

Interact Academy, Interreg Slam 2024-2025

# How to refine your stories: emotional storytelling

Nebojsa Nikolic/ Interact / 10.06.2024

**Interact**



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**  
Interreg

# Agenda/ topics

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Revision  
overview

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Emotional  
storytelling &  
target audience

03

Comfort  
break

04

Storytelling  
exercises

05

Next steps

# Revision Process

The paper basket is your best friend.

## Step 1

Back to the  
potential audience

## Step 2

Check  
problem/solution  
relation, plain  
language

## Step 3

Play with AI and  
other tools to help  
with steps 1 and 2

## Step 4

Test on a friend –  
ask them to retell

# Common mistakes in step 2: language and problem/solution

**Bureaucratic  
language**



**Excessive  
information**



**Solution oversell  
or mismatch**



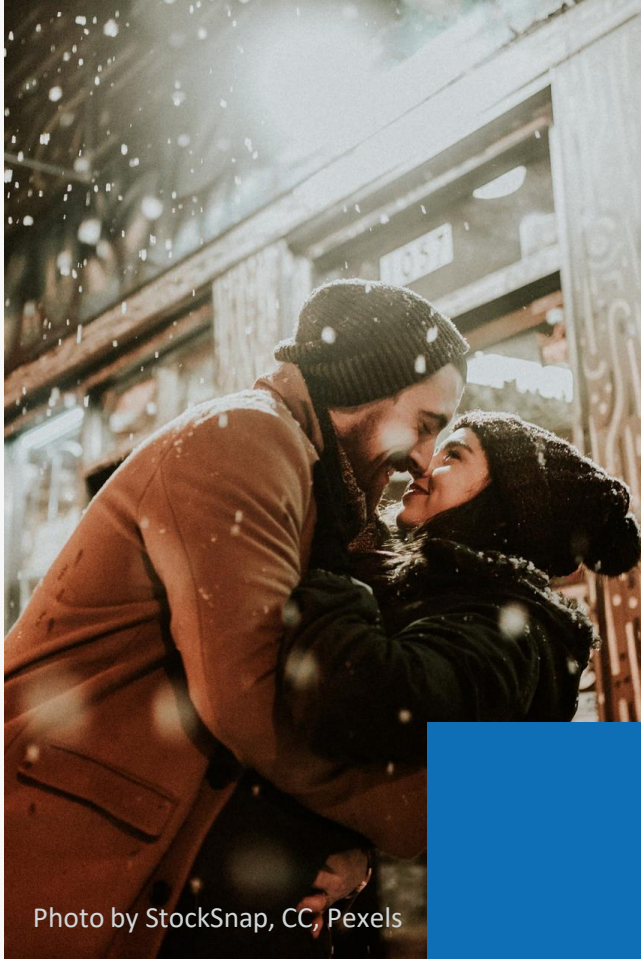
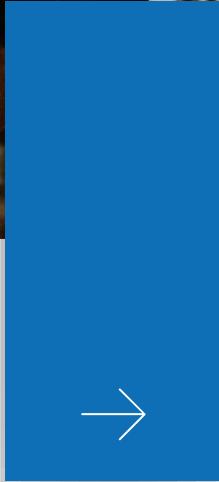


Photo by StockSnap, CC, Pexels



# A story of love or bubble gum?

Let's watch a video commercial together and try to identify what makes it so powerful?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NemtQx0m0Ss>

# What if it was made by Interreg?

The Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company, known as the Wrigley Company, is an American multinational candy and chewing gum company, based in the Global Innovation Center (GIC) in Goose Island, Chicago, Illinois.\*

Wrigley's Extra Long Lasting Flavor Extra Mint chewing gum is an excellent chewing gum with delicious flavor. One packet comes with 15 white sugar-free sticks.

©2015 Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company. All rights reserved.

\* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wrigley\\_Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wrigley_Company)



Photo by Milada Vigerova, CC, Pexels

# Interreg

- Brand at the start
- List of outputs
- Dry and legal
- Unnecessary facts
- Abbreviations
- Disclaimers
- Association with boring
- Reporting

# Wrigley's

- Brand at the end
- A story of real people
- A story of love victory
- Emotions: affection, thrill, excitement, anxiety, frustration, loneliness, love
- Relatable situation
- Association with love
- Storytelling

# Who was the story for?

## Making a “communication persona”

- A **profile** of a typical audience member, representing **people who might care** about your project - forget about Interreg for now
- This is known as “**audience profiling**” within a larger process of “**audience segmentation**”
- Think about age, gender, education, interests, hobbies, relationship status, income, commute to work, social media they use, etc.
- Write a story for THEM



Photo by Igozar Igozar, CC, Pexels



# Exercise

Let's draft the "Bubble gum persona"

Age: ...

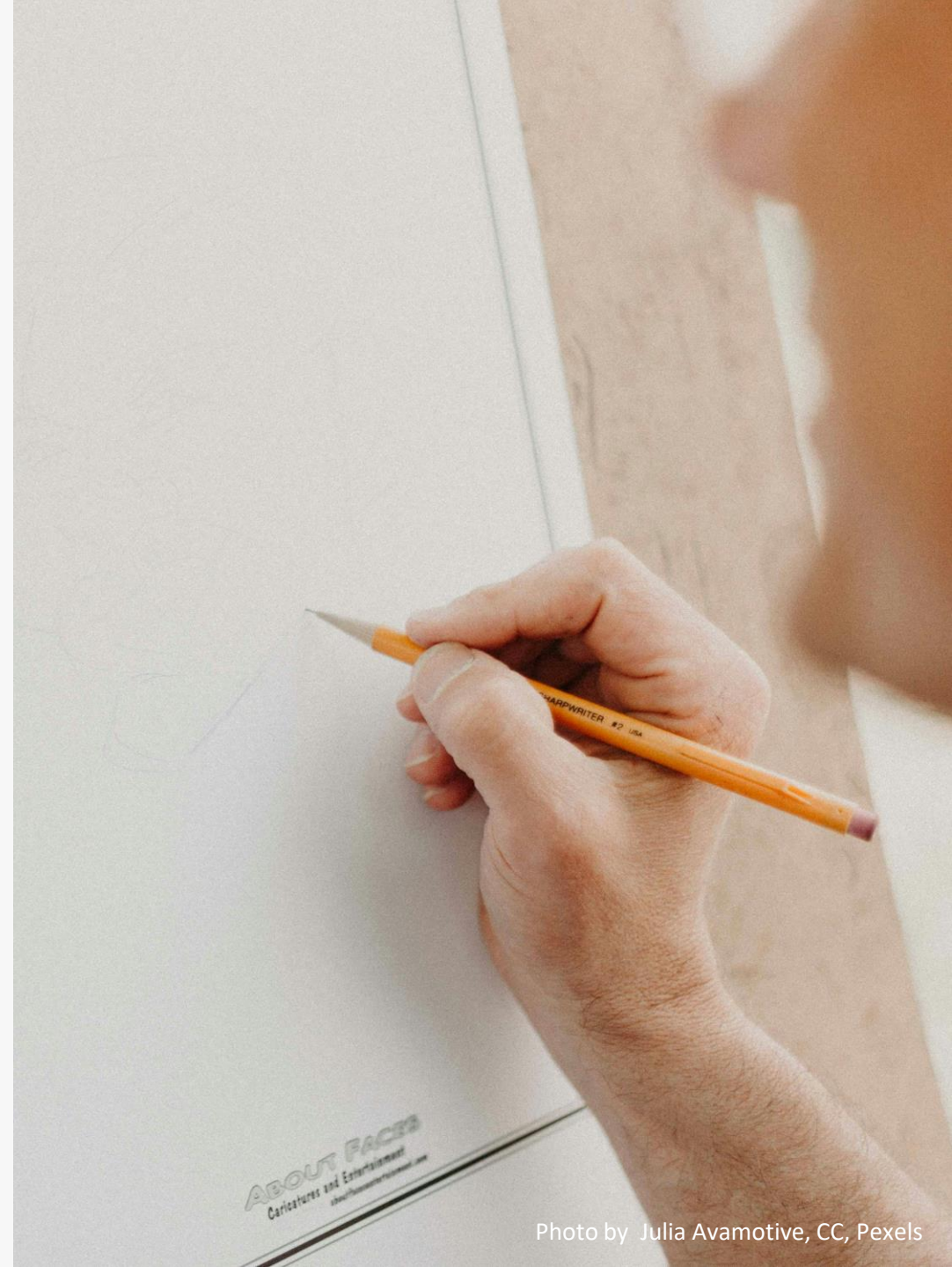
Personality: ...

