

QAGTC 2024 State Conference

Improvising and Cognition

ImproCOG
Comedy-powered cognition



LEARN FUN IMPRO SKILLS

MASTER COGNITIVE VERBS
(70+ in the Australian Curriculum)

IMPROVE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS
(Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Empathy)

IGNITE YOUR COGNITIVE PROCESSES

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About the presenter - **Alastair Tomkins**

- Improvising performer 1990's-present and has performed across Australia and internationally in improvised shows
- Teacher PD presenter for Drama Qld & Drama Australia conferences
- Regular workshop presenter for Impro Qld in secondary schools
- Member of Applied Improvisation Network
- Presenter UNSW GERRIC program "Improvising & Cognition"
- Completed Masters in Education (UTS) April 2024



Learning goals

At the end of this class you will be able to:

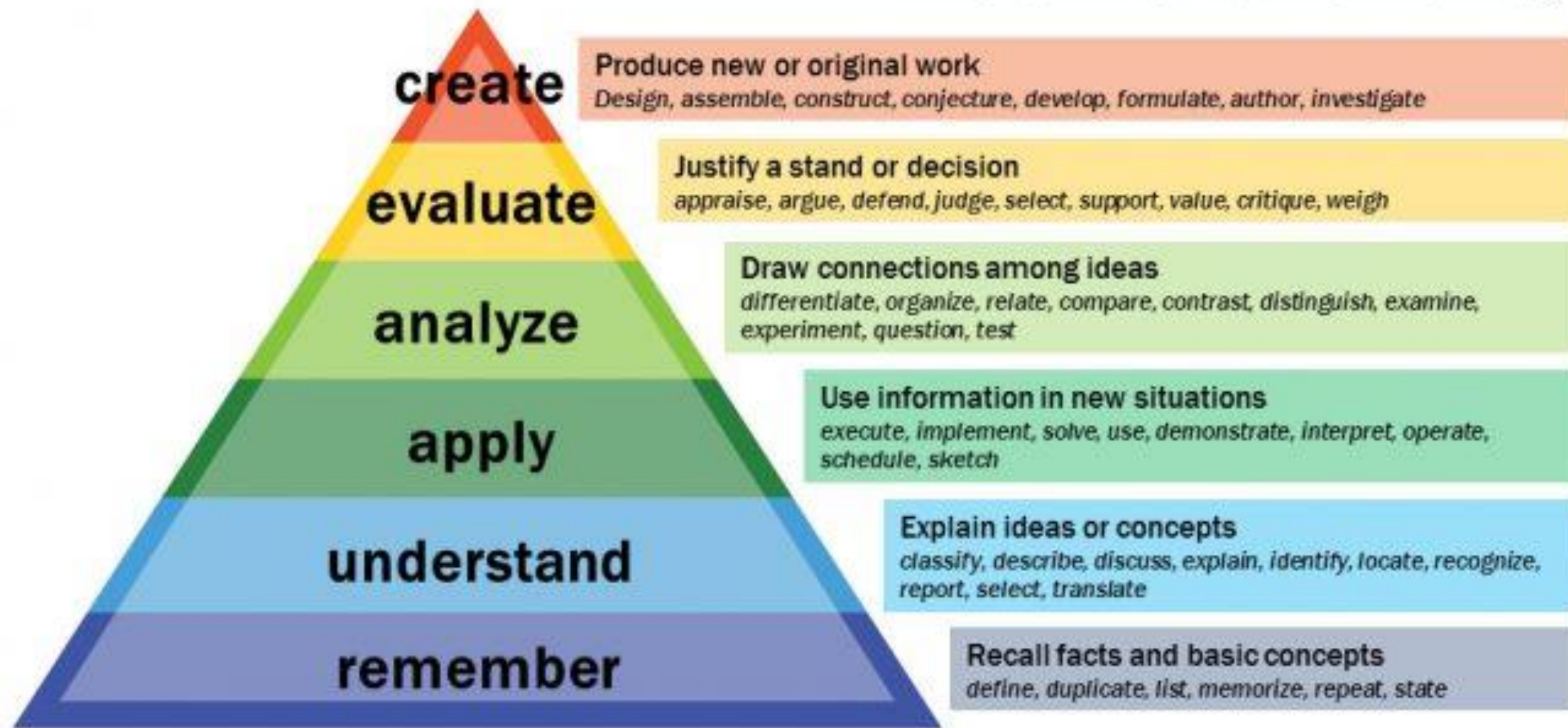
• Explain how impro games can be used to explicitly teach cognitive processes, 21st century skills, and cognitive verbs

