

# Alternative books

Primary: (ages 7 – 11)

Language and Literacy

Students create, along with their families, an alternative book (the genre can be chosen by the students or assigned by the teacher e.g. a history book). They think about the content and form of similar books and generate radical ideas to create an alternative. They then use various materials to write and produce the book. Finally, they present the creative books at the school book fair or equivalent.

**Time allocation** About 11 lesson periods

**Subject content** Read and write different kinds of text  
Understand differences/similarities between different types of text  
Develop awareness of materials used to produce a book

**Creative and critical thinking** This unit has a **creativity** and **critical thinking** focus:

- Identify and question generally accepted practices
- Generate unusual ideas to produce a meaningful and personally novel alternative to studied texts
- Consider alternative perspectives and reflect on steps taken and novelty of solution

**Other skills** Communication, Collaboration

**Key words** textbooks; libraries; texts; style; format; authors; structure

## Products and processes to assess

This activity is designed to develop key skills in reading, writing and book production whilst nurturing the creative skills of curiosity and observation. Asking students, along with their families, to produce alternative books supports them to develop not only a love for reading, but also creativity and criticality. At the highest levels of achievement, students produce a highly imaginative, unusual, engaging output with significant personal features. Their work process demonstrates they are willing to work collaboratively with others to explore and challenge a variety of ideas and conventional ways of organizing and creating books. They show good awareness of the novelty of their book and why they have made their choices and a clear understating of the strengths and limitations of their chosen methods and output.

## Teaching and Learning plan

This plan suggests potential steps for implementing the activity. Teachers can introduce as many modifications as they see fit to adapt the activity to their teaching context.

| Step | Duration  | Teacher and student roles   | Subject content   | Creativity and critical thinking   |
|------|---|---|---|--|
| 1    | Prior to Lesson period 1  | Teachers may plan a literary tour of the public library and schedule a play (on any topic) for the students to watch.   |   |  |
| 2    | Lesson periods 1, 2 and 3 (time to be adjusted according to level and planned activities) | <p>The teacher offers a number of different types of texts such as recipes, history books, brochures, story books from the school library and explains to the students that they are going to explore and read everything that is offered to them. The teacher can support students to notice and/or record some differences and similarities in the forms, structures, and contents of different types of texts.</p> <p>The students go on a literary tour in the city, visiting the public library and possibly going to watch a play. The teacher explains that they are going to be assessed through the creativity rubric, and they are going to produce an alternative book along with their families. They will need to do this as creatively as possible by working hard to make their book unusual or novel.</p>   | <p>Reading different texts and noticing differences in form and content</p> <p>Visiting libraries and thinking about different types of texts</p> | Observing and describing relevant experience and information (e.g. similarities and differences between different types of texts)  |
| 3    | Lesson periods 4, 5 and 6 (time can be adjusted according to level and time available)    | <p>Students begin to plan their books. The first time the teacher applies the rubric orally is to discuss students' decisions on their theme for the unusual book. The teacher may decide to support this process by brainstorming with the class/individuals to come up with ways to make the books more unusual. They can explore questions such as what does a book of this type usually look like? What contents does it usually cover? How could you do it differently to make it more interesting for your readers (e.g. more visual/colourful, comic form, pop-up, alternative content, different audiences, different kinds of chapters, covering different perspectives, written collectively etc.)?</p> <p>On the basis of the discussions about the rubric and how they can generate novel ideas for their books, students make decisions on what type of book they will create and its themes, sub-themes, structure, style, and form, and are reminded to find interesting and alternative ways to create both content and form.</p> <p>Teacher introduces the idea that students can work creatively with their families on this project. In between each lesson period, the students can be asked to consult with and work with their family on reviewing or creating a small section of the book as homework.</p> | <p>Planning books</p> <p>Thinking about texts in terms of content, form, structure, style, and theme</p> <p>Planning and writing texts</p>        | <p>Identifying and questioning generally accepted practices (e.g. Different types of texts should have particular contents and forms)</p> <p>Generating and playing with unusual and radical ideas (e.g. for alternative form/contents etc. of texts)</p> <p>Envisioning a meaningful output that is personally novel (e.g. an alternative book)</p> <p>Considering different perspectives (e.g. family)</p> |

