Training Package Vol 1

CREATIVE THINKING
IN LITERACY & LANGUAGE SKILLS
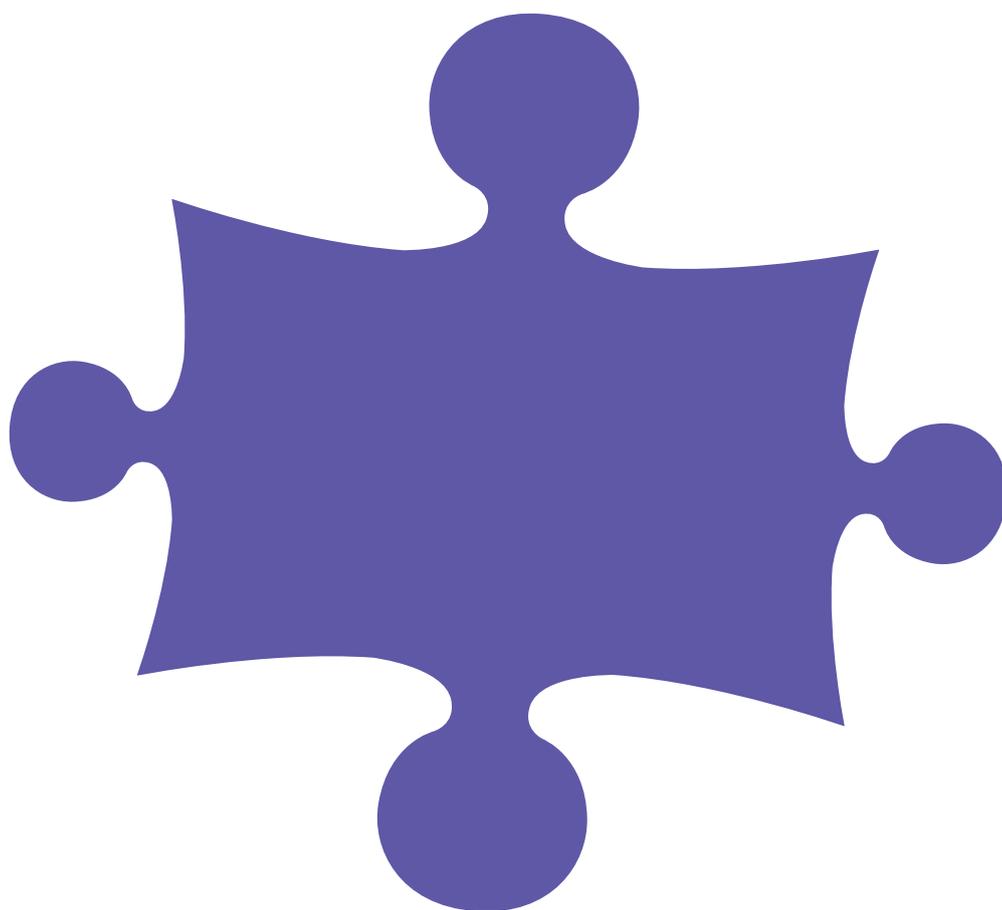
Art & Design

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About this Training Package

'Learning by doing' is a principle of effective learning that is as true in the learning of creative thinking as it is in any other subject.

While we may read the innumerable articles and web pages dedicated to the practice of creative thinking, it is not until we have sat down and confronted a problem, equipped with our various creative thinking tools, that we will actually learn how to apply the various techniques to generate creative outputs.

The accompanying Training Guidelines provide step-by-step instructions to enable learners to understand the basics for themselves OR for trainers / teachers to facilitate training sessions with the same objective.

The Training Guidelines are recommended as a starting point, as they provide a high degree of contextual information in support of the various creative thinking methods. However, for those who wish to either extend the teaching of the Training Guidelines through a series of semi-prescriptive activities, or for those who wish to start their creative thinking learning journey at the coal face (where the real work happens), this Training Package provides the support and tools required to do so.

Thematic topics

The training guidelines have been developed within four thematic topic areas.

- **Art & Design (Volume 1)**
- **Media (Volume 2)**
- **Narrative (Volume 3)**
- **Responsive learning (Volume 4)**

These topic areas are deemed to be appropriate to a wide range of foreign language and literacy learning situations, with readily available resources and extensive opportunities for on going development.

Each thematic topic activity set is contained in its own volume.

Activities

The training package contains a total of forty ready-to-use activities; ten activities per topic area.

Each activity has a title and activity number, 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 staring 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.

In the name of art

Thematic topic	Art & Design
Creative thinking method	Generation of alternatives
Primary skills addressed	Speaking, Looking
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	Selection or art images

Overview:

While the generation of alternatives is one of the simpler creative thinking techniques available to us, this does not make it any less powerful, particularly as it is designed to force our thinking beyond the obvious and predictable. Coupled with the setting of quotas (fixing a set amount of responses in advance) this technique can be effective in encouraging learners to generate new and authentic language in both foreign language and literacy contexts.

This activity is based on learners responding to various art pieces by assigning them appropriate or inappropriate titles based on some notional criteria, which can of course change through the exercise.

The generation of alternatives dictates that in any situation a multiple number of responses / ideas are generated in order to complete the task. The quota determines that number and with confident and/or enthusiastic learners, a time limit can be introduced to deliberately add a little pressure that might encourage some very 'different thinking'.

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Background information: Titling art

For an artist, titling their work can often be a daunting and difficult part of the creative process. There may be fear of choosing an inappropriate name that undermines the entire work, fear of a 'safe' title that fails to draw attention to the art, fear that the title may be considered uncreative or even boring, or worse, a title that overshadows the work. It is no surprise that many art works are left 'untitled'.

Despite the angst that artists may suffer, there are some pointers that can be followed to make the job of titling art a little less daunting, without being too prescriptive. The following guidelines are just that, guidelines, so use those that you think will be useful for this task and ignore those that you feel could be limiting.

In fact, you could consider all of these points with your learners and collectively determine the usefulness of these guidelines before you start the task.

• Consider what the artwork is about and write down words or short phrases that reinforce this idea.

• List adjectives that describe the artwork.

• After generating a few words think about and list synonyms.

• Write down what the 'big idea' is in the work (if there is one).

• Decide if the title should help others understand it or remain ambiguous.

• Think about why the artist might have created the work (beyond financial gain).

Activity:

As the facilitator you will need to either pre-select a range of artworks OR task your learners to bring in pictures of their most favourite (or least favourite) pieces of art. Keep in mind that painting is not the only form of art, sculptures and 'art objects' will work very well for this exercise.

Select the artworks that you wish to use for the activity and begin by presenting the first chosen artwork. If possible try to avoid presenting something that has a familiar or well-known title.

