

The Art and Practice of Creative Storytelling

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By

Niki Lambropoulos

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN: 978-1-0364-3417-5

ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-3418-2

To my creative nephew, Panagiotis

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FOREWORD BY CATHERINE WILLIAMS

I was excited and honoured to be invited to read this book, which brings together facets that are close to my heart: story-telling, the perspective of the child/student, and Greece.

Researched and composed with dedication and thoroughness, the book is a reference and an inspiration for those who want to write screenplays, and for those who want to encourage others to create stories too. It features a chapter dedicated to summing up various key structural theories - a useful resource for screenwriters who are either embarking on a new project or refining one which is already underway. None of the theories are definitive or 'right'. As the writer says, it's a matter of trying them on for size, finding which works for your concept, exploiting and amending them to suit your needs.

"The Art and Practice of Creative Storytelling" explores the painstaking hither and thither of adhering to and breaking rules, respecting and testing limits. It outlines also how this process is a useful educational tool more broadly: creativity becomes a conduit for learning, story-telling a way to grow.

The book ties together not only how curiosity and creativity are linked, but also how they make us more rounded and capable as 21st century citizens with our 7Cs honed and ready for action.

Catherine Williams is a Bafta-winning screenwriter, series creator and story editor, specialising in writing for children: exploding the epic from the tiny. She has an impressive list of multi-award-winning, top-rated and much-loved credits, including *Chip and Potato*, *Waffle the Wonder Dog*, *Topsy+Tim*, the *New Teletubbies*, *Pocoyo*, *PJ Masks*, and *Lovely Little Farm*. She also facilitates screenwriting workshops and works as a script consultant, spending as much time as she can in her beloved Greece.

FOREWORD BY AGIS MARINIS

Storytelling is a foundational element of literature, harking back to the archaic and classical periods; indeed, it has shaped literary traditions and cultural narratives throughout history. From the epic poems of Homer to the works of Greek historiographers and tragic poets, classical literature is rich with stories that explore the complexities of human experience, morality, and the role of the divine. The use of myth, legend, and historical events in classical storytelling serves not only to entertain but also to educate and preserve collective memory. Through storytelling, classical literature addresses universal themes such as heroism, fate, and the human condition, establishing a legacy that continues to influence contemporary literature and thought.

Indeed, storytelling holds a pivotal role in literature, serving as the primary vehicle for human expression, cultural transmission, and emotional engagement. Through narratives, authors convey complex themes, moral lessons, and universal truths, making abstract ideas tangible and relatable. Stories have the power to evoke deep emotions, cultivating empathy and understanding among readers by allowing them to experience diverse perspectives and lives. Additionally, storytelling in literature creates a sense of continuity, linking generations by preserving and transmitting cultural heritage and shared experiences. This is particularly evident in the case of the Homeric poems, which were passed on as oral literature from generation to generation by the rhapsodes. This process not only entertained but also educated, offering multifaceted knowledge and elements of wisdom, and promoting reflection on the human condition. From a diachronic perspective, storytelling enriches literature by weaving the intricate tapestry of human experience, shaping our worldview, and nurturing our intellectual and emotional growth.

Concentrating specifically on education, narrative storytelling offers substantial advantages that significantly enhance students' learning experiences. One of the primary benefits is the increased engagement and motivation it promotes. Stories naturally capture attention and spark curiosity, making educational content more compelling and enjoyable. When lessons are framed within a narrative, students are more likely to stay interested and invested in the material. This heightened engagement can lead to improved retention and understanding of complex concepts, as narratives provide a

coherent structure that helps students remember information better. Narrative structures are also found in drama, whose core is effectively a story featuring characters involved in decision-making and actions. It is worth noting that stories often involve relatable characters and situations, making abstract ideas more concrete and accessible. This approach aligns with cognitive theories suggesting that humans are wired to learn through stories, thus facilitating deeper comprehension and long-term memory retention. Additionally – as amply documented in Niki Lampropoulos’ book – narrative storytelling supports the development of critical thinking and empathy. When students analyse stories, they must consider multiple perspectives, understand character motivations, and identify underlying themes, which enhances their analytical skills.

To focus now on the book at hand, we are dealing with a masterful exploration of the intricate world of narrative storytelling. The book begins with a compelling discussion on the importance of storytelling, laying a strong foundation for understanding how stories shape our intelligence and creativity. The chapters on “The Human Narrative Thought” and “Forms and Structures” delve deeply into the cognitive processes involved in storytelling, offering readers profound insights into how narratives are constructed and perceived. This foundational knowledge is further enriched by sections like “Narrative Intelligence” and “Narrative Literacy,” which highlight the critical skills needed to craft and comprehend compelling stories. As the author points out, “narrative intelligence suggests the human ability to recognise patterns and structures formed as stories, as well as identify central themes and characters, and use this information for better decision-making and to create new narratives that resonate with audiences”.

