SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH POETRY

REPILOT ACTION ACTIVITY HANDBOOK

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NEW abc

Networking the Educational World: Across Boundaries for Community-building

Self-expression through Poetry. Repilot action activity handbook.

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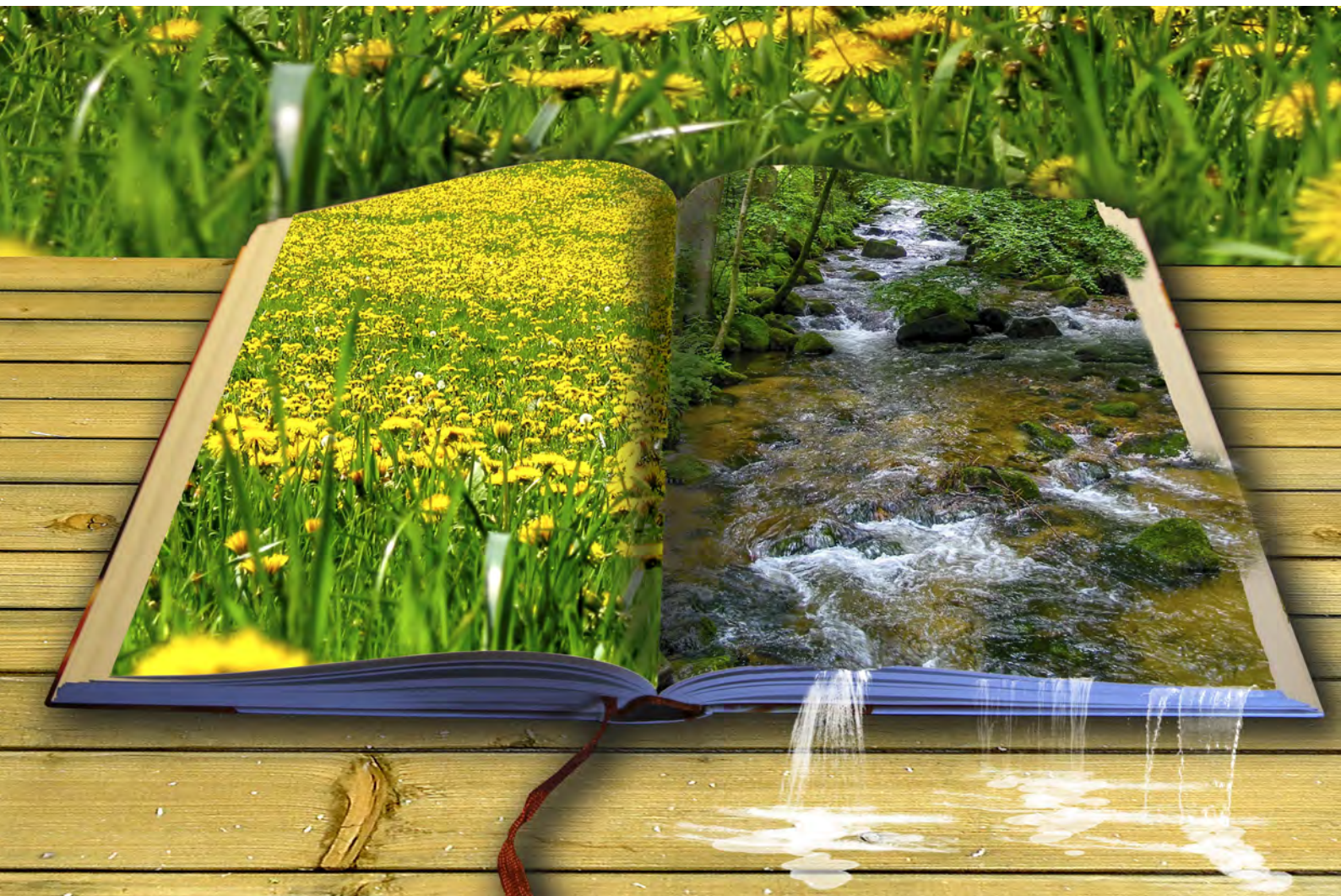
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INTRODUCTION

In this handbook you will find:

- a brief description of the NEW-ABC project and the main concepts that guide it;

- some general guidelines and specific tips for adapting this pilot action to different contexts;

- the aims and objectives of the pilot action;

- a thorough description of the activities conducted alongside tips for replicating them;

- some reflections emerging from our experience that you might find useful for your adaptation.

The NEW ABC project in a nutshell

NEW ABC is a project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, and brings together 13 partners from nine European countries with the aim of developing and implementing nine pilot actions that foster youth engagement and belonging in their communities. All NEW ABC pilot actions include children and young people, as well as teachers, families, communities and other stakeholders in education, as co-creators of innovation to empower youth and enable their voices to be heard.

If you want to learn more about NEW ABC **this is** the link to the project website where you can find information on the other pilot actions too:

newabc.eu

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What is co-creation?

Before we introduce the activities co-created with young people for the *Self-Expression Through Poetry* pilot action, we would like to explain in just a few words the basic features of co-creation.