...and

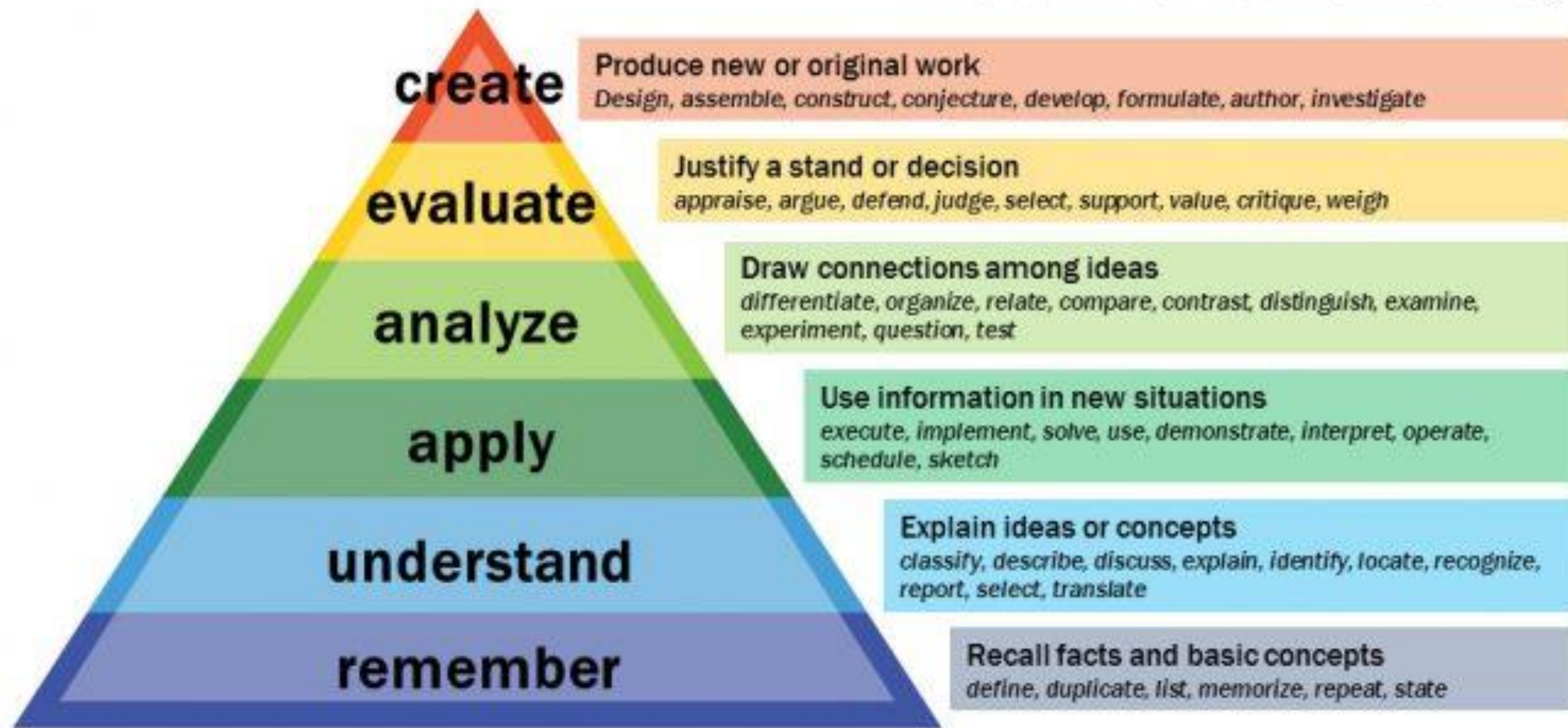
- Model and coach impro games for your students
- Adapt and manipulate impro games for your specific context
- Bring some laughter and fun into what can be a dry topic area