As the book progresses, it ventures into more specialised topics such as “The Hero’s Journey,” “Harmon’s Cycle,” and “Blake Snyder’s Beat Sheet,” providing a detailed examination of various narrative structures and their applications. These chapters are particularly beneficial for both novice and seasoned storytellers seeking to enhance their narrative techniques. The inclusion of “Unconventional Structures” and “The Narrative Distance” expands the reader’s understanding of narrative possibilities, encouraging innovative approaches to narrative creation. Additionally, the book’s focus on the psychological and emotional aspects of storytelling, as seen in “Catharsis as a Process” and “Imaginative Empathy,” underscores the profound impact stories have on our emotions and personal growth. In fact, catharsis, along with symmetry and assimilation, is one of the three key notions in the author’s theory of creative storytelling. As she points out, “Symmetry, assimilation and catharsis lead to an impactful story, creating a powerful storytelling experience; symmetry establishes order and balance and builds

anticipation, assimilation draws the audience into the story emotionally and creates emotional awareness via relatability and empathy; catharsis provides the emotional release through a satisfying resolution. As such, storytellers can craft narratives that are not only structurally solid and engaging but also emotionally impactful and memorable". Overall, this book offers an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the art and science of storytelling, presenting a rich blend of theory, practical advice, and innovative ideas. Most importantly, it is based on a sophisticated, interdisciplinary theoretical framework and is very well documented in terms of relevant bibliography.

A specific topic raised by the author that I would like to focus on here is the connection between creative storytelling and Aristotle's *Poetics*. Indeed, they share a profound link, grounded in the fundamental principles of narrative construction and the emotional impact of stories. The *Poetics*, written in the 4th century BCE, is one of the earliest and most influential works on dramatic theory, outlining key elements of a well-designed storyline, such as plot structure, character development, and the notion of catharsis. Creative storytelling builds on these foundational concepts, applying them to a wide array of modern contexts and genres, including, for example, cinematic scenarios. By adhering to Aristotle's insights on plot unity, causal relationships, and the importance of a well-crafted beginning, middle, and end, contemporary storytellers can create engaging and coherent narratives that resonate with diverse audiences.

Moreover, Aristotle's emphasis on the emotional and psychological effects of the plot, particularly through the concept of catharsis, remains relevant in creative storytelling today. Catharsis, the emotional "purging" or "cleansing" experienced by the audience, is achieved through the evocation of pity and fear. Modern storytellers can harness this principle to create deep emotional connections with their audiences, leading to transformative experiences. By exploring themes of conflict, resolution, and moral dilemmas, storytellers engage viewers on a profound level, fostering empathy and self-reflection. This enduring connection between Aristotle's *Poetics* and creative storytelling underscores the timeless nature of narrative principles and their capacity to shape human experience through the art of narrative. Pity and fear arise from the love of humanity as they stem from the emotional connection to others' experiences. Pity reflects compassion for suffering, while fear emerges from the recognition of shared vulnerabilities. Both emotions drive empathy, meaning and understanding, reinforcing our bond with the collective human experience. In this context, modern interpretations of Aristotelian catharsis extend beyond the merely somatic or emotional notion of purging pity and fear, integrating emotional, intellectual, and ethical dimensions.

We may argue that Greek tragedies are designed not only to evoke emotional responses but also to stimulate deep thinking about ethical and philosophical issues. Catharsis may thus be construed as possessing a dual nature, encompassing both emotional release and cognitive resolution. The emotional aspect involves the release of pent-up emotions, while the cognitive aspect involves gaining insights and understanding from the narrative. This dual nature makes catharsis a more holistic experience. Another key facet of the notion of catharsis is the idea of restoring balance or harmony. The tragic experience can be considered as ultimately aiming to reestablish a sense of equilibrium in the audience, balancing emotional upheaval with intellectual and moral insight. Further, by experiencing tragic emotions and engaging with the narrative intellectually, the audience undergoes a personal transformation that enhances their emotional intelligence and moral sensibilities. Such a process helps individuals to achieve moral clarity and ethical insight, promoting personal growth and understanding. Through the characters' experiences and the unfolding of the tragic plot, the audience is invited to reflect on their own values and beliefs, nurturing a deeper sense of empathy and moral awareness.

