

Stories from Watertown

A story-based approach to familiarise with worldviews

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v.3.4

This game-set has been developed under the Future-proof Labs research activities (Innovation Network research group), Mission Zero Kenniscentrum (The Hague University of Applied Sciences), and as part of an MBDesign Master Thesis (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya & University of Barcelona).

Join me in Watertown

Hello there!

Let me introduce myself, my name is Jan, and I am a story lover. Why? I grew up in a home with books on every wall, table, and cupboard. Texts of all sorts: essays, scientific, short stories, fiction, etc. The books and I would have a date every night. And from chapter to chapter of *Le Petit Prince*, among *Les Aventures de Petit Nicolas* or of Tintin, and the foreign tales of *1000 Ans de Contes*, I became a story enthusiast. Stories have a special thing that allows you to look at things from many lenses, discover something new and imagine other realities.

But why is that any relevant, you might wonder? Narratives are at the core of how we look at the world around us and make sense of it. But as we grow up, we often forget their importance in allowing us to see things differently than how we are used to, understand different truths and listen wholeheartedly. The consequence of this loss of touch with stories as pieces of knowledge and wisdom is that we fail to recognise how powerful it is to understand where someone comes from. In fact, when we listen, immerse ourselves in a story and detach from our judgements, we can unlock a much-required empathy that will allow us to engage more honestly, efficiently, and creatively with those around us. Whether you got here to read stories, for self-discovery, to deepen a relationship or help your team and stakeholders to collaborate, this game might be for you.

I gathered five stories for you. They are tales from the inhabitants I met in Watertown; each character comes from a different place and will offer their perspective of what happened when the cat left the town. I invite you to learn from their stories, interpret them, and reflect on your interpretations and yourself. And, if you are working on a project with other people, you could think of Watertown as the space where this project happens and familiarize yourself with worldviews in this space – your own and others.

Welcome!