Bloom's Taxonomy



Bloom's Taxonomy

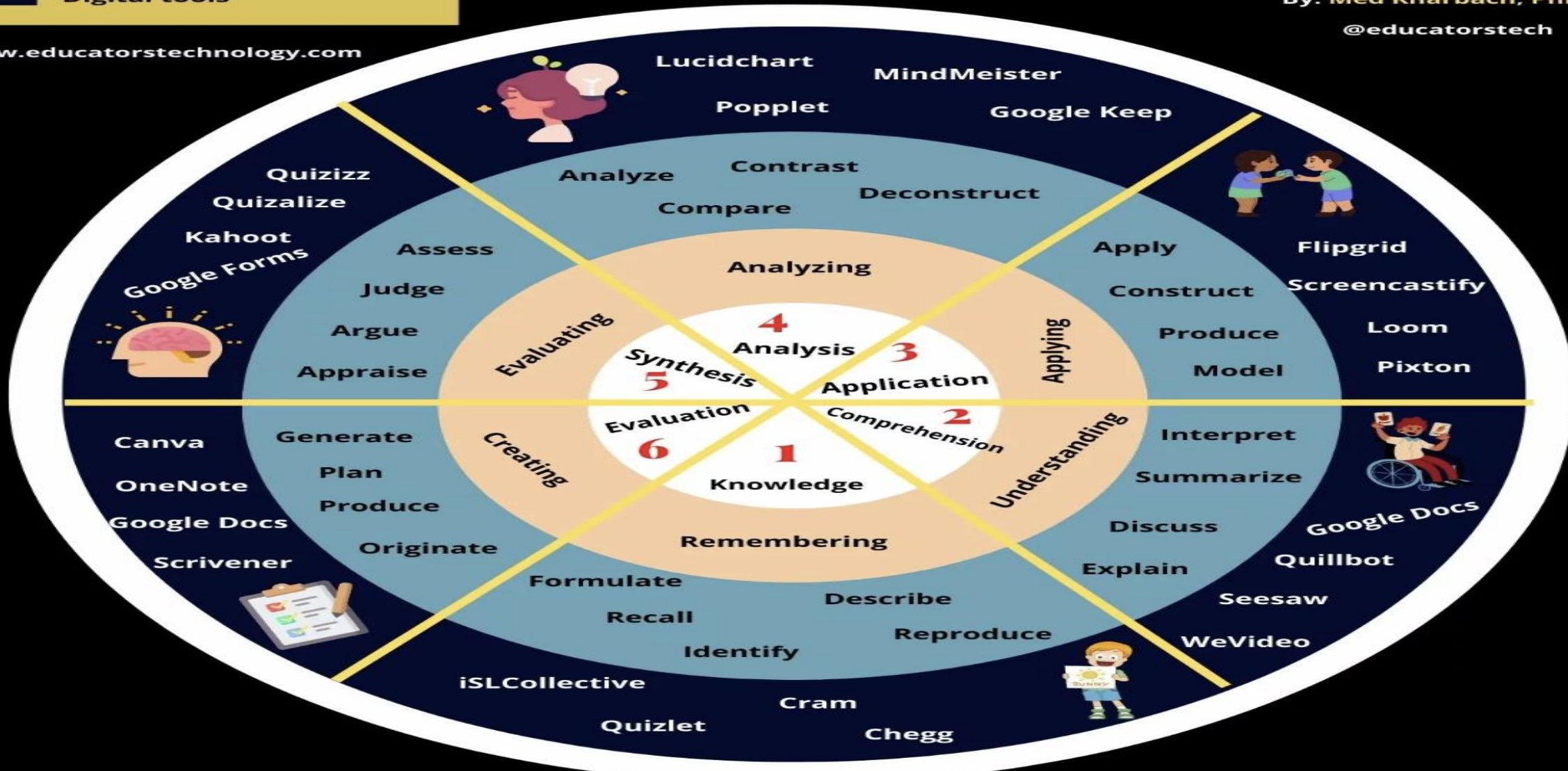


Bloom's Taxonomy Wheel

By: Med Kharbach, PhD
@educatorstech

www.educatorstechnology.com

- Bloom's original taxonomy
- Revised taxonomy
- Verbs
- Digital tools



Some key impro terminology

- Offer - an offer is an idea, a name, a word/action
- "Yes...and" - is what improvisers say/do to an offer
 - Eg. You call out "doctor, help" and your partner says "Julie is your leg still sore?"
- You positively support the offer (idea) in a collaborative manner and see where it goes
- We don't block/negate offers
 - Eg we don't shut down ideation, all ideas need to be acknowledged and tested
- We are interested in multiple narratives/responses and divergent