The theory of catharsis may therefore enable us to gain a deeper insight into the educational potential of creative storytelling. Indeed, Niki Lampropoulos' book serves as a remarkable resource for teachers and educators, offering practical insights and methodologies to enhance their pedagogical practices through storytelling. For instance, the chapters entitled "Story Immersion: The Essence of Being Human" and "Storytelling Narrative Reframing" provide educators with tools to create immersive and engaging learning environments. By integrating narrative techniques into their teaching, educators can make lessons more relatable and memorable, facilitating better retention and understanding among students. The book involves an exposition of multifarious storytelling pedagogical methodologies, which highlight effective strategies to tailor storytelling techniques to different educational contexts and student needs, fostering an inclusive and dynamic classroom atmosphere.

Furthermore, the book's exploration of emotional and psychological dimensions, such as in the chapters entitled "Imaginative Empathy" and "Storytelling for the Social and Emotional School Education," emphasises the importance of storytelling in developing students' social and emotional skills. These sections provide educators with frameworks to address complex and sensitive topics like various forms of violence, abuse, and bullying, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder. The use of narrative offers students a safe space to explore and understand these issues. By using stories to teach empathy and resilience, educators can help students handle their emotions

and build stronger interpersonal relationships. Overall, this book equips educators with the knowledge and tools to use storytelling as a powerful educational tool, enhancing both cognitive and personal development in their students. The educational potential of the narrative is foregrounded in a thoughtful, well-documented, and convincing manner, offering ample instigation for further reflection and new ideas on the involvement of creative storytelling in educational praxis.

Agis Marinis is Associate Professor of Ancient Greek Philology and Drama at the University of Patras (Greece). He studied Classics in Athens and Cambridge (BA, MPhil) and received his PhD from the University of Cambridge. His scholarly focus includes Pindaric poetry, as well as Greek tragedy and its reception, with particular emphasis on Aeschylus. Recent publications include: *Poetics and Religion in Pindar: Ambits of Performance and Cult* (Routledge, 2024) and *Elements of Tragedy in Flavian Epic*, co-edited with Sophia Papaioannou (De Gruyter, 2021).

INTRODUCTION

Meeting the challenges of the 21st century is a daunting endeavour; a new framework of capabilities suggests the need for a participatory culture and connectivity between individuals and their communities. The mission of education is not only to provide citizens with knowledge and skills but also to develop abilities to express themselves, be creative, cooperate in small or large groups, self-regulate, develop, and transform their identity by adapting learning depending on the circumstances. Hence, according to Prensky (2006), the 21st century requires a new set of soft skills beyond the obvious technological knowledge of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), such as communication, collaboration, social and cultural skills, creativity, critical thinking, creation of new original ideas, problem-solving, productivity in a globalised world, self-organised learning, autonomy, planning, flexibility, taking and handling risks, conflict management, initiative, and entrepreneurship, learning for life to name a few. These new skills and abilities are summarised and commonly referred to as the 21st-century skills or the 7Cs: creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, citizenship, culture, computers and connectivity as a digital skill.

Learning is the result of a continuous process of changes in cognitive structures where the role of the social and cultural environment is important, the context through mental and material artefacts in which the learning process and activity occur. Culture forms identities (social constructivism, Vygotsky, 1978), which are not fixed but fluid and emerge not from within us but from our interactions and daily conversations (Burr, 2015). By transforming our identities (Mezirow, 2009; Kegan, 1982), we build our identities and self-concepts. Thus, we perceive our existence, understood as a whole and as the expression of a single unfolding and developing personal story (Polkinghorne, 1988). Creative storytelling provides these personal and collective identifications and projections (Bettelheim, 1995) to transmit culture, values, knowledge, and traditions that can inspire change. Stories often explore social issues, challenge norms, and suggest alternatives, sparking creativity towards positive progress.

Creative storytelling serves as a means of expressing ideas, feelings, and experiences, functioning as a form of communication that conveys messages, themes, and community and cultural morals. In this procedure,

creativity and narrative are essential in determining how to interweave these elements through symbolism, metaphor, or narrative techniques, resulting in a well-told story. Creative storytelling can transport people to different worlds, provoke, inspire, and transmit ideas through diverse media such as written literature, oral traditions, visual arts, theatre, television, film, internet, multimedia, etc. It creates a conducive environment that enhances the development of the 7Cs skills and makes knowledge more appealing and impactful to learners. Storytelling often employs various techniques to enhance audience empathy. Humanity's inherent inclination for storytelling, coupled with its capacity to glean insights and lessons from narratives, underpins the organisation of the human psyche (Gersie, 1997). Storytelling serves as an observation and documentation of human behaviour and the world as perceived by the narrator. Narrative discourse presupposes the ability to comprehend and synthesise various forms of media (texts, images, multimedia, etc.), and integrate and preserve meanings within the narrative (Humphries et al., 2004). It invents new modes of communication and action, with narrative acting as a conduit for conveying appropriate messages, perceptions, knowledge, values, and behaviours (Gersie, 1997).

