

# Enterprise Design Thinking

by IBM

TOOLKIT

## Speculative Design Stories



## INTRODUCTION

# Why do you use this activity?

This activity enables your team to make new characters and write short stories that predict your users' future problems and produce novel solutions to address those problems.

## INTRODUCTION

### When should you use this activity?

As a team, you should use this activity when working to fill a long-term product roadmap with new intellectual property, products, features, and services—especially if you’re struggling to invent creative, big ideas.

# Speculative Design Stories

90 min

# INTRODUCTION

Teams need to think beyond the next few quarters or years and have a clear point of view of how emerging trends and behaviors may affect strategy.



## INTRODUCTION

However, it is not always easy to be creative and develop big ideas on-demand.

This exercise provides a process for developing new, big ideas.



We suggest **90 minutes** for this activity.  
How much time you spend is up to you!

- **Write before you talk.** Write or sketch lots of your ideas *before* talking about them.
- **Yes, and...** Instead of dismissing the ideas that your teammates suggest, push yourself to build on them.
- **Stay focused on your main character.** Keep your stories human-centered.
- **Everyone participates.** Everyone is writing, creating, editing, and drawing.
- **Stay engaged.** Avoid side conversations. Use a “parking lot” to capture issues that are off-topic.
- **Start on time, stay on time.** To meet our goals, we need to watch the clock and stick to the plan.

# Suggestions for success

- **Limit to 3-5 participants per story team** This activity involves co-creation and serial writing activities. This can be done with less or more, but 3-5 per group is optimal.
- **Always capture ideas** They'll come at every step in the process. Make sure you capture all ideas, no matter how large or small.
- **Bring the right supplies** These are the tools you need: markers, 11x17 paper, large paper pads, and whiteboard markers
- **Start abstract and end with details** Capture as many story ideas as possible, then create broad structures, and add details last.
- **Generate prompt details** We highly suggest a 6-sided die. If that is not available, [use a random number generator](#). As a last option, democratically vote.
- **Trust the process** Embrace a level of ambiguity, and don't worry about pulling today's reality into these activities. Speculation is not extrapolation.
- **Think of a domain, not a product** Keep your story within the frame of the broad technology, domain, or industry relevant to your product team. For example: *cloud, AI, blockchain, analytics, security, education, finance, policy, etc.*

# Ready, set, go!

**SETUP**

Starting at the very beginning, keep a big idea parking lot so that you can capture your creative output at every phase of the activity.

**BIG IDEA PARKING LOT**

## MAIN CHARACTER

NAME: ARDELLE

YEAR: 2049

AGE: 55 YEARS OLD

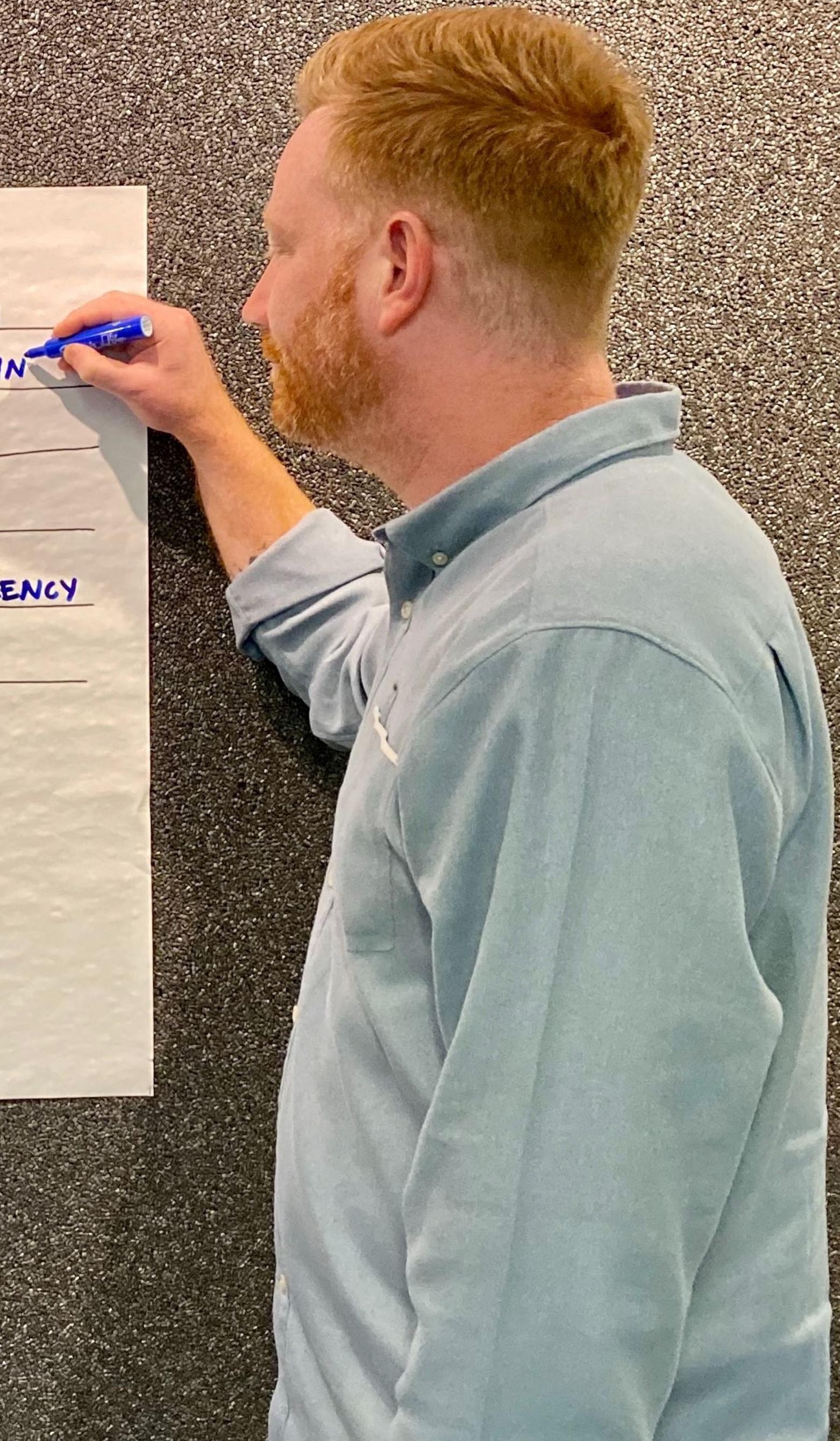
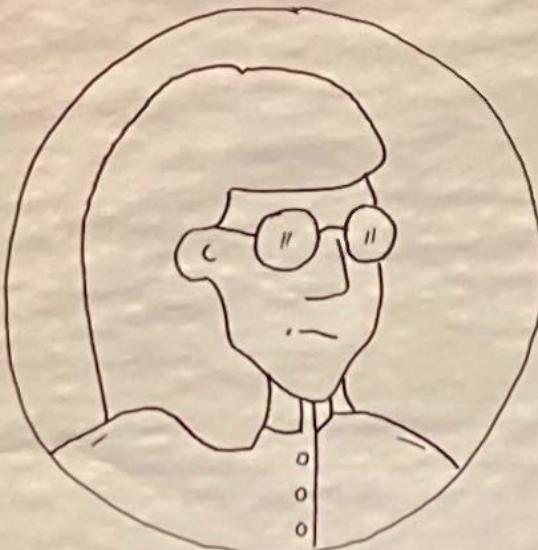
JOB TITLE: JAZZ MUSICIAN

DOMAIN: CLOUD TECHNOLOGY

VALUES: FRIENDS AND FAMILY

CONSTRAINT 1: GLOBAL DIGITAL-ONLY CURRENCY

CONSTRAINT 2: LACK OF FARMLAND



## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### SETUP

Draw your main character template on a whiteboard or a large pad of paper by labeling fields with the following values:

- Name
- Year
- Age
- Job title
- Domain
- Values
- Context 1
- Context 2

### MAIN CHARACTER

NAME :

YEAR :

AGE :

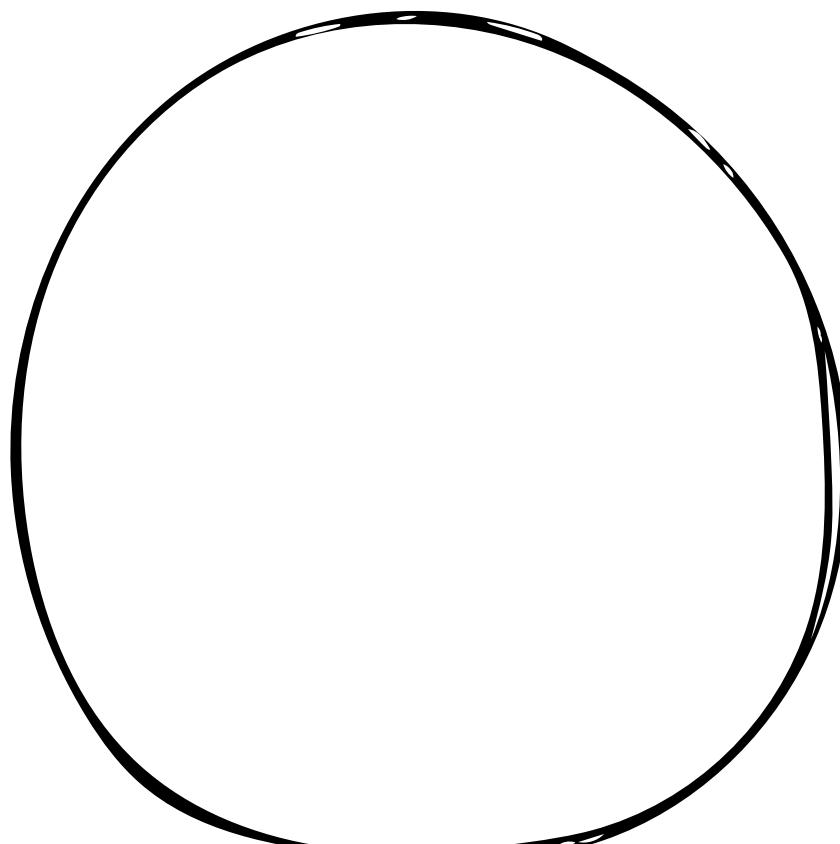
JOB TITLE :