Co-creation is a method used to develop democratic partnerships between researchers and local/community stakeholders by promoting their involvement in the design of practices that are tailored to a specific context and responsive to the needs of the community and the participants they serve.

Co-creation is particularly apt in increasing engagement and participation on behalf of citizens in policy-making because it:

- places end-user value at its core

- gives particular relevance to the implementation of co-created practices

- includes broader dissemination strategies as part of the design from inception

All the activities presented in this handbook have been planned and implemented together with pupils and parents, headmasters, and researchers by taking the children's perspective and allowing them to voice their dreams and needs.

About the Self-Expression Through Poetry pilot action

The pilot action *Self-Expression Through Poetry (SeP)* is an activity-based intervention for young people in schools and other educational institutions. It is based on young people's creative skills and aims to prompt them to express their voice and share their stories through various means (e.g., poems, short stories, illustrations, podcasts, videos).

Adapting this repilot action to different contexts

A key aim of the NEW ABC project is to ensure that all 9 pilot actions can be adapted and replicated in different contexts (i.e., different countries, educational systems, different communities). Following the completion of their original implementation, all pilot actions were retested in a different partner country and by a different NEW ABC team. Our repilot action was first implemented in Belgium and then re-implemented in Italy. You can read more about the different piloting versions through the NEW ABC's platform . If you are interested in implementing this action in a different context, you might find these recommendations useful.

Main suggestions for institutions interested in repiloting this and other actions from the NEW ABC project

o **Invest time to consider what is unique to your own context and what you might need to adapt.**

You might have to think if there are any required changes or modifications in relation to specific characteristics such as geographical, social, or cultural features. For instance, if you are planning on working with children and young people from different national and ethnic backgrounds, you might want to invest resources to recruit community translators to support the young participants during the project.

o **Invite colleagues both inside and outside your school setting to work together.**

If you need the support of other colleagues in the school (fellow teachers or teaching assistants), you may want to involve them early and make sure their opinions on what they feel is important to do as part of the project.

o **Work *with* the children and young people and collectively agree *how* you will collaborate together.**

Involve young people and children from the start and make sure their opinions, skills, and needs, feed into the design of the project. For example, you may decide to involve a small advisory group of young people so they can help you set up the project.

o **Design your learning environment.**

For example, will you be working in schools or non-school learning environments (e.g. youth groups, after-school clubs, weekend clubs, etc.)? This will also determine how you will structure the activities (i.e. long-term project or individual activities) and how many participants will be engaged each time (i.e. working across a school year or with a smaller group of young people).

o **Make a 'wish list' of materials, resources, and services you may need.**

As you develop your project ideas it is important to consider what resources you will need. For instance, where will you complete the activities? What types of space will you need? (e.g. rooms, outdoor places). You might also like to consider issues of accessibility (e.g. parking availability, wheelchair access, toilets, close to public transport stops). Your wish list may also include activity ideas (e.g. field trip, museum visits) or working with specialist practitioners (e.g. digital artist, drama teacher). Equally important, what materials will you be needing for the activities? (e.g. paper sheets, paint, notebooks, stationary, whiteboard access, online training courses etc.)

o **Invest time and care in co-creating a safe environment.**

Make sure you include time for relationship-building activities that encourage participants to become familiar with each other and develop trust across the group. Refreshments and snacks help at creating a more relaxed social environment so make sure you have thought about your hospitality budget!

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o **Support your project participants.**

Provide training and skills-development opportunities to support those involved in project activities (e.g. students, teaching assistants or fellow classroom teachers) as they join the project. Are there any particular social, cultural, linguistic, or learning needs you might need to think of?

o **Evaluate your repilot action.**

Every project serves as a unique learning opportunity to reflect on what worked, what didn't and what could be done differently. Invest time to plan your project's evaluation and think of activities you might find helpful (e.g. feedback postcards, reflections, creative responses, group reflections).

o **Plan ahead.**

While developing an 'action plan' and thinking of what your project might look like, it is also important to focus on your plans for engagement and dissemination. Things to consider may include:

• What key issues are you aiming to address?

• How can participants engage in these activities in meaningful ways?

• Who are your primary audiences? (i.e. local community, decision-making audiences)

We hope that these suggestions might support your planning process as you decide what your future project activities might look like.

Aims and objectives of the repilot action

The main aim of this repilot action is to produce a participatory co-creative learning programme that engages young people to express their identities, histories and stories through the creation of various artistic products. In particular, the activity-based intervention during the repiloting phase focuses on the following **objectives**:

- To give students the tools to explore, express and share their stories

- To encourage listening and dialogic interactions through the group work

- To help students become more adept at using language to express their thoughts, feelings and identities

- To prompt students to reflect on their role in the planning and implementation of school activities

- To enhance young people's social, cultural, and emotional well-being

How this handbook works and who might find it useful

This Handbook is intended as a guide to the *Self-Expression Through Poetry* repilot action. It is designed in such a way to offer a detailed but not prescriptive overview of the process behind the activities and to invite you to create your own unique, local version. How much time you decide to spend on each activity will be determined by your team and co-researchers. Equally, you might also decide to develop your own activities to better respond to the needs and interests of your stakeholders – just take what you need for your everyday work. The main ideas to bear in mind are that activities should be *co-created* with the various stakeholders (especially the students themselves), and that the overarching aim is to foster *social inclusion and belonging*. The scope is wide, and we hope you will stretch and build on ideas and activities as relevant and appropriate. We hope you enjoy it!