Originality can surprise and delight based on the storyteller's unique perspective and unexpected ways to create a unique and intriguing story world. Character complexity and unconventional narrative structures, multiple perspectives, unique formats, symbolism and metaphor, exploring new themes from diverse perspectives, embracing the absurd and cultural fusion can merge for fresh and vibrant worldbuilding. Originality suggests the storyteller's unique focus and spin on familiar elements and taking risks.

Engaging in creative storytelling in education facilitates a temporary escape from the confines of the educational, rational, scientific, and school environment, along with the stressors of reality. Such escape helps calm students and enables them to enhance their self-control, problem-solving abilities, and self-regulation, and fosters collaboration with their peers (Bruner, 1986). This collaborative process promotes interaction, mutual support, and understanding. Students can engage with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering the construction of mental and emotional bridges. They may find themselves in situations where their abilities align with the demands, enabling them to experience creative flow or situations where they require assistance to progress, thus benefiting from the guidance of more capable peers. Consequently, what initially appears as a one-dimensional idea becomes multi-dimensional, leading to the attainment of goals that may not have been achievable individually.

Narrative intelligence and narrative literacy, the skills of functional and critical reception and synthesis of stories, are not exclusively cultivated

through the teaching of narrative textual genres in language instruction but rather encompass inherent cognitive processes of understanding and interpreting the human experience and the world. In this context, creating a storytelling interdisciplinary curriculum is proposed (Kiosses, 2019) based on the notion that narrative perception is a complementary intelligence (Kiosses, 2021b) in multiple intelligences. Kiosses advocates for harnessing narrative intelligence to support and enhance narrative literacy, which involves the ability to receive and synthesise narratives across various communicative contexts and media functionally and critically. This skill is not solely developed through language instruction focusing on narrative text but is also intertwined with diverse cognitive domains, possessing an interdisciplinary nature, and relating to inherent cognitive processes of understanding and interpreting the world. Narrative intelligence encompasses the ability to gather and apply general knowledge and skills by integrating diverse methods of gathering information and experiences into a meaningful coherent whole. It involves the capacity to listen, understand, and analyse narratives effectively.

The creative storytelling multidisciplinary field draws on cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, folklore, history, and other disciplines to study how individuals perceive, interpret, and utilise stories to comprehend the world. Therefore, this book delves into solid theoretical foundations and scientific research findings to facilitate efficient and effective analyses, assessments, and techniques for creative storytelling. It provides examples and practical exercises for crafting stories and teaching storytelling, discussing theories and research findings from various fields, as well as techniques and best practices for the communication and educational sciences. It integrates plot development with the emotional journey, drawing from ancient Greek storytelling and drama to present catharsis as the final stage in the hero's emotional journey in a contemporary context.

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who contributed to the creation of this book: my mother Aphrodite and my father Constantine, my sister Georgia and Antony, and especially my amazing, creative nephew, Panayiotis; my friends in the U.K. and my colleagues at the University of Patras in Greece; Catherine Williams for her foreword and her love for Greece, apparent in her amazing efforts to learn Greek and her precious time dedicated to the foreword; Agis Marinis for his foreword and his ideas and insights; and Alison Duffy, Adam Rummens, Amanda Millar, Sophie Edminson, and Cambridge Scholars Publishers for their support in publishing this book. We all share the storytelling ancestry.

One might argue that the urgency and necessity of this book stem from the same context that gave rise to the emergence of unique and

unconventional Greek cinema, exemplified by filmmakers like Yorgos Lanthimos and Athina Rachel Tsangari, known as the Greek Weird Wave (Papanikolaou, 2023). Greece's economic turmoil and crises have influenced the development of such films and the future of filmmakers and storytellers like myself. Through various media, the Greek Weird Wave reflects on the influence and struggle to persist in creating amidst adversity, viewing persistence as the ultimate act of hope. Themes of biopolitics, derived from Michel Foucault's philosophy, explore the regulation of human life by the state, echoing power dynamics. Dimitris Papanikolaou, the author of the book 'Greek Weird Wave: A Cinema of Biopolitics', emphasises that it is the crisis itself that unveiled the social, cultural, and power dynamics leading to its utilisation. Lanthimos is regarded as the pioneer of this emerging movement, continuing to produce films that embody the distinctive traits of 'weird' cinematography, as evidenced in his seminal 2009 urban dystopia. These traits include oppressive familial and societal systems mirroring socio-political reality, themes predominantly focused on biopower, feelings of claustrophobia, alienation and social isolation, and enclosed spaces, among others.