DOMAIN :

VALUES :

CONTEXT 1 :

CONTEXT 2 :



## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### SETUP

Agree as a team on the domain\* you'll design for. This can include:

- technology types like Cloud, AI, blockchain, analytics, security, and Internet of Things
- domain spaces like education, governmental policy, and insurance
- industries like aerospace, finance, and energy

*\*This should not be so granular that you describe a specific product. Keeping the domain broad increases the creative output.*

### MAIN CHARACTER

NAME :

YEAR :

AGE :

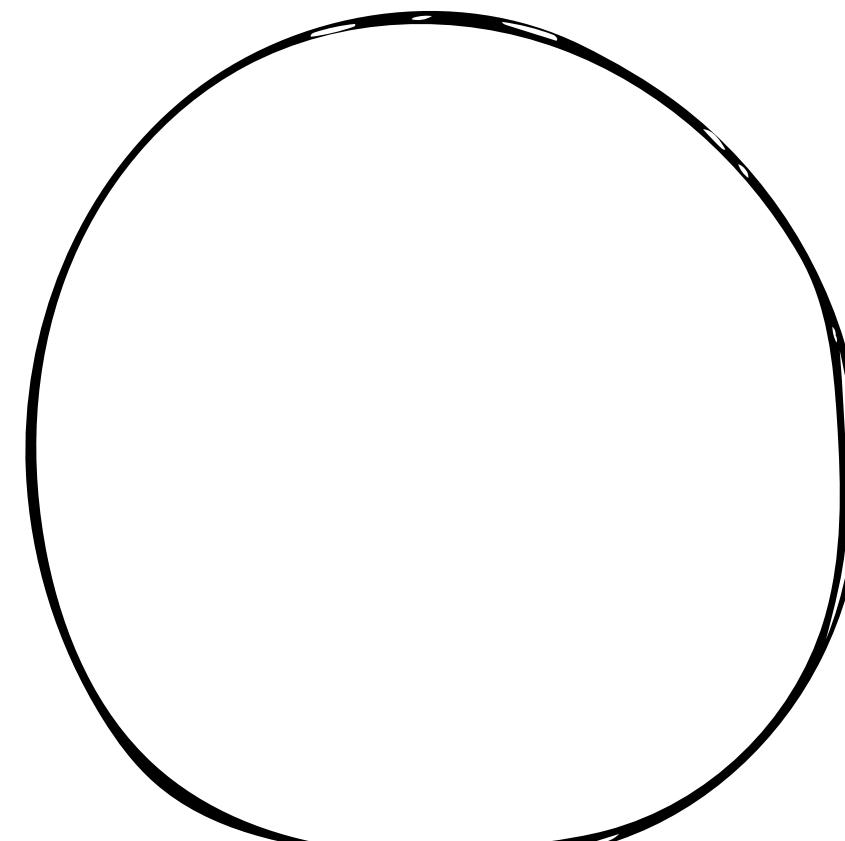
JOB TITLE :

DOMAIN : *Cloud Technology*

VALUES :

CONTEXT 1 :

CONTEXT 2 :



## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### SETUP

Roll a die or use a random number generator to determine the year in which your story takes place. Update your template's Year space



#### Die number      Year

- |          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| 1 or 2 = | Today + 10 years |
| 3 or 4 = | Today + 20 years |
| 5 or 6 = | Today + 30 years |

### MAIN CHARACTER

NAME:

YEAR : 2049

AGE :

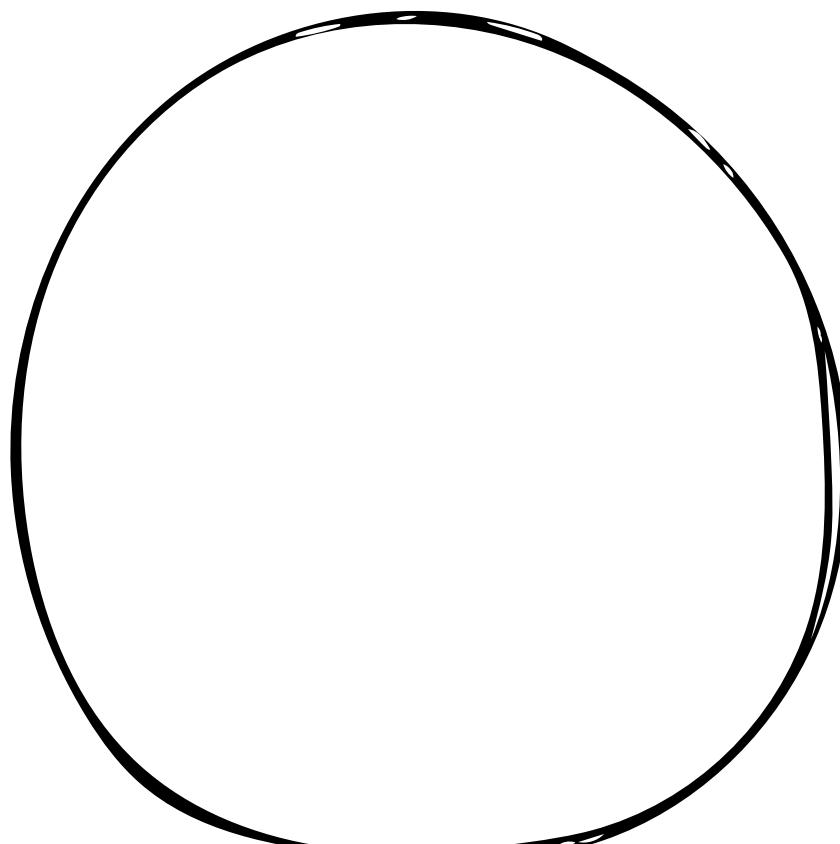
JOB TITLE :

DOMAIN : Cloud Technology

VALUES :

CONTEXT 1 :

CONTEXT 2 :



## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### SETUP

Roll the die or use a random number generator to determine your main character's demographics. Record these attributes in your main character template.

Die number	Age	Die number	Job role
1 =	29 years old	1 =	Fast food employee
2 =	35 years old	2 =	University professor
3 =	46 years old	3 =	Pediatrician
4 =	55 years old	4 =	Call center manager
5 =	76 years old	5 =	Jazz musician
6 =	85 years old	6 =	Investment banker

### MAIN CHARACTER

NAME:

YEAR : 2049

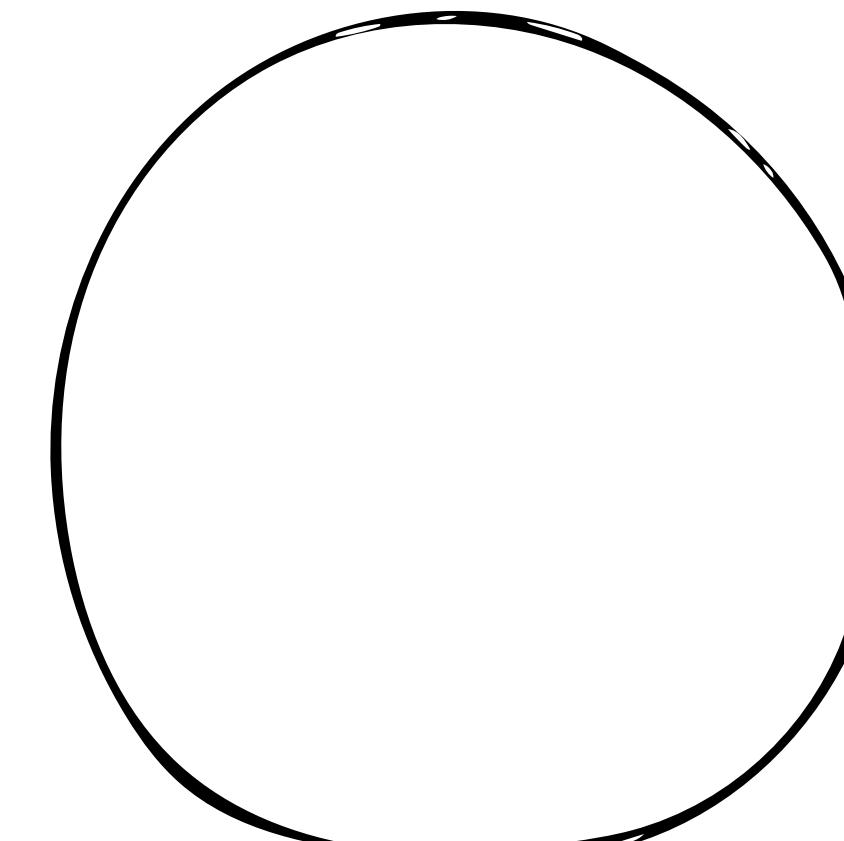
AGE : 55 years old JOB TITLE : Jazz Musician

DOMAIN : Cloud Technology

VALUES :

CONTEXT 1 :

CONTEXT 2 :



**Speculative  
Design Stories**

90 min

**SETUP**

Roll the die or use a random number generator to determine your character's values and record them in your main character template.