Note: If learners have thesauruses with them they should be encouraged to use them.

With a starting quota of 5, ask your learners to each provide this number of 'single word' titles that describe the artwork. Once this has been completed ask each learner to share at least one of their title suggestions, along with an explanation of why they think it is appropriate. At this stage the suggestions should conform to conventional naming.

Present the second piece of art and using a quota of 5 again, ask each learner to provide this number of 'phrasal' titles, in which multiple words (a short phrase or sentence) form the suggested title.

Repeat the activity with a third piece of art and a quota of 5 responses, asking your learners to provide single word or phrasal titles that contain at least one adjective.

From this point on the exercise can be repeated with different pieces or art and different conditions, such as:

Including celebrity names in the titles • using alliteration • creating humorous titles • creating titles that deliberately undermine the real intention of the work • being as 'creative' or original as possible • creating titles without real words • using words of one syllable only • creating overtly pretentious titles • being deliberately ambiguous • using very long words • being deceitful or ironic • using rhyming words • incorporating song titles • using antonyms • being cruel etc.

As you set different conditions (choose the ones you find most interesting) you may change the quota or introduce time limits.

You should also take the opportunity to generate additional conditions for use in the activity. This may be something you choose to undertake in advance, as the facilitator, or something that you engage your learners in doing.

It is important in this activity that after each round you allow learners to share their title suggestions, along with their reasons for selection, as this also provides an opportunity to discuss new vocabulary and language use.

Extended activities:

Ask your learners to identify a set number (perhaps 5) of non-art objects to bring into the next session. Repeat the art naming exercise with non-art objects, following the same guidelines as much as possible.

As a further extension, distribute the non-art objects (they may be pictures or actual objects) and ask learners to also 'title' the objects brought to class by their peers. The intention is to imbue the non-art objects with the same importance that serious art is given, all achieved by the use of emotive and persuasive language.

Conclude the session with a sharing of titles and a discussion relating to the power of language to frame or influence our thinking on a range of topics.

CREATIVE THINKING
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Photographic portrait

Thematic topic	Art & Design
Creative thinking method	Oblique thinking
Primary skills addressed	Speaking, listening
Secondary skills addressed	Writing
Resources required	None

Overview:

Since the invention of photography, the photographic portrait has long been a staple of professional and amateur photographers alike. What started out as a document of the lives of portrait subjects, has over the years been elevated to a status of fine art, with masterful exponents such as Steve McCurry, Irvine Penn and Arnold Newman (to name a few from many), helping to cement this status with their creative approaches to what can potentially be a monotonous practice.

While achieving the optimum technical standards is fundamental to most photographic portraits, what elevates photographers in the company of these above to greater heights, creating art, is the ability to fuse the character and physical aspects of the subject within a visual representation of their environment.

When challenged with the prospect of creating a photographic portrait, many people will opt for the traditional face forward, head and shoulder shot, perhaps within an environment associated with the subject. However, if one wants to produce a photographic portrait that is to be deemed more 'creative', there are processes that can be followed to avoid the ordinary.

One such process is oblique thinking.

Background Information: Oblique thinking

Brian Eno, the eminent music producer (working with the likes of U2, David Bowie, Coldplay, Paul Simon, Grace Jones) and former keyboard player with the band Roxy Music, is often credited with 'inventing' oblique thinking strategies. In reality his contribution was probably more to do with popularising the method through the publication of his 'oblique thinking cards'.

Eno claimed that bands and artists came to him for 'creative input' into their work, which in itself created certain pressures when working in a professional studio. As studio time was expensive and the bands / artists often wanted immediate results, Eno said that his creativity was often suppressed by the added pressure, resulting in him doing things that he had done before or that he knew would work.

He had noticed though that when he was out walking or relaxing, creative ideas came to him more readily. He decided to start making notes of the ideas that emerged during relaxation and he recorded these notes on small cards.

When he was in the studio in a creative work situation, he would take out his cards and choose one at random (random input) with a commitment to respond to what was written on the card (not being tempted to choose another) This was normally a cryptic instruction or suggestion, that could be interpreted quite broadly.

Here are some examples of Eno's oblique thinking cards. Even though they were conceived in relation to music production and composition, try to imagine how they might support your creativity within your own field:

'Emphasise repetition'

'Work at a different speed'

'Not building a wall but making a brick'

These types of oblique thinking strategies are really another random input method, however as Eno attempted to do (this may not always be obvious) you can relate them a little more specifically to the area that you are working in; taking care not to be prescriptive

A subject-specific set of oblique thinking starting points was created some years ago by a lecturer in visual design, working with students in areas such as illustration, photography, graphic design, animation / film etc. By observing existing examples of 'creative' visual communication and identifying dominant approaches or ideas in each example, a list of oblique strategies was created. The approach was less cryptic than the original Eno cards and in many cases a single word was meaningful enough for a visual designer to respond to effectively.

Activity:

As a conceptual exercise (your learners are not expected to produce the visual work), ask your learners to work in small groups and to consider the following 'visual design brief'. Approach the brief from the starting point of one of the oblique thinking cues provided below. Use a randomising technique to assign an oblique thinking cue from the list below and avoid letting your learners choose or even swap their oblique starting point.

The outcome of the activity is a fairly detailed description of how the portrait will be created and what it will look like, with a clear link to the oblique thinking cue and the subject to be photographed. Each group should present one written description.

Design brief: Create a photographic portrait of a celebrity responding to your assigned oblique strategy. Learners can choose their celebrity, though this should be done right at the start of the exercise and before they have received their oblique thinking cue. The portrait should be creative in that it presents more than just the head and shoulders of the subject. Use the oblique thinking cue to make associations with the life and / or work of the subject.

Oblique thinking cues:

- Explore the fantasy
- Simplify the main elements
- Colour is king
- Collage of elements
- Silhouettes are more immediate
- Create a mask
- It's all in the lines
- How would an artist approach it
- Hiding in the shadows
- Create a sequence

Extended activities:

In this exercise there are at least two opportunities for extending the activity.

The first is to ask your learners to create a list of oblique thinking cues for themselves, of for use by others. As the language used is deliberately cryptic, suggestive at best, you may need to guide your learners more than is usual. Achieving success in this more difficult task may be a worthwhile reward.

The second opportunity is to repeat the exercise with a different design brief, such as the packaging design for a new perfume (this could be a celebrity perfume) or an illustration for a political party. Alternatively the learners could be invited to write their own short design brief for use by themselves or others.