A large population was in survival mode for too long; I had to navigate through difficult situations for a decade, including personal and family crises, two national crises (the Greek crisis and Brexit), as well as the Greek wildfires in my home town, Ancient Olympia. No aspect of social and cultural life is immune to catastrophic events. As a screenwriter, I found myself specialising in writing stories about underdogs and misfits, individuals who perpetually struggle due to their own flawed decisions deeply ingrained in their background, culture, society, and personality traits, yet persistently rise despite their setbacks. This parallels another connection between the new Greek cinematic movement and ancient tragedy: individuals who are too powerless to shape their destinies, are condemned to navigate a society governed by rules and laws imposed by superior entities. The distinction lies in the fact that it is no longer the gods dictating fate, but rather a faceless, detached system of power and governance.

The quintessential archive of a perennial past, the enduring legacy of ancient drama sets an imposing standard for all, and along with the contemporary unconventional Greek wave provides a distinctive mixture. In this book, the hero's journey intertwines with their emotional journey, exploring the universality of these themes. The book serves as an indicative roadmap, grounded in existing approaches, rather than a set of recommendations, ethics, storytelling codes or deontology.

Chapter 1 discusses the significance of creativity and storytelling in supporting and engaging human narrative thought. It explores existing

storytelling forms and structures while advocating for bending the rules, frames and structures and liberating individuals in their creative processes to advance their narrative intelligence. Lastly, it proposes the necessity for a new storytelling literacy and curriculum across all educational levels.

Chapter 2 introduces readers to the intricacies of linear and non-linear story structures, the immersion in the story through empathy, and storytelling utilisation as a system and technique to effect change within an ecosystem. It refers to the story immersion as the essence of being human; the importance of storytelling narrative reframing; and structure, including frameworks for multiple meanings, unconventional structures and the narrative distance between the storyteller and the audience. It also introduces the hero's journey, and emotional journey, presenting guidelines for crafting a well-told story.

Chapter 3 delves into the creative storytelling psycho-pedagogical character, portraying the hero's emotional journey towards assimilation, symmetry, and catharsis. The hero's journey encompasses both the outward journey and the commitment to resolving significant problems. Through difficulties and challenges, the hero acknowledges his weaknesses, strengths, and goals, self-regulates, becomes autonomous and develops resilience to persevere in his journey. As such, the chapter also discusses characters' multidimensionality, their wants, needs, secrets, fears, and super-objectives of their endeavours, as well as imaginative empathy, the amazing human ability to understand and share the feelings and perspectives of others by imagining oneself in their situation, including objects.

In Chapter 4, the hero's emotional journey serves as a non-invasive method for mental health support and facilitates the revision of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours projected onto characters. This approach, blending the external journey (structure and plot) and the internal journey (cycles of problematic events and behaviours in psychology), is unique, combining creative unscripted approaches with specific storytelling techniques. It also serves as a reframing technique within ecosystemic educational approaches, proposing the storytelling curriculum development. Exploring the stages of the hero's emotional journey can be integrated into story planning, reflection, and evaluation. This journey encompasses not only individuals, protagonists, and characters but also processes that large groups of people endure during shared periods of psychological trauma. What the storyteller has experienced, others may have experienced as well, fostering connection and communication with the audience through storytelling. Thus, the emotional journey aids the narrator in finding their flow without becoming ensnared in mental traumas but instead following the hero's desire and necessity. The psychological cycles discussed and

summarised in this book include coming of age, loss and bereavement, violence and abuse, abandonment, post-traumatic stress disorder, addiction or the realm of hungry ghosts, emotional manipulation, and transgenerational trauma.

Chapter 5 discusses the hero as a multidimensional character who aims to change his world or is compelled to do so; the hero embarks on his journey facing situations that reveal his shadow and the truth about himself and the world. Characters encapsulate their worlds and their worlds reflect through them. Creating multidimensional characters in character-driven stories is another creative storytelling puzzle to solve. Challenges compel the hero to recognise his weaknesses, goals, mistakes and misjudgments, and levels of development, fostering emotional resilience. He learns to confront errors and failures as integral parts of the process, assimilating and recovering from negative experiences, and managing his emotions to continue his journey. Reshaping thoughts and creating new mental images through our imagination positively impacts communication with others and the world. However, active engagement in the hero's journey towards transformation and new consciousness is a voluntary endeavour.

Chapter 6 discusses storytelling literacy and curriculum based on the results of the Glasgow-originated storyline approach suggested for education. In addition, it proposes appropriate pedagogical methodologies and techniques, such as the zone of proximal flow, the creative storytelling cube, and thematic teaching.

