design task, such as design a dog walking machine or a rat catching device. Submissions can be written, drawn or just described verbally. The secret to this 'warm-up' exercise is to congratulate and support any approach that is 'different', ignoring the right and wrong of the solution. Actively encouraging slightly crazy ideas normally has a positive result.

2. Concrete poetry or shape poetry, is used to create a poem or piece of prose that is set on the page in a shape connected with the theme. For example, a poem about a rose could be written in the shape of a rose. Printed imagery can be used as a template for the shape of the writing, taking the pressure of drawing out of the equation.

3. Creative writing can be inspired by introducing some form of external stimuli via a picture or photograph. Choosing a picture that is either ambiguous or surprising in some way, is a great way to encourage different interpretations. Keeping a small library of images that are selected at random in each case can keep this creative writing activity fresh and relevant to a number of different classes.

4. Storyboards can be used in a number of different ways to promote creative thinking. One example is to create a pictorial storyboard without speech bubbles. Using simple cardboard cut-out speech bubbles (your learners can make these themselves) dialogue is added to complete the story. This activity can be enriched further by having multiple authors, in which each participant responds directly to what the previous participant has inserted in their speech bubble.

5. You can use random input techniques in many ways. For example, if a character or personality is in the news, we take either the letters of the name or just the initials, and from this we think of a title of a story relating to that person. When the letters are used it creates a type of 'acrostic' title, though technically acrostics are used in poetry when the first letters of each line spell a word.

6. Video is readily available for learners, with most smart phones and tablets having video capability. To inspire creative writing, ask your learners to shoot a set number of video sequences. For example, you may specify three video clips with each clip lasting ten seconds. On returning to the class ask your learners to compare their video sequences; this can be done by reviewing all videos on a projector. Then ask the learners to construct short narrative sequences that link any of the available sequences together. The narrative may have between three and five short sequences. While this is unlikely to form a coherent narrative at this stage, the idea is that learners take this loose sequence as a starting point for a more resolved piece of writing.

7. Bitstrips is an online tool used for creating comic strips. It can be used in many different ways with learners, though we find that creating a visual sequence with Bitstrips and including blank speech bubbles, can be an effective way for learners to construct spontaneous language. It can be more engaging if learners take turns or assume the roles of different characters, responding to the emerging dialogue.

8. Give each learner a sentence or small set of sentences, preferably quite long sentences. Ask them to rearrange the words in the sentence to arrive at completely different meanings. Words can be left out but no new words should be added. This can be an effective way to generate new ideas for a variety of literacy or language exercises.

9. Ask your learners to create stories with very strict limitations. Ernest Hemingway is famous for creating a six-word story (or novel): 'For sale, baby shoes, never worn'. This type of writing is termed flash fiction or sudden fiction. Impose similar rules, such as six words, or you may choose a set number of lines, though the overall piece should be short. Invite your learners to compose a story within the specified constraints. You may focus the challenge by providing a specific theme.

10. Idioms are used in language to express figurative meanings, which relates to, but is different from the literal meaning. Idioms are notoriously difficult for language learners to master, as they often rely on deep cultural knowledge. However, they provide interesting little ideas that can be adapted for a range of literacy and language exercises. Choose a number of idioms and ask your learners to either compose poetry, a song lyric or a letter to a friend, based on the concept of the idiom.

11. Listening to music can trigger certain thoughts and emotional responses. Use different types of music as stimuli for your learners within a creative writing context. It is possible to focus this type of exercise on the use of adjectives, though used as an interim stage in a class, it can be used to stimulate stories, poetry, songs or other forms of writing, such as a news article inspired by the emotions that the music evokes.

12. Ask your learners to bring an object to class, perhaps something that they have received as an unwanted gift. With the object concealed in a cloth bag (or similar) presenting only a very basic silhouette, other learners have to try and guess the identity of the object by asking the owner questions. It is possible to restrict the owner's answers to 'yes' and 'no' responses.

13. Mind maps are a great way to start creative thinking processes. They can be pre-prepared using illustrations or other images at the centre of a sheet of paper. From this initial starting point learners are encouraged to apply associative thinking processes to generate other ideas and concepts. 'Big' ideas should be the first to radiate from the central starting point, branching off to include connected or smaller ideas. When we started using mind maps we made reference to the methods endorsed by Tony Buzan.