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LET'S GET STARTED!

Testing the water: Getting familiar with the context

If you are not familiar with the context, the first thing to do is to get some information about your school/organization. These might include how many students and teachers attend the school, the composition of the student body if it is available (e.g., how many native and non-native students), previous projects and activities, possible funding and so on.

This general 'reconnaissance' of your school will help you calibrate your initial approach and tailor it according to the specific situation of the context. A knowledge of the needs, challenges, and strengths of your school will enable you to develop activities that are closer to the 'real' situation of the context you work in.

For example, the activities in this handbook were co-created in a secondary school with a curriculum focused on foreign languages (English, German, French, Spanish). Therefore, we emphasized that students could use all languages in their repertoire in order to express their ideas and emotions.

This is important because...

o Young people are not always given a platform to individually and collectively reflect on their experiences with peers, teachers or the broader community. Nevertheless, being heard is crucial to develop a feeling of belonging to the community.

o Young people may not have the tools to express certain things or process strong emotions; the meetings with people external to the institution might help them to do so.

o Young people may not have the dedicated safe space to explore and discuss identity or belonging at school, and this pilot action creates that safe space.

HOW TO...

Step 1 | Setting up your poetry pilot action

The pilot action *Self-Expression through Poetry (SeP)* may function as a long-term weekly activity or as a more focused project held over a fixed number of workshops. The main focus is the creation of a safe, shared space for co-creation, dialogue and creative expression that invites young people to come together and share their experiences through various means of expression.

The basics of setting up

Who is this workshop for?

- Ideally for students aged 14 to 19 – but it can easily be adapted for anyone aged twelve and up

- Ideally for students with a good proficiency in the language of instruction; but it is also suitable for students with basic speaking and writing skills

- Groups of students up to 25. If possible, we suggest one adult facilitator for groups of 10-12 students

o Develop a short project proposal (**download here**) that explains 1) what the pilot action involves; 2) the kind of activities young people would participate in and co-create; and 3) who it is aimed for and what they will gain from being involved.

o If you are not already working within a learning setting, you will need to find a partnering school or alternatively an after-school group to collaborate and share the co-creation adventure.

o Work with the project partner (head of school, teachers, club facilitators) to develop project workshop plans and discuss a possible schedule, to discuss and agree on learning objectives and paths to those objectives, and to present the overall framework and relevance of the pilot and NEW ABC project goals.

o Discuss with the school how participants will be recruited: possibly entire classes

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will participate due to engagement by the teacher. Equally, students may have to be recruited on a voluntary basis, in which case publicity flyers or posters should be distributed on campus or via Self-expression through Poetry activities, which will be open to further development with the young people through their feedback, preferences, and interests.

o Start the activities!

Step 2 | Involve colleagues and develop partnerships

SEP embraces co-creation and participatory ways of working. The co-creation and participation of any and all stakeholders is encouraged, and this includes both students and their adult caregivers. In a school setting, partnerships can be built with teachers, head teachers and facilitators. If working in a non-school setting, types of organizations you might engage with might include youth centers and after-school clubs.

Once established an initial partnership with an institution, a problem that you might face regards the number of people in the organization who are willing to participate. Broadly, it is useful to involve several educational professionals (or several colleagues of yours) in the activities, as they might provide support and contribute with their experience and expertise to the success of the intervention. Moreover, if several teachers are involved, the total of hours needed for the activities can be divided between them. If the other professionals seem reluctant to commit themselves to the intervention, you might underline the following aspects of the activities:

o Point out that the activities are not necessarily alternative to the institutional curriculum, but might be integrated to it (and to any already planned activity aimed at working with students on topics such as inclusion, creativity, writing, group work and so on)

o Underline the previous success of the activities: students actively participated and enjoyed the activities, and this resulted in a serene and constructive classroom atmosphere.

o Explain that the intervention described in this handbook does not require an excessive amount of time. Overall, the intervention can be implemented in 6 to 10 hours according to the group and the planned activities. If you're working with a team of other teachers, this would mean that each teacher devotes just a couple of hours to the project.

Apart from that, these are some further suggestions to recruit students and other educational professionals and facilitate their participation in the project:

o As pilot 'facilitator', meet students and adult participants at their level and work actively to be sensitive to their interests, needs, difficulties. Be flexible and adaptable at all times.

o Make clear that if certain individuals resist participating or refuse to write or to share what they write, they will be allowed to step back and simply observe, and not be forced.

o Explain clearly and simply the pilot aims and objectives, and the benefits of participating (learning new skills, having a space to write about things in any way that resonates, building community). Focus on points of interest and relevance and underline how their participation will be a significant step in reaching and helping more young people just like them across Europe.