New curator

Thematic topic	Art & Design
Creative thinking method	Random input
Primary skills addressed	Reading, writing
Secondary skills addressed	Speaking
Resources required	Worksheet (see below)

Overview:

A visit to the museum is a simple-to-organise task that can be used for various purposes in the foreign language or literacy classroom. Even tough most language/ literacy teachers tend to use visits to museums as the basis for culturally-oriented tasks, there are other opportunities to create engaging classes that can exist before, during and after the visit. Such tasks can be tailored to suit learner competencies. This activity allows for adaptation from beginner upwards.

The following tasks are prepared for 3 stages of responsive learning: pre-visit activities, visit activities and post-visit activities.

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Activity: pre-visit

Prepare a worksheet with instructions on how to get to the site. For language learners prepare the instructions in the target language. You may prepare 'alternative' worksheets so that each pair / team / group has a different set of instructions for getting to the museum. You may choose to be 'creative' in this initial exercise

Suggestion: You could ask learners to prepare instructions for each other, though you should check each set of instructions for accuracy before re-assigning them to other groups. This type of exercise can be more challenging by setting conditions, such as 'complete at least 5 left turns on this journey' or 'travel without spending money'. Encourage learners to be inventive if you choose this approach.

In addition to the directional instructions, set additional tasks to be carried out 'en route'. The following are suggestions that you can use, though feel free to adapt, add or replace to suit your learner group and/or current learning objectives:

• List all types of shops you passed by on the way to the museum.

• You have passed by a city clock. What was the time on the clock?

• How many blue cars have you seen on the way? etc.

Learners should keep a record of the results of their 'en route' tasks.

Activity: visit

Familiarise yourself with the exhibits at the museum and prepare questions / tasks for each of the groups. Again keep the learner level in mind when formulating this element.

Here are some questions / tasks that can be used for beginner level learners, though again you're encouraged to adapt, add or replace to best suit your learning needs:

• Find a painting that was painted by someone from Germany / Holland / France and describe what you see in the painting? List the thing(s) that you like about the painting? How does viewing this painting make you feel?

• Find a painting that shows something that has a round shape (or other shape). What is in the painting? Can you think of an alternative name for this painting?

• Find a painting that contains at least one animal. Who else is in the painting? What is the relationship between the person and the animal(s)? What could be happening or about to happen?

• Find a painting with either an old or a young person. Without reading the title imagine who this person could be. What could their name be? Where do they live? What is the person doing in the picture? Why?

• Find the objects that you think are the smallest, the biggest and the most valuable in the museum. What are these objects? What is their purpose or use? Using your imagination, what else could they be used for?

• Find an object of a specific colour or material (red, black, white blue or ceramic, wood, metal etc.). When and where was this object made? Why was it made? Imagine who might have owned this object? What was the relation between the maker and the owner? How do you think this object came to be in the museum?

• Find a glass object or item of jewellery. When and where was that made? Who do you imagine would have made this piece and why? Who do you think owned this object and how did they come to own it?

• Find an object that you associate with a particular word (such as 'summer', 'joy', 'sadness', 'celebration', 'death', 'important'? Describe the object and explain why you have made this association.

Each learner / team / group should have more than one task on their worksheet.

Immediately after the visit, find a place where learners can sit down and work on their answers. Encourage them to elaborate on their responses, providing additional detail.

Activity: post-visit

Option 1: Imagine you are a new curator of the museum. Visitor numbers are decreasing. You need to design a new museum leaflet to attract more people. You need to mention all of the objects that you have 'found' during the visit task. The leaflet has to be informative (what can be seen in the museum), and should also appealing to the audience. Encourage learners to use short phrases, rather than full sentences in the leaflet, as well as to use visual aids (different fonts, combination of text and images etc.). Learners need to remember to include 'essential data' in the leaflet (museum address, working hours, entrance fee etc.). On completion learners can review each others' leaflets, pointing out similarities and differences and where possible, offering suggestions for improvement.

Option 2: Imagine you are a new curator of the museum. You are preparing a new exhibition. The title of the exhibition should be taken from the following list OR with some other randomly assigned title:

• Our museum is the key to your happiness

• Boiling hot

• Food for thought

• What's old is new

• Crossing borders

Titles similar to those above can be generated via an online random word generator.

Once a title has been decided, ask the learners to 'design' the exhibition. In this they should think about how their collected paintings and objects can be contextualised to support the exhibition. They can also include objects and paintings that they saw during the visit but didn't document. Once the exhibition has been designed (conceptually) the learners should create an advertisement. The advertisement could be for print (posters, newspapers etc.) or for radio or television.

CREATIVE THINKING
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Statements on art

Thematic topic	Art & Design
Creative thinking method	**Challenging assumptions**
Primary skills addressed	**Reading, writing**
Secondary skills addressed	**Speaking**
Resources required	**Art statements** (optional)

Overview:

As the field of art has evolved as a truly global business, the need to commercialise the main disciplines, has led to a specific and often esoteric language. The 'language' of art could be criticised for its use of academic terms and concepts, making it difficult for the average person to access or appreciate this area of communication.

It should perhaps be added, that the defence of this linguistic position is often based on a necessity for academic language to explain or explore academic concepts, though the more cynical may suggest that maintaining a sense or elitism helps to maintain market values in the art world.

Irrespective of the position you adopt, the result of such writing is a wealth of material that can be interrogated as a means to support a deeper understanding of language use.

Within the creative thinking suite of methods is an interrogative approach known as 'challenging assumptions'. It takes a statement as a starting point and then systematically asks questions to test the validity of the various elements that make the statement. The premise of this activity is that many statements about art rely on the reader not questioning the validity of the ideas, accepting what may in fact be assumptions.

Background information: Critiquing art

As with many critical investigations, critiquing art can benefit from following a series of structured questions, particularly in the early stages of practice. Below is a series of such questions that is sufficient to introduce even the novice or inexperienced art viewer, to this satisfying practice.

In critiquing art it is important to avoid stating what is 'liked' or 'disliked' (personal opinion), trying to focus more on objective analysis.

- What do you think is the most important aspect of this work, explaining what it is that made you come to this decision?

- What else seems to be important within this work, again with an explanation of what it is that makes you think this?

- What do you think the artist is trying to communicate through this work, stating 'how' you think that artist has attempted to communicate this idea, or ideas?

- How does the medium (painting, sculpture, photography, drawing etc.) support the communication of the work?

- Describe how the artwork makes you feel and explain 'why' it makes you feel this way?

- If you were to give this piece of art a title, what would it be? Explain why have you chosen this name.

Activity:

The activity begins by presenting learners with one (or a series) of statements about artwork, or the business of art itself; many people have attempted to define what art is.

Learners are asked to break the statement down into its various elements and to determine if something is factually accurate, or rather an assumption or personal opinion.

When assumptions are identified, learners are asked to consider what it is that the author actually means.