Hobbies: ...

Values: ...

Social life: ...

Motivated by: ...

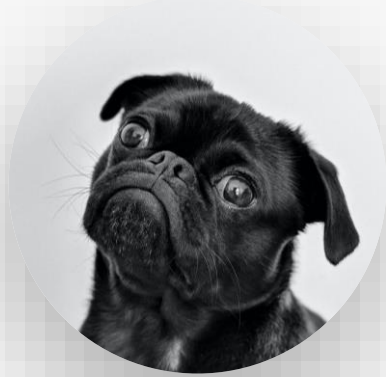


# AI assistance - Copilot

**Prompt: “Generate an audience profile description of a young man who likes chewing gum”**

**Answer:** “A young man who likes chewing gum is likely to be **creative**, imaginative, **expressive**, outgoing, sociable, **empathetic**, with a natural ability to connect with others. He **values romance**, love, emotional connection, creativity, self-expression, and individuality. He has an active social life, enjoys spending time with **friends and family**, exploring new places, trying new foods, and engaging in **creative activities** such as painting, writing, or music. He has a passion for the arts, such as music, literature, or visual arts, and is interested in **social causes**, such as environmentalism or animal rights. He is motivated by a **desire for emotional connection and intimacy**, self-expression, and creativity.”





**But this is a story of a **brand** and we are a serious public institution and we need to tell **stories of complex projects...****

Raise your hand if you agree

# True

But we can also learn from the brands and tell project stories in a much more engaging way, using emotions and even humor.

Watch the next example and observe the story **structure** and **style**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIOwFTr-6hA>



# So, what makes it work?

## Storytelling appeals to the three types of learners

1. **Visual:** with illustrations and mental pictures
2. **Auditory:** from words, lectures, discussions
3. **Kinesthetic:** by doing, experiencing, feeling

<https://www.harvardbusiness.org/what-makes-storytelling-so-effective-for-learning/>



# The appeal on every level

Appeal to the specific audience: Young people on “Twitter” who care about environment, live in London, etc.

- **Visual:** Strong colours, gradient effect, memes
- **Auditory:** Short, bold, surprising
- **Kinesthetic:** Shocking, engaging and funny



# So, who should I appeal to?

## We think about the audience first

A project about healthy food in schools could appeal to the government, schools, parents, children, food producers, food distributors, etc.

We narrow down the audience based on the problem and solution of the project.



# Once we know the audience

## Go back to the three levels of appeal

- **Visual:** What images does your reader see as they are reading the story?
- **Auditory:** Can the reader clearly understand your wording and flow of arguments?
- **Kinesthetic:** What is the emotional journey of the reader as they go through your story?





# How do we make the story relatable?

## We write for that ONE audience representative

- A setting THEY can see themselves in
- A problem THEY would understand and relate
- Can THEY benefit from the solution?
- Would THEY understand how it works?
- What kind of proof would THEY appreciate
- How detailed and technical would THEY want the story to be
- Give THEM examples and testimonials



# Story example

**Title:** Conserving the Arctic Fox: A cross-border project

**Author:** Jenny Lindbäck

The Arctic fox has been endangered in the regions of Sweden and Norway for over a century.

The Arctic fox population has struggled to recover independently. Could a collaborative project spanning the Sweden-Norway border be the key to bolstering their numbers and strengthen the population?

The Arctic fox project Felles Fjellrev II was born, which encompasses the counties of Trøndelag and Nordland in Norway, as well as Jämtland and Västerbotten in Sweden. This initiative focused on three critical areas:

By providing essential feeding support at active dens.

By research combined with annual monitoring and inventory, which yielded valuable insights into the Arctic fox's natural behavior and life cycle. Knowledge dissemination, the team developed new information products to raise awareness about the Arctic fox and fostering a deeper understanding among local communities.

The project's overarching goal was clear: to strengthen the Arctic fox population. During its duration from 2016 to 2019, an impressive 70-80% of all fox litters born in Scandinavia emerged from this specific cross-border area. Collaborating with other Arctic fox projects, this initiative significantly boosted litter numbers during the first two decades of the 21st century.