Step 3 | Find external 'experts'

This step is optional, as you might plan your intervention without the involvement of external people. In the activities presented in this handbook, the research team and the teachers decided to invite three 'experts' to talk about their experience in the classes that were participating in the project. The three experts were a writer, an illustrator, and a radio speaker, who talked about various aspects of the process of creative self-expression (e.g., about the act of writing, about visual representations, or about oral performance). However, this initial introduction to the concept of creative self-expression can be done by some colleagues of yours, or by yourself. Regardless of who assumes this 'duty', it is important that students are provided with a frame that facilitates their understanding of what they are supposed to do and that outlines the main pillars of the pilot action (i.e., self-expression, creativity, social inclusion, co-creation).

Nevertheless, even though it is not mandatory to involve external people, we recommend you do so. In our experience, the very presence of people who are perceived as external and 'different' from the usual educational figures might trigger students' interest and favor their active engagement and participation. It might be complicated to find suitable external people who are willing to take part in the project. For instance, you could:

o think about your acquaintances and colleagues and check their interests and fields of expertise.

o think of people you've listened to during events, roundtables, presentations.

o think of local artists, writers, illustrators, singers, musicians, radio speakers who might be willing to participate.

o search the web to see if there are some interesting people in your area.

Once you have found some potential candidates, make contact and explain in simple terms the project and its aims. If you have fundings at your disposal, a small economic reward might be an obvious incentive for them to participate.

Step 4 | Creating a safe environment

When collaborating with young people it is important to make sure they feel welcomed, supported, heard and, most importantly, respected. Young people may often feel that they are not respected, in the sense that their feelings, thoughts or ways of thinking are not

equally valued. The pilot facilitator should endeavor to making this a central concept of the intervention. This entails focusing on developing a nurturing space that takes into account students' physical and psychological needs.

Young SEP participants should be explicitly encouraged to…

Feel heard: the pilot activities welcome everyone and provide opportunities for different kinds of engagement, creative interpretation and expression, and sharing.

Feel safe: establish basic but important ground rules – such as speaking in turns and not interrupting, avoid criticizing others' ideas and believes (or criticize different opinions in a constructive way), being sensitive to others' feelings, etc. Foster the right to self-expression, or to privacy, and the right of consent, including for participation.

Work together: explain how and why the activities will be co-created.

Important information to share

Consent:
Depending on participants age group and the national legislation, you might need to obtain parental consent for them to be able to participate in the activities. Make sure that your consent form (**download here**) is clear (no technical terms), accurate, and detailed. It needs to explain how the young people will be involved in the pilot action activities and how the data (e.g., audio recordings of conversations, artwork, or podcasts) may be used for dissemination purposes (e.g., reports, presentations, exhibitions, social media posts etc.), and the overall purpose of the project.

Privacy and anonymity:
Processes of co-creation and collaboration are based on relationships of trust. If you plan to display students' products, discuss where and how they will be disseminated. Explain that any mention of their stories/experiences/personal information will remain anonymous - no one will know it was them, and within the smaller classroom/group environment, they will always have the choice whether to put their name on shared writing or not, and may write under a pseudonym if they wish. Writing under the anonymity of a pseudonym may in fact be freeing, as children may feel emboldened to share more of their inner world and more willing to deepen their creative process.

SEP: ACTIVITIES AND LEARNING AIMS

This section introduces the **Self-Expression Through Poetry** modules (see table below). Each module will introduce the **key learning themes**, an outline of the activity, and a list of all **required materials** to support a smooth replication of the intervention. These modules are simply examples of how a co-created activity might unfold. You can get some inspiration, but don't be afraid of changing the activities according to your specific context!

Learning aims

The activities are designed to achieve three main objectives and learning aims, a) Development of communicative skills (verbal and embodied skills for effective communication and self-expression); b) Storytelling (exploring selves through writing prompts and discussion with peers, facilitators and teachers); and c) Community building (creation of safe spaces and constant dialogue with others).

Table 1. An overview of the learning aims of the activities

Learning aims	Description	Link to the activities
Development of communicative skills	Development of verbal and embodied skills that allow students to effectively express their ideas and emotions.	Creation of written or visual products, group work, oral performances of the texts, continuous guidance from peers and adult caregivers.
Storytelling	Development of skills to engage others in extended narratives, ability to enact and express the self in various ways.	Guidance and encouragement of orally presenting and sharing the produced texts. Creation of opportunities for dialogue and creative expression in the peer group.
Community building	Development of an increased awareness regarding one's role in the community. Ability to listen to the personal stories and experiences of others.	Creation of dedicated spaces to encourage active listening, sharing work with the class, having open dialogue based on ground rules. Guidance from facilitators, teachers and external experts regarding students' role in our community. Discussion on the role of the self in our technologically-mediated communities.

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Overview of the activity modules

Before starting to work with a module, it is important to introduce the activities and the overall framework of the NEW ABC project. Explain students the pillars of the project and present them a rough outline of the activities. Ask their opinion and if they have any suggestions regarding the planned activities. Broadly, try to engage students into active participation from the very beginning.

After this first introduction, you can start with one of the modules. The five modules are quite interchangeable, as you can change the order in which they are presented in this handbook. However, we recommend you start the intervention with the meetings with the external experts (or with an introduction to the key concepts in the activities as performed by you or your colleagues). After that, the students can work individually or in small group on their products (poems, short stories, illustrations, podcasts etc.). You might also start with the meeting with an expert, then plan a module in which students work on their products, and then introduce a second expert on a different topic. The structure of the activities is up to you!