**Die number      Values**

- |     |                                 |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 1 = | Friends and family              |
| 2 = | Personal social media influence |
| 3 = | Environmental consciousness     |
| 4 = | Public support for the arts     |
| 5 = | Animal rights                   |
| 6 = | Personal privacy                |

**MAIN CHARACTER**

NAME:

YEAR : 2049

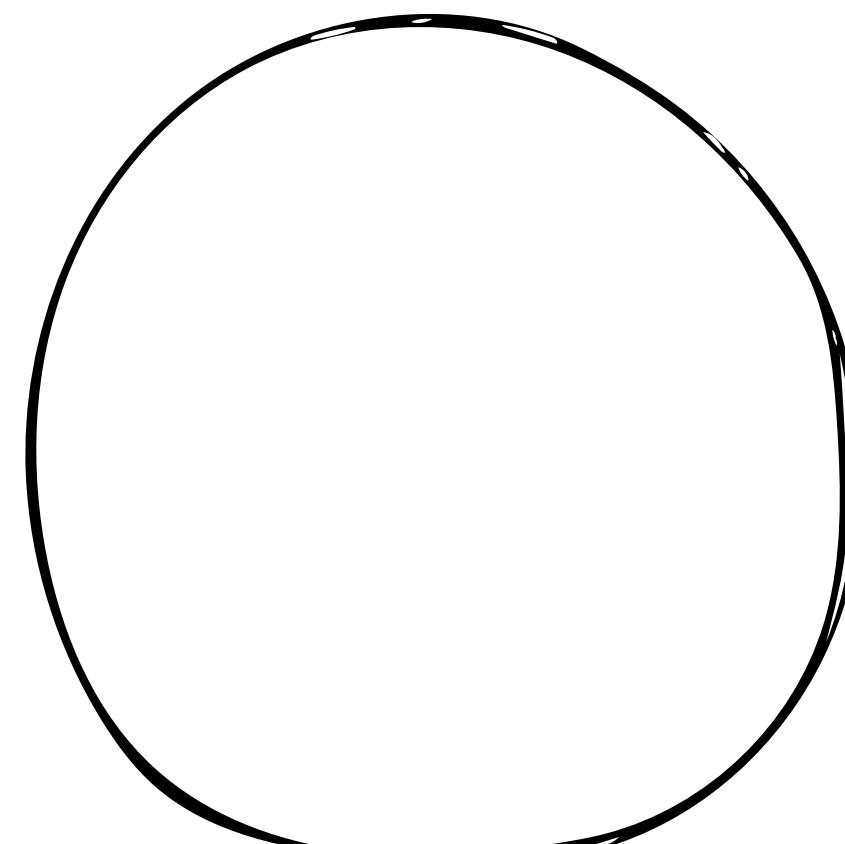
AGE : 55 years old    JOB TITLE : Jazz Musician

DOMAIN : Cloud Technology

VALUES : friends and family

CONTEXT 1 :

CONTEXT 2 :



## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### SETUP

Roll the die twice or use a random number generator to determine 2 pieces of context present in your character's world. Record these on your main character template.

#### Die number    Context 1

- 1 = Politician age limit
- 2 = Antibiotic resistant superbugs
- 3 = Global digital-only currency
- 4 = Combustible-free space travel
- 5 = Large-scale desalination
- 6 = Global hyperloop (mass transit)

#### Die number    Context 2

- 1 = Universal media ban
- 2 = Biometric-validated voting
- 3 = Volatile stock market
- 4 = Underwater dwelling
- 5 = Lack of farmland
- 6 = Decline in physical contact

### MAIN CHARACTER

NAME:

YEAR : 2049

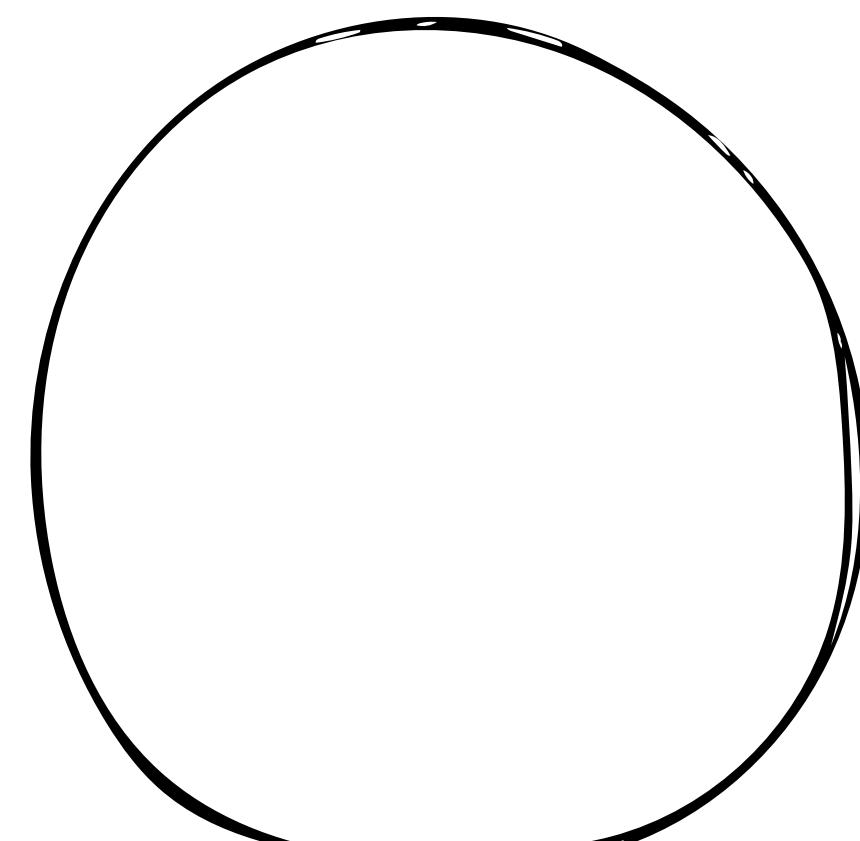
AGE : 55 years old    JOB TITLE : Jazz Musician

DOMAIN : Cloud Technology

VALUES : friends and family

CONTEXT 1 : Global digital-only currency

CONTEXT 2 : Lack of farmland



Speculative  
Design Stories

90 min

**SETUP**

Give your character a name.  
Write this name in your  
character template.

**MAIN CHARACTER**

NAME: Ardelle Torreblanca

YEAR: 2049

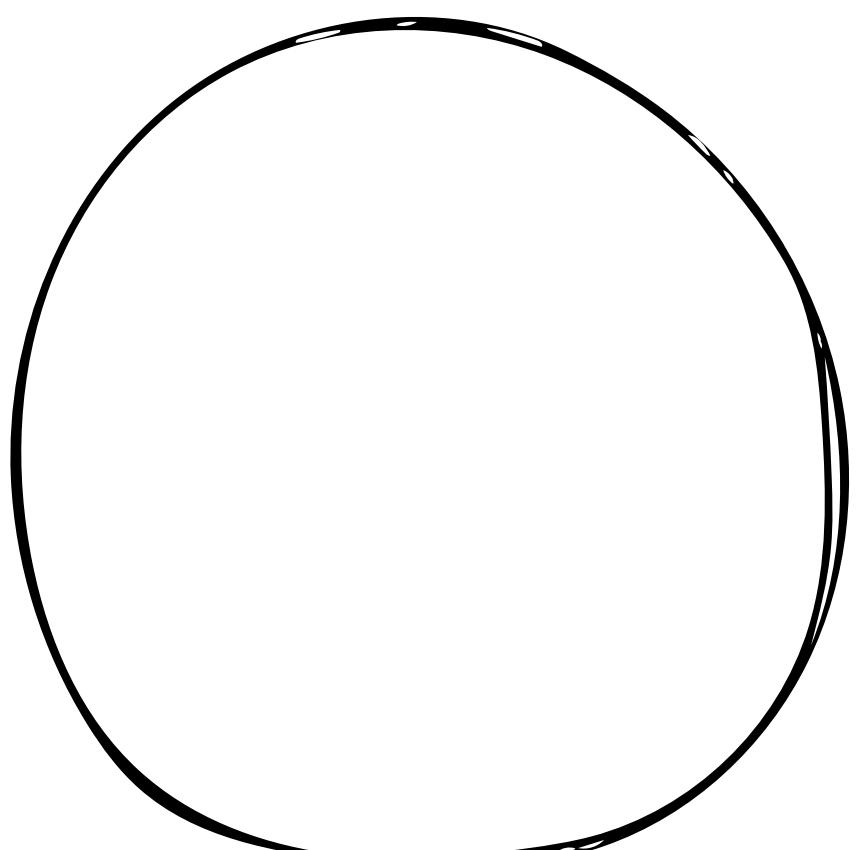
AGE: 55 years old JOB TITLE: Jazz Musician

DOMAIN: Cloud Technology

VALUES: friends and family

CONTEXT 1: Global digital-only currency

CONTEXT 2: Lack of farmland



Speculative  
Design Stories

90 min

### SETUP

Draw a picture of your main character on the template.