At this point, learners are tasked with recreating the statement, using a simpler form of words (usually) and avoiding making new assumptions. In some cases, this may require using more words than the original statement. The objective is to create an accurate and defensible statement.

Drawing never dies, it holds on by the skin of its teeth, because the hunger it satisfies is apparently immortal

The statement above was made by the eminent art theorist and critic Robert Hughes. While his work is wide reaching, in this abridged quote he speaks specifically about drawing.

There are a number of assumptions made within the statement that can be identified with a little deliberate consideration, as illustrated below.

Things that the statement assumes:

•   For drawing never to die it assumes that drawing is a living entity, which it isn't.

•   For drawing to hold on by 'the skin of its teeth' (which is a figurative expression) it implies (therefore assuming) that drawing is a conscious entity, rather than a conscious act, and that drawing has a will.

•   The final assumption made in the statement is that the 'hunger it satisfies', presumably within the person making the drawing(s), is immortal. Neither human nor drawing are immortal.

While there are no definitive solutions to these type of activities, the following provides an indicative solution to the above problem:

Drawing is a practice that is likely to be maintained in the art world, as it creates a sense of satisfaction within those that practice it. As long as people practice art, drawing is likely to continue.

Examples of existing statements relating to art:

•   Art is the Queen of all sciences communicating knowledge to all the generations of the world.

•   She presents a group of sculptural works that aims at a void that signifies precisely the non-being of what it represents

•   Moments are depicted that only exist to punctuate the human drama in order to clarify our existence and to find poetic meaning in everyday life.

•   Art does not reproduce what is visible; it makes things visible.

•   The inherent visual seductiveness, along with the conciseness of the exhibitions, further complicates the reception of their manifold layers of meaning.

•   Art is a discovery and development of elementary principles of nature into beautiful forms suitable for human use.

•   Art begins with resistance — at the point where resistance is overcome. No human masterpiece has ever been created without great labour.

•   Art is a jealous mistress, and, if a man has a genius for painting, poetry, music, architecture, or philosophy, he makes a bad husband, and an ill provider.

Extended activities:

Using the guide above as a starting point to critique art, provide your learners with some art examples. Ask each learner to critique the artwork they have been provided with. The outcomes should be written.

You may see this as an opportunity to arrange a visit to an art gallery, allowing learners to view and then select the artworks that they wish to critique.

Ask each learner to make a statement about the art they have critiqued, something that could accompany the artwork in a gallery. Repeat the main activity by sharing these 'new' statements with other learners. The learners will be challenging the assumptions made by their peers, before rewriting the statements to rely less on assumptions.

Greetings cards

Thematic topic	Art & Design
Creative thinking method	Forced associations
Primary skills addressed	Speaking, listening
Secondary skills addressed	Writing, drawing
Resources required	Internet access

Overview:

There is a very long history to the exchanging of greeting cards, stretching back to ancient Chinese culture, when people exchanged greetings cards to celebrate the new year. There is also evidence of people exchanging greetings cards (on papyrus scrolls) amongst the early Egyptians

The history of greetings cards in Europe can be traced back to around 1400AD, with evidence of woodcut printed cards being exchanged in Germany, and handmade paper valentine's cards being sent in various parts of Europe from the mid-fifteenth century. Around this time greetings cards would have been expensive.

During the nineteenth century, and due to advances in mechanised printing techniques, greetings cards were transformed into relatively inexpensive and affordable forms of greeting, leading to their ubiquitous use throughout the world today.

Greetings cards now exist for all types of occasions, even to 'celebrate' divorce, and in each case they attempt to convey a particular sentiment.

This activity is based on creating greetings cards that convey a certain sentiment, though the design of the card will be informed by the visual elements contained in artwork. Learners will be tasked with generating ideas for a number of different greeting cards, using the creative thinking method of forced association, which is based on a random input technique.

Activity:

As pre-activity task, assign your learners the task of viewing art online. This can be done by searching the artwork pages of large galleries (such as MOMA) or alternatively just searching for paintings in Google images. Other terms can be used to provide different search results, such as, 'oils'. 'watercolour', 'acrylic' or 'landscape', 'abstract', 'expressionism', 'animals' etc. Advise your learners to look primarily for paintings, though in some cases sculpture and drawings could be included.
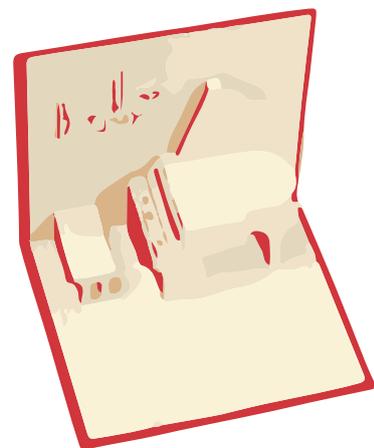
Each learner is to select five images which they particularly like. This could be based on the style, the colours, the visual elements contained in the artwork. Each learner should be able to say why they chose each artwork. Finally they should number their choices from one to five; it is important to keep a note of these number associations. While images can be printed, it is advisable to 'bookmark' them in a web browser and relate the numbering system to each image by name or general description. However, they will need to looked at again by your learners, so choose the most appropriate method for you.

The greeting card activity should start with a general discussion about greetings cards, asking learners why they think people send them, and also asking learners to list as many types of greeting card occasions they can think of.

Below is a pre-prepared list of occasions that are commonly celebrated with greetings cards. During your discussion with learners try to add to the list below, even if some of the suggestions are unusual or unexpected, still include them. Only reveal this list after the discussion and suggestions.

Birthday – Wedding anniversary – New baby – Get well – Sympathy – Engagement – Wedding – Bridal shower – Congratulations (exams, driving test, job etc.) – Thank you – Friendship – Love – Bon voyage – Christmas – Valentines day – Mothers day – Fathers day – Sorry – Thinking of you – New home – Saints' days – Divorce – Halloween – Easter

Once you have a comprehensive list of greetings cards occasions (from above or your own) randomly assign at least three occasions to each learner. As an example, learner one may have 'wedding, friendship, sympathy', while learner two has 'thank you, bon voyage and Valentines day'.

The first part of the task is to generate appropriate words that could be added to this type of greeting card. To do this ask each learner to consider the sentiment of the card and then generate as many suitable adjectives as they can for that card. Follow this exercise by asking your learners to generate any verbs that would be appropriate to that type of card. Verbs can be applied to the sender (I'm sorry…) or the receiver (Hope you do well…). The adjectives and verbs for each card should be arranged in two columns.

The learner should choose words from these lists, and create two messages. The first is the message that will appear on the front of the greeting card, which is normally very short and sometimes quite obvious (such as 'get well'), while the second is the message that will appear inside the card. This task should attempt to employ the most appropriate words to convey the sentiment of the card. The message inside the card is typically, perhaps a few lines and sometimes a rhyme… though not always.

