TECHNICAL SHEET
MYRIORAMA

WHAT IS IT?

THE MYRIORAMA is one of the most interesting and awe-inspiring games. There are many on the market, from collectors' items to those created by real artists. It is a narrative tool that originated in the early 19th century, although its inventor was not interested in creating a game but in improving his own painting style. The inventor, French artist, scientist and educator, Jean-Pierre Brès, created a real polyoptic painting, i.e. a painting divided into various "segments" or panels, entitled "Myriorama: collection of multiple landscapes". The term coined for the occasion comes from the union of two Greek terms: myrias, multitude or tens of thousands, and orama, vision, scene.

An infinite number of landscapes and stories can be composed with the cards of this fascinating game, as it works thanks to the interchangeability of the cards of which it is composed. The greater the number, the greater the possible combinations to be created. This little optical illusion became a real entertainment, capable of enchanting as if it were a true wonder.

Our Myriorama consists of a number of cards ranging from 12 to 16 on which a fragment of a landscape is represented. Arranged next to each other, the cards show the entire scene; however, the position of the cards is not fixed but interchangeable as the horizon line is always the same.

This makes it possible to create scenes that are always new, but, above all, stories that are always different. On one half of the cards the landscape is represented, on the other half the characters in the story.

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By swapping the order of the cards, a harmonious composition is always obtained, but from the point of view of the story, this allows the story to be told according to the regular succession of events as well as to subvert the order and, thus, change the narrative countless times.

This tool is, for all intents and purposes, a perfect synthesis of the STORY MAP and the STORY CARDS tools.

HOW TO USE IT

The teacher will show the deck of cards on the table with the cover prominently displayed so that the children understand that this is both a book ready to be 'read' and a game. The pictures in fact, as in SILENT BOOK THEATRE, replace the words, so it is up to the storyteller to interpret the scene and narrate. Then, they will arrange all the cards in sequence, one next to the other so that they can fit together and create a single landscape in which the scenes of the story unfold.

Cover of the Myriorama: "Theseus and the Minotaur". Below: four game cards

The children will be arranged so that they have a good view of the entire Myriorama and can thus follow the storytelling. You could place them in front of the table side by side, or in a semicircle, seated all together - including the teacher - on the floor, arranging the cards in front of you facing the children. (Alternatively, by sticking some double-sided tape on the back of each card you could arrange the cards on a wall; in any case, since the cards are small in size, it will still be necessary to have the children come closer together and sit close together).

Even with this narrative tool, the voice, the timbre and the way the story is told are absolutely important and fundamental.

It cannot be repeated enough that every storytelling is a real gift for the children.

The level of engagement and involvement of the teacher while narrating will be directly proportional to the attention and participation of the children. In this particular case, the teacher has an additional (pardon the pun), card to play. This is truly a wonderful tool that can engage and enthuse everyone. Once the 'official' story is over, the teacher can show how stories can be changed simply by... shuffling the cards!

The same cards are laid out in a different order, so the story will also be different.

The possibilities offered by this game and the marvellous amazement it is capable of arousing represent a strong stimulus for the children, who will be able to invent endless variations for the story events.

It is up to the teacher to determine the number of cards with which the children should initially play. The smaller the number, the shorter and thus simpler the story will be.

Although our Myriorama is in fact linked to specific stories, the possibility of changing the order of events already allows the basic story to be modified. The teacher can ask children to be inspired by the images or can initially help them by suggesting a new reading prompt, for example: "On a small island some dolphins, bored of always jumping out of the water, decided to organise a tournament. Hearing the word tournament, Theseus and his friend Minotaur decided to enter. The impartial judge would be Poseidon, God of the seas, who lived near the island... etc."

This tool, too, clearly lends itself well to becoming a valuable support for the construction of Participatory Stories.

The children can in fact, as with the 'Story Cards', use it as a starting point and then "transcribe" what the combination of the cards suggests!

After showing the possibilities of this tool, the teacher will divide the class into pairs or small groups, (maximum four children) giving them their own copy of the Myriorama, inviting them to tell each other the official story and then the variant retellings.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Print the A4 pages containing the 12/16 cards, (preferably on paper with a grammage of at least 200 g, which will ensure longer and better use by the children). Alternatively, if it is not possible for you to print on a suitable grammage, it is advisable to stick the 90 g sheets of paper, on which you have printed, onto A4 sheets of a higher grammage, which will act as a backing and then proceed to cut out the individual cards. Bring them together and place the card representing the "cover" of the story on top. Alternatively, we suggest finding a box that can hold the deck and decorate the surface of the box as if it were this, the cover of the "book", but this is not obligatory.