Chapter 7 concludes and encapsulates the ideas presented in this book, and suggests new trends and directions in creative storytelling. Human beings are not merely collections of data points but rather complex tapestries of lived experiences and emotions that shape our identities. Our lives are defined by personal narratives and the connections we form, emphasising the subjective and evolving nature of human existence. This process fosters empathy and deeper understanding, revealing the intricate complexities of human life and social dynamics. Ultimately, storytelling is a cognitive tool that shapes our understanding of ourselves and the world, creating meaning and cultivating connections through our shared journey of human experience.

Overall, the book contributes to the professional lifelong learning and development of storytellers and professionals involved in the creative storytelling process as co-shapers of these collective ecosystems. It is intended for students and experts in communication, media, and pedagogical sciences to name a few. Creative storytelling is an art and continuous practice of compellingly and engagingly communicating ideas, beliefs, feelings, and experiences.

This book delves into structures, models, methods, and techniques, yet acknowledges the essential role of a certain degree of chaos and constant change. Living in a prolonged emergency under pressure, and struggling to survive in a troubled nation, might resonate with the concept of biopolitical realism outlined by Papanikolaou (2023). This environment becomes a situational catalyst, and breeds a sense of strangeness and social unrest, creating a world of parallel realities and weird realism in the mind of a writer like myself. Brexit further compounded chaos, with flows of people migrating from and to Great Britain, leaving many stranded in the wake of change. This constant cycle of decay and destruction can push us to a far edge or a breaking point. Here, one might find a sense of liberation by shedding the illusions of life and established world models, expanding our internal space to breathe. This very urge to create amidst the chaos becomes a driving force in every aspect of life, to recreate ourselves and reclaim control over the narrative of our existence.

Niki Lambropoulos
LONDON, 15th of August, 2024

CHAPTER ONE

CREATIVE STORYTELLING

Creativity is a multifaceted cognitive and behavioural process that entails the generation of novel ideas, concepts, or solutions, thereby expanding human knowledge, skills, and abilities.

A story is a dramatised lesson that perpetuates itself through storytelling, the art of vividly describing and communicating ideas, beliefs, feelings, and experiences in a compelling and engaging manner.

Brain and sensory perception, as well as individual and societal dynamics, interact, define each other, and ultimately manifest themselves in external expressions. What facilitates and enriches the brain's sensory stimulation? How does the convergent creativity of analysis blend with the divergent creativity of imagination to generate new patterns and ideas, leading to breakthroughs and the magic of solutions? How does creativity embody non-linear thinking and absurdity?

Creativity has long been revered, from ancient civilizations attributing divine inspiration to human creation, to modern times where we understand that our perception of the world evolves with the accumulation of stimuli processed by an open-minded brain. As information is gathered, it is analysed, combined, and synthesized to form a more comprehensive understanding of our surroundings. However, each new analysis reveals structural gaps and errors, prompting us to continuously reconstruct our worldview, aware that it may collapse again at any moment. Creativity is a state of mind.

When we can articulate a problem accurately and understand its limitations, we take a crucial step toward solving it, regardless of its nature. This understanding can then be transformed into a creative solution, and if we proceed, creativity evolves into innovation, possessing the potential to revolutionize our lives and the world. Failure is not condemned but rather embraced as part of the learning process, bringing us closer to success. There is no quest for a utopian world; instead, the diversity of individual and collective perspectives, coupled with the ability to discern and prioritize subjective data, forms the foundation of a culture of creation.

We can foster and promote this culture by strengthening its presence and encouraging its dominance across all fields and endeavours. What we need to bear in mind is Democritus' definition of luck: 'Luck is the prudent of knowing'. Today, creativity stands as the most essential factor in navigating the increasing complexity and confusion of the world. Information is readily available to every user, fostering the production and synthesis of ideas. Within this context, specific skills and abilities development for personal and national autonomy and economic independence becomes imperative. These creative skills form the initial stage of human activity; without ideas and thinking any meaningful action is impossible. Together with imagination, they serve as the guiding initial conditions for transitioning from idea and thought to action, specifically in the design and production of innovative products, processes, and services to meet market demands, whether local or global. Creativity adds value by manifesting ideas in some form, whether spiritual, immaterial or material, thereby enhancing the quality of life for those who can harness it.

Creativity reinforces and enhances imagination, engaging all senses, thereby altering our perception mechanisms and the various ways information is received and experienced, while also stimulating cognitive functions such as insight (Kounios & Beeman, 2015). Consequently, two main groups of associated creativity techniques emerge to support idea generation: insights when all facts are not present, and problem-solving as analytical thinking when most information is available. These two creativity modes are linked to right-brain and left-brain functionalities. Sequential or parallel information, along with a conducive environment, aids the creative storyteller in managing, controlling and enhancing insight and problem-solving processes.

