Secondhand Stories

Adapt to changes while writing a creative or funny story

TIME	MATERIALS	TEAM STAGE
30-45 minutes	Paper, writing utensils	Forming, Norming, Performing

SUMMARY
This activity helps to show the different ways we respond to change by asking participants to develop a story that creatively incorporates whatever elements the facilitator suggests to them.

SET UP
- Break participants into groups of three or four people each.

INSTRUCTIONS
- Tell participants that they have 10-20 minutes to construct a story. It must have a beginning, a middle, an end, and a main character.
- Tell participants that throughout the activity things will be announced that need be changed or added to their stories.
- Sample announcements:
  - *Your story must include a beach*
  - *Add in an evil character*
  - *Change the name of your main character from this point forward*
  - *Create a title*
  - *Add a talking animal*
  - *Add your group's favorite food*
  - *Now everyone is on a pirate ship/in a jungle/in outer space*
  - *Change writers*
  - *Include a true story from one of your group members*
  - *Add a catastrophe*
- When time is up, have groups come back together to share their stories out loud.

VARIATIONS
- To change things up, announce different changes/additions to different groups rather than giving the same announcement to all groups.
- Add a challenge by having group members each contribute one sentence to the story at a time, going around in a set order.
- **Large Group:** To facilitate this activity for a large group, have small groups pair up to share their stories to each other instead of having them read out loud to everyone to save on sharing time.

VARIATIONS *(continued)*

Online: To facilitate this activity virtually, put participants into small breakout rooms to create their stories. They can write these stories on a shared document or create a visual story on a shared slide presentation. Send the announcements as broadcast messages. Then bring everyone back to share. *[click here for video]*

Asynchronous: To facilitate this activity asynchronously, create a shared document that all participants can contribute to. Create an order in which participants should contribute to the document along with deadlines for when these contributions should be made. Then, put in one sentence to begin a story. Participants should contribute one to two sentences to this collaborative story by their assigned deadline. After the last participant has contributed, send a final copy to all of the collaborators to read in its entirety.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- What:
  - How did your group go about completing this activity?
  - How did your group respond to announcements and changes?

- So What:
  - Does change foster creativity? Why or why not?
  - How are both change and creativity vital to the success of our group?

- Now What:
  - What aspects of our work together could use some change or creativity right now?
  - What is one thing you need to be inspired to make change or be creative?

  Facilitator Note: These questions can be used to guide your debrief, however, pick the questions that best match your group's experience and add or change questions as needed.