

Level 4 – Metacognition

# Create a Character, Tell a Story

Reset: Recovery  
Curriculum  
Resource Pack



**A NEW  
DIRECTION**  
We create opportunity



These free resources are delivered as part of **Reset** – our programme of support in response to the pandemic.

Though COVID-19 has caused huge disruption to our lives, our professions, and our learning, it is important to remember that we are resilient, strong and good at what we do.

We know that we can adapt and work differently, move quickly and innovate. Let's take this chance to reset and move forward with what we know works, leave behind what doesn't, and introduce new ways of working, together.

For the full set of resources go to

**[www.anewdirection.org.uk/reset](http://www.anewdirection.org.uk/reset)**

**Writer** Andrew Hammond

### Aims

- I can create a character and use writing and drawing to tell a story
- I can reflect on my own point of view
- I can get excited about my own ideas and motivate myself
- I can create something new and unique
- I can feel confident about sharing my thoughts
- I can communicate my ideas
- I can understand how my experiences relate to others
- I can use empathy to create something of worth and value to others

**Cross Curricular Links** Art, Drama, Literacy

**In this activity students are encouraged to create a character and tell a story. They will piece together their own unique ideas with the aim of developing an original story, not necessarily auto-biographical, that others will care about.**

To begin with, this will be done using a combination of writing and drawing, but as the activity progresses students may use as much or as little of either to tell their story.

When an individual creates a story from their imagination, it becomes a reflection of how they see the world. They unconsciously apply motivations to characters that adhere to their own internal logic. As a result, the stories we invent ourselves become wonderful metaphors through which we are able to process our own thinking and perspective, making this a great activity for exercising a person's metacognitive abilities.

This activity is designed to be as student led as possible, finding its structure mostly through asking questions and encouraging students to ask their own. Students shouldn't think too far ahead and so explicitly listing desired outcomes at the beginning of the class is discouraged, as this automatically creates expectations which may inhibit the process. By taking things one step at a time and using free-association, we reduce the students inhibitive emotions of fear and stress. Instead we should encourage reactions to be spontaneous and therefore as authentic as possible.

By finding the confidence to be open and honest, students will create characters and stories that others will respond to and care about. By doing this, they will find confidence in the fact that not just their ideas have worth, but who they are has worth and simply by externalizing that, they create value.

### **Time Required**

Ideally 4 lessons – 1 hour per part

### **Preparation Time**

2-3 mins to gather resources

### **Resources**

- Pens
- Paper
- Board to draw on in front of class

## **Part 1:**

# **Generate ideas – Using free association**

- 1.** Draw a simple smiley face on the board.

Ask the students what it is. They will most likely all say, "a face." Point out that it is in fact two dots and a line. Our imaginations create the face by making connections.

- 2.** Ask what the face is feeling and experiment with different expressions, then ask everyone to draw a simple face on their paper.
- 3.** Ask for a word, any word – it can be on a particular theme if you choose. e.g. words associated with "lockdown". Choose one of the words and write it next to the face. Ask the students to think of their own and write it next to their face.
- 4.** Begin making connections. Draw a line from the word to the face, like a speech bubble. Ask why this person is saying or thinking this word. How does the person feel about the word? Why?
- 5.** Encourage students to make connections between their word and face, building a story of who this person is. On the board you can begin adding details to or around the face, by writing or drawing, as we learn about the character. Encourage students to do the same.
- 6.** Next, draw two stick men on the board and ask the children to do the same. Before doing anything else on the board ask the children to add one detail to one of the stickmen. It could be anything, a tie, a hairstyle, another arm... On their other stickmen ask them to draw an expression, happy, sad, etc.
- 7.** Now back to the board, explain that one of these two stickmen has lost their memory and the other, knows everything about them. What should the stickman that has lost their memory ask the other?
- 8.** Choose one of the responses and write it on the board. Ask the students to write their own question on their paper. Suggest that the responses the all-knowing stickman gives can be influenced by the drawings they have made and details they've added. Even the way students have drawn each line for the stickman can influence ideas, e.g. if one of the stickmen is shorter than the other etc.

### For younger students

- Younger students tend to have fewer inhibitions. They often have more ideas than they can fit on the page. Encourage them to grow their drawing using the ideas they have or, if they don't like drawing, to begin writing down all their ideas.

### For older students

- Older students may find it harder to be spontaneous at first. They have been taught there is a right answer and they worry about what people think. Many may begin to use stories or ideas they have heard elsewhere, or struggle to expand at all without more stimuli. If they are struggling for ideas, ask them about themselves or people they know. *What would one of your family do if they found themselves without their memory, standing in front of someone who knew everything about them?*

## Part 2:

# Develop – Interrogate your characters

1. The stickman that has lost his memory continues to ask the other stickman questions about who he is, where he is, why is he there, how he got there? etc. The stickman with their memory intact can also ask questions.

**Tip: If anyone gets stuck, just keep asking “why?” “Why did they end up there?” “Why did ‘x’ happen?”**

2. Build up more details about both characters. Now is a good time for students to work more independently as they will be at different stages. You can go around and have discussions with each of them about their ideas.
3. As a class, or in pairs, begin a discussion about good and bad 'qualities' of a person. Write two lists on the board. Words like, 'courageous,' 'envious,' 'generous,' 'fickle'.