In this set



Introduction



Town map



3 playing modes instructions



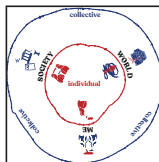
5 story sheets



8 red interpretation cards

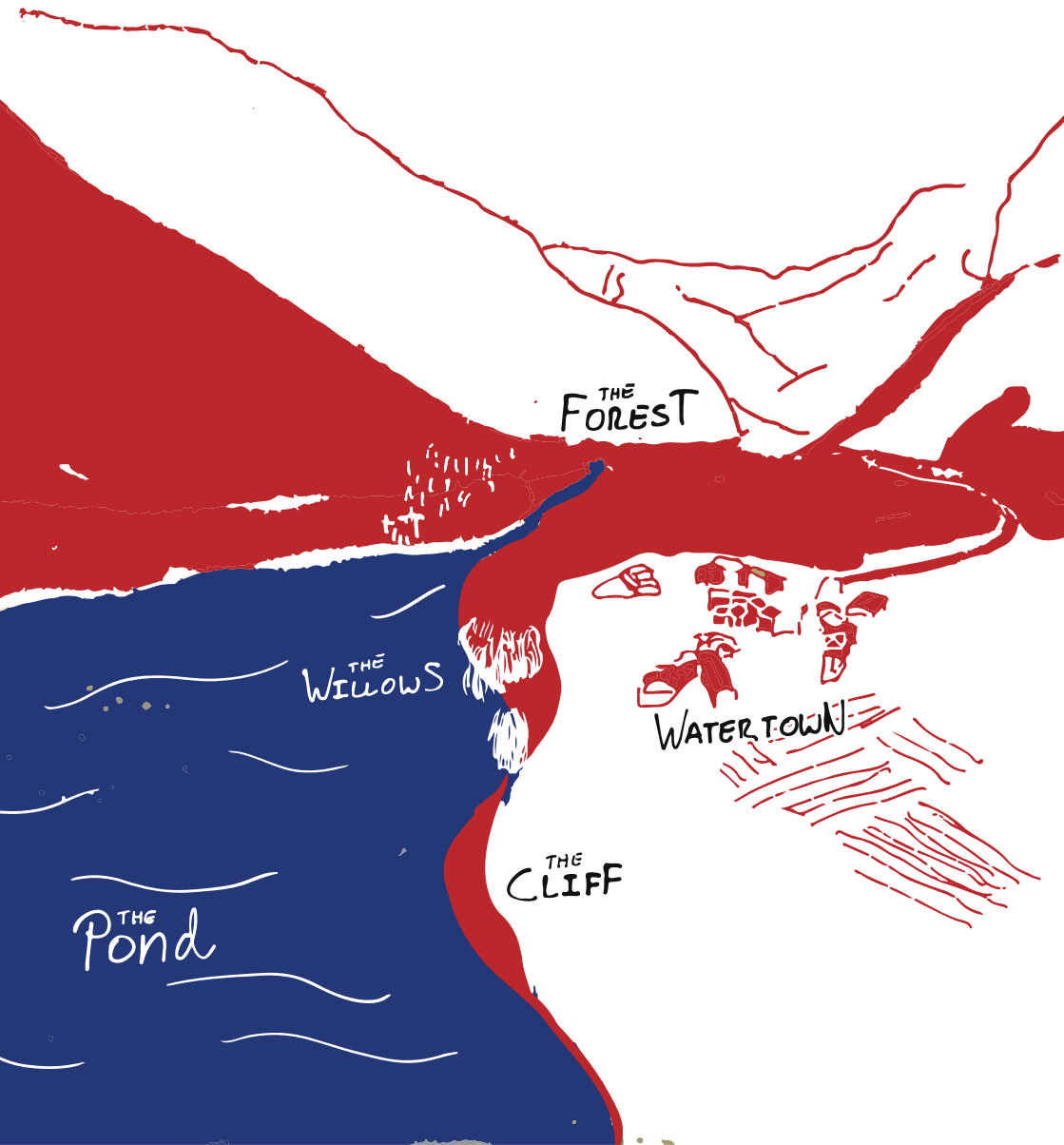


8 blue reflexion cards



Cartography template sheet

Map of Watertown



Mode 1

Get to know yourself

Individual
+30 minutes

This is a personal reflexion exercise, do it with calmness when you are not in a hurry. You will need a notebook and find a space where you can relax, feel comfortable, and be by yourself.

1



Read the five stories,
there is no specific order

2



Think about the characters
and their behaviours
(red cards)

3



Reflect on how you feel identified
with the characters and situations.
You can use the blue question cards
and write down your reflexions in a
journal or notebook.

4



Try it out with other stories, fables,
novels, movies, and songs... and
come up with new questions

5



Dare to write a fable of your own that
highlights your reflexions

These instructions are for reference, use the contents of the document at your will

Mode 2

Understand another person

2 - 4 participants
+20 minutes

You have to meet someone you have to collaborate with. You might want to consider beginning this meeting with a short warm-up to discuss your assumptions over each other and learn from your positions.

1



Bring the fables to the meeting

2



Choose 1 or 2

3



Read them together or at loud

4



Discuss the characters' behaviours and what could have led to these situations (red question cards)

5



Share how you relate to the different characters and situations (blue question cards)

6



Be curious about the other people you are conversing with and avoid judgments

Mode 3

Map a collective's evolution

+2 participants
1h individually + 1h collectively

Seeing how a group thinks and their thought evolves can be valuable to foster a sense of community and togetherness, define the best paths of action from the convergence of values, and glimpse the impact of their activities on the group's worldviews.

1



Get people of a group
(coordinators, some stakeholders...)
to have individual reflexions
(as stated in mode 1)

2



Hold an informal reflexions
sharing session

3



Allow people to share what they
want from their reflexions

4



Place the reflexions
in the included cartography
following the description

5



Keep the discussion open
and let people add to
each other reflexions

6



Set a date for another session
and plan for it
(e.g. every 6 months,
introduce new stories if necessary)

The fox

There was a little red fox who got lost in the forest. After wandering among the trees for hours and looking for a place where she could settle, she found a small town between a forest and a lake. What a mirage! Maybe in that town, she could find something to eat and recover. The village didn't look very big from the forests; it was more like a bunch of houses built together by a pond. In the sandy streets were footprints of various shoes, even different animals. After walking along the paths for a while, the fox encountered a well-fed cat.

Welcome to the village – the cat told her.

But the fox was more hungry than anything and wasn't well prepared to have a conversation with an empty stomach. If the cat was courteous enough to welcome her, he would help her settle in, and they could become good friends. So politely thanking him, she asked where food was to be found. The cat stayed still for a few seconds, maybe a minute, and then turned around to show her the way. He was not in a hurry, figured the fox. The cat got inside a house and came out a while after. The fox assumed the cat was arranging the food as they kept walking. A few corners further, the cat quickly turned towards a food plate and began to eat. There wasn't space for both of them, so the fox waited.