14. Thematic writing and speaking can be a great catalyst for generating spontaneous language. At the start of the year (course) We ask all learners to think of one or a small number of ideas, perhaps related to recent events in their lives. We collect these ideas up and keep a note of them. At times when we want to introduce a theme we randomly select one of the ideas from the original list, then delete it so that it isn't repeated. We find that this gives the learners a greater sense of participation, as the themes come from them.

15. By choosing a random letter from the alphabet, a learner could make this choice, ask your class to write down as many words as they can that begin with this letter. Once they have a list with at least ten words (you could specify more) ask your learners to choose a partner to swap their list with. Each pair should note how many words are the same. The pair with the fewest duplicate words could be regarded as the 'winners'. The activity is then extended with each learner choosing three words from their partner's list as a starting point for a creative news story.

16. Before each learner can write a story, I ask them to consider a minimum of three scenarios. Once they have done this and selected their favourite, I ask them to consider at least three starting points, choosing their favourite, and then three endings. This approach encourages learners to think beyond their first idea, which is not always the best one. It can be introduced at various stage of any piece of creative writing / speaking.

17. Take a news article and ask your learners to re-write or re-tell the story that is reported from a different perspective to the original. For example if the story tells of a person convicted of theft, write the article in sympathy of the thief, explaining why he/she found it necessary to steal.

18. Ask each learner to start writing a story, just an introduction a paragraph or two long. Once completed pass the introductions around the room by one person. In a circle this would mean each introduction being passed along by one person, so that each learner receives an unfamiliar introduction. Ask your learners to write another one or two paragraphs to continue the narrative in each case, then pass them on in the same direction as the original exchanges. Repeat the process until you feel you have forced your learners to be creative in their responses. Forewarn the learners at least two turns before the exercise concludes, so that they work towards an ending scenario. At the end of the exercise allow each learner to read out the story that they have in their hand.

19. Introducing 'real world' topics to learners can be a great motivational approach. As well as global issues, such as climate change and mass migration, ask your learners to nominate issues that they feel are relevant to them. These may be things relating to the school or the course, or from the local community / environment. In groups they take different roles in debating the issue and come up with different perspectives to fully understand causes, consequences and resolutions.

20. Either ask your learners to bring 'unusual' objects to class, or supply these yourself. Once accumulated a set can be re-used with different classes. Following a show and tell format, invite each learner in turn to the front of the class, and then present them with one of the objects. Ask them to make a show and tell presentation of this object. If they do not know what it is or what it is used for (which is the hope) encourage them to 'invent' a plausible explanation of the object and its uses, maybe even its 'pretend' origins. The rest of the class should vote on how believable the show and tell presentation was.

21. Present your learners with random props. I use inflatable objects as this adds a sense of fun that relaxes the group; I have a mobile phone, a microphone, a cassette player and a fish. I ask the question of what problem might we associate with the prop in question. For example, the mobile phone might prompt learners to say that mobile phones are too expensive. The task then is to generate ideas that could help to reduce the cost of mobile phones.

22. Collect a series of newspaper headlines and newspaper photographs. You should be careful not to have any headlines that were originally published with any of your images; the more unrelated the two sets the better. Assign small groups, three to five learners in each and ask them to 'blindly' select a headline and a newspaper image. The task of the group is to write a news story that effectively relates the two elements. Once written set up a role-play scenario of a TV news room and ask your learners to present their story. Encourage learners to not only present from the studio, but also to use 'outside' journalists interviewing people about the story.

23. Create two groups / teams in your class. Give each group two objects and ask them to note down the similarities and differences between the objects, within a five-minute timeframe. Following this activity each team should report its activity results, with the winning team that has created the most comprehensive lists. If you are starting a topic with your learners you can select two objects related to the topic, providing an efficient way for your learners to begin their engagement with the subject. Some of the ideas presented will be of use during the topic study.

