



# Finding Transformative Narratives

Exploring our common ground

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# Storytellers construct stories from ‘memes’

- **Mememes:** foundational cultural artifacts that shape belief systems, attitudes, ideologies, and the like, including phrases, words, images, symbols, or other types of artifacts that resonate with people (Blackmore 2000)
- Some particular important kinds of memes for stories include:
  - **Metaphors:** understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980)
  - **Frames:** Mental structures that order our ideas; and communicative tools that evoke these structures and shape our perceptions and interpretations over time (Holmes et al 2011)
  - **Tropes:** a commonly-seen theme or element of a story that becomes recognisable through repeated use, e.g. the hero’s journey
  - **Archetypes:** a type of trope (usually a character) that represents something universal about the human condition, e.g. a hero, villain, trickster, scapegoat or mentor





**Memes:** are the *all-embracing* set of ideas, words, tropes, and artifacts out of which stories can be built. In other words, metaphors, tropes, frames and archetypes can all be seen as different expressions of memes.

- **Memes** are at the **core** (foundation) of how people understand the world.
- Memes shape **understandings, attitudes, and behaviors**
- Memes work when they are **shared** (replicate), mind-to-mind with reasonably similar understandings
- **Cultural mythologies** are the (shared memes and) stories that tell different groups of people what it means to be in the world, how the world works, and what (human) purposes exist

Google

Coca-Cola

THE OLD WORLDVIEW

The Western world (Europe & USA) believe in an unchanging, patriarchal and hierarchical world. Everything is seen as separate from everything else and humans are separate from nature.



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**Imagine yourself in the future...**



# Activity – finding shared memes for an ideal future

1. Find a partner
2. Take it in turns to share your vision of 2040
3. Look for any memes that are common to both visions – write these down on sticky notes and stick onto the paper provided
4. You only have 10 minutes! Make sure both of you get a turn and that you get at least 3 common memes written down
5. If you can't find 3 memes you have in common, try exploring your visions a bit more to see if you can negotiate some common ground



# Activity – broadening

1. Form a group of 4
2. Share your lists of common memes
3. Write down a list of at least four memes for an ideal future that the four of you all agree on
  - Start with any memes that are on both lists
  - Add any memes that are only on one list but that the other pair really likes
  - Then, look for similar or related memes that you can connect in some way – write a new sticky note if you need to
  - If you need more, talk a bit more about your visions and look for new common memes that you can write down



**What has emerged?**





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