When the cat left, he left some food remainings on the plate, which the fox understood were for her.

The fox had food on the plate every day. Days became weeks, and weeks became months. Soon, the fox grew up, and although she had food, she also complemented her meal with the rabbits she hunted. Yet, one day she found the portion on the dish to be extremely small. At first, she thought the cat needed more food that day, but it quickly became a habit. How could the cat be so greedy as to leave her with almost nothing? In her community, everyone used to share with other animals because it was the right thing to do.



That did not seem to be the case anymore in that town.

The fox felt outraged by the loss of morality of her fellow villagers. Resolved, she went to see the cat. The cat was playing with some mice by the pond. So, she avidly approached him.

'Tell me, little cat. What should we do to stop you from taking so much food?' asked the fox before doing a little push to scare him off.

But the cat stood still. He didn't speak. He only moved his head to look at her and the cliff behind him.

'Could he not be aware of what he was doing wrong?' thought the fox. He had to be punished for his actions and lack of regret, and when she gave him a little push, the cat fell into the water. He was never seen again. From that time onwards, the fox couldn't find the cat food anymore and had to work harder hunting the mice taking over the village.



The mice

Once upon a time there was a village where mice and the town cat befriended. They would look after each other and play together. The mice saw the cat as a sort of town protector who would wander around. The cat lived inside the human houses and the mice underneath. One day, as a mouse was in the forest gathering some food, he saw a little fox entering the village. He quickly ran to inform all his fellow mice.

The mice got altered by the news. They did not fancy another animal in town who could eat them, but neither they knew if the fox was simply passing by or wanted to settle in. So they decided to hide and stay expectant of the events. The days went by, and the fox stayed in the town but didn't make any effort to hunt mice, so the bravest began to go out again, and all the mice soon retook their lives. One mouse told the others he had seen the fox eating with the cat, and everyone felt safer when they concluded the cat had a deal with the fox so she would not attack the mice.

Over time, the fox grew, and although she was not hunting mice, they feared it could happen soon. Besides, it was also becoming a problem for the cat, who became skinnier, and the mice who had not any food leftovers anymore. They could not understand how the cat allowed that situation, so the

mice called for a meeting to address the issue.

It is unjust the fox gets more food than the cat, who looks after us — exposed a mouse.

Not only, because the fox is eating so much we do not have leftovers and will starve to death — complained another.

After a long talk, one of them — who was praised for his ideas— proposed: *since the food is not properly distributed and the fox is profiting from this unfairness and inequality for all, why don't we split the food into four? A part for the cat, another for the fox, one for us, and the fourth for visiting animals?* The proposal seemed reasonable to all and was quickly accepted by all the mice of the village.

The following day, the mouse who looked after the cat the most went to where the human left the food and split the dish contents in four. He took one part and gave it to the other mice, then he took another and brought it by the pond where many animals passing by stopped to drink and eat a bit.

And so they did for a few days, sometimes eating together with the cat, others at different times and places.

About a week later, while some mice were by the pond, the cat approached them. When he usually did, often it was to play, but this time the cat didn't look very friendly. He was rather aggressive and began to run after the mice right. Immediately after, the fox appeared and began to run after the cat, too. They got closer and closer to a short cliff by the pond, and as they were standing next to it, the fox pushed the cat into the water.

The mice were unsure of what happened and why, but the cat disappeared, and they began to take more and more food from the cat feeder as the human kept refilling it. Their population grew, and the fox was finally a danger. She hasn't stopped hunting mice since.



The cat

The cat could go anywhere. Over the roofs, jumping walls, in everyone's gardens and over trees. Freedom had given him the possibility to do everything he wanted, and he loved it. One day, a little red fox arrived in the village. That day the fox and the cat met. The fox was a small animal, barely the same size as the cat, but with a distinctive dark orange and brownish fur. The cat found it interesting to have such a similar animal around. Amazed by the new creature, he approached her to take a close look.

Welcome to the village, said the cat to the little fox.

Thanks a lot. Would you know where I can find some food around? – asked the fox.