### MAIN CHARACTER

NAME: Ardelle Torreblanca

YEAR: 2049

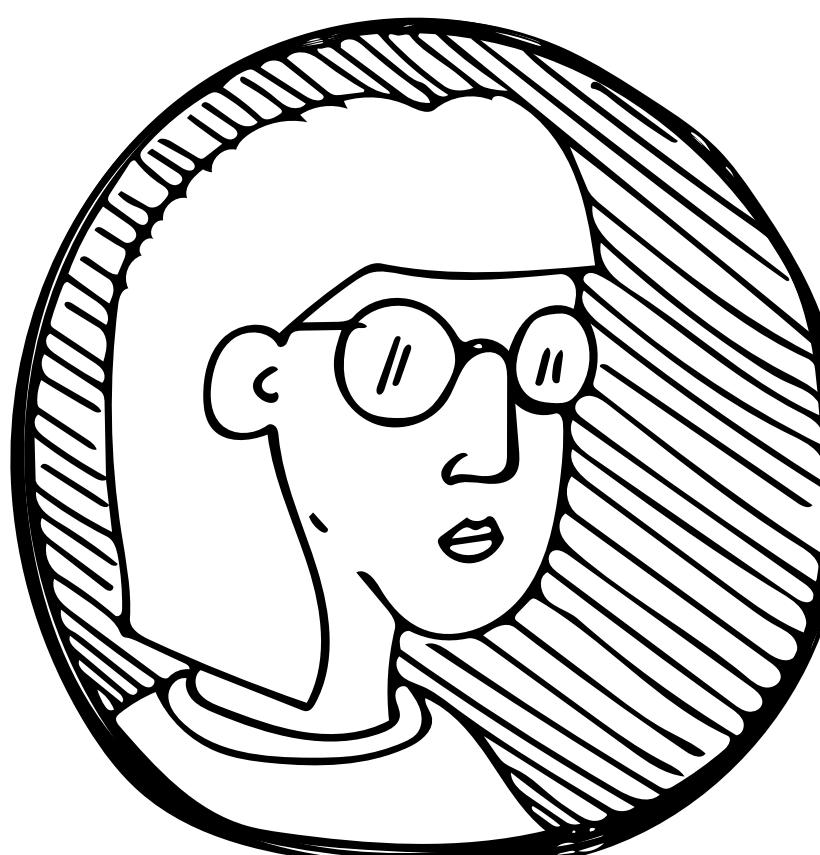
AGE: 55 years old JOB TITLE: Jazz Musician

DOMAIN: Cloud Technology

VALUES: friends and family

CONTEXT 1: Global digital-only currency

CONTEXT 2: Lack of farmland

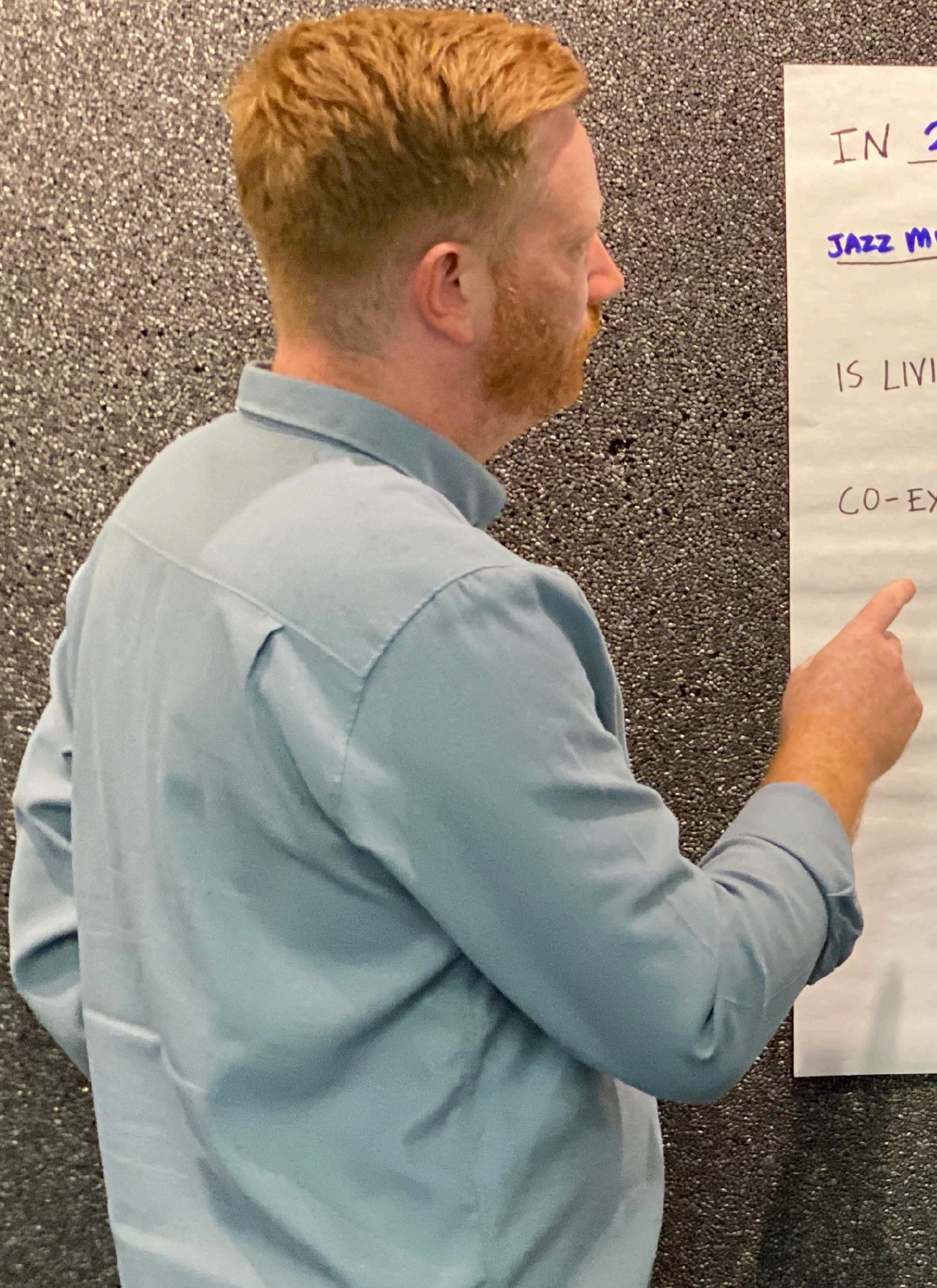


IN 2049, ARDELLE A 55-YEAR-OLD

JAZZ MUSICIAN, WHO VALUES FRIENDS AND

IS LIVING IN A WORLD WHERE \_\_\_\_\_

CO-EXISTS WITH \_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_.



## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### SETUP

Write out and fill in the following “In a world” template.

#### Story template

In (year), (name) ,a (age) (job title) is living in a world where (domain) co-exists with (context 1) and (context 2).

IN 2049, Ardelle Torreblanca, A 55 year old  
Jazz Musician WHO VALUES friends and family  
IS LIVING IN A WORLD WHERE cloud  
CO- EXISTS WITH Lack of farmland AND Global Digital Currency.

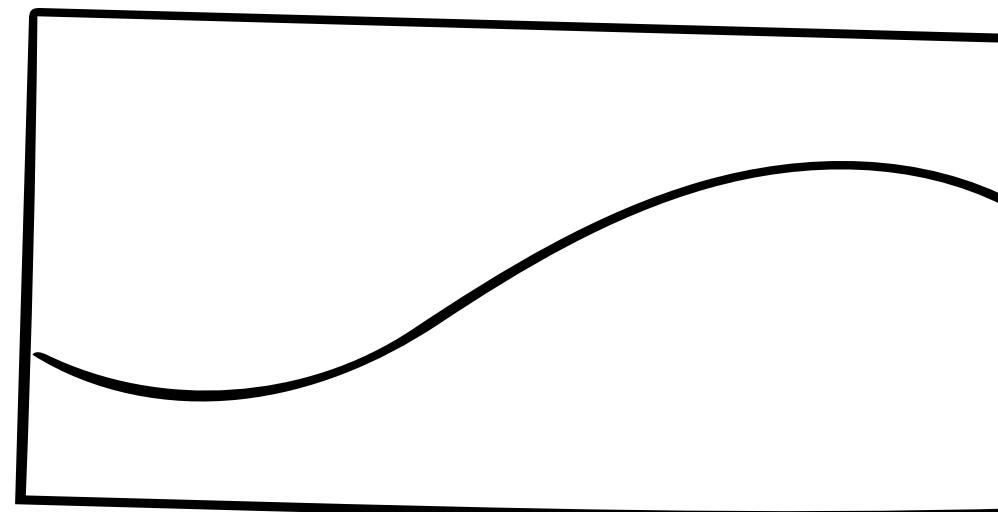
## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

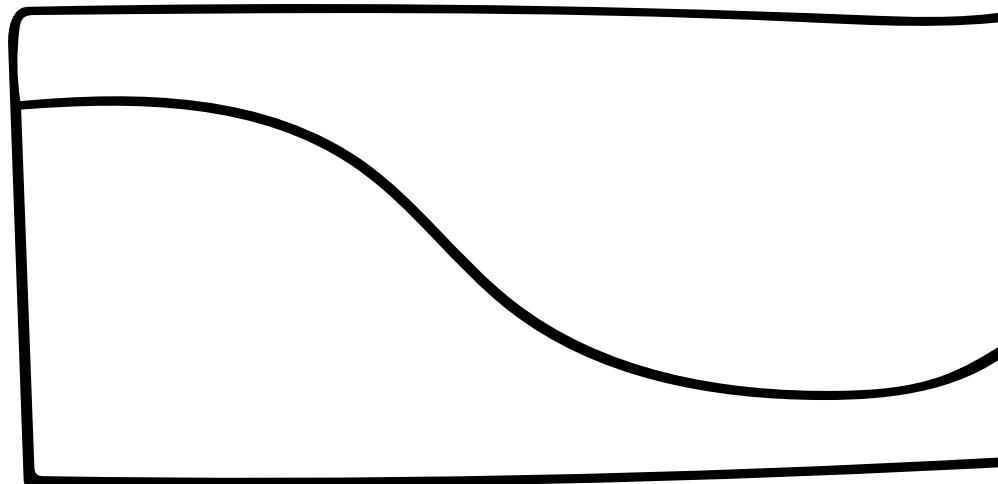
### SETUP

Stories can take on several arcs. Keep these in mind as you generate your own stories.

