Empathy Map

This method is used to analyse a character from a story and gain a different perspective. It is specifically used to understand the end user (the person with an issue), what do they hear and see and feel, what is their challenge from their perspective. It can be utilized to help the students deeply understand the person and the problem he/she is facing. In addition to this principle, this activity supports Learning Through Thinking, Learning Through Reflection and Evaluation and Learning Through dialogue and Interaction.

Expected Outcomes – students will:

- ✓ Be able to explore additional perspectives of an issue/problem/situation by taking another character's position.
- ✓ Be able to explore alternative realities.
- ✓ Be able to consider that alternative developments may occur in the future.
- ✓ Be able to think critically.
- ✓ Be able to be actively involved in a debate (show active listening to others and building arguments to support their opinion).

Timing

The minimum amount of time you should plan is **55** minutes.

Material

This working method can be implemented in-person or in a blended format if you choose.

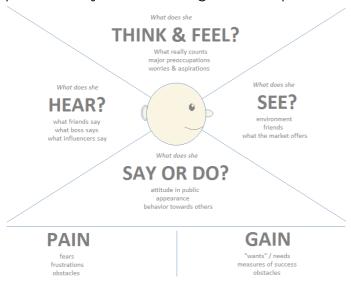| Offline	Blended
Empathy maps Create one large visual space (Board or large paper) to collect small group (or plenary) ideas. Create an additional visual space for the last step of the process.	Create a Google Jamboard account. Create a Google Jamboard for step 2. A laptop/tablet for each group in step 2. **More information?**

Prepare yourself!

Offline

Print out the empathy maps for each group. Look for an empathy map image online and use it to draw a paper map or upload it on the blended learning platform of your choice. A good example can be found here.

You may find more information and idea in the toolkit at http://www.storylogicnet.eu.

Blended:

→ Create a Google Jamboard.
→ Create a frame with an empathy map for each group in step 2.
→ Upload the outline of an empathy map in each frame.
→ Make sure every group has a device.

Step-by-step

Begin by deciding on the societal problem or issue you wish to work with. We suggest you consider the following:

→ *Students' prior knowledge and experiences*
→ *Students' cultural and social background*
→ *Local elements (e.g., historical background, economy elements, landmarks, etc.)*

An Empathy Map is a tool for analyzing a character. Select a character from a story or the news that most likely has a different perspective on a problem that you want your students to explore, based on the above list.

1. Preparation

You will need about 5 minutes for this step.

Present a character in a story. If multiple characters appear in the story, you may select more than one. Try to work with main characters and not supporting characters as they do not provide many insights into a story.

Suggestion: In the case of choosing a story with a protagonist and an antagonist, it is interesting to explore both perspectives for similarities and contradictions.

2. Assign groups

You will need at least 20 minutes for this step.

We propose that you create small groups of students, with no more than 4-5 members. Assign one character to each group if you have multiple characters to work with or the same character to all or more than one groups. Briefly explain the Empathy Map structure.

Give 15 minutes to each group to fill in their Empathy Map on their paper or on the Google Jamboard.

Suggestion: If your students have little or no experience with Empathy Maps, provide them Maps with provoking questions or pre-filled post-it notes to serve as examples. The more experienced your students become the less help you need to provide at the beginning. Find more inspiration for this at

Guidelines for explaining what an Empathy Map is.

> *An empathy map is a template which can be used to explore all the qualities of a character, including both external and internal features (e.g., appearance, thoughts, habits, fears). In the Design Thinking approach, it is also called a Persona template. The idea is that you get to know your character completely before integrating him/her in your story. This way you will be able to understand what is important for this character, the values that he/she holds, the possible reactions to dilemmas or crisis situations.*

Besides, empathy is when you get into another person's shoes, seeing and feeling everything that he/she does, gaining his/her perspective.

3. Plenary

You will need at least 10 minutes for this step.

Each group takes 3-5 minutes to present their assigned character. Use 2-3 more minutes for comments and discussion with the whole classroom.

In case of groups assigned with the same character, give them the opportunity to explain what they filled in differently and facilitate the discussion, For example, focus on the differences and ask the groups to justify the difference in their perspective. Ask them to give examples (e.g., "what do you mean by 'the character is shy'"). Ask the other groups what they think after a group's presentation and always try to have the students justify their arguments.

4. Individual (optional)

You may provide empty maps to the students and ask them to create their own, personal map. Use 5 minutes and then give them 5 more minutes asking them to reflect on the differences they have with the character under examination.

This may provide deeper insights of the character's perspective, by highlighting the differences between the students' perspectives.

Follow these steps:

Create an Empathy Map of yourself. Try to describe yourself in as much detail as possible. This will make you think of questions to ask yourself when filling in an Empathy Map.

Create a short story (up to 10 lines) of a usual day of yours. How do your actions within a usual day comply with what you wrote in your Empathy Map? What is missing or needs to be corrected? Reflect and go back to step 1 if needed.

Freely or randomly select a co-student. Each of you create an Empathy Map for your classmate.

Present the Map to your pair and ask him/her to validate your description. Explain your pair may ask you questions regarding your choices like "what makes you say that", "why do you think that of me". Freely discuss to understand each other's perspective.

Create a short story (up to 10 lines) of a usual day of your pair. Ask him/her to comment on your story (e.g., does he/she usually spend a day like that?)

Interview the person you created the Empathy map for and validate your choices while filling in the map.

5. Reflection

You will need at least 5 minutes for this step.

This step is individual. Ask each student to reflect on the character now that the map is completed and think of how they feel about the character now. How different is that (if it is) than before the activity started? Give them a few minutes to share in plenary.

6. Identification

You will need at least 15 minutes for this step.

Select the most appealing perspective in the case of multiple characters or ask the students to select their favorite. In the case of a single character, combine empathy maps during the discussions in step 3.

Focus on the Pain/Gain sections of the empathy map. Give 3-5 minutes to the students to identify the main problem that the character is facing and their underlying reasons. Ask them to put it on the visual board. Use the following questions as a guide."

→ Who is the problem important for? Why?
→ How does the problem affect the character now and in the future?
→ How difficult is the problem to be solved?

Is the problem personal/internal or because of someone else (e.g., harassment is caused by someone else).

How important is for the character to solve the problem before going on with his/her life?

Facilitate a 5–10-minute discussion with the students to reach consensus on what they would write in these sections of the Empathy Map. By the end of this discussion, students will have examined alternative perspectives deeply. Encourage debates.

7. Consider next steps!

After completing the previous steps, your students should have gained new insights on a given problem. You may re-iterate all or some of the steps if you think that they need to reflect more on the new perspectives. Try the "I used to think and now I think" method.

Use the new perspectives as a foundation for building a project through which the student will be asked to solve the problem at stake for the character they examined.

8. Bring it Home

If you follow a blended learning approach, you may initially ask the students to create the empathy map at home with the support of their families. Then they will bring those insights to the classroom, where you start from step 3.

Alternatively, you may ask the students to implement step 4 at home with their families. Another idea is to select as characters to be examined the students' parents, to begin with. Be creative!