Efforts have been made towards a future where the Arctic fox population can thrive with minimal assistance—or better yet, entirely independently, free from human intervention.

# Target audience with Copilot

Profile image generated on the platform: [www.this-person-does-not-exist.com](http://www.this-person-does-not-exist.com)

**Name:** Eva Andersson **Age:** 32

**Occupation:** Environmental Educator

**Location:** Stockholm, Sweden

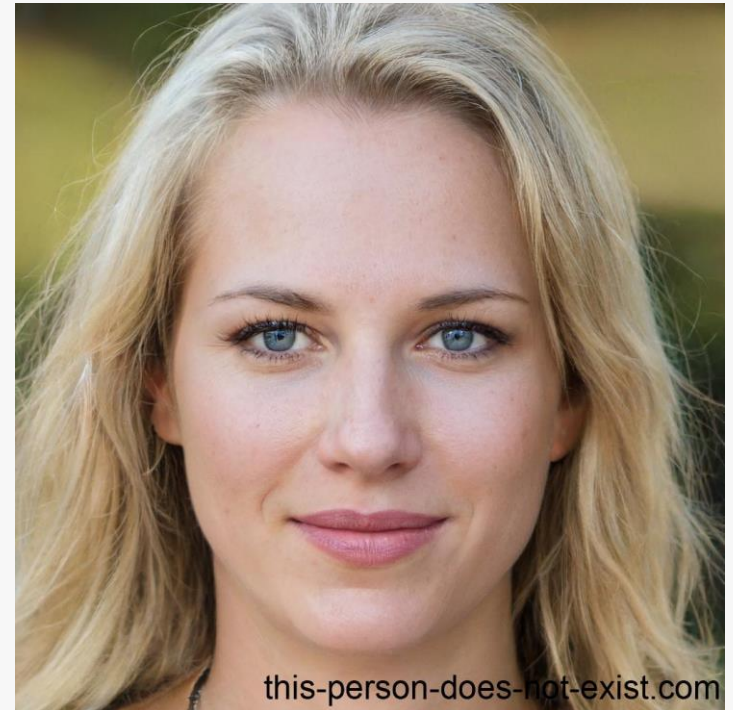
**Background:**

Eva grew up in the picturesque landscapes of northern Sweden, surrounded by forests, lakes, and wildlife.

She studied biology and conservation, driven by her love for nature and a desire to protect it.

**Communication Style:**

Eva is approachable and empathetic. She speaks with conviction, weaving facts into heartfelt narratives. Her social media posts are a blend of informative content and personal anecdotes. Eva's followers admire her authenticity and dedication to wildlife conservation.



# Target audience with Google Gemini

Profile image generated on the platform: [www.this-person-does-not-exist.com](http://www.this-person-does-not-exist.com)

**Name:** Elsa **Age:** 25-40

**Occupation:** Teacher, Park Ranger, Student (Environmental Science/Biology), or someone with a general interest in nature and conservation efforts.

## How to tailor the message for Elsa:

Emphasize the **scientific approach** and **collaboration** between Norway and Sweden.

Use **visuals of healthy arctic foxes** in their **natural habitat**.

**Briefly mention the challenges** faced by the arctic fox population but **focus on the positive outcomes** of the project.

Include a call to action, encouraging Elsa to learn more about arctic fox conservation or support similar projects.



# Story revision – adjusted for Elsa

**Title:** Conserving the Arctic Fox: A cross-border project

**Author:** Jenny Lindbäck,

**Version:** Edited by Nebojsa Nikolic using Copilot AI, for the purpose of a short video storyboard

For over a century, the arctic fox has teetered on the brink of extinction in Sweden and Norway. But hope emerged - [Scientists and conservationists](#) from Sweden and Norway united to protect this iconic species.

They made a cross-border cooperation project and helped the fox population in several key ways: First, they improved research and monitoring, by [tracking the foxes' movements](#), breeding [patterns](#), and [health](#). Then they shared knowledge, resources, and strategies to safeguard the arctic fox. Finally, they ensured that these [elusive creatures](#) had enough [food during harsh winters](#).