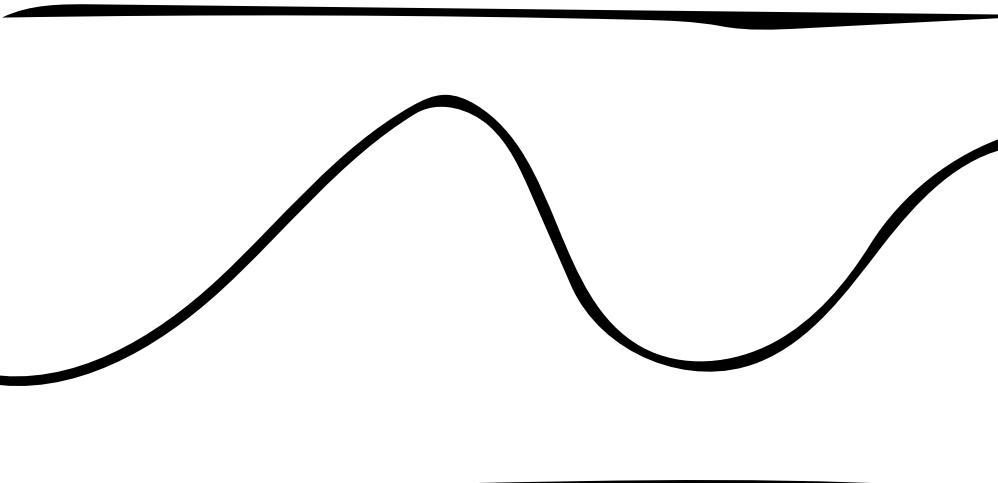
The following exercise will use tragedy (Romeo and Juliet) as an example, but feel free to use any emotional arc you want.



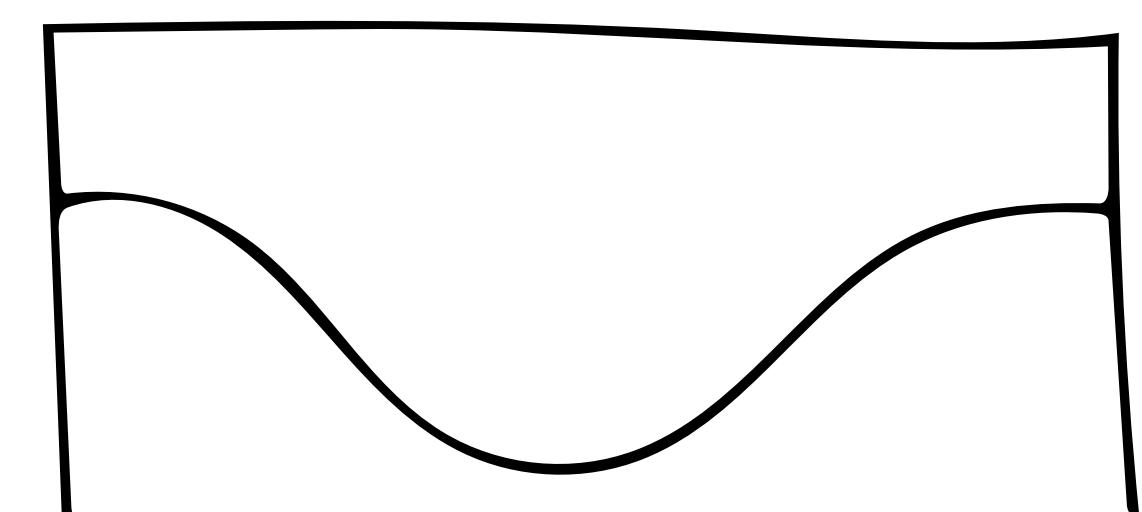
RISE / RAGS TO RICHES



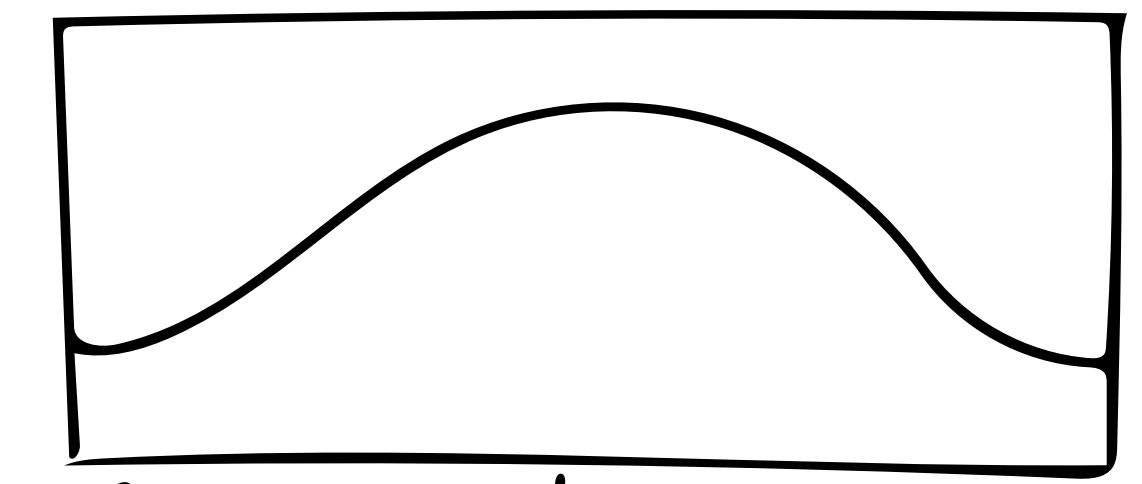
FALL / TRAGEDY



RISE → FALL → RISE / CINDERELLA



FALL → RISE → FALL / OEDIPUS



RISE → FALL → RISE → FALL / ICARUS

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### WRITE

Stories also have a structure.  
Each person should divide  
an 11x17 sheet of paper into  
5 sections, and label each  
section to map to the  
narrative structure.

1. Setup
2. Rising action
3. Climax
4. Falling action
5. Ending

SETUP

RISING

CLIMAX

FALLING

ENDING



CLIMATE  
CLIMATE  
CLIMATE  
CLIMATE  
CLIMATE  
CLIMATE

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### WRITE

The setup introduces important information to the audience that is vital to the unfolding action of the story.

The setup clues the audience into the story world.

### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A  
ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS  
INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

### RISING

### CLIMAX

### FALLING

### ENDING

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

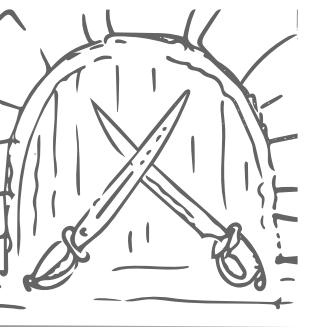
### WRITE

Keeping in mind your constraints, technology and character, write a 1-2 sentence setup.

Once you are done, stop and wait for everyone to finish.

- Don't let your character and their context constrain you. Use these items as creative inspiration and as a starting point.

### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A  
ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS  
INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

### RISING

### CLIMAX

### FALLING

### ENDING

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### WRITE

Now, pass your paper to the person to your right, and using the previous writers' setup as context, write the rising action.

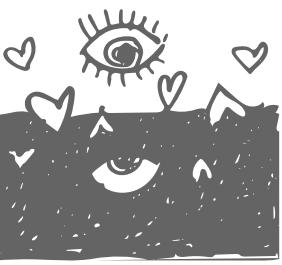
In the rising action, the conflict is introduced and an incident occurs that sets the rising action in motion.

### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A  
ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS  
INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

### RISING



ONE BOY, OUR MAIN CHARACTER, FROM  
ONE FAMILY AND ONE GIRL FROM  
ANOTHER FAMILY FALL MADLY IN LOVE.

### CLIMAX

### FALLING

### ENDING

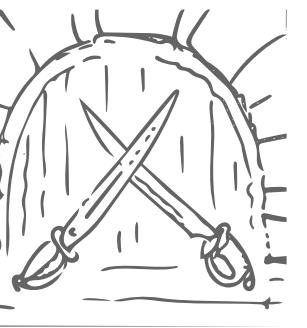
## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### WRITE

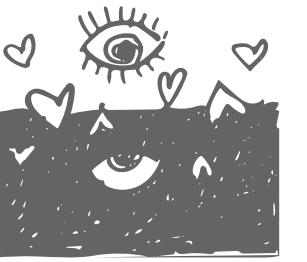
Now, write 1-2 sentences for rising action that connects to the setup written by your teammate.

### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A  
ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS  
INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

### RISING



ONE BOY, OUR MAIN CHARACTER, FROM  
ONE FAMILY AND ONE GIRL FROM  
ANOTHER FAMILY FALL MADLY IN LOVE.

### CLIMAX

### FALLING

### ENDING

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

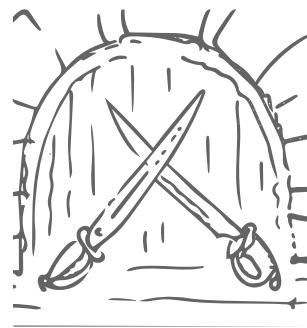
### WRITE

Again, pass your paper to the right, and write the climax.

The climax is the turning point in the story that changes the main character's fate.

This climax is the consequence of the events that occurred in the rising action.

### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

### RISING



ONE BOY, OUR MAIN CHARACTER, FROM ONE FAMILY AND ONE GIRL FROM ANOTHER FAMILY FALL MADLY IN LOVE.