24. Using three envelopes create slips of paper with the following information: a character, a place and an object. Place around ten examples of each in the separate envelopes. Working in small groups of between three and five learners, ask each group to randomly draw one slip of paper from each envelope. The group should then use these three pieces of information as the basis of a short story. For language learning you can be very selective with your words to cover key vocabulary, or even change the 'types' of words in each envelope, using the exercise to generate sentences rather than short stories.

25. Choose a set of postcards/greeting cards/birthday cards or photographs/ images from magazines. Places on the floor, table or wall. Ask each student to choose a one and then in turn they have to provide an explanation of why they have chosen it and also describe the situation illustrated in the image or what it makes them think of.

26. Each pair/group receives an object which they pretend that they have never seen before. The students should document it in terms of its inventor, target users, utility, function and value then write a report on it which they share with the class. Eventually the class will select the best report.

27. This activity is meant to encourage both off-the-cuff assessments and creativity. Students create their own unique business cards which other students have to assess in terms of personality of the person who designed it. This could be a great warm-up activity which might well serve as a getting-to-know-each-other exercise, as well as a filler before writing a CV or an application letter.



28. The activity is best suited for younger and flexible groups who have a larger open space at their disposal. One of the students is the artist who creates some paper sculptures which could be anything unusual. Then the others in the groups are allocated one per group and they then have to create a scenario to use it in e.g. as a newspaper report /tv show / radio etc. interviewing the creator or an event in which it could have been used. It could end up being quite amusing and encourages that the whole group be involved in a dialogue .

29. Students are divided into small groups and receive appropriate materials for designing a board game for their language school. In groups, they could choose specific topics such as ‘finding the way to the course’, ‘registering for the course’ or ‘test preparation’. To prepare the board game, they will have to do research or even interview the staff and other students at the centre. At the end of the class, each group should present their game. Playing each other’s game can then help new students to familiarise themselves with different aspects.

30. Learners receive a famous person from history to whom they should create a memorial. 10 minutes later, the students are asked to present their memorial to the class. This activity could also serve as a two-pronged activity in which one student writes the first part of the memorial and a second student is asked to finish it and also develop the first part of the memorial. This could be a good practice for the improvement of learners’ speaking and writing skills.

31. The students are split into pairs. Each pair receives an ordinary item (e.g. pencil, book, ruler, etc.) that is more than it appears to be since it could solve a big problem. At first students should think about a major problem which could be solved using this ‘special item’, then they should imagine a scenario that presents the problem to be solved and its solution.

32. Students think of a favourite recipe and the ingredients they need. As they will not be able to go to the store by themselves they should send a friend to buy the ingredients they need. Unfortunately, their friend has recently suffered a trauma and has difficulty remembering the names of the ingredients. Each of the students should figure out an ingenious way of describing the ingredients in order to help the friend remember them correctly. The friend is not allowed to write a list.

33. Students write a list of interesting common items/ objects in use now . The teacher collects the lists and redistributes them to the learners so that each student receives the list of another student. The teacher explains to the learners that these lists are to be found 500 years later when the items are no longer known to man. Students should work in pairs and try to describe the items to a partner so that the latter should guess what it may be.

34. The teacher selects a popular song and plays it for the class. The learners and the teacher discuss the meaning of the lyrics and sing along. The students are asked to create an additional verse of the song to which they can add gestures and act it out.

35. Students receive an adventure scenario and a list of items that they may take with them. Depending on the items they choose, the learners should find the matching partner and then decide the items they finally pick out since they are only allowed to take up to two kilos with them. A final discussion would enable students to talk about their options and justify their choices.

36. Spaghetti and marshmallows should be used to construct a tower as high as possible. Learners are split into groups and have 10 minutes to plan how to build the tower, but they are allowed to communicate only in the target language. For any exchange of information in the native language a marshmallow and a piece of spaghetti will be taken away. The 10-minute planning will be followed by a 5-minute building process. Eventually the teacher measures the tower and a discussion follows, in which the learners explain why they constructed the tower the way they did.

37. Each student should think about a task they need advice on and write it on a piece of paper. Depending on the level of the group it could be a simple or a difficult task. The teacher will collect the papers and redistribute them. Each student should spontaneously answer the question in front of the class.