Ideally, the activities would involve a group of 10 to 25 students. A whole class fits perfectly for this pilot action. If there are several teachers who would like to participate, you can involve several classes that work on parallel tracks. As regards the choice of possible themes or of the external people to involve, you should take into account students' interests and choose topics that are appropriate to their age and subjectivities. Broadly, you should try to shape the activities according to students' interests and needs and invite external people that will probably trigger students' engagement and participation. An informal brainstorming in the classroom or a discussion with your colleagues might be effective in exploring students' interests, if you don't know them yet.

Table 2. Overview of the modules

Module	Title	Aims and objectives	Description of this activity in our repilot action
Module 1	*Meeting with the writer*	To learn possible narrative structures and writing techniques; to reflect on possible themes and contents; to discuss previous works of literature.	The writer presented previous literary works and talked about his own production in order to discuss with students about possible narratives, writing techniques, and topics. The students briefly worked on several writing prompts.
Module 2	*Meeting with the illustrator*	To learn possible techniques of illustration and the use of different materials; to reflect on the power of representation and on the relationship between forms and meanings.	The illustrator presented previous illustrations and reflected with students on their characteristics. Students worked individually or in group on several prompts by the illustrator.

Module	Title	Aims and objectives	Description of this activity in our repilot action
Module 3	*Meeting with the radio speaker*	To learn the basics of oral performance and the physic characteristics of human voice; to learn some aspects of the work of a radio speaker.	The radio speaker talked about his work at the radio station and introduced students to the characteristics of human voice and oral performance.
Module 4	*Students' individual or group work on their products*	To learn to work collectively on a shared product; to learn to use various techniques to express one's ideas and emotions; to engage in creative expression; to share personal narratives.	Students worked on their audiovisual products, individually or in small groups.
Module 5	*Final reflections, performance and evaluation*	To reflect on the competences acquired; to evaluate the intervention and one's own commitment and engagement in the tasks proposed; to manage the live performance of the created products.	Students, teachers, and researchers reflected on the intervention and discussed various aspects of the activities. Some students gave a live performance of their products (reading a poem, or part of a podcast).

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Module 1: Meeting with the writer

Aims & Objectives	- Learn possible narrative structures and writing techniques - Reflect on possible themes and contents - Discuss previous works of literature - Reflect on one's own life experience
Materials	Basic school materials (paper, pens), a blackboard, a projector
Estimated time	2 to 6 hours

By the end of this Module young people will have...

- been i**ntroduced to the project** and had the chance to **find out more** about what it involves

- learnt about basic **writing techniques and genres**

- practiced creative writing

- shared personal narratives with their peers

Description of the activity

The teachers and the research team involved an Italian writer, Cristiano Cavina, in the activities through a previous personal connection. In what follows, his activities in the classroom are thoroughly described. Notably, you can approach these specific activities as a source of inspiration, but you do not need to replicate them in the exact same way. If you invite some external people, they might shape the activities as they deem fit.

The writer started the meeting by briefly presenting the work of various authors (Dante Alighieri, James Joyce, Philip Roth, John Dos Passos, Charles Bukowski, Eugenio Montale, John Fante, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Mark Twain), underlining their language and writing techniques. These specific authors were chosen by the writer for the influence they had on his work and because they 'talked to him', as the writer put it. Of course, in future replications this brief introduction could also include women authors as well as authors from more diverse origins. The presentation of the authors took the shape of an informal sharing of anecdotes and interesting aspects of their life and work. For instance, the writer explained Mark Twain's choice to let his young characters speak in the language of children (i.e. with specific formulations, lexis, and even mistakes and misspelled words) and not as if they were well-educated adults. Starting from this example, he underlined the relevance of how stories are told and written, encouraging students to find creative ways of expressing their thoughts and inviting them to use their own language, without aping a supposed 'institutional', standard style. Overall, the writer underlined the necessity to find one's own language and to write in the style one is most familiar with.

After this whole-class introduction, the writer asked students to work individually on a task. He prompted them to write the incipit (i.e., the opening sentences) of their biography, or the incipit of a book about their life. These incipits should subsume the meaning of the whole life, be emblematic of what is going to be told in the book. In order to facilitate the students' work, he read an incipit that he brought, which was written by an adolescent girl ("My head is full of thoughts, but when I open my mouth, nothing comes out"). The students wrote their texts anonymously on small pieces of paper, which were then collected by the writer. The writer read aloud and commented on all texts, finding the positive aspects in each one of them and giving possible suggestions to improve their overall effectiveness. Since several incipits regarded emotional traumas and suffering, the writer underlined how talking about our own emotions and problems helps us establish a connection with other people (or with the reader). More broadly, the writer stressed the relevance of traumas and suffering in a story – they are often the driving force in a narrative (even though not all stories must revolve around emotional traumas).