### CLIMAX



DURING A PARTY, A COUPLE OF RIVAL FAMILY MEMBERS GET IN A FIGHT. ONE OF THEM IS MURDERED, SO THE MAIN CHARACTER KILLS THE KILLER IN AN ACT OF REVENGE. FOR THIS, HE IS BANISHED.

### FALLING

### ENDING

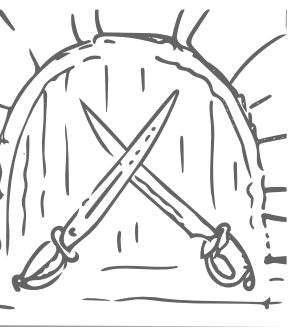
## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### WRITE

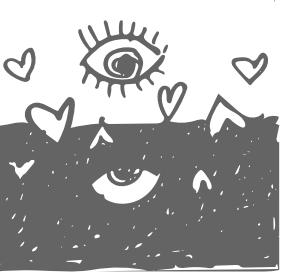
Write 1-2 sentences for the climax.

### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A  
ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS  
INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

### RISING



ONE BOY, OUR MAIN CHARACTER, FROM  
ONE FAMILY AND ONE GIRL FROM  
ANOTHER FAMILY FALL MADLY IN LOVE.

### CLIMAX



DURING A PARTY, A COUPLE OF RIVAL FAMILY  
MEMBERS GET IN A FIGHT. ONE OF THEM  
IS MURDERED, SO THE MAIN CHARACTER  
KILLS THE KILLER IN AN ACT OF REVENGE.  
FOR THIS, HE IS BANISHED.

### FALLING

### ENDING

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

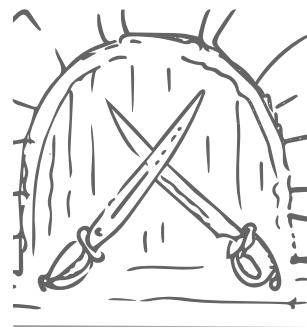
### WRITE

Pass your papers again to write the falling action

The falling action resolves the consequences of the climax.

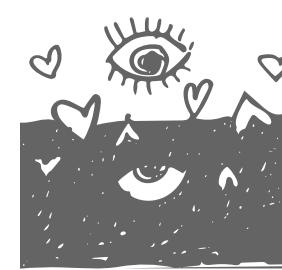
Falling action often contains a moment of suspense where it is perceived that the main character may not escape their fate.

### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

### RISING



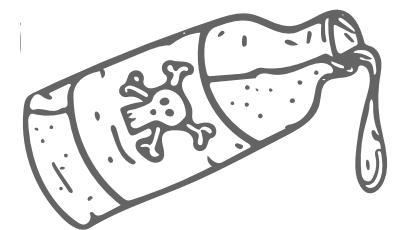
ONE BOY, OUR MAIN CHARACTER, FROM ONE FAMILY AND ONE GIRL FROM ANOTHER FAMILY FALL MADLY IN LOVE.

### CLIMAX



DURING A PARTY, A COUPLE OF RIVAL FAMILY MEMBERS GET IN A FIGHT. ONE OF THEM IS MURDERED, SO THE MAIN CHARACTER KILLS THE KILLER IN AN ACT OF REVENGE. FOR THIS, HE IS BANISHED.

### FALLING



THE WOMAN HE LOVES NOW HAS TO MARRY ANOTHER MAN. SO, SHE DEIDES TO FAKE HER DEATH. UNFORTUNATELY, THE MAIN CHARACTER THINKS IT IS REAL AND KILLS HIMSELF.

### ENDING

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### WRITE

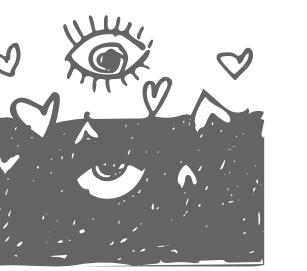
Now write 1-2 sentences for falling action.

#### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A ITALIAN TOWNSHIP ARE ALWAYS INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS.

#### RISING



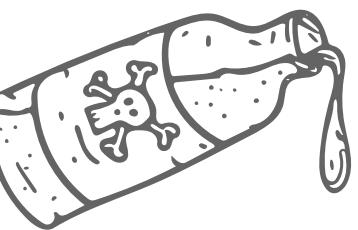
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#### CLIMAX



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#### ENDING

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

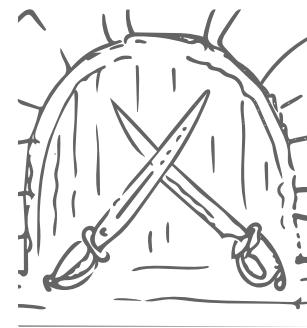
### WRITE

Pass your paper to the right.  
You will now write the ending.

This is an opportunity to  
change the emotional arc of  
the story you have received.

The ending wraps up any  
continued conflict and defines  
the new status quo.

### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A  
ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS  
INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

### RISING



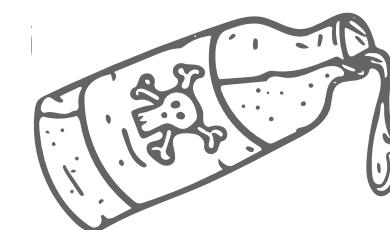
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ANOTHER FAMILY FALL MADLY IN LOVE.

### CLIMAX



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IS MURDERED, SO THE MAIN CHARACTER  
KILLS THE KILLER IN AN ACT OF REVENGE.  
FOR THIS, HE IS BANISHED.

### FALLING



THE WOMAN HE LOVES NOW HAS TO MARRY  
ANOTHER MAN. SO, SHE DEIDES TO FAKE  
HER DEATH. UNFORTUNATELY, THE MAIN  
CHARACTER THINKS IT IS REAL AND KILLS HIMSELF.

### ENDING



ONCE THE FAMILIES REALIZE THAT THEIR  
RIVALRY HAS COST THEM SO MANY LIVES, THEY  
DECIDE TO BURY THEIR GRUDGE AND LIVE  
IN HARMONY.

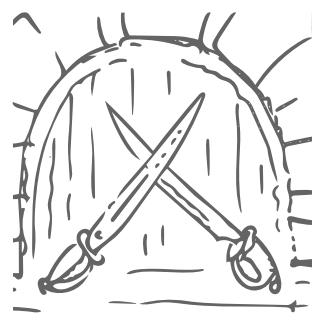
## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### WRITE

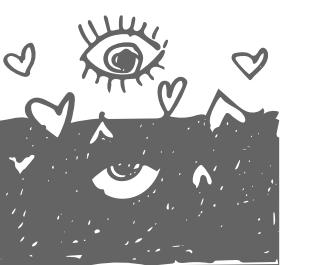
Now write 1-2 sentences for the ending.

#### SETUP



TWO RIVAL FAMILIES IN A ITALIAN TOWN ARE ALWAYS INTO TIT-FOR-TAT FIGHTS

#### RISING



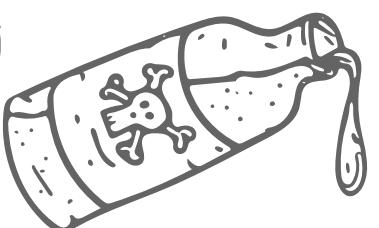
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#### FALLING



THE WOMAN HE LOVES NOW HAS TO MARRY ANOTHER MAN. SO, SHE DEIDES TO FAKE HER DEATH. UNFORTUNATELY, THE MAIN CHARACTER THINKS IT IS REAL AND KILLS HIMSELF.

#### ENDING



ONCE THE FAMILIES REALIZE THAT THEIR RIVALRY HAS COST THEM SO MANY LIVES, THEY DECIDE TO BURY THEIR GRUDGE AND LIVE IN HARMONY.

## Speculative Design Stories

90 min

### PLAYBACK

To prepare for Playbacks, grab sticky notes to capture big ideas that relate to potential products, services, and intellectual property from each story.

- Even ideas that seem abstract now should be captured, no matter how big or small.

AI sensor  
material

Blockchain  
pay as you go

IOT price  
projection  
alerts

Real-time  
blockchain

Immersive  
microbiome  
structures

Microbiome  
version  
control

# Speculative Design Stories

# PLAYBACK

In your 3-5 person story groups, have each member read their story to the groups.