38. The students stand in a circle. Student A invites student B to an event and student B turns down the invitation by providing an excuse. However, the excuse should be plausible enough so that it should enable student B to be the next one to invite another student to a different event. Thus s/he is allowed to leave the circle and move around to look for the next person to be invited. Students who provide implausible excuses or copy a previous excuse will not be allowed to leave the circle. Each conversation should include a greeting, small talk and a farewell.

39. The teacher splits up the class into pairs. Learner A closes their eyes and is guided by learner B through the classroom. They are pretending they are walking through another world (e.g. rain forest, a desert, a mountain, etc.) and Learner A talks about the lurking dangers or possible problems they have to deal with and how to solve them.

40. This activity could be put into practice in adult education classes in order to support advanced students' skills. The more experienced learners are asked to design and create a course book or any other learning material for younger intermediate students or beginners. They should decide on the table of contents, favourite topics, the best practice and useful exercises. It is best when the students split into groups and each group works on a specific topic. As the creation of the learning material is a longer process, the teacher should check the progress of the task regularly and provide constructive feedback.

41. This activity is well suited for lower level courses. The teacher selects a specific topic. The learners should brainstorm as many long and difficult words to spell as they can (15 to 20). After the meaning of each word has been explained, the students are asked to write a story based on these words. Based on the level of learners the teacher will decide on the lengths for the activity. The learners are not allowed to use 2 difficult words in the same sentence. The winner is the student with the most words spelt correctly and used appropriately.

42. The students and teachers brainstorm famous people. The class is split up into interviewers and famous people. Each student who takes on the role of a famous person should match up with a partner from the interviewers' group. The partner asks generic and specific questions. "The famous person" should try to provide close-to-reality answers. After 5 minutes the partners should swap roles and the interviewer is a new famous person to be interviewed. This could be good practice for question words, for instance.



43. One student sits on the chair in front of the classroom. The teacher explains that the chair is “magic” and the other students would have to provide only positive things about the person who sits on it. The learners should be encouraged only to compliment the person.

44. This activity is ideal as a warm-up or a filler and could be suitable for either whole class or group work. The students brainstorm words that they associate with specific holidays and compare their lists to then devise a story or events that include 5 of the world elicited.

45. The teacher chooses a well known written story and gives the students its first sentence. Each student should try to provide a new sentence in order to continue the story. Finally, the two versions should be compared.

46. Students should either carefully plan or spontaneously organise a conference and should choose to role-play the persons involved in it. Depending on the learners’ level, they can simply discuss a specific topic or provide reports or articles on it.

47. Mapping the connections between the characters of a story or text paragraphs could be appropriate for learning how to retell a story. This is a good activity to encourage discussion and come up with explanation to link the two sides.

48. “WhatsApp” Group for refugees, as a helping method to easily communicate with each other and help them to cope with everyday situations. To prepare for real communication, the teacher can propose on a template different questions and place them in a box, Students choose at random one whatsapp message and have to answer it within a set amount of time.

49. Students should imagine that they are a pet or inanimate object, i.e. a car and reflect on their daily activities. How is the perception of the day different from their daily perspective? For example, the learners should start with waking up in the morning, what did this object or animal do first? The students can work together in groups or pairs and present their ideas.

50. Students should write down their names and a brief description of a special moment of their life that is unknown to other students. The teacher collects the papers, picks up a piece of paper and reads it aloud. The teacher chooses then two people to be interrogated, but only one of the two is the student who wrote the original description. The other learners should ask questions in order to find out who originally wrote the paper. The real author provides true answers while the “fake author” should try to improvise credible answers that could match the story. A final class discussion would reveal the real author.

51. In the process of teaching a foreign language and in the context of practising different constructions of sentences, it is important to use the methodology of – questioning of assumptions. The teacher has to bring some assumptions/statements about the rules that are familiar to students. After this, students have to ask different questions about the rule and thus give different opinions that question some rules or assumptions.

52. For practising language skills of speaking we can use discussion in that we can motivate students to tell their opinion in a creative way. They have to use short sentences for explanation of their thoughts and ideas. The teacher has to give them a topic and divide them into two groups – one for and one against the argument or point of view.