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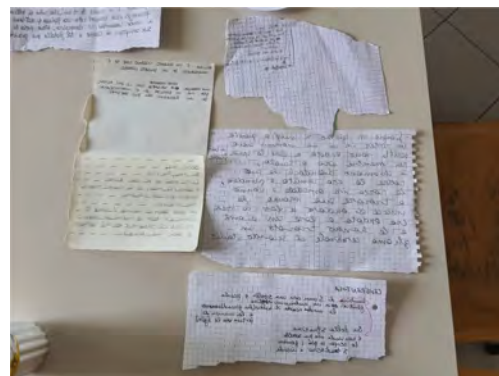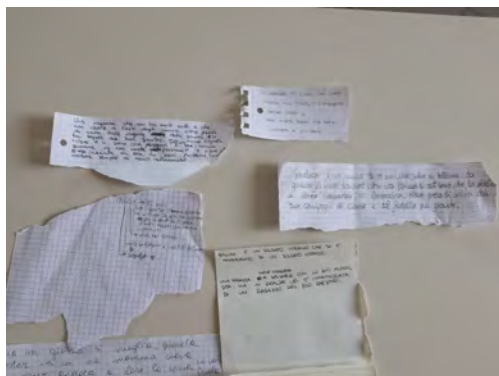
The writer introduced the concept of narrative structure and outlined the narrative development of some famous stories (e.g., Hamlet, Cinderella). He sketched these various plots on the blackboard, along the lines of a schema developed by Kurt Vonnegut (The Shape of Story; see figure below).
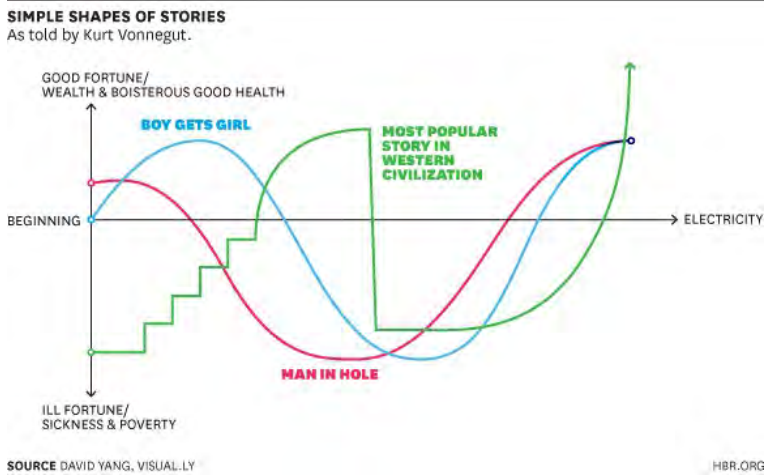
A schema to visualize narrative structures, by Kurt Vonnegut

After that, the writer talked about possible starting points for a story and about the content of the narrative. He invited students to think about something that could 'hold together' the whole story: this might be (a) the style in which is written, regardless of the content and/or (b) an interesting and engaging narrative structure; for example, the latter might revolve around traumas and problems that trigger the further development of the story. As regards the starting point of the story, the writer presented some possible beginnings from world literature (e.g., Kafka's Metamorphosis). He told students that a possible starting point is the setting: where and when does the story take place? Who are the protagonists? How is the overall context of the story?

After this introduction on some aspects of writing stories, the writer engaged students in an individual task: they had to think of a possible setting for a modern version of Cinderella (that is, a terrible situation from which it is possible to somehow recover). Students worked individually on the tasks, handing in their texts after ca. 15 minutes. Having collected all anonymous texts, the writer started reading them in front of the whole class and commenting their positive aspects and the possible changes that would render them more effective.

The writer outlines possible narrative structures

Module 2: Meeting with the illustrator

Aims & Objectives	- Learn possible techniques of illustration and the use of different materials - Reflect on the power of representation - Reflect on the relationship between forms and meanings
Materials	Drawing materials (paper, pencils, markers and so on); glue, magazines and colorful paper to make collages; other materials if needed (e.g., threads, ropes, confetti)
Estimated time	2 to 6 hours

By the end of this Module young people will have...

- Learnt about basic **illustration techniques**
- Practiced creative illustration
- Visually expressed their emotions

Description of the activity

The teachers and the research team involved a German illustrator, Christoph Brehme, in the activities through a previous personal connection. In what follows, his activities in the classroom are thoroughly described. Notably, you can approach these specific activities as a source of inspiration, but you do not need to replicate them in the exact same way. If you invite some external people, they might shape the activities as they deem fit.

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1st part

The illustrator started asking each student to present him- or herself and to say something about his/her relationship with art and artistic expression ("Do you like art? Do you go to museums? Do you know how to draw?"). The illustrator listened attentively and encouraged those students who said they did not know how to draw – he said they might find out that they do indeed have an artistic talent during the upcoming activities.

After this introduction, the illustrator talked about the history of illustration with some slides. He showed a first example of an animated illustration on a thousand-year-old vase, underlining how visual representations (in motion) are part of the history of humankind. Even before the invention of modern technologies, humans managed to draw visual representations of their life-world and to animate them in various ways.

