

Teaching materials

The Metaphor

Discovering a powerful storytelling tool

inspired by

The MATRIX Method – Metaphor X
by Roman Kroke

Click on the title of the artwork above
to be directed straight to the online video
(hyperlink)

A. Application options (alternatives)

- **As Phase I of an interdisciplinary arts workshop:** analysing metaphors helps students become more aware of key content and of possible forms their later work in Phase II could take.
- **As a standalone phase** that provides a basis for class-wide conversations and debates—without producing an artwork in the traditional sense. Here, the “work” is the universe of ideas and feelings that emerges on each piece of card and, during presentations, becomes a trigger for a whole-group discussion.

B. Aims and impacts

- Working with metaphors supports **sustainable, connected observation** and connected learning: seeing, hearing, smelling, sensing, touching, thinking, feeling—and in this way makes it possible for personal forms of expression to emerge (for example, spoken and/or written).
→ **Taking ownership of the content.**
- When a topic is also explored through metaphors, the student creates many **emotional and intellectual points of connection**. **These anchor points** help link the topic: – to what they already know; – to what they will discover later.
- These points of connection act like **anchors against forgetting and strengthen the ability to recognise links between different topics**. The topics no longer “float” like isolated islands in the mind: through metaphors, they connect with others.
- Working with metaphors encourages **rhizomatic thinking** (network thinking)
 - o Rhizomatic thinking is a way of learning and understanding in which ideas are not organised like a hierarchical tree (root → trunk → branches), but as a flexible network—without a fixed centre.
 - o It is **non-linear thinking** that can branch off, make free associations, and create unexpected links between very different elements.
 - o A rhizome grows **horizontally**, spreads, intertwines, and works around obstacles: → it is lively, diverse, adaptable, creative thinking.
 - o To illustrate this, you can mention **Pando**, the largest living organism on Earth—a quaking aspen grove in Utah. On the surface you can see around 47,000 trunks and millions of leaves: everything looks separate, like many individual topics. **Under the surface, however, a single root system connects all the trees**. In metaphor work, this invisible root system represents the many connections that link topics that may seem independent at first glance.

When we integrate the metaphor-based approach of the MATRIX method into how we feel and think, we no longer look only at the “trees”: we learn to notice the network of relationships that connects them.

- By becoming more sensitive to metaphors, students develop the ability to make **emotional and intellectual connections** between: – history, the present and the future; – different subjects (history, philosophy, sciences, languages, etc.); – geographically distant places; – the three-dimensional world and the digital world; – individuals and groups from different backgrounds (age, culture, education, religion, gender, period, ...); – experiences and skills from both school and out-of-school contexts (free time, hobbies, etc.).
- Metaphor serves as a **common denominator** and makes it possible to associate across very different worlds.
- The metaphors developed give students **new verbal images** and immediately give their presentations a personal and engaging dimension.


Practical demonstrations:

Video demo – [Léa Denet’s metaphor analysis](#) (Phase I)

To see how this metaphor analysis later fed the creation of the artwork in Phase II of the workshop, please see Léa Denet’s presentation “Transmission”. [Hyperlink](#)

The artwork “[A Window to the World](#)” by Justin Duchêne

This video shows how the reflections developed by their group in Phase I around the metaphors of “door” and “window” become the inspiring engine for their artwork.

 **The other artwork presentations** in the “[Artworks](#)” menu also illustrate the impacts mentioned above, especially the way metaphor work enables each student, depending on their personality and lived experience, to find their own language and their own stance on the topic.

C. Organising the teaching unit

I. Class organisation

- **Group work** (preferred approach):

Up to 4 students per group—this multiplies the flow of metaphorical associations.

- **Alternative: individual work**

Each student receives their own set of materials for the metaphor analysis.

II. Materials per group

- **One large piece of card** (at least 120 cm × 80 cm), beige (avoid white)
 - This base can be made from several pieces of card joined with tape like puzzle pieces, depending on the group’s “storytelling”.
 - Ideally: used cardboard showing signs of wear (tears, stains, stickers, etc.) from a paper-recycling container.
- **1 set of thick markers** in 4 colours (black, red, blue, green)
 - The lines must be visible from a distance (presentation to the class).
- **Craft knife (for card), scissors (paper), and tape**—preferably light beige (masking tape), as it stands out visually both from the brown card and from the white edges of printouts (texts, photos).
- **A set of materials for the metaphor analysis**

What kinds of metaphors could be included as working material?

Primary:

o Visual:

- A4 printouts of abstract or figurative, metaphorical, historical or contemporary photos;
- AI-generated images or photos taken by students (smartphone, camera, etc.).

o Text-based:

- A4 printouts of quotations, proverbs, idioms, short extracts ...

o Other options:

- Tools to work the surface of the card (for tactile metaphors): screwdrivers (Phillips and flathead), forks, awls, pointed tools, etc.

- Dry pastel chalks in different colours;
- Threads/strings of all kinds (to represent connecting lines in 3D);
- 1 object per group that can be freely integrated metaphorically (mug, shoe, lightbulb, cable, computer mouse, etc.); to encourage tactile metaphors: objects/materials with very different surfaces (smooth, rough, grainy, ridged, bumpy, fibrous, porous, silky, sticky, cold, metallic, soft, springy, cracked, irregular ...);
- Olfactory: scented natural materials (wood, moss, flowers ...), perfumes, soaps ...
- Acoustic: access to sound samples via a freely usable audio database (for example, an online database of royalty-free sounds).

III. Steps

1. Preparing the workspace on the floor

- if possible, move tables and chairs to the sides of the room;
- lay out the cardboard on the floor as “work islands” for each group.

2. Place on each cardboard island

- a limited number of A4 sheets for the metaphor analysis (images + texts), for example 7 pages;
- during the work, place further sheets near the card: students decide freely whether they want to integrate these “new ingredients” or not.
- 1 set of thick markers (4 colours).
- 1–2 craft knives, 1–2 pairs of scissors, 1–2 rolls of tape.
- Optional (see above): surface-working tools, dry pastels in different colours, threads, 1 object, etc.
- Duration of group work: approx. 20–30 minutes.
- Afterwards:
 - each group presents their analyses to the class;
 - the option to open a discussion/debate space after each presentation.

D. Examples of possible themes for the metaphor analysis

(to be adapted to your project context)

In our workshop, the task instruction—written after the visits to Leverkusen and Villeneuve d’Ascq—was as follows:

“Based on your experiences, develop ideas for an artwork that represents your personal place of remembrance.”

In the appendix you will find several PDF files that served as working materials for the metaphor analyses in Phase I of our workshop and that you can use in your own teaching sequence, in particular:

- **Photos of the historical sites in Leverkusen** (the new memorial for forced labourers on the BAYER company site; the stones marking the mass graves at Manfort Cemetery) as well as in **Villeneuve d’Ascq** (the memorial site, the portraits and personal belongings of the civilian victims);
- **Photos on the topic of “online hate speech”;**
- **Examples of digital violence** that students researched online (screenshots from social networks);
- **Images illustrating the metaphors of door, window, flame, etc.;**
- **Quotes and proverbs** on the themes of door, window and other related symbols.

IMPORTANT

These educational resources may only be used by teachers within the framework of their own school-based practice. They may not be used in the context of paid collaborations with external contributors (honorary or commissioned partners).

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