53. In teaching a foreign language it may be interesting to use a speaking activity where students have to present something that is stereotypical of their culture. Students have to give interesting stereotypes relating to aspects of their culture such as age, sex, race... and after that other students from the class ask them questions and compare different cultures.

54. It is most important in the process of teaching a language to motivate and encourage language skills such as listening. For this activity linked to creative play silence can help. The teacher has to prepare 30 pieces of cards with different instructions. Students have to read the instructions in turn to others. They have to listen and make what those giving the instruction have on their cards. For example: When you hear: Good afternoon you have to say: Welcome! It is most important that students concentrate and that they listen carefully. This is very good to encourage practice of listening.

55. In the process of language learning it is important to encourage language skills for reading. This activity is very interesting to students but also it could be interesting for parents because they have to collaborate in this activity. After collaborative reading of a fable, parents have to together with pupil, come up with the most important elements of the fable and draw it. This is a good method to develop collaborative reading where parents are involved in situational learning.

56. This activity is good for the learning of foreign language on higher levels because students have to have a good base knowledge of the language. Students could read plays, stories or a short novel. After that they have creative exercises that help them develop understanding of the texts. Students have to build the story with a changed end or they have to ask some questions for authors of text. Also, it is possible that students dramatise some parts of text or write a short script for a movie.

57. After some grammar learning, students have to create a mind map. The mind map could be in different drawings and with short descriptions of key words. Students have to make an interesting and useful mind map that will help them in the process of memorising.

58. The language skill of speaking is most important in the process of language learning. We can connect it with other language skills such as reading. Students have to read some text and then think about “the real picture” – they have to act real roles of characters in these texts. The dramatisation will continue to the next person when they are touched within the close area.

59. Reading with understanding is one of the most important activities in the process of learning language and literacy. For this we can use the method of reading in different ways: with a speedy voice, slow as a snail, with a deep voice, happy, angry, ironic. Students practice the art of reading and thus a more interesting way to learn about the content of the text.

60. In the focus of language teaching is the development of speaking. One of the activities that encourage speaking is the dramatisation of different situations after reading some of the text. Students have to make a TV from cardboard and then they have to play different roles in front of their colleagues. Some of them will be actors, some singers, some journalists.



61. The teacher has to prepare some videos for students. You can find them on the Internet or they could be some videos which students have already acted in and filmed. The exercise is to note all non-verbal communication that students can find in those videos – the position of hands, body language, head, gestures, expressions. They have to watch two videos and then discuss what they saw and what the non-verbal communication means. This activity is good because it encourages students in using quality communication in two ways – verbal and non-verbal.

62. You have to divide students in three groups. Every group gets one Croatian town: Zagreb, Osijek and Split. During one week students have to watch the news and everything that is happening in these towns and then through an oral presentation talk about this town to other students in class with characteristic language, topics, phrases etc.

63. The process of learning relationships between words can be used for enrichment of vocabulary. Students will be given worksheets with different words: verbs, nouns, adjectives. After that they have to create two physical circles, an inner one and an outer one. The two circles move around and students have to explain one to another the meaning of some word and they have to give the synonym and antonym. They learn together one from another and enrich their vocabulary. It is important to choose new words that aren't familiar to all students.

64. Dictation develops language skills, especially creative dictation. Students have to note some words from a text that starts with specific vowels while the teacher is reading the text. After that they have to create a rhyming poem including those words but they can add some new words. Those words are base ideas.

65. Identification of nouns from a text that the teacher reads could be a creative exercise that encourages grammar skills. Texts are rich in different classes of words – verbs, nouns, adjectives...After, the students note all the nouns, they have to make new words as: diminutives, augmentatives...???

66. Creative dictation could be an effective exercise for practising of writing in future or past tenses. Students have to rewrite the text that is read or heard on previous occasions. Sometimes they can add new things – characters or situations.

67. A very good exercise for developing enrichment of vocabulary could be making new words from roots. They have to make new words adding a prefix or suffix. They have to give every new word a meaning which could be a real meaning or an allegorical meaning.