**Tip: If struggling for ideas, ask the students to describe the qualities of a fictional character they like/don't like.**

Start assigning qualities to each of the stickmen. Ask how their stickmen might react in different situations. *What if they saw someone in need? What would make your character angry? If they were trapped somewhere, how would they escape?* Take a moment to write this down or draw a scenario.

Ask the students if they like their characters. *Which of your two stickmen do you like more and why? Would you like to hang out with your character? Do you feel sorry for them or admire them? Which character would you prefer to write/read about?*

4. Create a moment of change for one of the characters. Ask students to choose one of the stickmen to focus on. Encourage students to write, draw or make notes about their ideas.

If they did not like their character, what situation could they put them in, which would make them feel sorry for them? *What is the character afraid of? How would they act?*



If they felt sorry for their character, what could their character do to make us like them?

**Tip: Check the good qualities list, how could they show one of these?**

If they do like/admire their character, what would make their character angry? *How would they react? What situation would make us pity them? How would they react?*

### For younger students

- Younger students may find they just want to create lots of details about one of the stickmen. They will find it easy to think of things and work on their stories/drawings independently. While they're working, simply go around and ask them about their story. If a scenario has spawned a new character, ask about them.

### For older students

- Some students may be quite confident in their ideas and be happy to continue without much prompting. It isn't essential that they follow the above structure. Others may be very shy about their ideas. Getting stuck is fine. Just ask them to focus on one part of what they create and expand on that. Ask them what they like. They could work in pairs, with one writing or one drawing, or groups. The goal is for them to get excited about an idea they have thought of.

## Part 3:

# Communicate – Break it down and tell it

1. Tell the students that for the next part they should choose to focus on one part of their preferred character and expand on it, ready to show/tell someone else. *Who else in this class might enjoy this story? Why might people respond to/like your character?*
  - They may choose to draw the character in more detail, adding features and developing their appearance
  - They may want to focus on one moment where they felt proud of their character or one part of their story that is most interesting and write about it. They could also draw a comic, or simply make notes ready for sharing
  - They could write a script e.g. part of a conversation the character has had with someone else
2. Ask students to show/tell their character/story to others in the class. They can tell it to one other person or to the whole class.
3. Allow the person/people who received the story to tell the story back to the student.
4. Ask the listener/reader to give feedback: *What did you like/dislike about your story? What have you left out? Which parts do you focus on? What parts of the story appealed to you most?*

If someone has created a drawing of a character, how do others perceive this character? What assumptions do people make of them?

5. Suggest the creators make notes about what is said about their story. Does it give them any new ideas? Is there anything they might want to change?

### For younger students

- Younger students may struggle to structure and tell their story, giving a lot of information at a time. Encourage them to slow down and to emphasise certain points. Notice what they get most excited about. Encourage them to listen when others are telling their story back to them, and not to interrupt or argue if they think they think the re-teller has made a mistake.

### For older students

- Some students may speak well and confidently about their story. Others may be reluctant to share too much. In either case, working with a friend in the class, sharing their ideas and coming up with new ideas together is a great way to lend courage and spark creativity. Remind them that while others might have opinions on their story, they choose what is right. They have the final say on the direction their story takes.

## Part 4:

# Review – Assess and re-evaluate



1. Ask the students to consider what was communicated about their story as intended. *What wasn't communicated? What did others like about their story? What didn't they like? How did it make them feel?*

Others not liking some aspect of what they've created is not necessarily a good enough reason to remove it. How does the student feel about this part?

**Tip: Often when people get something wrong or don't understand something about our story, it is because we didn't communicate something well enough. This is most likely because it is an area of the story where we have made the most assumptions. We have taken for granted ideas and motivations that make sense to us, but may be unique to us. Often, by focusing on what wasn't communicated we discover the most interesting aspect of our story.**

2. Ask the students to think about what they liked or disliked about their own story and what they will change or choose to focus on.
3. Ask the students to write a statement of intent. This can be framed as a pitch of their story, or a plan for how the story develops. *What techniques have you learned today which might help to develop it further?*
4. Finally ask them if they enjoyed the class. *What were your expectations at the beginning of the class? Have you surprised yourself? What have you learned about yourself?*

### For younger students

- Younger students might not care as much about what others think and their story will probably change little. For them, this process is about developing a habit of asking themselves questions and reminding them that others will need to listen and understand their story.

### **For older students**

- Older students tend to care more about what others think. Remind them that their opinion is important. Encourage them not to feel like they need to take on other people's ideas or change their route entirely if no one liked their idea. Their unique perspective has value. They should hang on to what they like about their story.



### **Want to go further? Try these:**

Some other prompts to use to stimulate ideas for stories.

- When was the last time you were angry/scared/lonely? How can you tell a story to communicate why?
- Talk about a specific person the student doesn't like. Encourage them to tell a story about this person that makes them feel pity for them.
- Ask them about someone they admire and why. What story can the student invent to show how they might have become that person?

### **Resources:**

Videos about creativity →

Create Your Own Comic Character video tutorial →

### **Other resources from A New Direction that link with this lever:**

Desert Island Values →

Manifesto →

My Secret Superpowers →

Keeping Creative at Home: How to play with time →

Keeping Creative at Home: How to sail away using storybooks →

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