Sternberg and O'Hara (1999) propose five possible relationships between intelligence and creativity, viewing them either as subsets of each other, independent but overlapping sets, or completely unrelated sets. Guilford (1950) suggests that this correlation may vary across different levels of cognitive ability, with a positive linear relationship on the IQ scale but no correlation between creativity with high IQ. Guilford concludes that high IQ is not a sufficient condition for high divergent idea generation ability, though it is often a necessary condition, a concept known as the 'threshold hypothesis'.

Piaget (1960) defines creativity as a process of finding, formulating, and solving problems, exploring, and experimenting for reasoned decision-making. Torrance (1966, 1974) identifies creativity as an individual's ability to approach various problems with sensitivity, originality, method, and calmness. More recently, Baucus and colleagues (2008) outline four ethical issues

for supporting creativity and innovation in organisations: violation of standard operating procedures, challenging authority and traditional functions, creating conflict, competition, and stress, and taking risks.

When one creates new perspectives and demonstrates challenging behaviour in terms of classical standards, it heightens the levels of uncertainty. A crisis is marked by any sudden disruption of the normal rhythm of daily life, necessitating a reassessment of actions and thoughts. It is associated with the loss of daily life stability, causing anxiety and encompassing feelings of anger, fear, humiliation, the uncontrollable, the unexpected, and uncertainty about the future. The effects of a crisis manifest in short-term or long-term melancholy, changes in daily life, and impacts on thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. It entails threat, dealing with a situation, and continuous survival conditions (fight or flight). Long-term exposure to crisis conditions without support and assistance can have tragic consequences for those experiencing it.

Managing creativity in a complex world is a fundamental human skill, and the most impactful ideas have a profound effect on individuals, their communities and the world. Cognitive processes that lead to shifts in perspective and the reorganisation of information generate new ideas, address needs, and solve problems. These effects can manifest as visible or underlying changes in individuals and their behaviour, thereby influencing and reshaping the environment and social context in which they live. Human creativity leverages cognitive processes and conceptual structures to generate new ideas and necessitates these changes to drive transformation, both externally and internally. Creative thinking and the generation of innovative, original ideas contribute to improving everyday life and well-being, enhancing the overall quality of life.

According to Sir Ken Robinson (2011), creativity is the greatest gift of human intelligence. The more complex the world becomes, the more creative we need to be to meet its challenges. And yet, many people wonder if they have creative abilities. To move forward in the new world of tomorrow, we need encouragement, imagination, composition, collaboration, innovation, and creativity. Ideas emerge when they encounter specific problems, interacting with data and their creators, who, through their experience and expertise, flexibly synthesize elements. Cognitive and affective empathy can serve as a perceptual mechanism for bridging the gap between individuals and others, as well as their ideas. Those with developed empathy can discern emotional experiences through their thinking and judgment, allowing them to simulate shared visions, needs, and movements. Empathy plays a crucial role in fostering cohesion within groups or larger communities and is directly linked to action in response to specific needs. Recognising

creators' extraordinary power cultivates flexibility concerning pre-existing knowledge, experiences, and information, along with the skills to provide feedback, make final adjustments, and synthesise new ideas, individually or collaboratively. Creativity can be nurtured and enhanced through methods that stimulate imagination, engage all senses, alter perceptual mechanisms to facilitate different ways of experiencing information, and incorporate new technologies to support cognitive functions, including insight.

Story: A game of our intelligence

A characteristic of humanity, not yet fully understood through scientific research, is creativity, the play of intelligence. With imagination and creativity, the realm of ideas intertwines with the everyday world to form a new reality. The phenomenon of insight, or the 'Eureka Moment', is famously attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Archimedes (287 BC), who, while immersed in a bath, discovered a solution, and leapt out naked in a state of ecstasy. Some 2,500 years later, modern research by John Kounios and his colleagues provided a clear depiction of brain neurons in electroencephalogrammes (Kounios & Beeman, 2015), showing intense right-hemisphere activity and focused attention before and during moments of insight. Direct brain stimulation can facilitate creativity and, consequently, knowledge, as a product of non-conscious processing. The emotional burst observed mirrors Archimedes' experience akin to an extremely positive surprise. The elusive nature of creativity stems from its amorphous concepts and lack of specific categorisation, compounded by the limitations of existing technology. Consequently, the study of creativity and the development of techniques, methods, and tools for its enhancement including language, as well as the creation of taxonomies, remain challenging for scientists. Language serves as the most essential cultural mediation tool and thought-building element, constructing meaning and understanding of ourselves (our identity), our environment, fellow human beings, and the world around us. Social structures, relationships, and socially determined meanings are transmitted through language. Nowadays, there is a need to identify, support, and develop language through learning and education, driven by unlimited access to information necessitating critical thinking and evaluation.