Thanks to this and similar projects, the number of fox litters born has significantly increased. As many as [80%](#) of all fox litters born in Scandinavia emerged from this specific cross-border area. Step by step, we're paving the way for a future where the arctic fox roams freely, [a symbol of nature's resilience](#).



For over a century, [the arctic fox](#) has teetered on the brink of extinction in Sweden and Norway



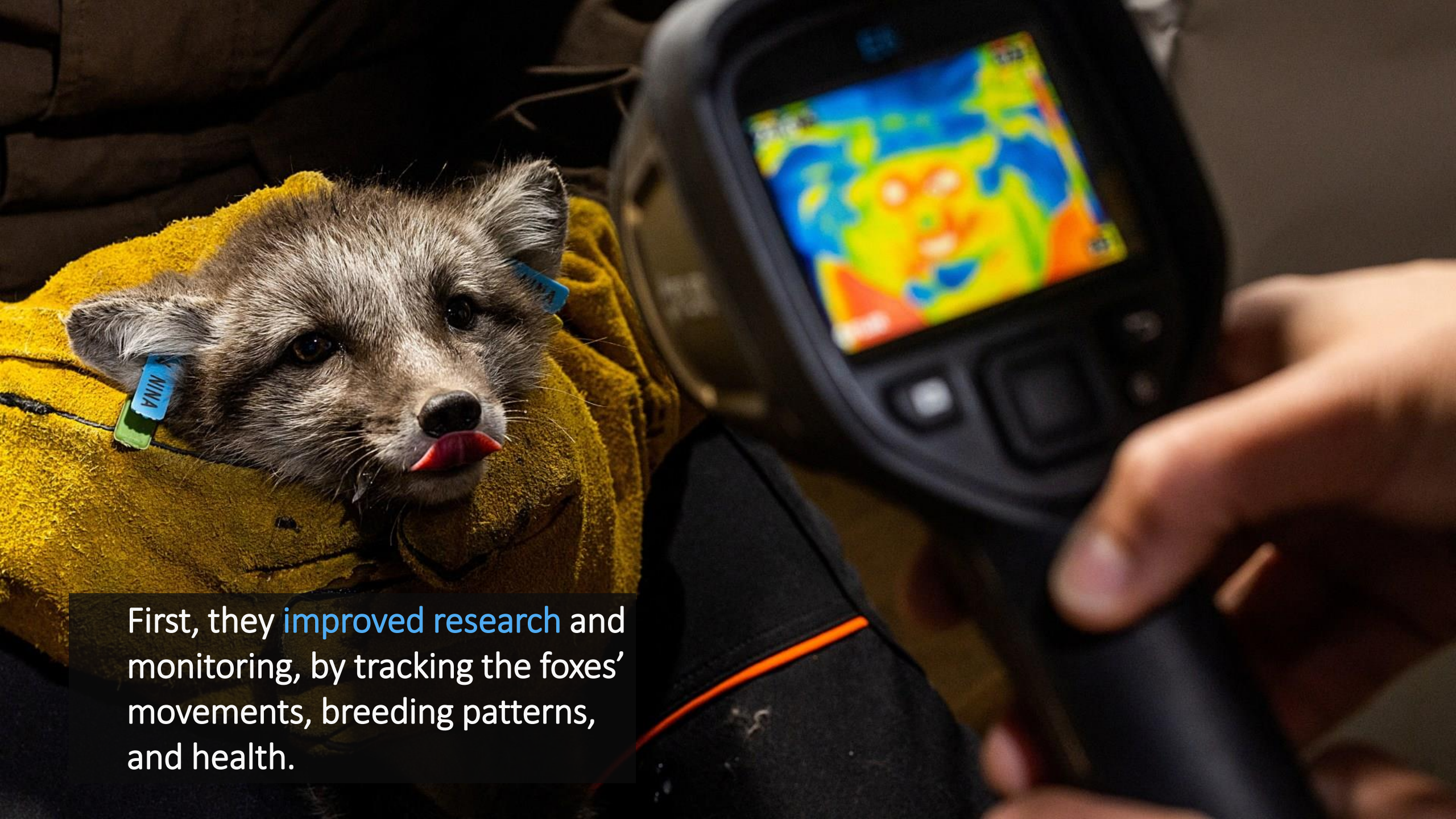


But **hope** emerged. Scientists and conservationists from Sweden and Norway united to protect this iconic species.