One of the examples that the illustrator discussed with students

The illustrator also showed some examples of modern illustrations, outlining their characteristics. He presented both illustrations with verbal text and without verbal text. Apart from these examples of artistic illustrations, he also showed several images that are used for marketing purposes. For instance, he commented on the visual characteristics of the packaging of various common products, such as cereals, yogurt, and milk: he explained the illustrations and revealed the implicit social meanings that they conveyed, stressing how there is no need to use words in order to deliver a message (e.g., an idyllic landscape with rivers and cows on a package of milk convey the idea of 'nature', 'simplicity', and 'tradition'). Broadly, the illustrator let students reflect on the power of visual illustrations to express a certain idea or emotion.

2nd part

The illustrator introduced a first individual exercise. He used blue and green ink to do a small 'stain' (of various forms) on an A4 sheet. Then, he gave a sheet to each student and invited them to draw something starting from the initial, random ink stain that he put on the paper. After the initial bewilderment, students started working individually, completing the

illustration with a pencil. While students drew various forms and entities (animals, landscapes, eyes…), the illustrator checked students' efforts and provided positive feedbacks and encouraging words.

Students started from colorful 'stains' to make various illustrations

After this first exercise, the illustrator invited students to divide into small groups. He then introduced another exercise, based on small pieces of paper of various forms; the illustrator said that these pieces of paper might represent various things (people, animals, things…). Students were prompted to glue all pieces of paper on an A4 sheet in order to represent something (e.g., the concepts of inclusion and exclusion). The students started discussing in the small groups and exploring the various ways in which the pieces of paper could be arranged. After a while, the illustrator collected all products and discussed them with the whole class. He showed each product and talked about his inferable meaning, discussing with students the interpretation of each arrangement (for instance, some students arranged all forms in a single circle, whereas others separated the forms according to their shape; see figures below).

A group of students discuss possible arrangements

The illustrator shows two different ways of arranging the pieces of paper

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Module 3: Meeting with the radio speaker

Aims & Objectives	- Learn the basics of oral performance - Learn the physic characteristics of human voice - Learn some aspects of the work of a radio speaker
Materials	A computer with internet access, a projector
Estimated time	1 to 2 hours

By the end of this Module young people will have...

- increased their awareness of the characteristics of human voice

- improved their performative skills

- received insider knowledge on how a radio station works

Description of the activity

The teachers and the research team involved an Italian radio speaker, Daniele Tigli, in the activities through a previous personal connection. In what follows, his activities in the classroom are thoroughly described. Notably, you can approach these specific activities as a source of inspiration, but you do not need to replicate them in the exact same way. If you invite some external people, they might shape the activities as they deem fit.

The radio speaker first outlined the process that led him to become a radio speaker. He had already been interested in the radio and in oral performance when he was in high school. Setting out from this recognition, he reflected with the students on the relevance of personal interests and passions in shaping life trajectories. After this first introduction, the radio speaker illustrated various aspects of his daily work at the radio station – it is a world which is mostly inaccessible to lay people, and students are particularly interested. He talked about technologies and technical details (e.g., the hardware and software that they use), described the soundstage, explained the reasons behind the choice of specific songs to be aired. He also showed students the live chart of the most aired songs in Italy, and talked extensively of the time constraints of working on a live radio: between a song and the next, he often has less than 30 seconds to talk.

After this description of his profession, the radio speaker discussed with students the issue of human voice and oral performance, illustrating the relevant aspects that need to be taken into account when reading or talking in front of an audience. He underlined the power of voice in constructing whole worlds without the need of images and videos. He talked about the correct pronunciation of various sounds, about pauses ("the punctuation of talk"), about rhythm and breathing, and about the tone of voice (underlining that it should not be monotonous). He stressed that our voice is similar to our outward appearance: we might not like it, but we can work in order to improve it. The radio speaker also provided some references to find further information about the topic: podcasts, speech training and videos on Youtube, books on pronunciation.

Eventually, the radio speaker asked students about their ideas regarding the products that they were going to develop. Several students shared their plans, outlining their projects of doing a podcast or reading a poem aloud. The radio speaker discussed with them these various ideas, giving several tips to improve their effectiveness.

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Module 4: Students' individual or group work

Aims & Objectives	- Learn to work collectively on a shared product - Learn to use various techniques to express one's ideas and emotions - Engage in creative expression - Share personal narratives
Materials	Basic school materials (pencils, paper, colors, scissors, glue), various magazines and colored paper to make collage, other materials if needed to create the artistic product (e.g., threads, fabrics)
Estimated time	4 to 8 hours

By the end of this Module young people will have…

- learnt to negotiate their ideas with peers

- learnt to use various techniques to construct an artistic product

- expressed their ideas and emotions

- shared personal narratives

Two groups of students at work

Setting out from the insights and inspiration of the meetings with the external people, students started working on their own products. The research team introduced the activity, which consisted in the creation of an artistic product through which students would express themselves. First, researchers initiated a whole-class discussion to reflect on what the 'experts' had told them in the

previous meetings. Through broad questions ("what do you remember?", "what was significant?", "what struck you?"), the researchers managed to involve students in an active discussion that reminded them of what they had heard, seen, and learnt. Second, the research team introduced the 'rules' of the activities:

o Students could work in small groups or individually.

o Students could use all available materials and choose between various modalities (visual or audio) to create their products.

o Students' products could have any form (e.g., poems, short stories, podcasts), but they had to display a certain cohesion and 'unity'.

o Students could talk about any subject (e.g., they could talk/write/draw about themselves, or about other people and places).

o Students' products would not be evaluated and could remain private if the authors wished so.

