



Mix, Mix, Remix: Drawing on Pop Culture Stories to Inspire Intercultural Dialogue

Sangita Shresthova, PhD

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Audience

This workshop can appeal to many communities but is best suited for diverse contexts where participants come from a range of cultural, social, and political backgrounds. Between 8 and 20 participants works well.

Goal

This workshop uses remix and storytelling to support intercultural dialogue and exchange.

Description

The Mix, Mix, Remix workshop taps icons and narratives borrowed from popular culture to encourage intercultural dialogue and bridge divisions and differences. Participants begin by gathering and sharing stories that inspire them. Then, exploring each other's stories, they start to mix and recombine elements between stories, seeing how the combinations of unexpected elements lead to entirely new creative narratives. As story remixing leads to real-life sharing, reflection, debate, and collaboration, as well as, most importantly, connection.

The use of narrative remix in this works promotes a mode of intercultural dialogue that can be easy to understand, accessible, and yet powerful. It encourages people to encounter each other through the act of building a remixed shared narrative, one that respects their individuality and yet allows them to connect through the weaving of stories that have been significant in their lives.





Intercultural Dialogues Exercises

Through its use of remix, the workshop also touches on questions of copyright as a form of “private censorship” that has the potential to silence remix, as a particular kind of intercultural expression. Diving into these complex issues through the act of storytelling, participants can develop opportunities for meaningful learning. Especially in classroom contexts, remix practices may intersect with questions around plagiarism and appropriation. Through the act of remixing stories, the workshop allows participants to acknowledge this, and other, concerns around ‘borrowed’ cultural content as it simultaneously presents a productive context in which to develop best practices for recognition, understanding, citation, respect, and appropriate use. Other skills supported through this workshop include communication skills, and effective intercultural dialogue.

Workshop Instructions

Part I - Inspiring Stories (15 minutes)

Ask participants to reflect on their lives and think back to stories that have been meaningful to them in terms of connecting to their cultural backgrounds. Introduce this process through a brief discussion of why stories matter, how they motivate us, help us to find connections to others, and can ultimately help us to take action around issues that matter to us. Examples to mention may include your own personal inspiring stories (have at least two very different examples ready). Stress that the stories should first and foremost be inspirational. They do not need to provide a model for action.

Here is a sample text to use to as a prompt:

Identify a story that resonates with you and inspires you as you think about your cultural experiences and backgrounds. Your story could be a movie, a play, a song, a comic, a myth, a television show, even a commercial. It could be a story that originated in your region, country, town, or it could be a story from somewhere else but that resonates locally or across cultures. It could be a story that you remember from your childhood, it could be a story that you learned in school, heard at home, or that a friend shared with you. It could be a story which has a much longer cultural tradition behind it. It could even be a story that follows the life of a real person or persons, alive or deceased. They could be celebrities who work to change society, but they also could be everyday folks who do amazing things.





Intercultural Dialogues Exercises

Ask participants to come up with one story in their mind.

Have each participant write their inspiring story down using the following prompts:

- Title of your story.
- Who are the main characters?
- Where and when does the story take place?
- What challenges or events occur in the story?
- How does the story end?
- Why is this story inspiring to you?

Go around the room and have some participants share their story. List some of the stories and ideas which have surfaced on a flipchart or whiteboard to provide participants with a starting place.

Part 2 - Connecting Stories (15 minutes)

Assign participants to small groups (ideally 3 or 4 participants per group). Introduce the idea of remix and mixing stories to create a new one.

About Remix

Remix is a maker practice used by many individuals and groups featured here. At its most basic level, remix means taking existing content (images, videos, songs, etc.) and transforming that content in some way to create your own new work. Many powerful remix works comment on the original work, critiquing it or boosting particular elements, but this is not necessary for a work to be a remix.

Ask the students to each share their inspiring story in their small group. They should then discuss what connections they see across the stories (and what differences). How would they start to think about combining them?

Part 3 - Creating Remixed Story (15 minutes)

Ask the students to come up with a new story that uses an element from each of the stories told in their group. Possible elements include:





Intercultural Dialogues Exercises

- Themes
- Characters
- Plots
- Locations

Ask each group to write down the key elements of their remixed stories.

Prompts:

- Title of new story.
- Title of source stories.
- Who are the main characters?
- Where and when does the story take place?
- What challenges or events occur in the story?
- How does the story end?
- Why is this story inspiring to you?

Part 3a (Optional but Recommended): Drawing a Visual Representation of the Remixed Story (10-15 minutes)

Have the participants use paper and markers to create a picture (that is, some sort of visual image) that somehow represents your story. This could be a symbol, a character, or other visual representation. Make sure students understand that the drawing is to help them tell the story, not an end in itself. Ask them to include the following information on the paper with their drawing:

Prompts:

- Title of new story.
- Team members: who is on your team?
- What three (or four, if there were four group members) stories are you drawing upon?

Part 4 - Sharing Remixed Stories (10 minutes)





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Ask some groups to share their remixed stories. Have each group stand up, hold up their drawing, and tell their collective story. (If there is time at the end: have them share their individual inspiring stories).

Part 5 - Conclusion: Reflect on the Process and Return to Remix as a Tool for Intercultural Dialogue and Social Action (5 minutes)

Ask the participants to reflect on the process.

- What did they enjoy?
- What did they notice as they worked to create stories?
- What surprised them?
- What was difficult?

In concluding, you may return to the additive nature of remix, how it helps us think about things differently, in order to approach stories and people in new ways. This can help us understand what motivates and inspires us and build connections with others who may be different from or similar to us by understanding what inspires them.

You may choose to illustrate your point through more closely examining one of the remixed stories to demonstrate how the process of remixing helped participants make thematic, character-based and other, ultimately human, connections with one another.

End the exercise by noting what may be gained through putting stories together and stressing how each person's contribution was crucial to creating their new, combined stories.

Facilitator note: Be sure to collect all materials from the students. If possible, find a way to return these to the participants as a way to remind them of their workshop experience.

Time Required

This workshop takes between 60 and 75 minutes.





Intercultural Dialogues Exercises

Hints for Success

It is helpful for the facilitator to prepare by gaining a sense of the popular culture content worlds present in the geographic region and communities participating in the workshop. This can help to support students verbalizing their own content worlds. Doing this would help the facilitator be better equipped to support participants as they move through the remixing process.

Supplies Required

The technical needs for this workshop are minimal. Participants will need to have pens, colored pencils, or markers. Large sheets of paper can be useful as well. All handouts associated with this workshop should be printed out in adequate numbers to be available to each participant. In addition, tables and chairs are needed, arranged to facilitate small group work and collaboration. The participants will also need table space on which to draw their illustrations.

Resources

Peters-Lazaro, G., & Shresthova, S. (2020). [*Practicing futures: A civic imagination action handbook*](#). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Source

An earlier version of this workshop was created by Sangita Shresthova, PhD, and Gabriel Peters-Lazaro, PhD, for inclusion in *Practicing Futures: Civic Imagination Action Handbook*.