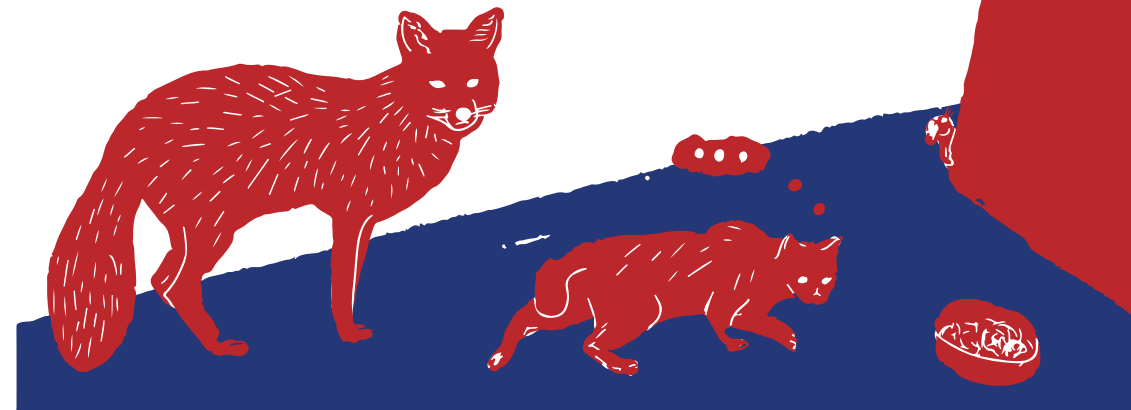
The cat doubted if he would show the fox or not where the food was. That little animal would grow up and need more food, so he would be left with any. After giving it some thought, he turned around, went to a garden to zizz and let it be; the fox would find something to eat by herself. When later he was hungry and headed to eat a bit, he saw the fox following him. *What does she want now?* he mumbled. The fox followed him until he arrived on a sandy street with whitewashed facades. She waited for the cat to finish eating, and then she ate too from the cat food. Although the cat didn't want

to show the fox where his food was, he figured out it would be fine for now as there was enough food.

As the fox grew up, she needed more food, but because there was food abundance, they could both get enough. Sometimes the cat ate more, other times, less. Weeks passed, and one day, the cat found the food split into portions and other animals eating it by the pond. The same thing happened day in, day out. The food he was left with was not enough, and seeing it was all an idea of the mouse, he ran after him to the pond. Suddenly, the fox also appeared and began to run after him. He found himself between the fox and the water, without any runaway. The cat had never gotten that close to so much water. He did not know what would happen. The fox was getting closer to him and didn't look friendly as she quickly complained about the food.

Tell me, little cat, what should we do to stop you from taking so much food? – said the fox.

The cat, afraid, did not know what to do. Neither the fox nor the water seemed a good ending for him. Would the fox kill him? Would the water drown him? Could he swim? Could he attack back the fox? And before realising, the fox had already scratched him, and from her strike, he was dead-ly-wounded, falling to the water.



The man

The man loved his life in the town, wildness living around and without the stress of humankind, cars, and pollution. It was much different from city life. The village had a few inhabitants. The humans, who, over time, built the houses and reshaped the landscape, were the ones most in control. Yet, there also were other inhabitants. The cat was one of them, and the humans were quite fond of him. Everyone loved that cat and allowed him to go inside their homes.

Our men usually gave him food. *Food for me and the food for the cat* – he often said. Then, he would fill a big terra-cotta dish with food and leave it outside, so the cat could eat whenever without having to get through the fence. He made a habit out of it. But for them, it was a kind of a deal: in exchange for the

food, the cat would also spend time with the man and keep him some company.

One day as the man was walking where he left the cat food, he saw another animal eating from the dish. At first, he found it cute to have new creatures eating in Watertown streets, but soon he remembered he had left that food there solely for the cat. How did that fox dare to steal from the cat? Were not enough mice and rabbits around? The man was troubled for some time that things didn't work as they were supposed to. He even brought the situation up to the town council. Anyhow, they discarded hunting the fox and killing it. Laws forbid it.

After some days of poorly sleeping, the man ideated a solution for the cat food problem. He designed a cage as a cat-feeder where the dish could be placed inside. The box opening was big enough for the cat but too deep for the fox to get in and reach the food. So he got some wood and turned his marvellous idea into a reality.

For some time, the man saw the cat taking out the plate and leaving it inside the structure again after a while.