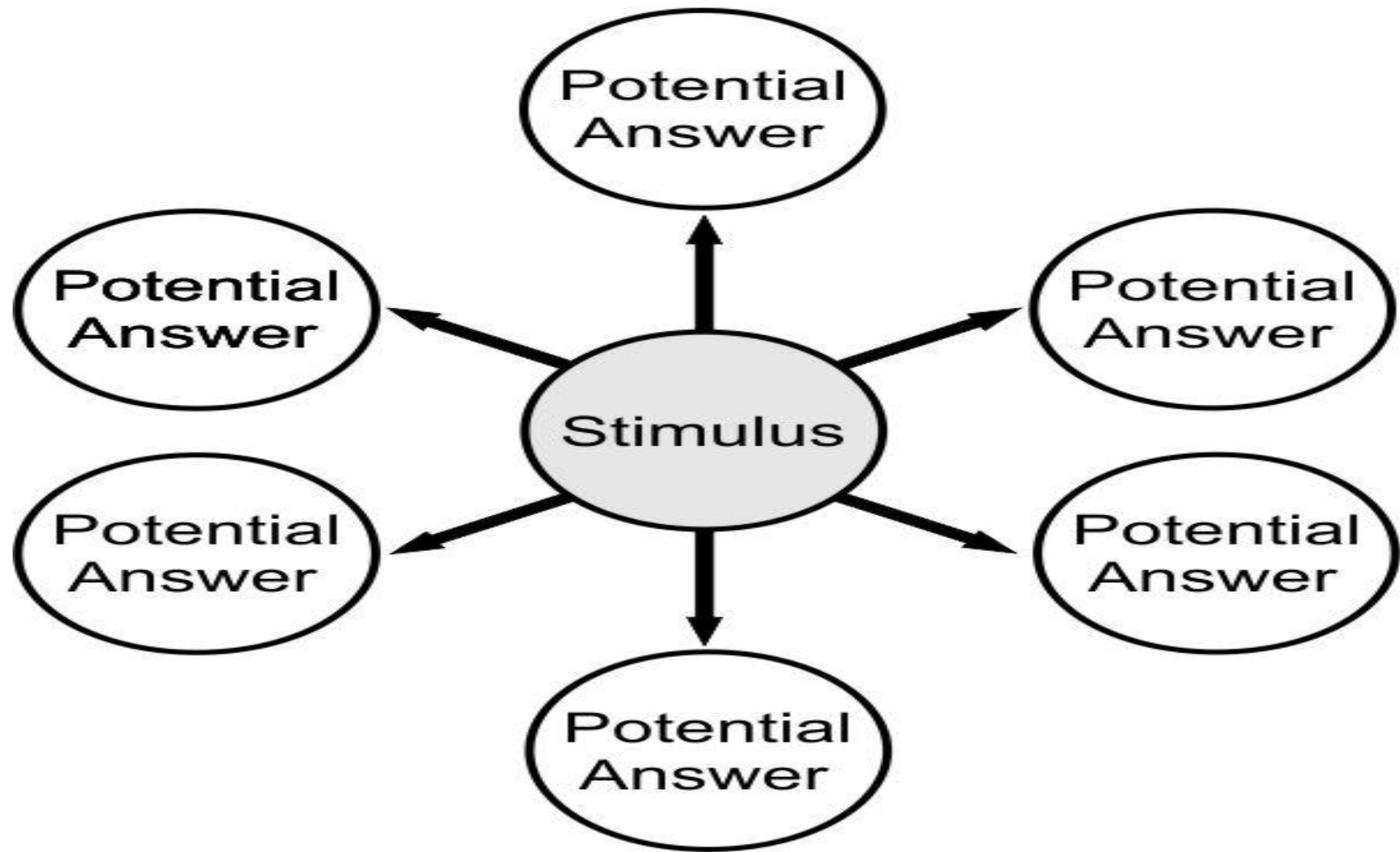
Demonstrating concepts

- **Yes... and**
- **Riffing**



SCHEMA / SCHEMATA

CHAIR



DIVERGENT THINKING




o known as ideating, brainstorming or
riffing

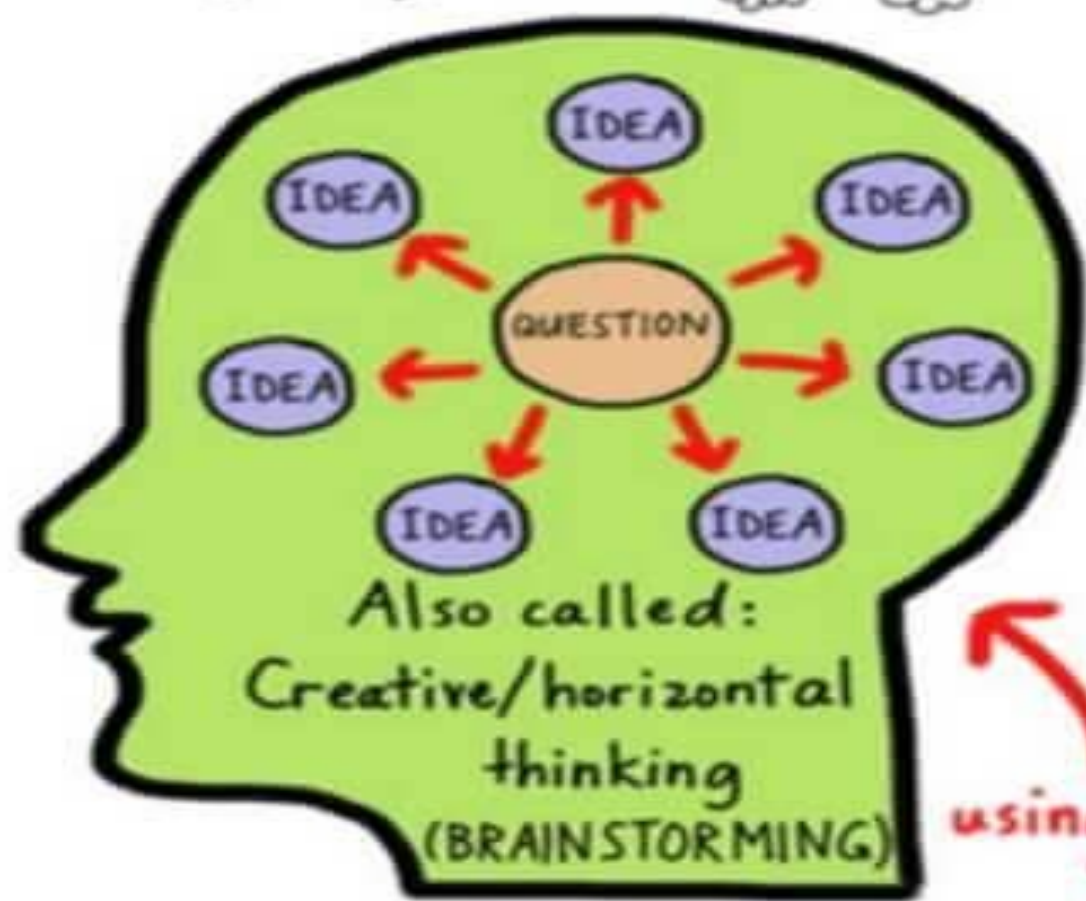
