Imagining the Future: Speculative Creativity

Duration: 45-60 minutes
Target age: 11-16 years (with differentiated questioning and scaffolding)
Group size: 35 students

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define speculative design and explain how it differs from conventional design.
- Describe the idea that design can ask questions rather than simply solve problems.
- Generate ideas for possible, probable, and preferable futures.
- Create a low fidelity speculative prototype (sketch, storyboard or simple model).
- Reflect on the future they have imagined and the question it raises.

Resources Needed

- Paper, pens, pencils, markers
- Card, scissors, glue, tape, assorted scrap material
- Scenario cards (or printed prompts)
- 'Imagining the future' worksheet
- Projector / screen or printed visual examples of speculative design
- Sticky notes or small cards for the gallery walk

SESSION BREAKDOWN

1. Introduction – "What if...?"

TIME:

Teacher & Student Actions:

- Show 23 "what if" prompts (e.g. What if schools had no teachers?).
- Students shout quick ideas; teacher records a few on the board.
- Introduction to speculative design.
- Explore the futures cone; students shout quick ideas for different types of future.

2. Core Explanation – Speculative Design Overview

TIME:

Teacher & Student Actions:

- Present 2 concise visual examples (e.g. Near Future Lab IKEA catalogue and Mitigation of Shock)
- Highlight the purpose: provoke thought, surface values, question assumptions.
- Prompt a short whole class check: What does this design make you wonder?

3. Scenario Selection & Briefing

TIME:

Teacher & Student Actions:

- Groups draw a scenario card from the appropriate set

4. Design Challenge – Prototype the Future

TIME:

Teacher & Student Actions:

- Groups develop a speculative artefact or system using sketches, mock-up ads, cardboard models or storyboards.
- Teacher circulates, asking guiding prompts:
  - Who uses it?
  - What new problem does it create?
  - What feeling does it evoke?
  - What question does it raise?
- Emphasise low fidelity, rapid creation – the idea matters more than polish.

5. Gallery Walk & Mini Presentations

TIME:

Teacher & Student Actions:

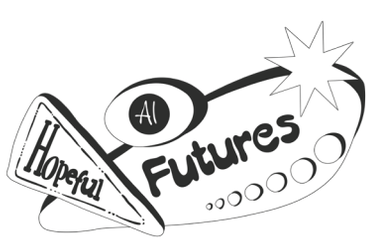
- Groups display their prototypes on desks.
- Each group may take 1minute to present: name the scenario, show the artefact, and state the central question.
- Audience peers leave a sticky note comment: Future imagined? / Question asked?

6. Whole Class Reflection

TIME:

Teacher & Student Actions:

- Quick plenary: ask three prompts and capture a few responses on the board:
  - What surprised you most?
  - Did your design imagine a good, bad, or mixed future?
  - Which part of the "Futures Cone" (possible / probable / preferable) does your idea sit in?
- Students jot a brief written reflection on the worksheet (23 sentences).



DIFFERENTIATION & EXTENSION

Learner group: Younger (11-13)

ADJUSTMENTS

- Emphasise storytelling and exploring ideas rather than detailed design.
- Use more detailed, scaffolded scenarios.

Learner group: Older (14-16)

ADJUSTMENTS

- Add a brief ethical discussion after the gallery walk (e.g. What societal impact could this have?).
- Incorporate use of digital tools (simple graphic design apps) for the prototype.

Extension

ADJUSTMENTS

- Turn prototypes into "future museum exhibits" for a follow-up lesson.
- Have students write a 150word "Future News Report" about their design.