## Speculative Design Stories

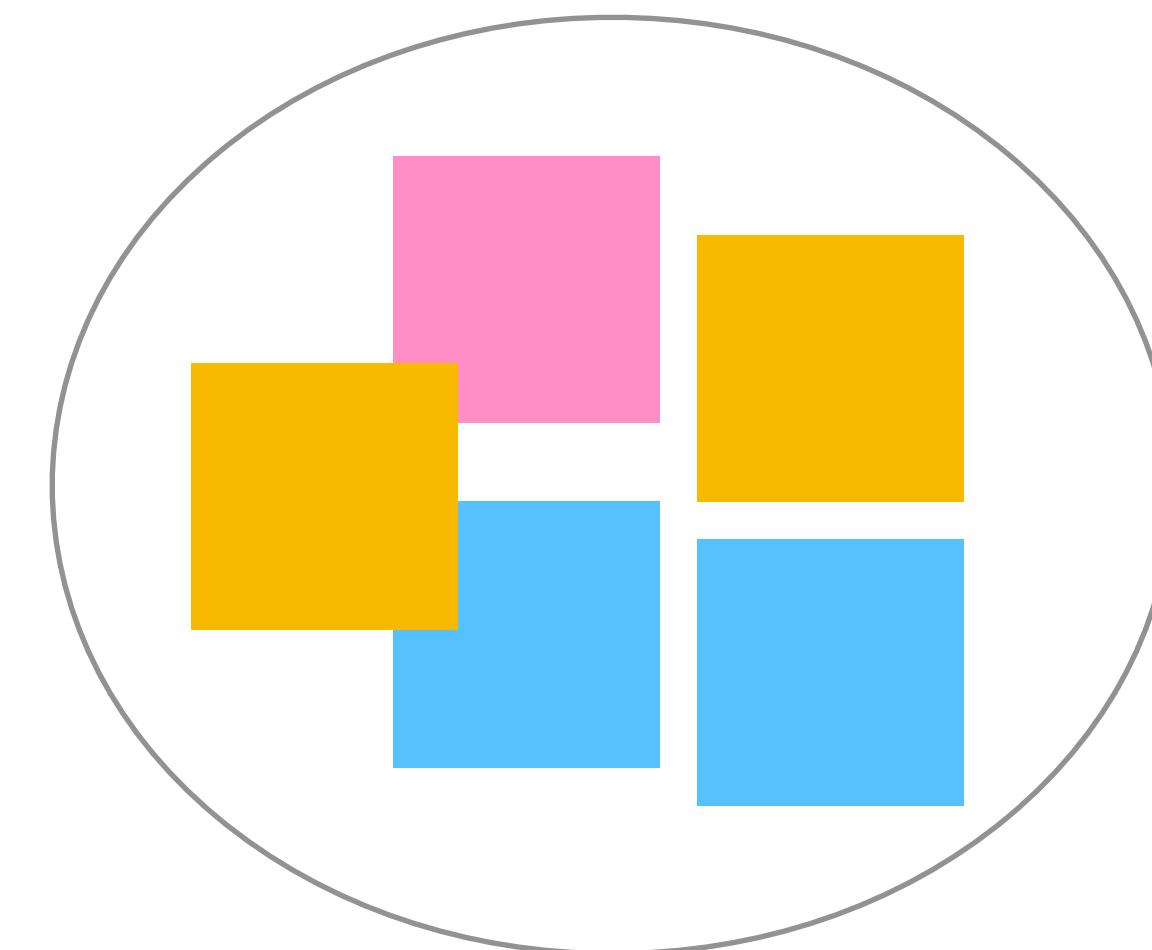
90 min

### PLAYBACK

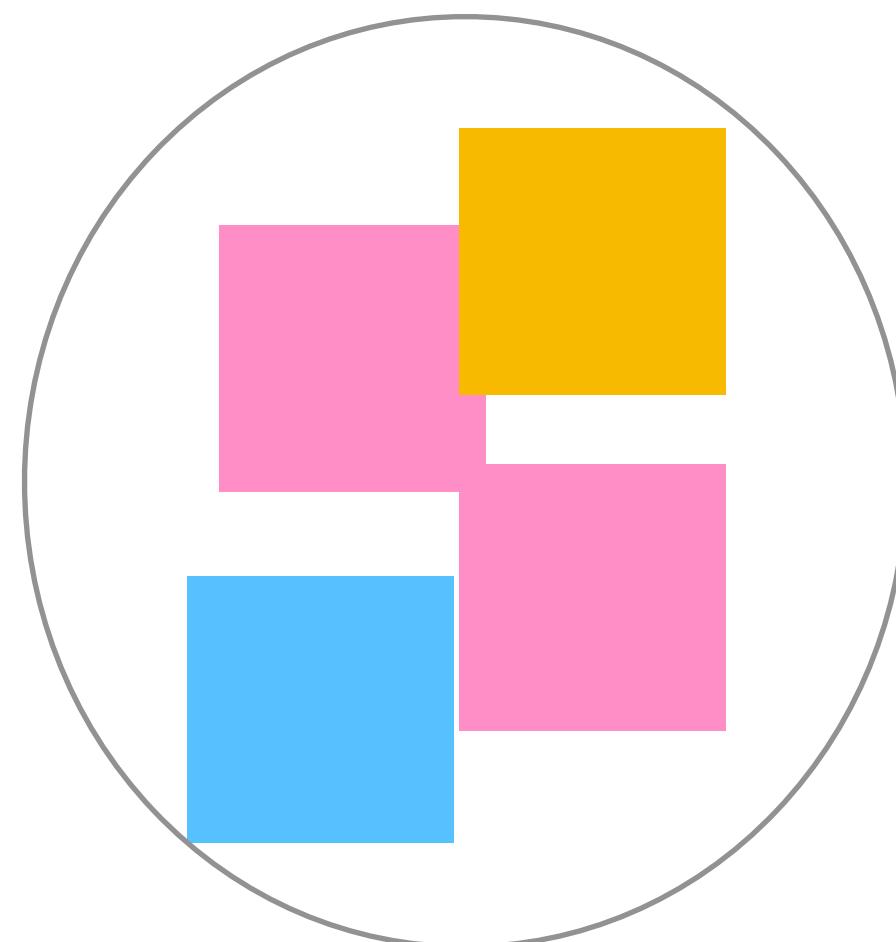
Then, hang your stories on the wall, and have everyone silently ideate new ideas from each story.

Place your sticky notes on the whiteboard next to each story. Then, cluster and label them based on category or type.