The final stage of the task is to return to the artwork images that were selected, choosing one of the five images at random using the numbers the images were assigned. The random selection is an important factor in this process. By studying this selected image, the learner should look for visual ideas (colours, shapes, patterns, objects, people etc.) that can visibly influence the design of their greetings card. For example the colour scheme may be bright and lively and appropriate for a happy occasion, or the dark shadows may be more fitting if a condolence or sympathy card is being designed.

For more visually-confident learners, you may ask them to make the final greeting card with their visual design concept and selected text. For those that are less confident in visual design, they can present their text and a description and/or rationale for their visual design choices.

Extended activities:

As we have seen from the list above, there are many occasions that are celebrated by the exchanging of greetings cards, including some that may appear to somewhat inappropriate; despite which they still exist. Taking this idea forward you can have some fun with developing ideas for alternative occasions that 'could' be celebrated by exchanging greetings cards.

Asking your learners to work in small groups of between three and five members, use a random word generator to introduce a starting point. From this word your learners are required to generate at least ten related ideas that could be celebrated with a greetings card. Encourage learners to be creative and allow for outlandish and silly ideas if they are put forward. At the end of the round let the learners choose, through discussion, the greetings card that they think would have the most market potential.

CREATIVE THINKING
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Character art review

Thematic topic	Art & Design
Creative thinking method	**Thinking hats**
Primary skills addressed	**Speaking, looking**
Secondary skills addressed	**Reading, writing**
Resources required	**Selection or art images**

Overview:

The review or criticism of art is most often carried by professional critics or academics. Their particular experiences of the world and life, naturally colours their interpretation and description of the art work.

For this activity this convention is challenged, by asking learners to critique art works from the position of a different character.

The activity is based on a well established approach to creative thinking called the 'six thinking hats'. The method was proposed by creative thinking exponent Edward De Bono, providing a management tool that ensures team or group members work collaboratively rather than in opposition.

To achieve this type of collaboration, the participants assume different roles at different stages of the meeting / session, with each role requiring a specific approach.

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Background information: Six thinking hat's roles

The notion or wearing a particular colour hat while engaging in this method is symbolic rather than literal. A facilitator may announce that 'the task in hand should now be approached wearing our blue hat' or 'green hat'. At such a time, each participant mentally adjusts their position and focuses on what the particular colour hat requires in terms of a response type.

The colours of the thinking hats and their contribution requirements is as follows:

White hat: The White Hat calls for information known or needed. "The facts, just the facts."

Yellow hat: The Yellow Hat symbolises brightness and optimism. Under this hat you explore the positives and probe for value and benefit.

Black hat: The Black Hat is judgment - the devil's advocate or why something may not work. Spot the difficulties and dangers, where things might go wrong. Probably the most powerful and useful of the Hats, but a problem if overused.

Red hat: The Red Hat signifies feelings, hunches and intuition. When wearing this hat you can express emotions and feelings and share fears, likes, dislikes, loves, and hates.

Green hat: The Green Hat focuses on creativity; the possibilities, alternatives, and new ideas. It's an opportunity to express new concepts and new perceptions.

Blue hat: The Blue Hat is used to manage the thinking process. It's the control mechanism that ensures the Six Thinking Hats guidelines are observed.

Activity:

Within this activity it is the act of taking no on a specific role that is important, rather than following the original model. Instead of assuming a coloured hat, learners will symbolically wear the hat of a particular character.

The activity is designed to work best as part of a visit to a gallery, though it can be delivered using images in a classroom.

If a visit is possible you can ask learners to look around the gallery and choose their favourite or least favourite artwork. You may set some guidelines if you want certain examples to be included, such as specifying an art movement or a period.

Once each learner has selected their specific artwork you can then assign them a character to play, effectively a thinking hat. Once their character is known, they should consider how they can review the artwork selected in the style of their character. Written notes are encouraged as a plan for the presentation of their art review.

This type of role-play interpretation may include a certain style of language, particular vocabulary and expressions. These elements should be reflected as each learner presents a critique / review of the artwork that they have chosen. The class can then be invited to comment on how effectively each presenter has played their character.

This type of role-play demands that learners explore language use outside of their own experience and common usage. It may not always be factually accurate or authentic, though a recognition of how different characters communicate through language is important.

Suggestions for characters are as follows, though of course you and/or your learners could nominate alternative characters to add to the pool:

- Football manager
- Politician
- Poet
- Scientist
- Weather man / woman
- Comedian
- Auctioneer
- Therapist
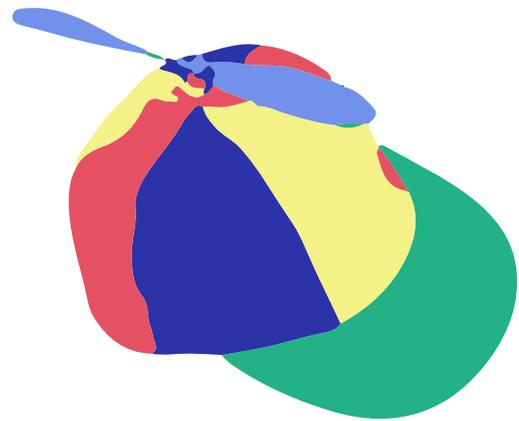
Extended activities:

As already suggested, the pool of available characters could be expanded or changed, as nominating characters relies on an awareness of particular language use.

Additionally the nature of the presentation could be changed, introducing other forms for review, such as a play, a film, a book, or even a product.

CREATIVE THINKING
IN LITERACY & LANGUAGE SKILLS

Creative collage

Thematic topic	**Art & Design**
Creative thinking method	**Oblique thinking**
Primary skills addressed	**Speaking, writing**
Secondary skills addressed	**Reading**
Resources required	**Internet access, image editing software OR printer, glue, scissors**

Overview:

A collage is an art production technique based on the assembling of different, often unrelated forms, in order to construct a new whole. It is important to note that the final collage is often considered greater than the sum of its parts. The origins of collage can be traced back hundreds of years though it is fair to say that it was during the twentieth century that it was most widely used as a completed art form.

Collages are quite easy to make using printed imagery from magazines, old books, packaging etc. or for more choice, images printed from the internet. The traditional method for collage creation has been to cut out physical imagery and paste / glue it on a board or sheet of paper, while computers offer the option of creating collages on screen by virtually cutting out and pasting imagery. What's more important than the technique used, is the meaning that the final image contains.

In this activity learners will have the opportunity to create at least one collage, which will be subsequently used as the starting point for a separate activity.