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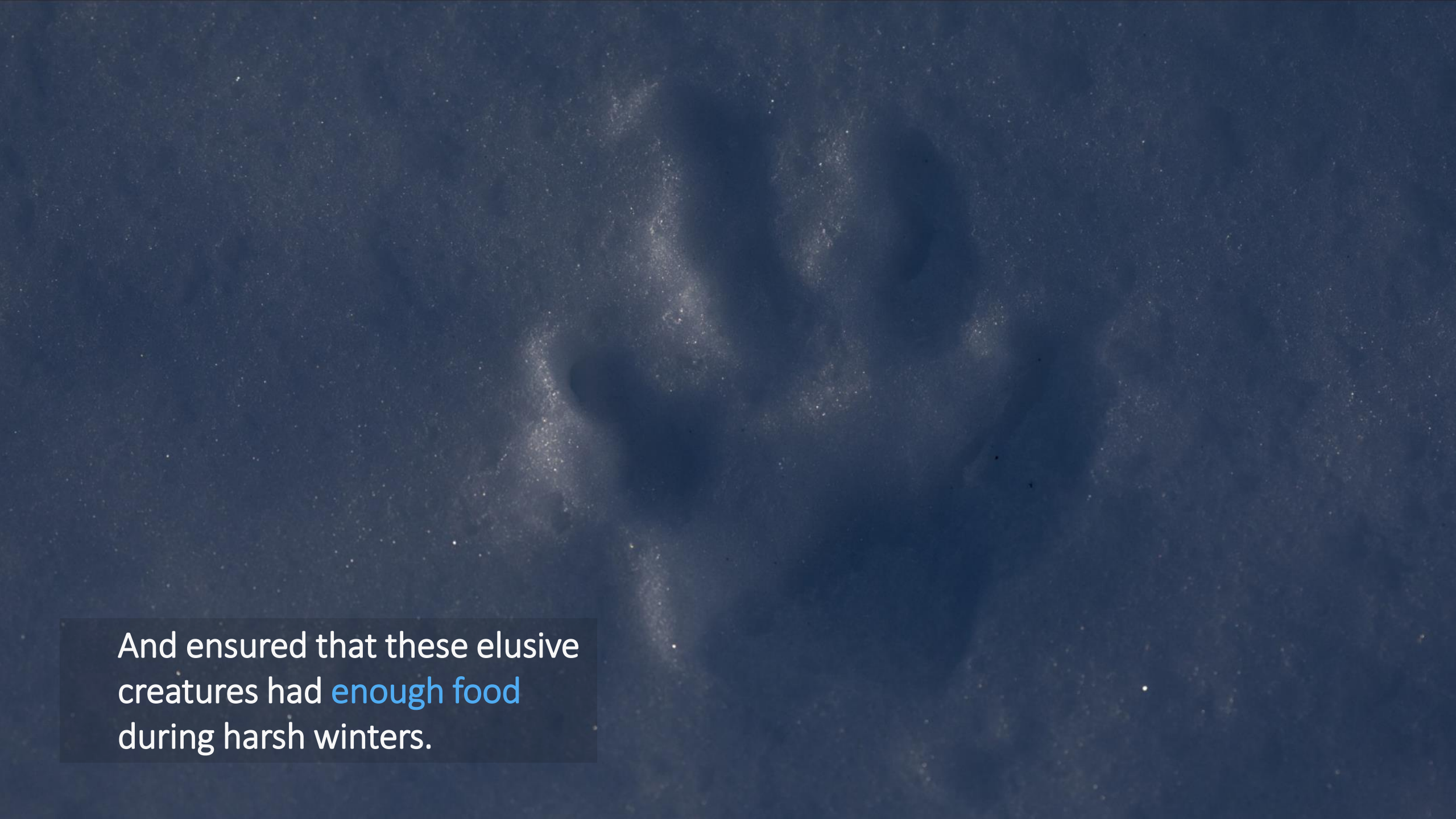




First, they improved research and monitoring, by tracking the foxes' movements, breeding patterns, and health.




Then they [shared knowledge](#), resources, and strategies to safeguard the arctic fox.