68. In the process of learning a foreign language we can enrich the learning by linking it to creative skills such as drawing. With drawing students have some words on a card and they have to draw all the meanings that this word can have in different contexts.

69. Also in process of learning a foreign language we can use cards with new words and students have to take the card and then tell others what is on the card and put this word in context – in a sentence.

70. Making of class list of spelling rules could be an interesting activity that helps students and teachers learn the more difficult content of the Croatian language because Croatian spelling and word structure is very difficult. Students use books and workbooks and write different examples for some rules in spelling. Also they use journals and can build billboards using pictures and the rules. It can help later when they start to write essays

71. Putting words in sentences could be a very difficult activity for some students because for that it is important to know morphology, orthography and syntax. Because of that, this activity is very interesting, especially to students learning a foreign language. The pupil has to take one word and starts a sentence adding one new word. Every new pupil has to put one new word in the sentence and it must be meaningful and grammatically correct.

72. The comparison of vocabulary could be a very motivating activity for students. It can be used for learning a foreign language and for learning standard language – you can compare dialects and the standard form of the language. Students have a theme and they have to build a vocabulary writing words in dialect or the foreign language and then in the mother language. Also, they have to put words in sentences and illustrate them.

73. For the enrichment of vocabulary you can take one text where they can find a lot of underlined words. They have to change the underlined words with others with the same or a similar meaning. This activity is called “Tell it in a different way!”.

74. It is interesting to connect the learning of language and music. Students can enjoy a very popular song where some words are missing. Having listened to the song, they fill in words that are missing. After listening, students can consider ideas about the meaning of words. Here we can encourage the language skills of listening, reading and in this way enrich their vocabulary.

75. Again for enrichment of vocabulary you can play the game Allias. Students are divided in groups and every group has a presenter who gets 20 cards with words.

The main aim is to explain the words to your group in one minute. The group has to guess the words described. The winner is group with the most words guessed correctly in the allotted time This activity is good for enrichment of vocabulary and for the development of language skills of listening and speaking.

76. When teaching Italian, or even history and geography etc., I use different strategies and techniques for “going beyond” the way of thinking of the students.

First of all nothing is wasted: even the words that seem more unusual and the solutions that seem less appropriate proposed by students become creative and useful material to be recorded to then make use of when reasoning together during collective work.

I ask students to work in pairs in a timed task with writing a portrait of one another in the form of an acrostic poem starting from their name. The activity lasts around half an hour.

77. I ask the class to write a text about their city / country or on a theme they like, for example, the sea, a day with friends, etc.

To warm up, I facilitate for 15 minutes a brainstorming session during which each student writes on the board at least 5 words related to their chosen theme.

Subsequently, I divide them into small groups and give them an hour to write a text using the anaphora technique. I encourage them to search for words and synonyms including those written on the board.

Using this type of writing technique they develop ideas and things never seen before. Unexpected metaphors and analogies are achieved by all students: and this is the exciting thing.



78. The workshop begins with an activity that uses the communicative use of the body by providing words to interpret / represent (e.g.: happiness, fear, hunger, friendship, etc.).

The screenplay is then written and built step by step on a given theme like “The food of the soul “ or on a social and life theme such as ‘a journey’, ‘migration’, ‘memory’, ‘work’, ‘freedom’, ‘love’, etc.

Specifically, to identify the theme to use, I initiate a brainstorming session of about half an hour with the class. Once the theme is chosen, then I divide the students into small groups. Their task is to propose a line of work within an hour. The different ideas are then shown to the rest of the group and discussed so as to choose the most suitable to the group.

79. At the beginning of the lesson, I ask each student to write a list of food they buy on a weekly basis and to transcribe them on to the board.

I then divide the students into pairs. Each pair is tasked with writing a new recipe with some of the ingredients on the board without using the actual names of the ingredients. They can describe them but not name them.

80. Nature can inspire and suggest solutions to many practical problems.

I often suggest to my students the reading of short scientific texts on the behaviour of animals and plants. Here are some examples used:

- The air circulation in a termite mound
- The social roles in an ant colony/nest
- Pollination systems
- How seeds are dispersed
- How geckos walk on walls

Based on these, I give students half an hour to think about what would happen if these strategies were applied in the human world. They then write a short text of their ideas and share it with the class.