He just had to learn and get used to eating inside.

Days went by, and eventually, the cat stopped taking the food out. *Finally, he learned!* – the man thought, as he was getting used to leaving the food inside the feeder.

But in the following weeks, the cat was nowhere to be seen. The town even organised a search to find the cat and know what happened regarding his disappearance. Yet, the food was eaten by the end of every day, so the man kept feeding the cat with the hope one day he would let others see him again. But as is often said, time heals everything; the inhabitants forgot about the cat and focused their worries on the growing mice population.



The pond

In current days there was a pond that had a village built nearby. For thousands of years, the pond sourced its waters from a stream. The stream begins in the forests and moves through the planes and to the sea. Throughout its life, the pond has seen all sorts of creatures who lived among and around her body. Her surroundings had changed steadily over time. Nonetheless, it was since the establishment of the human community by her side —over six hundred years ago— that the whole landscape changed the quickest.

The pond's body would extend over a few hectares at the foot of a valley. She laid over a bed of sand and sandstone that allowed the waters to flow deep into the Earth. Around her, some willows would shade and caress her surface with their sharp thin leaves. Among them, some wind rush printing dense mazes on the water.

The pond had a lot of tenderness for all the creatures around. They were like sons and daughters that kept relying on her, generation after generation. She wasn't an easy mother to them; as much as she could give them water abundance from her body, she would also ask for the water back. Only under that condition, they would exist and life would blossom. So everyone played by her rules. It was only fair for all she provided.

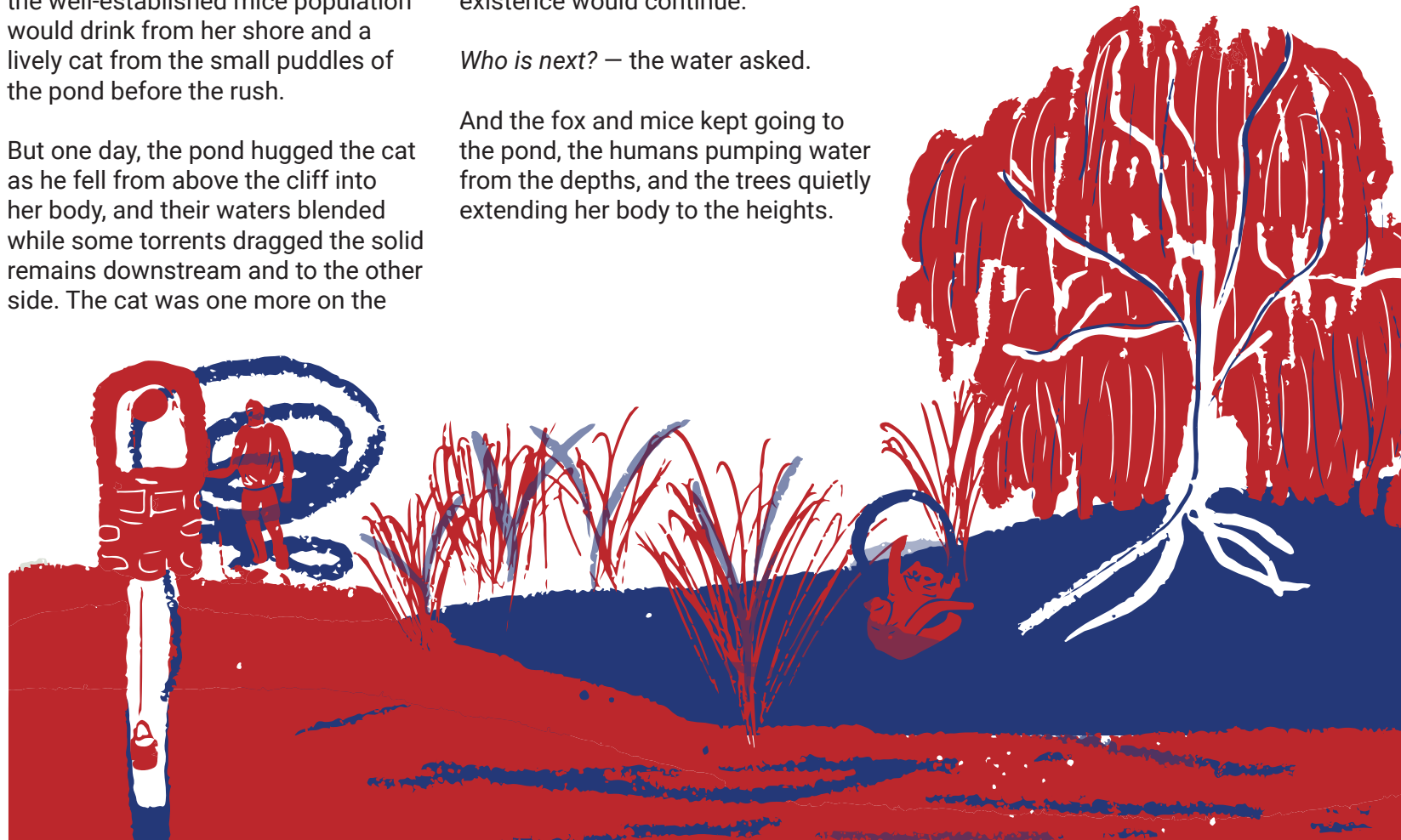
The men usually took the water from the deepest of her body, from the soil-protected vessels. Sometimes this troubled her since only she could sense how much water they took; at times, they took so much that the wells got dry for a while. It hurt. Many other creatures with little options to move around also took it from below. Yet, they keep a constant cycle of giving and taking, far more stable and caring. Many animals passing by, or the well-established mice population would drink from her shore and a lively cat from the small puddles of the pond before the rush.