Background information: Creating a thematic art collage

The technical requirements for creating a collage are covered above and so this set of guides is to inform learners of how to create a communicative art collage, in which the meaning is important.

• Start with a theme for your collage, choosing something that you feel is a worthwhile message. For example, an 'anti war' collage or a 'Valentines day' collage.

• Decide whether your position (message) is for or against the chosen theme.

• Create a mind map (or similar) of the key words or ideas that you would like to present through your collage

• Write a list of the 'ideal' imagery that you could use for this collage – keeping in mind that collage often involves compromise and adjustment in image use.

• Source / select your imagery

• With the available imagery, think about how different images will be perceived when placed together – are they complementary or oppositional? (Sometimes opposition can work)

• Use scale to determine the hierarchy or importance of imagery – make things more important bigger or more prominent

• Before fixing your imagery, lay out the various elements and try a few compositional arrangements – ask others for their views too, based on your intended communication.

• Digital photography can be used to 'capture' many variations of a collage before fixing it permanently (if at all)
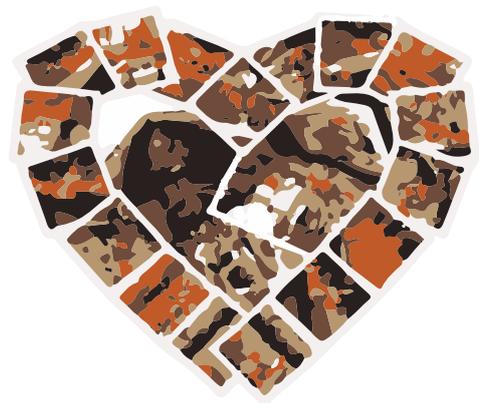
Activity:

While art collages often relate to pre-determined themes (the message), in this activity the collage will be created based on a set of randomly generated images. Using a random image generation tool online OR prepare a pack of imagery cut from magazines, old books, packaging (or similar) assign each learner a total of ten images.

The following are links to online random image generators, though you may find alternatives:

http://photo.net/photodb/random-photo?category=NoNudes

http://writingexercises.co.uk/random-images.php

Following the guidelines below, in terms of composing a collage and not those related to a specific theme, ask each learner to create a 'meaningful' collage based on the images that they have been assigned.

Once the collage is complete ask each learner to answer the following questions, keeping a record of their five answers:

- What is the main idea / concept within your collage?
- What emotion do you think your collage evokes in a viewer?
- What adjective would you use to describe your collage?
- What is the most important image element in your collage?
- What single word title would you give to your collage?

For the following writing exercise you have the option of one of three forms of writing, depending on the level of your learners and your learning objectives.

Option 1: Ask your learners to create a poem that relates the five elements from their list. As the teacher / instructor you should determine the length of the poem and any particular rules on form, if you feel any are necessary.

Option 2: Ask your learners to write a essay style magazine article that could use the collage as an illustration. The style should be journalistic and the article should contain references to the five items on the learner's list.

Option 3: Ask your learners to plan and/or write a short story that integrates the five elements included on their particular list.

Extended activities:

As your learners are now familiar with the process of creating a collage, you can invite them to extend their practice by creating an art collage as described in the guidelines above.

The key difference is the starting point of a specific theme, which can be defined by each learner OR set by you to answer one or a number of learning needs, in relation to a current topic for example.

Whatever your starting approach, ask each learner to present their final thematic collage via a verbal and visual presentation.

CREATIVE THINKING
IN LITERACY & LANGUAGE SKILLS

Comic books

Thematic topic	Art & Design
Creative thinking method	**Associative thinking**
Primary skills addressed	**Writing**
Secondary skills addressed	**Reading**
Resources required	**Comic book app or paper comic book template & images**

Overview:

Associative thinking is a key element in a number of creative thinking methods. It is perhaps most significant during formal brainstorming activities and the slightly more focussed, oblique thinking activities. It relies on new ideas being formed in response to emerging stimuli, as the human brain naturally makes familiar associations with new information.

The comic book form is often used in both literacy and language learning, as it allows for visual cues to aid the recognition of new written language. However, with the inclusion of a creative thinking element, it can become a far more personalised learning tool.

This activity can be undertaken as a reading and writing exercise, or it can include elements of drawing and/or photography. It can also be undertaken as a free-flowing writing activity, or it can be controlled to a greater or lesser degree by the teacher, when specific language concepts are to be learnt and practised.

Digital comic book tools:

There is a wide range of comic book tools available on desktop and tablet computers. 'Comic life' is one of the more popular comic book creation apps, available for Windows, Macintosh and iOS.

If you do not have access to a digital comic book tool you can create comic book templates on paper, which can then be photocopied for distribution.

www.creativethinkingproject.eu

Background information: Comic book authoring

While most learners will be familiar with comic books as readers, it is worth considering a few guidelines when beginning to create original comic books. The following points should also be useful for teachers developing material for one or all of these activities.

- **Apply logic:** Keep in mind that a visual narrative follows a logical process. It is unwise to assume that a user knows something that they have not been explicitly told, unless it is a constant in the real world, such as gravity.

- **Key moments:** When creating imagery, attempt to capture the key moment of an action. If a balloon is popped, represent the moment the pin is entering the balloon, or the moment the balloon actually pops. Ensure the cause of the incident is known, such as showing someone holding a pin.

- **Communicate with images:** Each image in a comic book should communicate a definite meaning. If the image intends to depict a character as 'old', then the elements that signify this (stooped posture, white hair, walking stick, wrinkles etc.) should be emphasised.

- **Word forms:** Words in comic books appear either as captions, providing additional context, or within a speech bubble assigned to a character. Speech bubbles can indicate different things depending on their form. Rounded solid lines for normal speech, jagged edges for shouting or alarm, dotted line edges for whispering, and even cloud like bubbles with intermittent tails for presenting a character's thoughts in writing. Try to apply these conventions.

- **Framing / composition**: Related to communication, how an image is framed can have a dramatic effect on the meaning. As rule of thumb, focus on what is necessary. To establish a scene / location, use a wide image from a distance. To communicate a character's emotional response, frame the image close to the face. To show an action such as a pick-pocket theft, frame the image on the thief's hand. If an object is important to stimulate dialogue, prioritise it in the frame.
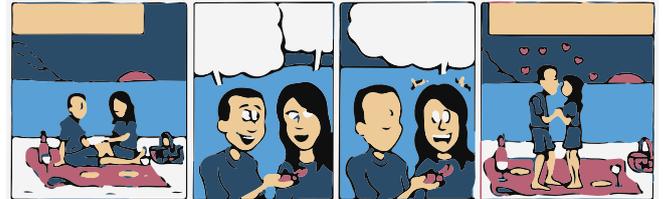
Activity:

Variant 1: Using a digital comic book tool or similar, create a visual narrative sequence containing at least two characters and requiring dialogue for the visual sequence to be understood. Determine a suitable number of images for the sequence, with 10 being a lower limit. This ensures there is enough potential for the dialogue to develop. If you want particular themes to feature in the narrative, ensure that they feature within your visual imagery. Provide the visual template to two (or more) learners and ask them to assume the role of a character from the visual sequence provided.