And ensured that these elusive creatures had **enough food** during harsh winters.



Thanks to this and similar projects,  
the number of fox litters born has  
significantly increased.

A close-up photograph of a white Arctic fox sitting in a snowy environment. The fox is looking slightly to the left of the camera. Its fur is thick and white, with some darker patches on its ears. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue-grey color, suggesting a snowy or icy landscape. The fox is positioned in the center-right of the frame, with a large mound of snow in the foreground on the right side.

Step by step, we're paving the way for a [future](#) where the arctic fox roams freely, a symbol of nature's resilience.



Foto: Tom Arnbom WWF

Interreg



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Sverige – Norge

# AI Prompt ideas to improve your story

“Create a **target audience** profile for this project: (project summary)”

“**Rewrite** this text, make it easy to understand and to **appeal to** ...”

“Help me write a 2-minute **video script** about this project...”

“**Rewrite** this project description in the style of ... (get inspired)”



## Question

Who is your target audience in the first round of the Interreg Slam?

Answer in chat





## Answer

**The jury.** It consists of **experienced** Interreg experts who have seen hundreds of projects. They want an **engaging story** of a project showing true potential of Interreg to make a **real impact**.

Show creative potential

# Coffee Break



# Storytelling exercises



# Exercises

1. **Freewriting** – unlock creative block, warm-up before writing
2. **Switch perspective** – practice writing depth, adding narrative layers
3. **Metaphorical storytelling** – to connect on a deeper, emotional level
4. **Spy dialogue** – learn how to write realistic dialogue
5. **Story spine structure** – practice writing in a structured way
6. **Story seeds** – unlock creative potential, kindle imagination
7. **PowerPoint karaoke** – practice improvisational storytelling
8. **Ordinary into extraordinary** – exercise your imagination and persuasion skills
9. **From the ground up** – practice research and making realistic setting
10. **“What if?”** – Pixar studio method, spark imagination

# Freewriting

## warm up

**Task:** Write down your thoughts quickly and without any filter or worry about style and grammar.

**Benefits:** Great for brainstorming, processing emotions, releasing stress, manifesting thoughts, unlocking creativity.



# Switch perspective for story depth

**Task:** Write about a well known story but from a completely new perspective. For example, Cinderella from the perspective of the shoe or the Fox project story from the perspective of a fox.

**Benefits:** Every story has many potential points of view. Looking at yours from a different perspective will help you understand the characters and setting, helping you to add depth to your story. Different perspective can also be intriguing to the reader, as a refreshing and unique experience.