81. In a first meeting with students, I propose short texts that are read together aloud. Once we have read, understood and commented on them, the students will choose words that they consider “beautiful” which become an archive of words to be used to compose future texts.

In a follow up meeting, I initiate a short brainstorming with the group on a theme to work on. The students have fifteen minutes during which they make at least three proposals.

At the end we discuss and collectively we evaluate the various proposals to then choose one. Students will have one hour to then write a poem on the theme chosen using the archive of words created in the first meeting.

82. I divide the class into small groups (4-6 students) and I ask each group to propose to the class at least 5 issues to deal with. The students have 15 minutes to come up with the 5 issues.

Each group will then choose at a random one of the problems to be solved and have to propose a solution following a set of questions and repeat each question at least 4 times:

What is the origin of the problem?

When did it happen?

How did it happen?

Who did it happen to and who caused it ?

The activity ends after an hour with the sharing of problems and solutions

83. The activity can be done with various food packaging.

At the beginning of the lesson, for example, I put an empty box of spaghetti on the desk. Students have two minutes to think about as many alternative uses as possible for the packaging.

(Some of the most creative suggestions of students were: use them for furnishing or as components in jewellery).

The activity could be expanded by dividing students into groups each of which is assigned a different use of the packaging, chosen at random from among those identified in the first phase. They are then given an hour to develop and create the alternative use of the item.

84. I imagined with the students in my class a country where people were unable to perceive colours.

For an hour we discussed together how this would impact on everyday life in such a situation. At the end most of them seemed to think that the thing most difficult to manage was how to interpret the traffic lights. Working in groups, I ask students to design a traffic system not based on colours.

In one hour they had to submit a written proposal to the rest of the class.

85. “What would happen if the café stopped serving coffee?”

It is a “what if” scenario that I use with students to stimulate ideas and creativity in writing. Initially, I leave them to reply freely to the question by writing their answers on the board. After about twenty minutes of work, I divide them into groups and I give them 5 of the written ideas in the first part selected at random. With these, I then give them an hour to write a script for a short film.

86. I divide the class into groups of three. I give them a common problem that most would know, for example, ‘how to reduce the number of homeless on the streets’.

Then, I assign to each group a familiar figure chosen from history, fiction, current affairs, or comics and they have to write how the character assigned would solve the problem. For example, what if Martin Luther King,

addressed the homeless problem? What if a Ninja Turtle would try to solve it? As an initial starting point, I suggest to the students to consider what particular skills that character has and would bring in solving the problem.

88. I divide the class into small groups (4-6 students). I invite each group to make a list of ten rules that they follow every day and I ask them to write these in a column on a page. Examples:

- Foods they may or they may not eat,
- What time they get up in the morning
- Which school schedule or work schedule they have.

After half an hour, I ask the various groups to discuss why they follow these “rules” and what could be done to alter the list. They then write in an adjacent column their answers.

89. I often use with my classes a technique first invented by the Surrealists in 1925 used to elicit subconscious images.

In this form of collaborative art, a piece of paper was folded in four, and four different artists contributed to the representation of a figure without seeing what the others were doing. It is a method to collectively build a collection of words or images.

In my class, for example, I ask a person to write a sentence on a theme on a piece of paper and then to fold it to hide the sentence and to pass it to the next person who will add their sentence on the theme and carry on to the next person, and so on. At the end there is a new text to work with in class.



90. I read the class a short news story. At the end I ask the students to choose 5/6 words of the text that have impressed them the most and to compose with those words a lullaby, or nursery rhyme, a song, a poem, etc.

91. This exercise is based on the idea of getting a new perspective starting from someone else's. The goal is to think as if you were someone else.

Participants are divided into small groups of four or five.

A problem is chosen. I then distribute a list of different occupations: lawyer, policeman, officer, accountant, pharmacist, doctor, butcher, or carpenter.

I ask participants to choose an occupation and to think like that person would stereotypically do in that position and to suggest the solution to the problem as that person possibly would.

The participants have to then orally present their solutions to the class.