|   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
|   |  | <p>Students work out how to produce their creative books and start working on the task.</p> <p>The second time the teacher applies the rubric the students have to describe step by step how they are going to produce the book. The teacher proceeds to explain that they have to assess themselves collectively, to listen to their classmates about which material they chose to use following creativity and critical thinking aspects.</p>   |   | <p>Reflecting on the steps taken and novelty of the book relative to possible alternatives</p>  |
| 4 | <p>Lesson periods 7, 8, and 9 (time can be adjusted according to level and time available)</p> | <p>Students continue to create and revise their books.</p> <p>The teacher can regularly check in, give feedback and encourage revision, provide structure, help the students identify next steps, support the process of integrating the input of family members, and ask students to assess themselves according to the rubric. This process can be repeated across a number of lessons.</p>   | <p>Writing and revising texts</p>                                   | <p>Producing and revising a meaningful output</p> <p>Considering different perspectives and reflecting on novelty of output</p>   |
| 5 | <p>Lesson period 10 and 11</p>   | <p>Students assess themselves in writing as well as collectively and reflect on how they have produced their book, what makes it unusual, what its strengths are, and how they could have improved it. The teacher might send the rubric to the parents as well.</p> <p>Students should now decide how to display the creative books they have produced at a school fair or a similar event and how they will explain the idea and materials used to produce the book and how they used creative and critical thinking to produce it</p> <p>When they are finished they should visit the displays of others and ask questions, make suggestions for improvement or discuss issues that arise.</p> | <p>Communicating about texts and developing presentation skills</p> | <p>Explaining both strengths and limitations of an output (their book) according to different criteria</p> <p>Reflecting on the novelty of the chosen solution relative to alternatives</p> |

## Resources and examples for inspiration

### Web and print

- Different types of texts for students to read and compare in step 2

### Other

- Paper, pencils, glue and markers
- Arts materials to create books

### Opportunities to adapt, extend, and enrich

- If the teacher wishes to combine this with another discipline, students can be assigned a type of text (e.g. a history book, a science textbook, an art coffee-table book), and discussions about how to create alternatives can be focussed on what the book teaches us about history/science/art etc. and how this could be improved/changed/made more unusual or interesting.
- This activity could be extended by introducing students to the idea that poets sometimes try to create new 'forms' or 'types' of poetry – new styles or structures or content for their poems and giving examples (e.g. *And the days are not full enough* by Ezra Pound) or by discussing the differences, for example, between the 'form' of stories and poems

**Creativity and  
critical thinking rubric**

- Mapping of the different steps of the lesson plan against the OECD rubric to identify the creative and/or critical thinking skills the different parts of the lesson aim to develop

|                   | <b>CREATIVITY</b><br>Coming up with new ideas<br>and solutions                           | <b>Steps</b> | <b>CRITICAL THINKING</b><br>Questioning and evaluating ideas<br>and solutions   | <b>Steps</b> |
|-------------------|--|--------------|---|--------------|
| <b>INQUIRING</b>  | Make connections to other concepts and knowledge from the same or from other disciplines | 2            | Identify and question assumptions and generally accepted ideas or practices   | 3-5          |
| <b>IMAGINING</b>  | Generate and play with unusual and radical ideas   | 3,4          | Consider several perspectives on a problem based on different assumptions   | 3-5          |
| <b>DOING</b>      | Produce, perform or envision a meaningful output that is personally novel                | 3-5          | Explain both strengths and limitations of a product, a solution or a theory justified on logical, ethical or aesthetic criteria | 5            |
| <b>REFLECTING</b> | Reflect on the novelty of solution and of its possible consequences                      | 3-5          | Reflect on the chosen solution/position relative to possible alternatives   | 3,5          |