But one day, the pond hugged the cat as he fell from above the cliff into her body, and their waters blended while some torrents dragged the solid remains downstream and to the other side. The cat was one more on the

list of those to become with water again, just like the ritual mandates. It was obvious: what they all shared wasn't enough to keep them united until they would be together again. The pond didn't judge. It was not her position to do so. She only cared about keeping the circle going and the rituals guaranteeing it. She was one of the guardians of life. Another creature would look at the situation in a new way, take different actions, and the existence would continue.

Who is next? — the water asked.

And the fox and mice kept going to the pond, the humans pumping water from the depths, and the trees quietly extending her body to the heights.



INTERPRETATION CARD

Which character was the most egalitarian?

INTERPRETATION CARD

Which character had the strongest moral?

INTERPRETATION CARD

Which character had the best understanding of the situation?

INTERPRETATION CARD

Which character had the strongest will?

INTERPRETATION CARD

Which character had the highest possibility of solving the situation if they acted differently?

INTERPRETATION CARD

Which character was on best terms with the others?

INTERPRETATION CARD

Which character was the most selfish?

INTERPRETATION CARD

Which character was the most affirmative?

REFLEXION CARD

**How close do you feel
to the cat?**

REFLEXION CARD

**How close do you feel
to the man?**

REFLEXION CARD

**How close do you feel
to mice?**

REFLEXION CARD

**How close do you feel
to the fox?**

REFLEXION CARD

**How close do you feel
to the water?**

or

**What is the water in you
and your surroundings?**

REFLEXION CARD

**What is the food
in your story?**

REFLEXION CARD

**What cat-feeders
are you building
or using?**

REFLEXION CARD

**What character
do you strive to be?**

Cartography template

The stories and questions in this set open up to multiple understandings and interpretations. Possibly, your reflexions are very different from someone else's. This cartography can help you classify your reflexions or even deepen them with topics you didn't consider. Also, having a thematic classification can help you discuss these personal reflexions in a group, create a collective picture, or track changes in mindset over time in an organised manner.

	Individual	Collective
Me	Includes those reflexions about the perception of oneself. Answers the question 'who am I?' It might enclose knowledge, skills...	Includes those reflexions about the collective values and beliefs. Answers the question 'who are we?' It might enclose discourses, language, goals...
Society	Includes those reflexions about individual (social) behaviour. Answers the question 'how do I interact with other humans?' It might enclose characteristics of interpersonal relationships.	Includes those reflexions about social behaviour and structures. Answers the question 'how do we organise?' It might enclose social arrangements, norms, embodied and structural values and assumptions...
World	Includes those reflexions about the individual behaviour as living beings. Answers the question 'how do I interact with the World?' It might enclose considerations, understandings, and relationships between us and the non-humans.	Includes those reflexions about the World's behaviour and its structures. Answers the question 'how does the World organise?' It might enclose understandings of science and philosophy (energy, materialisms, immanence...).