92. This activity can be jointly carried out with the physical education teacher.

The class is given this task: "How could a football work if it was the shape of a cube?" In the first phase the students are left to freely express their ideas, simply writing their solutions on the board. Then they are divided into 4 groups. Each group is asked to choose 5 ideas from the board. They are then given 2 hours to develop and create, from the 5 chosen ideas, the rules for the game using a cubic ball.

At the end a game using the suggested rules can be trialled .

93. I take into class an assortment of mixed objects such as, pipe cleaners, clay, toy balls, plastic animals, books, light bulbs, bottles, watches, candles, etc.

I divide the class into small groups and each group is

given a choice of 5/6 objects from which they then have to then choose one.

The task of each group is to describe the object in detail, including the physical characteristics and how people behave when they use it. I insist on the importance of making the descriptions interesting so they are not limited to using single nouns. These descriptions will serve to stimulate ideas.

Based on these observations they then will have to develop at least 5 ideas using an object ,changing it from its conventional use.

94. In the English-language course I propose typical recipes for a Thanksgiving dinner using flash cards to present the ingredients and their history.

I then divide the class into two groups:

- The Settlers
- The Native Americans

The settlers have the task of rethinking the Thanksgiving lunch answering the question: "What would happen if turkeys became extinct?"

The Native Americans have the task to answer the question: "what would have happened if the settlers had forgotten not brought wheat seeds from Europe?"

95. For this activity I was inspired by the six thinking hats of De Bono.

I ask the students to form a circle and ask them to write on a card a problem they would like to be solved.

All cards are collected in a box from which in turn each student randomly chooses a card and reads the text aloud. The others, in turn, will try to give a solution inspired by the emotion written on the hat that I assign them at random.

Examples of hats:

- Hat of joy

- **Hat of Pain**
- **Amazement Hat**
- **Hat of sadness**
- **Hat of enthusiasm**

96. I read to the class the myth of Hades and Persephone. Then with a brief brainstorming session, I ask students to choose at least 10 keywords. Subsequently, I divide them into groups, each of which randomly picks two words amongst those identified in the brainstorming session. The task of each group is to rewrite the story questioning the 2 keywords using the technique “what if?” Examples:

- What would happen if Hades was abducted by Zeus?
- What would happen if Hades were to eat a banana instead of the pomegranate?

97. I prepare a set of phrases or thoughts to be written on cards that I put in a box. Examples:

- The room is blue
- The swallows are finally back
- Everything was suddenly very, very small
- He awoke in the body of an ant.

I read in class a short mystery story omitting the ending. Then I ask each student to think and write an ending inspired by the text written on the card picked at a random from the box.

98. I invite students to write in their notebooks a recipe typical of their country of origin. Then, I transcribe the individual ingredients on small cards, which will be put altogether in a box.

I divide the class into pairs or in small groups and give them the tasks to write a new recipe with 5/6 ingredients picked at random from the box.

Students can exchange their duplicate ingredients or those they have an excess of.

99. Often in science courses, I have to face problems related to the environment. After presenting the problem to the class, in this case global warming for example, I divide the students into groups. Each group has an hour during which they will have to produce a short written text proposing a solution to the problem following the inspiration of the pen that I will give them. The pens are inspired by the six hats of De Bono. Examples:

- The housewife’s pen
- The child’s pen
- The senior citizen’s pen
- The manager’s pen
- The animal’s pen

100. Using a fan style card set, write different topics/ stimuli on each part of the fan. Split the students into groups and in turns they have to come up with as many words and sentences as possible about each of the topics. Students then separate the part of the fan and place them on different tables where each group will bring their contributions. After this exercises all the answers are compared, extending students’ perspectives and knowledge when different answered are compared.



Activity idea credits

The preceding '100 activity ideas' were contributed by teachers and educators from around Europe. Each of them responded to an online survey relating to the use of creative thinking methods within their particular context(s).

After completing the survey, each educator was invited to submit a short description of an activity that use in the classroom. One hundred of these activities were selected for inclusion in this publication, and while they're not as comprehensive as other activity suggestions, we hope that you can elicit enough information from each to determine whether or not you can employ them in your own teaching, as they are or with modifications.

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