Two students work in group

Having cleared these (few) rules of engagement, the research team made various materials available (paper, colored paper, magazines, colors) and students started actively working at their creations. In all classrooms, most students decided to work in small groups and just a few students worked individually. In the groups, students usually started with a brainstorming of variable duration to establish the content and form of their work of art. Overall, most students chose to use the written form (i.e., poems, short stories, and diaries), whereas others used visual representations (illustrations and collages) or combined the two forms (comics and images accompanying written text). Notably, some students chose to write texts that would be then orally performed (poems, songs, and podcasts); in the case of songs, students also searched for possible musical arrangements for their texts.

While students worked at their products, researchers and teachers walked through the desks to provide support in case of questions or problems. Broadly, adults tried to help students without steering or influencing too heavily their creative trajectories. Students were quite autonomous and were actively engaged throughout the process of creation. In all classes, the phase of individual or group work lasted between 4 and 8 hours.

One of students' collages

Module 5: Final reflections, performance, and evaluation

Aims & Objectives	- Reflect on the competences acquired - Evaluate the intervention and one's own commitment and engagement in the tasks proposed - Manage the live performance of the created products
Materials	Musical instruments, recording devices
Estimated time	1 hour

By the end of this Module young people will have…

- an increased awareness of their own role during the activities and, broadly, at school

- reflected on the competences that they developed performing their texts for an audience

After the completion of their work, students reflected on the whole process of creation together with teachers and researchers. Specifically, the adults prompted a whole-class discussion with some broad questions (e.g., "how was it?", "what did you like most?", "have you experienced any difficulties?") and then managed students' answers in order to facilitate dialogue between students. Among other topics, students talked about the efficacy of group work, about the modules that they especially appreciated and about different textual genres.

After this rather informal evaluation of the intervention, the research team asked students to fill in a brief questionnaire in order to collect their individual opinions. This is a possible method to collect students' evaluation of the activities, if you are interested in their perspective on the intervention (see below).

In the case of the activities presented in this handbook, students performed their texts outside of school hours. They met at home or in other contexts, recorded their performances and sent us the files (e.g., podcasts and songs). However, if you have time and students are willing to do so, they could perform their texts in front of the whole class or during ad hoc events.

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EVALUATION OF YOUR ACTIVITIES

Developing your own evaluation strategy

Whether you follow the suggested 5 modules, or end up compressing the pilot into fewer sessions or expanding it to include additional ones, at some point the collaboration between you and the partnering school/teacher/community group will come to an end – if for no other reason than the start of school holidays! It is important to evaluate the pilot's success or failure by way of overall impact, efficacy or engagement. Both positive and negative feedback are valuable. By evaluating the pilot at the end of a run, we can assess what has worked well, what can be improved, what can be discarded, and so on.

You will surely have a hint of how it went, but how can you assess more clearly the impact of your activity?

The manner of seeking feedback can vary. You are best suited to decide what form the evaluation should take: a general conversation as a group, with questions to explore students' impressions and suggestions, or a written feedback (e.g., a series of yes/no questions, multiple answer questions, or open-ended questions).

We list here some indicators that can be useful to evaluate your activity. You can develop an evaluation tool using some (or all) of them.

Students' participation

o Were students eager to talk and participate?

o Were they displaying enthusiasm and willingness to be part of the activity?

o Did you notice an increased participation over time of individuals and the group generally?

Networking in the school

o Did you manage to involve a group of teachers in the project?

o How are your work relationships after the activity?

o Will they utilize or embed any of the pilot activities in their own lesson plans?

o Did they feel the activities of the pilot directly impacted or supplemented their regular teaching goals?

Professional development

o Have you developed new skills during the activity?

o Do you think you improved your professional competences? Have you learned something?

Overall impact

o Are there many people interested in your activities?

o Did you manage to disseminate them through various channels?

o Are your colleagues asking you about the activity?

o Are some colleagues from other schools willing to re-do your activity?

o Were policy-makers informed about the activity?

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DISSEMINATING YOUR ACTIVITY

The final stretch of this journey is to make the pilot available and accessible by anyone. There are several strategies that you can deploy to enhance the visibility of your activity. We divided them into two macro-areas:

Local level

At the local level, you can start disseminating the activity while you are implementing it. For instance, you can involve other people by illustrating the activity through posters and informal chats with children's parents, colleagues, and the headmaster. You can also organize final events that allow to showcase what you have done – an exhibition of printed poems or an oral poetry slam, for example - invite local authorities and policy makers to these events!

(Inter)national level

You can use various digital channels to present your activities to a broader audience. For example, a platform at the European level is eTwinning; here, you can upload a description of your activity and share it with other teachers from different Europe countries.

As you know, there are also other multi-purpose platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and so on (but be careful with privacy issues!).

Acknowledgements

So, that's pretty much it. Thank you very much for your attention!

We hope this handbook has been (and will be) useful for your professional practice. Best of luck!

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