WORKSHOP: HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN VERSION

Choose a tale, a story, a character or simply a topic (e.g. nature, space, etc.). Based on this, find out who the characters are and how many there are, and in which environment your story takes place. You will need a ruler or a square, a pencil and some A3 paper of at least 200 g.

1.   Preferably choose A3 sheets because they will allow you to draw more easily and enrich the story with details. As well as establishing a suitable format for the cards, which should be neither too large nor too small.

2.   With the help of the ruler, draw a longitudinal line in the middle of the sheet and as many vertical lines as many cards you want to create.

3.   Now draw two more horizontal lines about 2/3 cm from the base line of the cards.
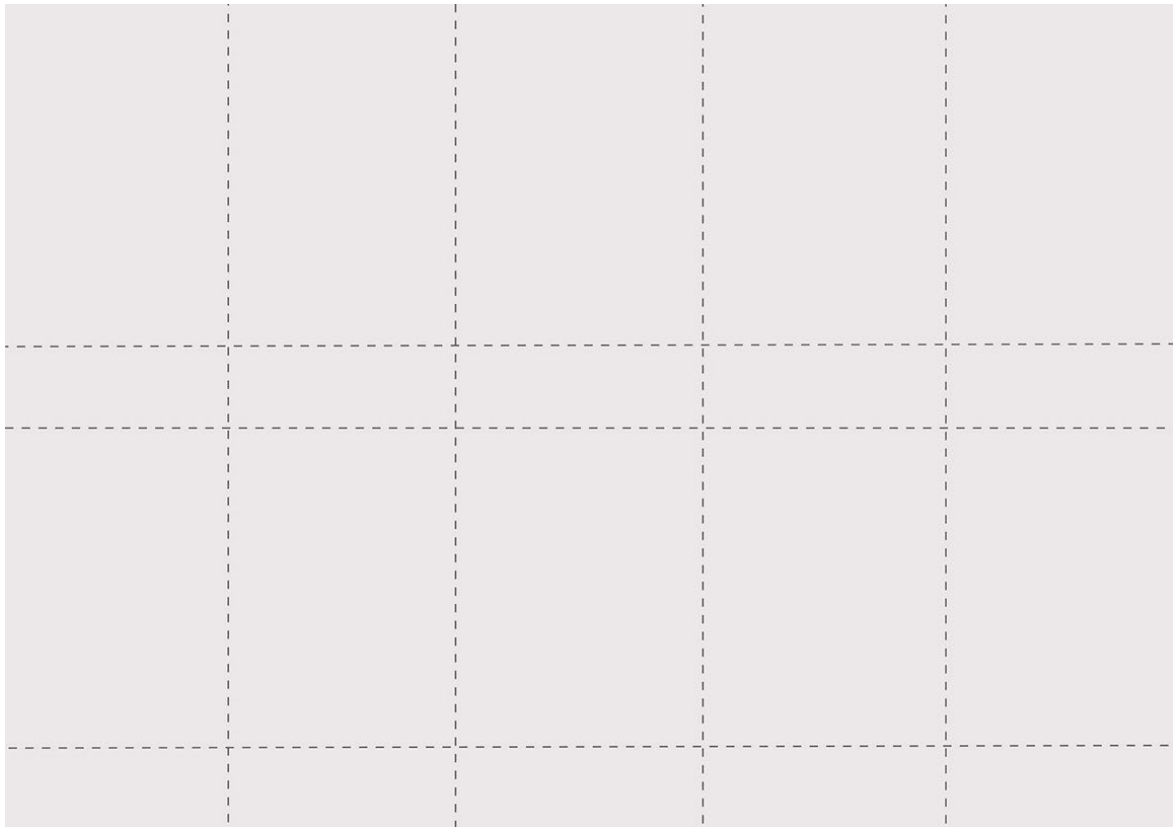
4.   Where the vertical and horizontal lines meet, draw marks that will be the points where your design must always fit together. At this point you may also delete the horizontal lines, except for the one that divides the sheet in half.
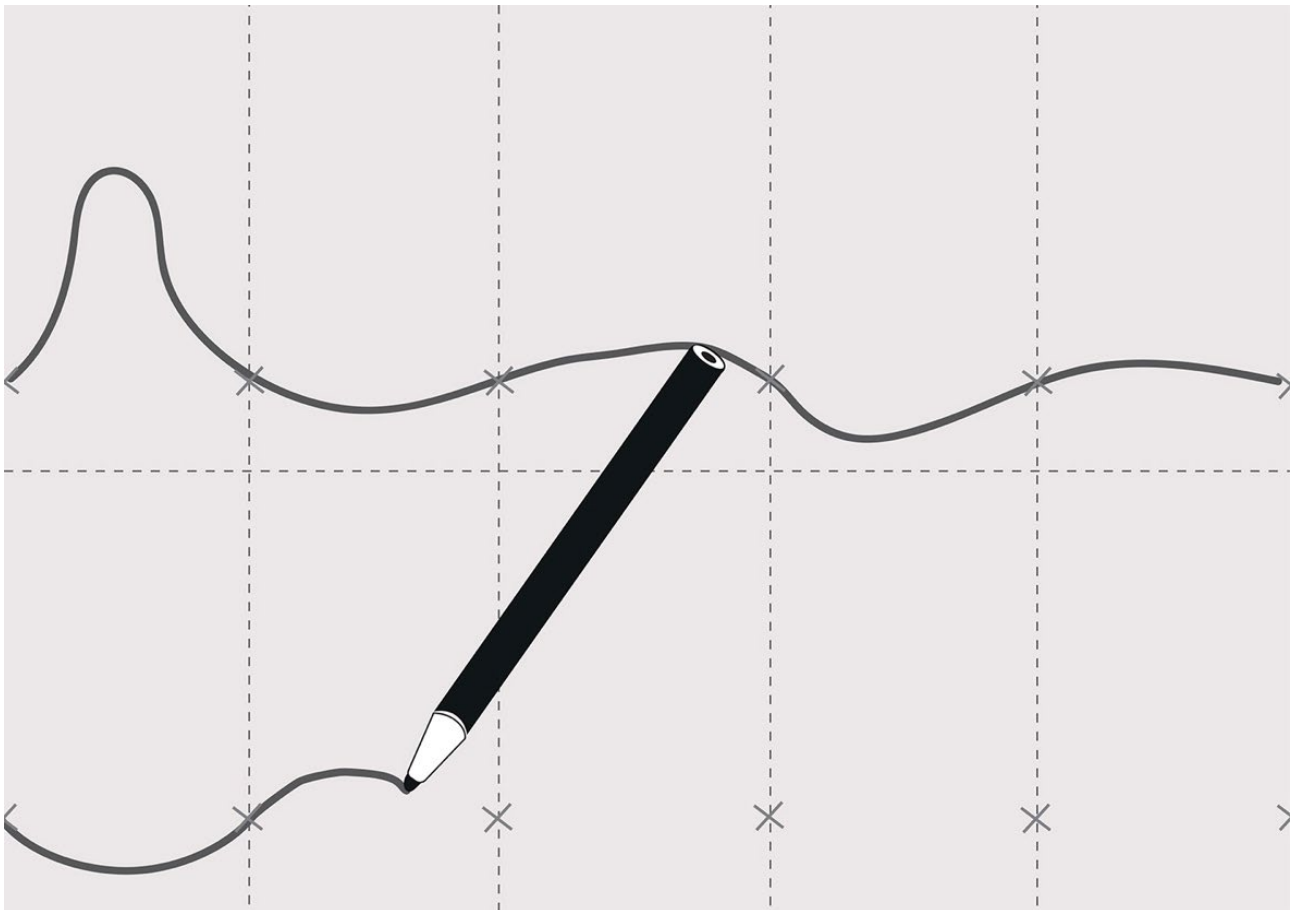
5.   Draw the horizon line, alternating mountains, hills, plains or whatever element you want to represent. (e.g. the skyline of a city, a tropical forest, a moonscape or deep space, then enrich accordingly). You must always take great care to intersect the previously marked points. This is very important because otherwise once you have separated the cards and start changing the combinations, the design may not match.

6.   Then start drawing the setting by enriching each tile with details, e.g. trees, animals, a village, and of course the main characters. Within each card you can make all the changes and add all the details necessary for the narration of your story.

We recommend, however, that you also add external elements, not strictly related to your story.

For example, if your story takes place in a forest, you could add animals, a bear, a deer, etc. (It depends very much on the type of story you have to or want to tell, but you could also add characters and details that have nothing to do with the story, e.g. what if your story takes place in the forest but a small UFO flies in the sky?). These elements and details will come in particularly handy when you change the sequence of the cards because they could be interesting starting points for a new narrative. Once you have

finished the drawing, (to keep the original drawing), we recommend that you photocopy it or scan it and then print it out.