Their task is to develop a coherent written dialogue by adding speech bubbles to the comic book. However, rather than discussing and agreeing on the complete dialogue, learner 1 inserts the first dialogue bubble and learner 2 has to make an appropriate response by associating the dialogue with the image sequence. Learner 1 then responds to the dialogue offered by learner 2, again without discussion. This pattern continues until the comic book dialogue is completed.

Activity variant 2: This second variant follows a similar format to activity 1, though the teacher takes more control by inserting key dialogue at strategic points in the comic book. While learners 1 and 2 still take turns in responding to previous dialogues, the teacher is able to guide the learners towards particular dialogue or conversations. This may be useful to encourage the use of certain vocabulary or grammar.

Activity variant 3: Similar again to activity 1 in that learners respond to previous dialogues, with the added element of learners also generating their own visual elements. This works best for drawn comic books, as the visual elements are not limited by their availability to be photographed. In this activity learners are not only making associations with words but also with images. More time is required to deliver this activity.

Activity variant 4: The final variant is one in which a learner uses a comic book tool to create a complete visual narrative using photography (drawing can be time consuming), which is then offered to a different learner to determine an appropriate dialogue. In this way each learner is still responding to the ideas of another learner, and as such is engaged in associative thinking throughout.

Extended activities:

Similar activities can be undertaken using video media. In such cases dialogue is spoken and recorded over a video sequence. It can be used as in activity 1 with each learner responding to the previous narration OR a video segment can be shot as the element to be respond to, with each learner taking turns until a visual narrative has been developed. Logic should be used as a key criterion for developing any visual narrative sequence.

Photocode

Thematic topic	Art & Design
Creative thinking method	**Random input**
Primary skills addressed	**Reading, speaking**
Secondary skills addressed	**Writing**
Resources required	**Selection or art images and digital projector**

Overview:

The popularity of mobile phones and tablet computers, means that most people in the developed world have relatively easy access to some form of photographic camera. What digital cameras / phones also offer, is an endless supply of photo taking and editing opportunities, that did not exist in the past with the costs associated with film-based cameras. It has been said that in the current technological age, anyone can be a photographer…though criteria concerning quality are often left out of the equation.

Quality aside, you can make good use of digital / phone cameras as a way to engage learners in their external environments and to add another dimension to their learning. While it is not essential, having access to a digital projector to present digital photographs can help in certain situations, removing the time and cost burdens of printing.

In this activity learners will make their own photography based on certain vocabulary and word types, assigned through a random input process.

Random input relies on an external and initially unrelated element being brought into a creative situation. As the human brain is adept at making connections between otherwise disparate concepts and things, the method relies on this process to generate new directions for ideas.

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Activity:

Begin the activity by presenting a series of images to your learners. Ask them to discuss the images in terms of what they communicate or why they have been created. You will need to think about this in your choices, though Google images or some old magazines should provide suitable images to get started.

After discussing each image ask learners to list as many adjectives as they can, that could be used to describe the image. Repeat this exercise for four or five images until each learner has quite a long list of adjectives.

Record the adjectives that the learners have suggested and then re-assign them at random to different learners. Each learner should have a total of five adjectives. It doesn't matter if learners have the same words as other learners, as long as they have five unique words themselves.

The following task is for your learners to leave the classroom with a photographic device (mobile phone or similar) and to find objects, people, situations etc. that relate directly to one of the adjectives on their lists. They should take the necessary photos, remembering that may choose to take many photographs in any situation and choose the 'best' one later. The photo should attempt to be a visual definition or exemplar of the adjective

When all learners are back in the classrooms with their photographs, they should present them and ask other learners to guess which adjective their picture represents. Although it's not important for it to be a competition, the learners with the most accurately guessed associations have probably done the best job.

Depending on the quality of the images, you could set up a small photographic exhibition in the classroom.

Extended activities:

The extended activity in this case is perhaps as long as the main activity, though it should be considered as a way of further developing coded visual language.

Ask your learners to either write a short story OR use a story that they have created for another purpose. From this written story they should create a photographic sequence that attempts to re-tell the story through visuals.

You may allow your learners to add captions to images, but avoid learners re-writing the story at the side of the visuals. Essentially, if the photographs were taken away, the story should lose its meaning entirely.

Again ask learners to present their photographic sequences, clicked through on a digital projector, and ask other learns to try and decode the meaning of the story.

CREATIVE THINKING
IN LITERACY & LANGUAGE SKILLS

Visual debate

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Thematic topic	**Art & Design**
Creative thinking method	**Associative thinking**
Primary skills addressed	**Speaking, listening**
Secondary skills addressed	**Writing**
Resources required	**Internet access and digital projector**

Overview:

Associative thinking is a key element in a number of creative thinking methods. It is perhaps most significant during formal brainstorming activities and the slightly more focussed, oblique thinking activities. It relies on new ideas being formed in response to emerging stimuli, as the human brain naturally makes familiar associations with new information.

This activity is based on learners responding to various artworks to inform points to be made for a class debate. The process of debating has long been used as a means of furthering discussions and arguments, however it can also be used as a way to promote use of language through verbal communication, within a lively and competitive setting. AS a teacher you will find some useful tips at the end of activity, aimed at supporting your delivery of the task.

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Background information: Conducting a class debate

• Introduce the point – which is the point that the two debate teams will argue either for or against.

• Assign two 'teams' – indicating which team should argue 'for' and which team should argue 'against'

• Provide time for developing arguments – each team needs to prepared, which may include some research, but will certainly include team discussions and planning.

• Ensure time is maintained - following the basic debate structure of first team argues the positive / supportive case (2 minutes), followed by the team arguing against the point (2 minutes). Time is then allowed for each team to discuss what has been said, and then the process is reversed. The team arguing against the point has two minutes to speak, followed by the team supporting the point having two minutes to speak.