Deliberate creative thinking is possible; understanding how the brain functions allows individuals to enhance creative thinking, thereby adopting a creative attitude as a personality characteristic (Lambropoulos, 2022). Sternberg (2003) proposed that creative abilities can be developed within the constraints of genetics and the environment. All individuals possess creativity. According to Sir Ken Robinson (2013), a creative person can:

- Recognise their creative powers,
- Identify personality types,
- Discover their talents and inclinations,
- Understand and utilize the creative process,
- Find unexpected solutions to challenges,
- Learn to think creatively.

Creative thinking and creativity can be nurtured, enabling individuals to discover their unique abilities and personality traits. Exposure to diverse environments is necessary for individuals to uncover their abilities, often leading to a sense of inner energy and excitement, fuelling creativity, and making it addictive (Lambropoulos, 2022). Creative thinking can manifest as insight, defined by Kounios and Beeman (2015) as any sudden understanding, realisation, or problem-solving related to the reorganisation of mental representations of a stimulus, situation, or event to provide a non-obvious or non-dominant interpretation. Insights may manifest as:

- A simple solution breaking a deadlock or psychological barrier initially based on an incorrect or strong previous solution but ultimately failing to connect ideas and create new ones.
- A solution suddenly enters consciousness when not focused on a specific problem.
- A solution was suggested while actively engaged in analytical processing but has not yet been found.
- Spontaneous awareness unrelated to any clear problem.

In 1926, Wallas attempted to delineate the non-linear stages of the creative process. This article adds the stage of fantasy as a prerequisite for initiating the creative process. Thus, the creative process unfolds as follows (Lambropoulos, 2022):

1. Imagination: In this stage, the boundaries of a situation or problem are dismantled through an ideological exploration of the potential possibilities.
2. Research: This stage involves investigating the problematic situation to answer questions such as how, what, who, when, and why.
3. Incubation: In this stage, there is a lack of activity as information potentially resides in both the pre-conscious and unconscious realms. Unconscious internal processes occur during moments of relaxation, such as watching TV, reading a book, taking a walk, and especially during sleep.

4. Eureka!: At this stage, insight surfaces momentarily into consciousness, famously represented by Archimedes' exclamation 'Eureka!'. This realisation is often accompanied by euphoria and excitement.
5. Evaluation: During this stage, new ideas are assessed to determine their validity, functionality, and usefulness, aiming to identify the most valid solution and the most appropriate form of formulation for application and implementation.

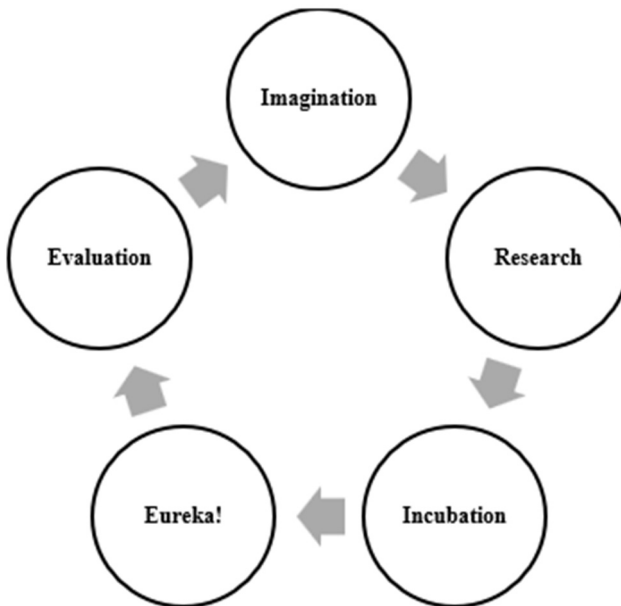


Figure 1. The Creative Process

Wallas's classification, established in 1926, remains a classic in the science of creativity. The addition of imagination as in Figure 1 corresponds to visualising the next step so that the individual can actualise it. Creative skills empower individuals to discover their unique talents and work towards their manifestation in the external world. Understanding one's specific creative abilities, coupled with creativity techniques, provides individuals with the knowledge, opportunities, and possibilities to create in any life circumstance. Creative individuals exhibit heightened sensitivity, expanded attention, and simultaneous focus on memory. This sensitivity is often evident in precise problem formulation in external and social environments and in self-criticism. Such individuals possess the ability to discern