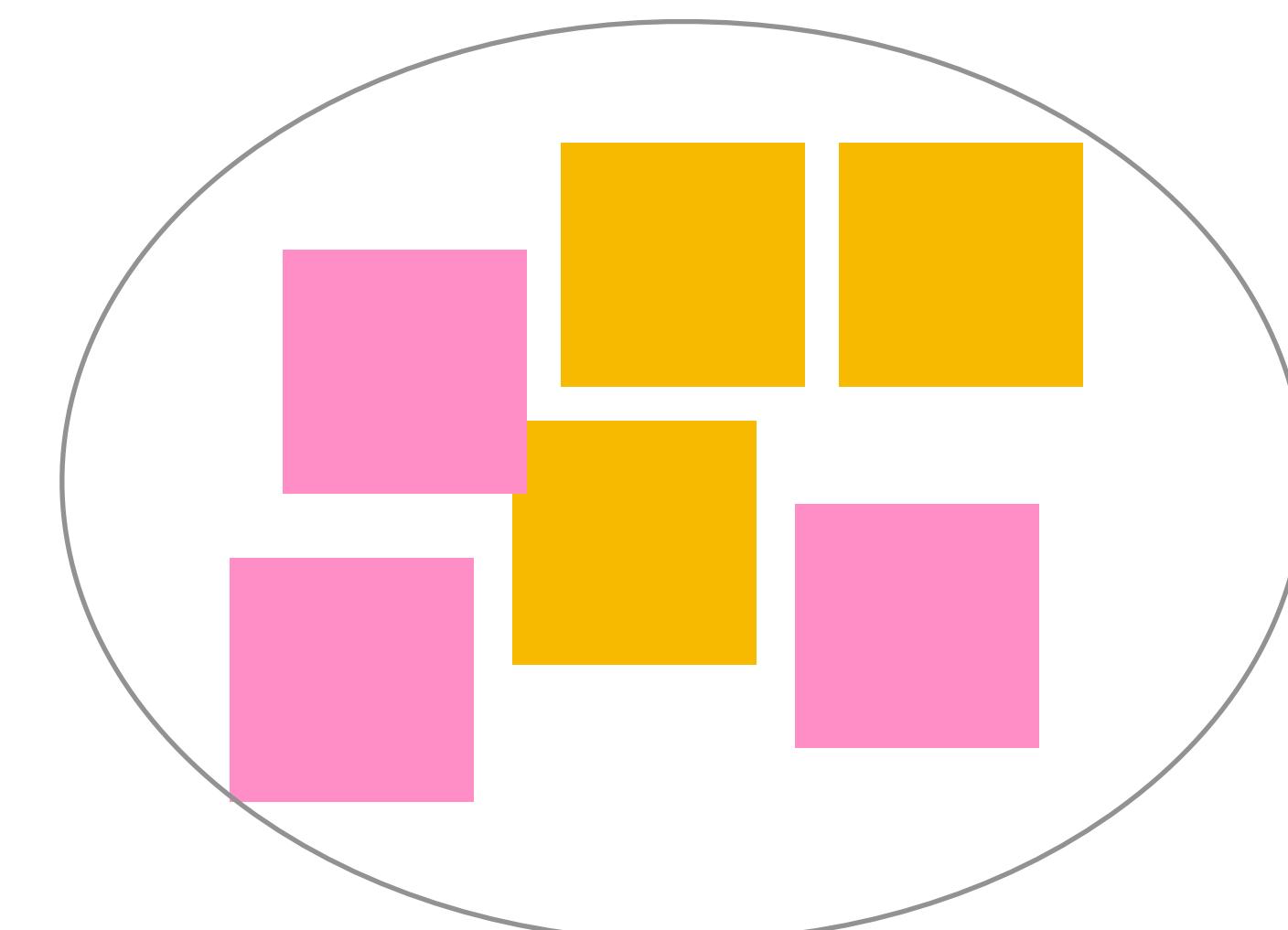
*The future of currency*



*Blockchained Produce*



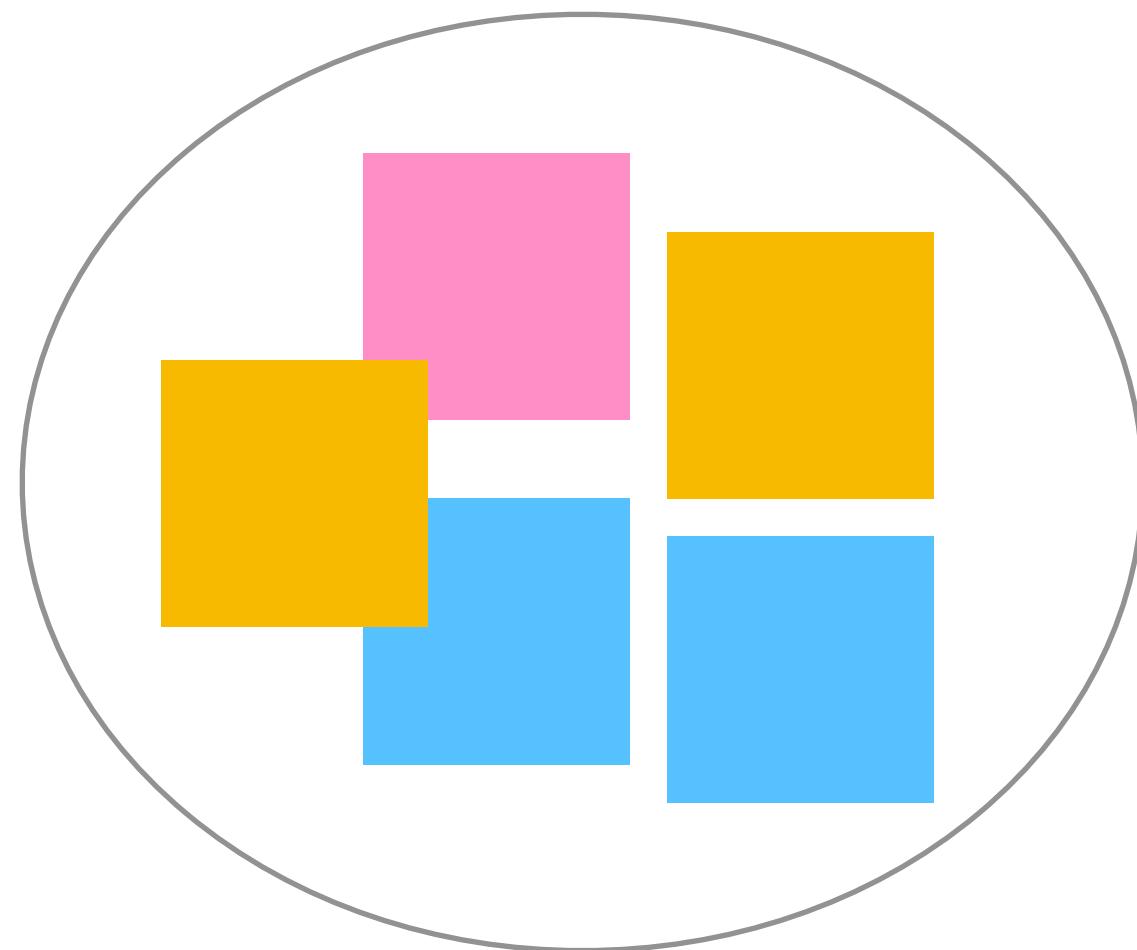
*Financial services*



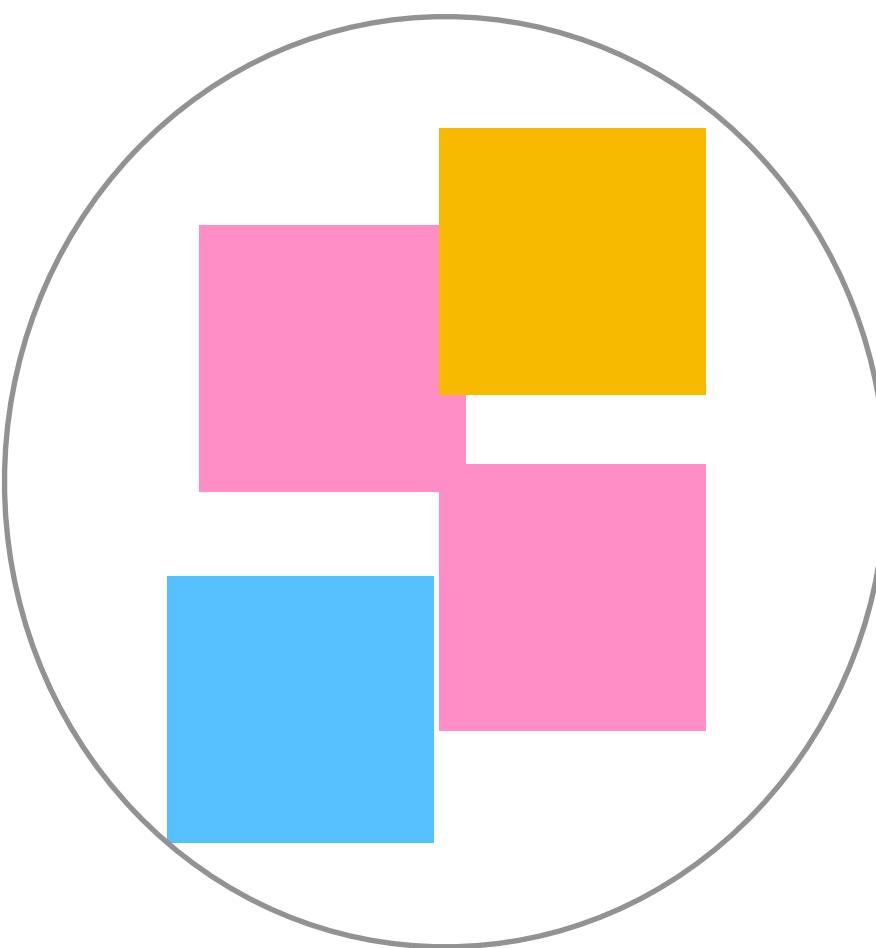
**PLAYBACK**

Use these ideas to seed patents groups or roadmaps. These are big ideas, so think of them as the “wedding cake” of an Experience-based Roadmap. Using these ideas as a starting point, work backward to the “cupcake” you can build today.

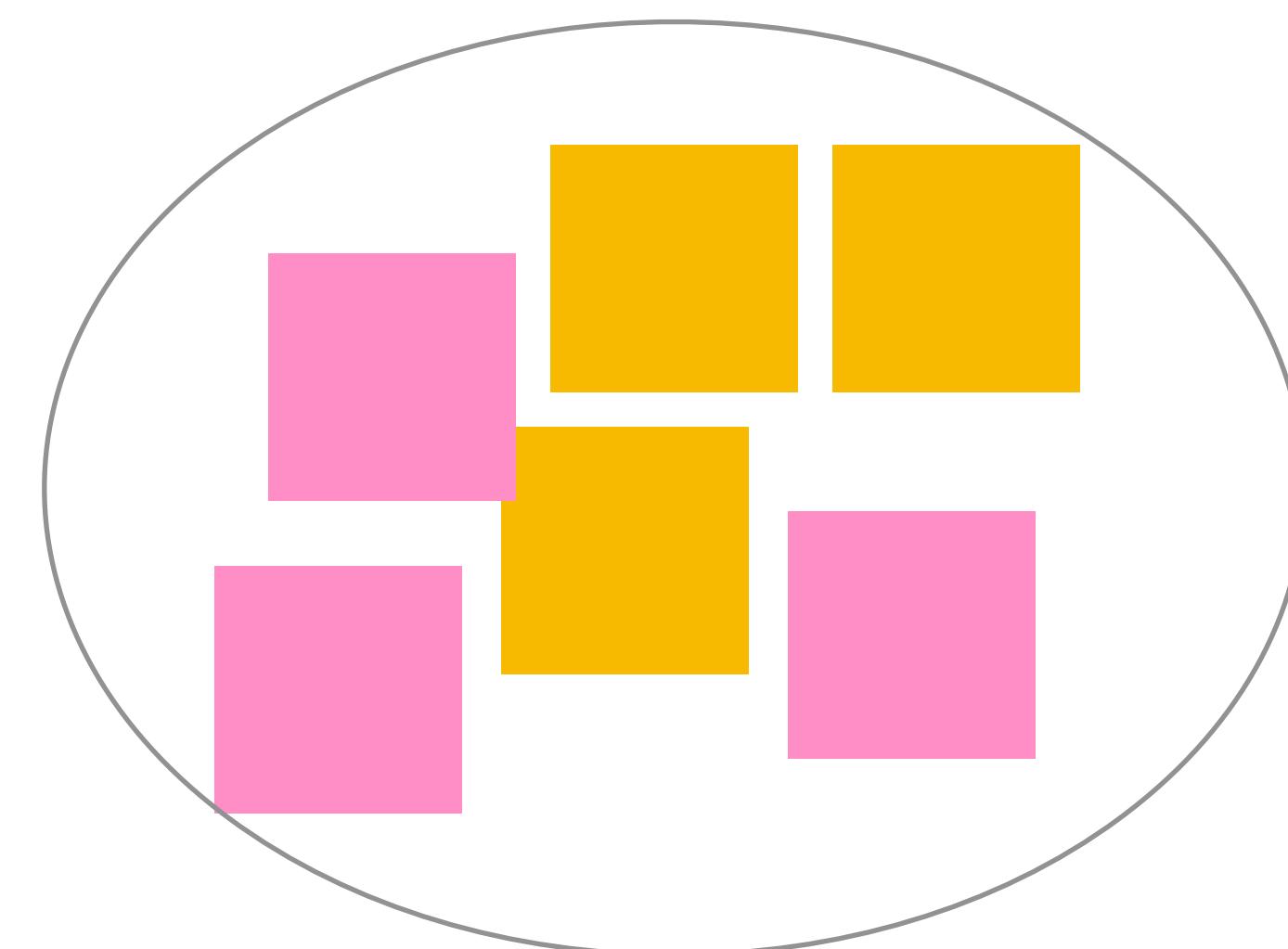
*The future of currency*



*Blockchained Produce*



*Financial services*



# Enterprise Design Thinking

by IBM

TOOLKIT

## Speculative Design Stories