• Make the final judgement – as the facilitator of the debate you should award a 'winner' based on the strength of the argument(s) and supporting evidence. If you have an audience for the debate… allow the audience to vote for a winner.
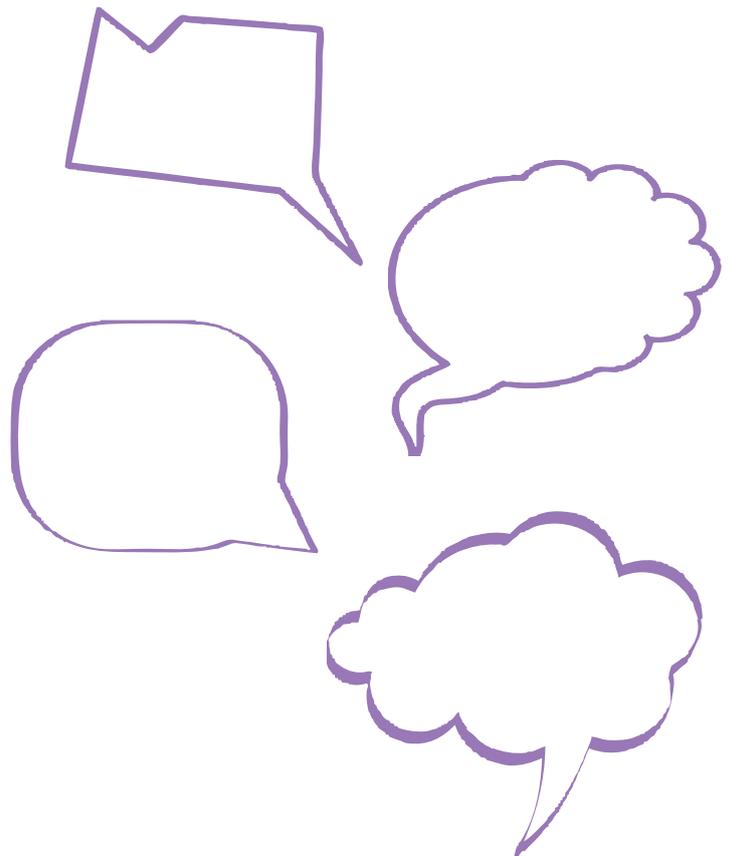
Activity:

While the idea of a class debate is certainly not a new one, the preparation and arguing process in this activity is different.

You should introduce a point to the class as an asserted fact, in this case 'City living is better than rural living'. While you can choose alternative topics for this type of debate, you will see that choices are slightly constrained by the availability of visual evidence in art objects; drawings, paintings and photography.

Decide on how you wish to divide the class into teams, which could be two halves of the class, or you may choose smaller teams to make up a series of debates. If this is the case you will need to devise additional 'points' to debate.

With two teams decide on which team is arguing for the point proposed, and which is arguing against the point, allowing both teams time to gather research and visual evidence.

This is where the conventional debating model is altered, as each team are required to make their case on evidence that they can find within artworks, primarily drawings, paintings and photography.

In the case of this example, it is likely that learners will find images of the city that depict hope, aspiration, luxury, modernity, progress etc. while the opposing team may seek images of the city that show decay, famine, pollution, crime, corruption etc.

The timings for a conventional debate format should be adhered to, though your learners are required to speak alongside of visual imagery, explaining in each case what the artwork contains to support the particular argument. Points made without visual evidence or support should be ignored.
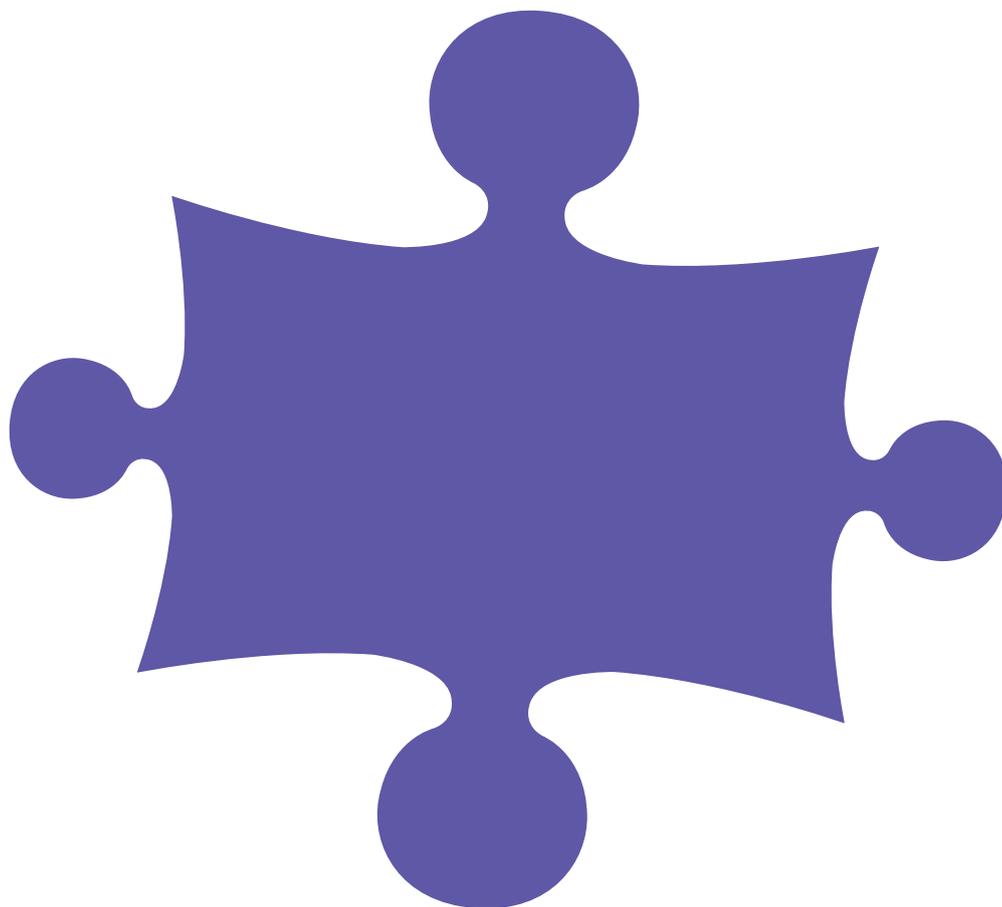
It is important that after the first two speeches, learners are given longer than the typical two-minute period to prepare their responses, as again they will need to source additional visual material.

Extended activities:

Once your learners have experienced this type of debating format, they will have a good understanding of the limitations of topics for debate. However, this does not mean that they will be incapable of defining suitable topics for future visual debates.

Therefore, the extended activity id for your learners to devise a minimum of five additional topics for visual debates. This can be done outside of class with a submitted list of topics presented during the following session.

Ideally these additional topics (number of learners x 5) will provide excellent opportunities for future visual debates or conventional debates. It is a good idea for learners to utilize their own ideas / submissions within a class situation, though do keep in mind that many of the suggested topics could also serve other classes.

CREATIVE THINKING
IN LITERACY & LANGUAGE SKILLS