Riffing



Modes of Thinking

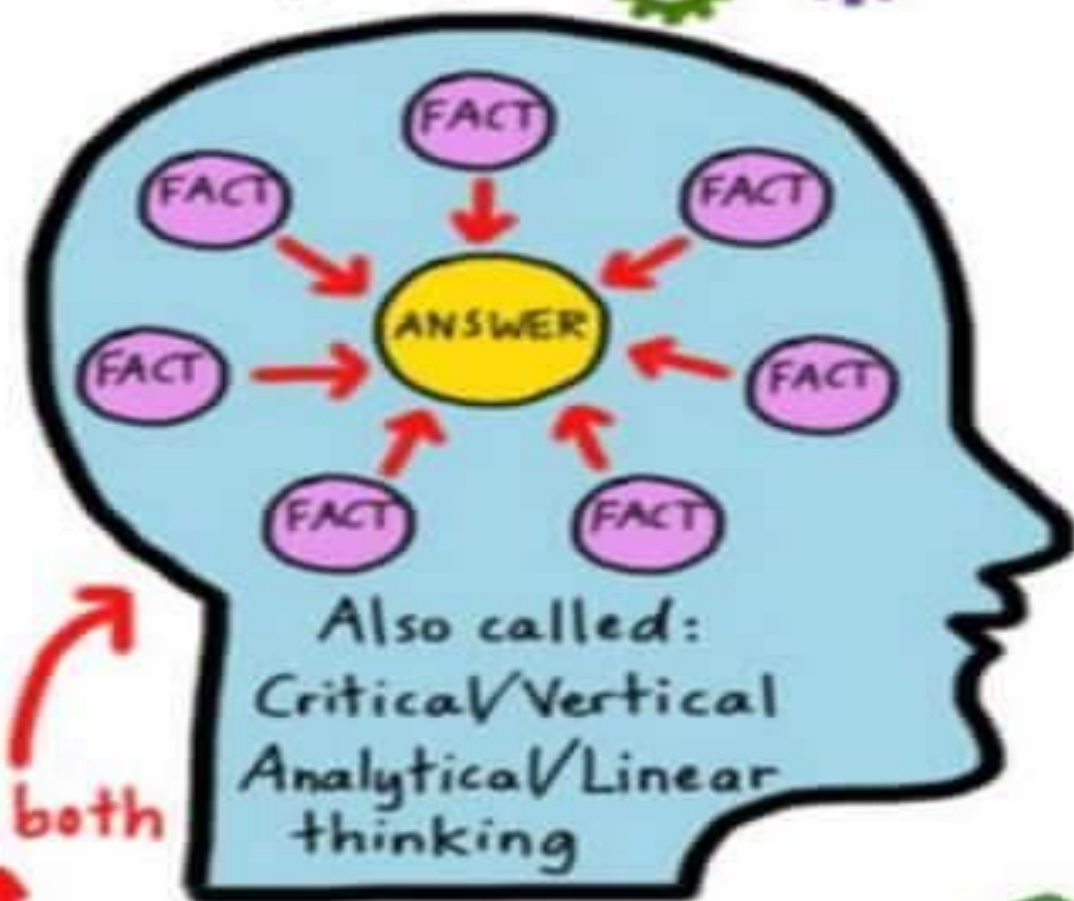
Divergent Thinking

Using imagination 



Convergent Thinking

Using logic 

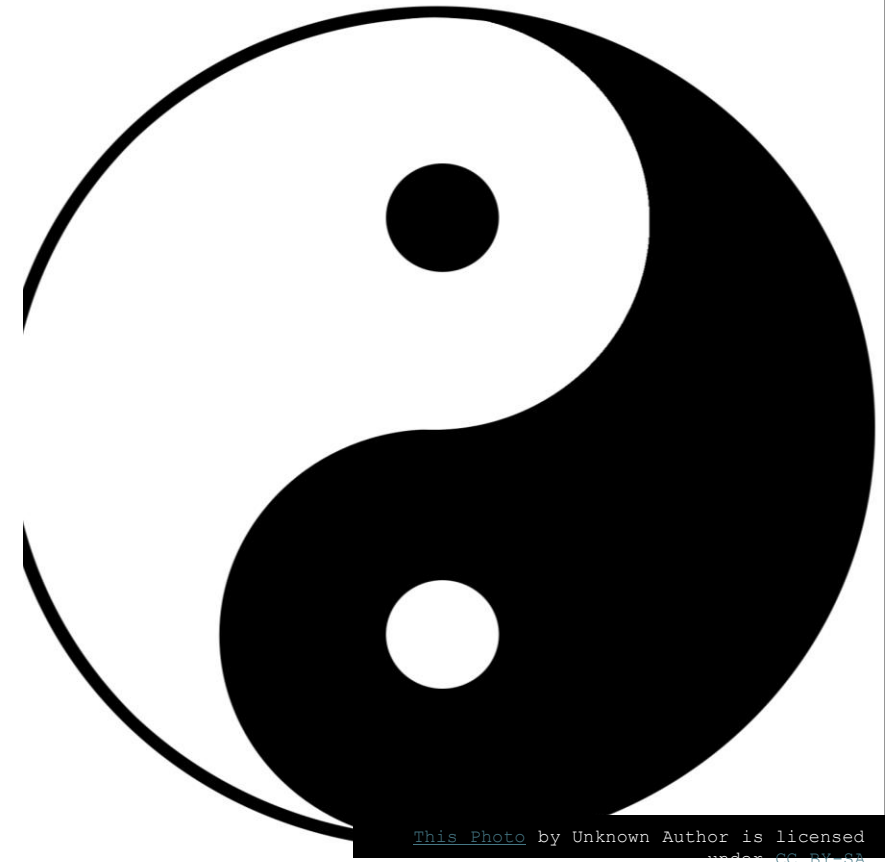


using both

Lateral Thinking: Thinking "Outside the box" 

Fortunately / Unfortunately game

- We are changing the “frame” on a given idea or situation
- We are looking at the idea/situation from extreme positive and extreme negative point of view
- Think about any extremely positive/negative people you know in real life
- We are listening to our partner and collaborating with them BUT also trying to put them under pressure (this is the “game within the game”)
- Escalate slowly, give yourself (and your partner) somewhere to go with