7.   If you could not print on 200 g paper, we recommend that you glue it onto a heavy card before cutting, then cut your cards precisely, always paying attention to the points where the design joins.
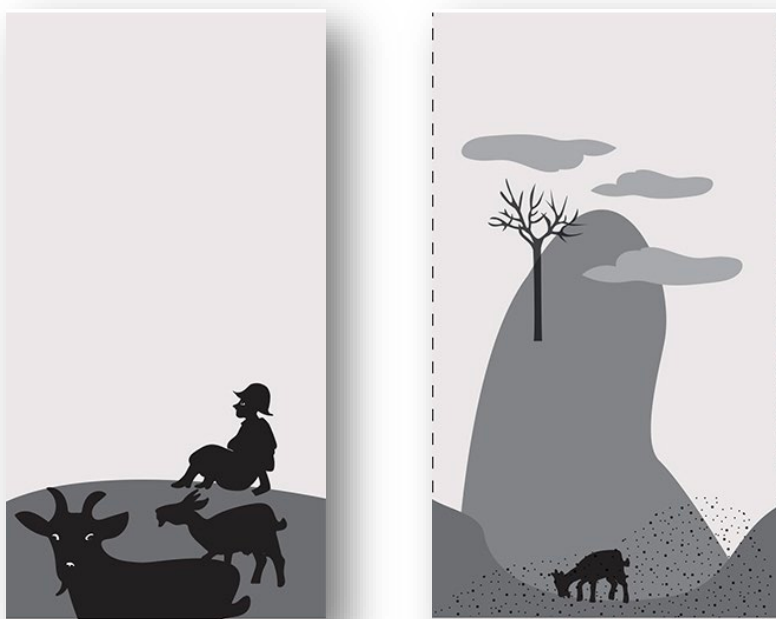
NOW YOU CAN PLAY!

A SMALL TIP

Designing a Myriorama requires a lot of precision and drawing skills, it is quite a complex job and therefore it might be really difficult to do this workshop in a classroom with very young children (5/6 and 7 years old).

In this case, it will be necessary for the teacher to prepare the basic sheets, i.e. the positioning of the division lines and the points of intersection of the horizon line. Explain to the children that it is very important that they respect this rule. Show them how they should do it. Help them if necessary.

It may indeed be frustrating for a child not to be able to fit the design together once the cards have been cut and recompose the panorama in the different versions.

Alternatively, you could prepare the different "landscapes" already, leaving it up to the children only to enrich them with the characters and details they want.

BENEFITS OF MYRIORAMA FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISORDERS

Using Myriorama can be a great complement to the development of heightened visual intelligence of pupils with SLD. As with story cards, myriorama is made up of images instead of text, so the composition of this tool can play to the strengths of these learners. This is done by activating their vivid imaginations with the illustrations depicting key story settings, instead of relying on learners to read and memorise explanations of story events. It is important to note that, when having the children retell the story using only the illustrations displayed side-by-side, you should not insist on perfect retellings of events and key words. Allow the children the freedom of creative expression the first time they discuss the story, and gradually improve on their retellings collaboratively. As with the story map, when placed chronologically, myriorama illustrations give learners a bird's eye view of the story structure and the relationship between the story events. Children are, therefore, supported in memory retrieval (particularly useful for pupils with

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SLD), and they are also shown how the settings, events, and characters of the story are interrelated.

In addition, as with story maps, this tool is conducive to the application of scaffolding techniques: depending on the strengths of your learners, you can determine the number of cards pupils engage with. If you are aware that certain aspects of the story have posed difficulties for your pupils, you can choose to highlight those and leave out the parts that pupils have already mastered, tempering the activity to their needs. Altering the number of cards that you include in this activity can also be done to personalise the story according to your pupils' wishes: to fuel engagement with the learning material and counter learning anxiety, allow them the freedom to include and retell the parts of the story that excite them the most.

This tool also has the potential to be used for multisensory learning, especially for combining visual and kinaesthetic learning possibilities. As mentioned, allow children to shuffle the illustrations according to their wishes and incorporate acting exercises to stimulate different senses.

When applying this tool in class, take into account similar considerations as you would for the story card tool: do not time the activity to overwhelm pupils; instead, slowly reveal the illustrations and offer thorough explanations.