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Freeze tag

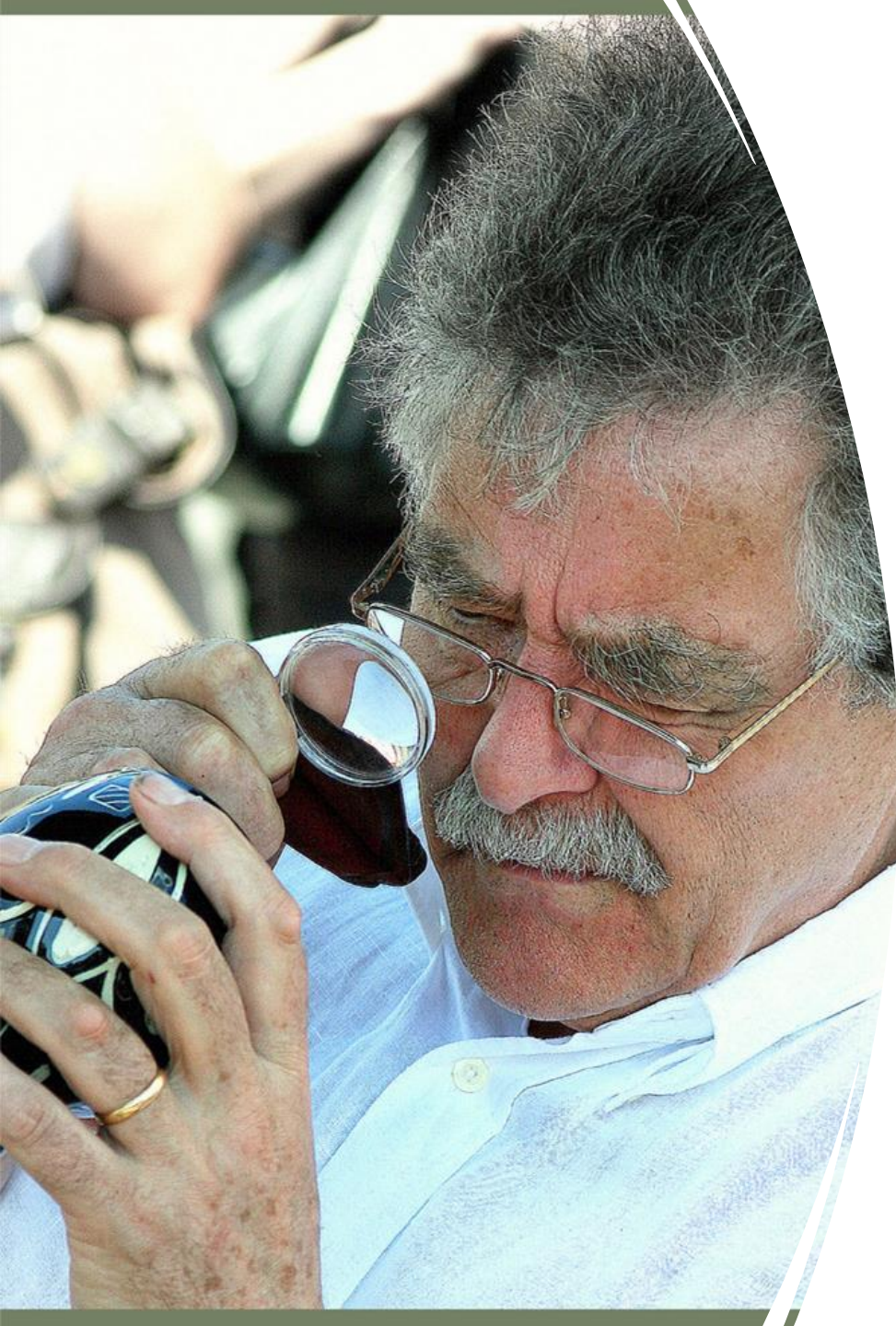
- Groups of 2+, 1 person frozen shape
- Justify your partner's body position/gesture
- Partner says "yes...and" to your (physical/verbal) offer and joins in providing context
- You accomplish a task together / finish a scene
- Repeat ad infinitum



Lolly exercise

- Recognise, identify, name
- Describe, categorise/classify
- Demonstrate
- Compare & contrast, analyse, test (eg pressure test, elasticity test)
- Critique, judge, select, justify





Antiques roadshow / Instant expert

- Students use special glasses to provide great knowledge/insight
- Teacher/partner prompts student using a range of cognitive verbs to interact with a random object
- Student is "the expert" and can talk as long as they want but must answer questions/explain
- Challenge the expert at times (create pressure)

Pick up lines of dialogue



- Students work in groups of 2-3
- Scenario (scaffolding) is given
- Student picks out random line of dialogue from a hat and must incorporate it into conversation
- JUSTIFY/EXPLAIN and "Backstory" concepts
- Story continues with new line or an integral part of the

- ## Final wrap up
- Impro skills are transferable
 - Most games feed into divergent thinking
 - 21st century skills are used constantly - collaboration, communication, creativity, empathy
 - End goal = flexible fast resilient thinkers
 - Lots of games can/do align with cognitive verbs
 - Today was just a sample
 - Have fun with impro and get a laugh in class!



Final wrap up

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