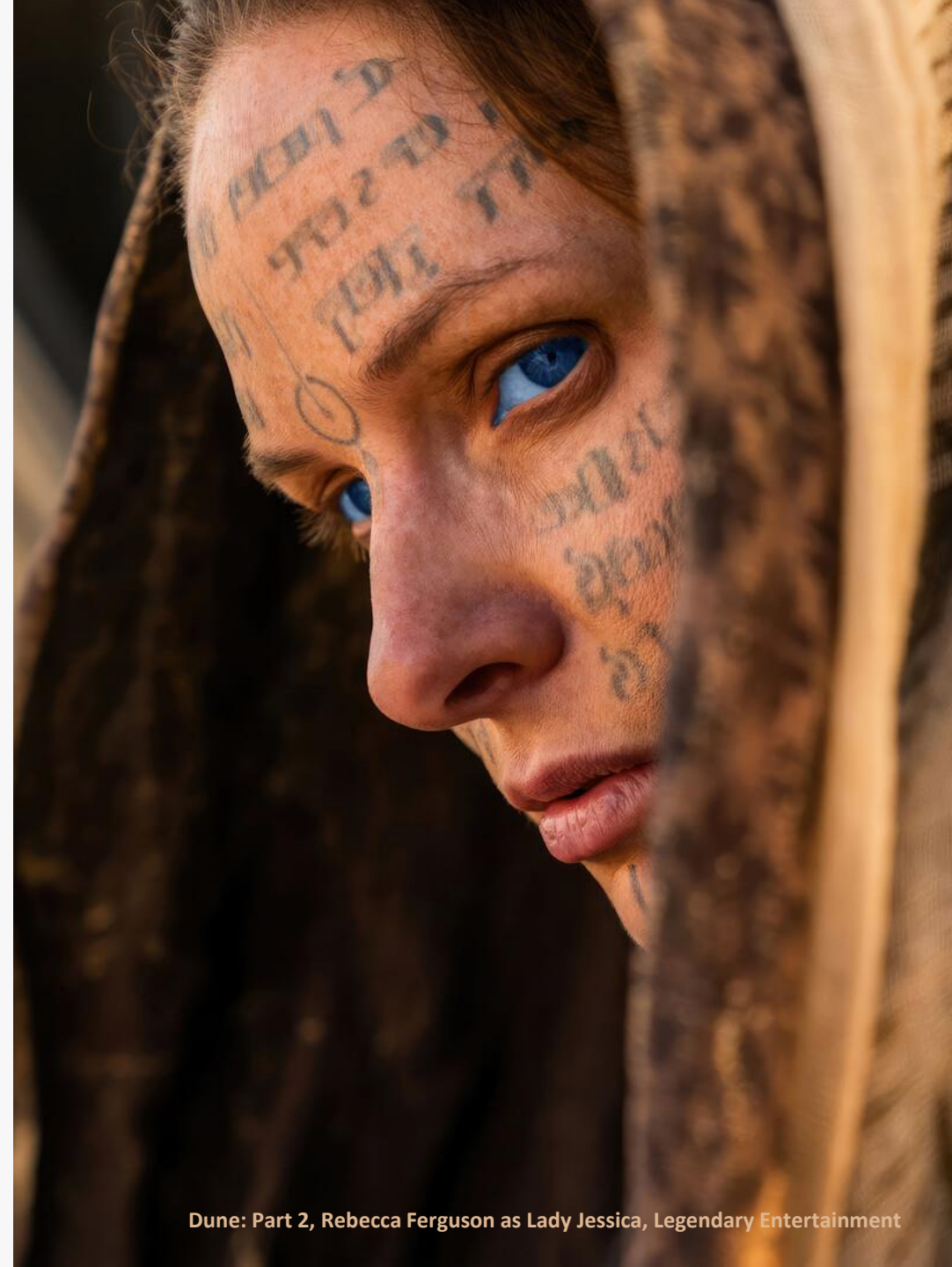


# Metaphorical deep emotion

**Task:** Develop a story from a metaphor that illustrates the problem. You can use a metaphor as an expression within the story, or the whole story can be a metaphor. Famous metaphorical stories: Animal Farm, The Little Prince, Dune

**Benefits:** Using a unique metaphor can help you transform your text from something that looks like a regular report to a intriguing story.

Beware of [clichés](#).



# Spy dialogue realistic talk

**Task:** Listen in on a conversation and try to write down what people are saying. Do not spy on deeply private conversations – listen to a casual chat in the local café and note down the dialogue.

**Benefits:** The goal of the task is to observe and analyse how people talk in real life and learn how to express in a less academic and more natural way.





# Story spine practice structure

**Task:** Follow the template to draft your first story.

Developed by [Kenn Adams](#):

1. Once upon a time...,
2. Every day...,
3. But, one day...,
4. Because of that (repeat as needed)...,
5. Until finally...,
6. and ever since...

**Benefits:** Easy to draft quick and easy stories, especially for kids.



# Story seeds spark imagination

**Task:** You are given an opening line and then you need to continue a story. You can use a famous opening line and see where your imagination takes you.

Examples: “It was a big mistake to skip my coffee that morning.”, “It was a pleasure to burn.”  
(Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury)

**Benefits:** Develops imagination, breaks creative blocks.



# PowerPoint karaoke improvisation

**Task:** The participants get a set on slides with unrelated images, and they have to present on the spot, pretending it all makes sense and it is very important. You can work in pairs, each person explaining one slide and connecting to the story from the other person.

**Benefits:** Great icebreaker and team-building exercise, helping you develop improvisational storytelling skills.



AI generated, Pixabay, CC

# Extra/ordinary exercise imagination

**Task:** Take an ordinary object or concept and try to write a description like it is the most novel and extraordinary thing.

**Example:** You are in a world where doors do not exist. You are about to introduce the concept of doors to the people of this world and convince them that doors are amazing.

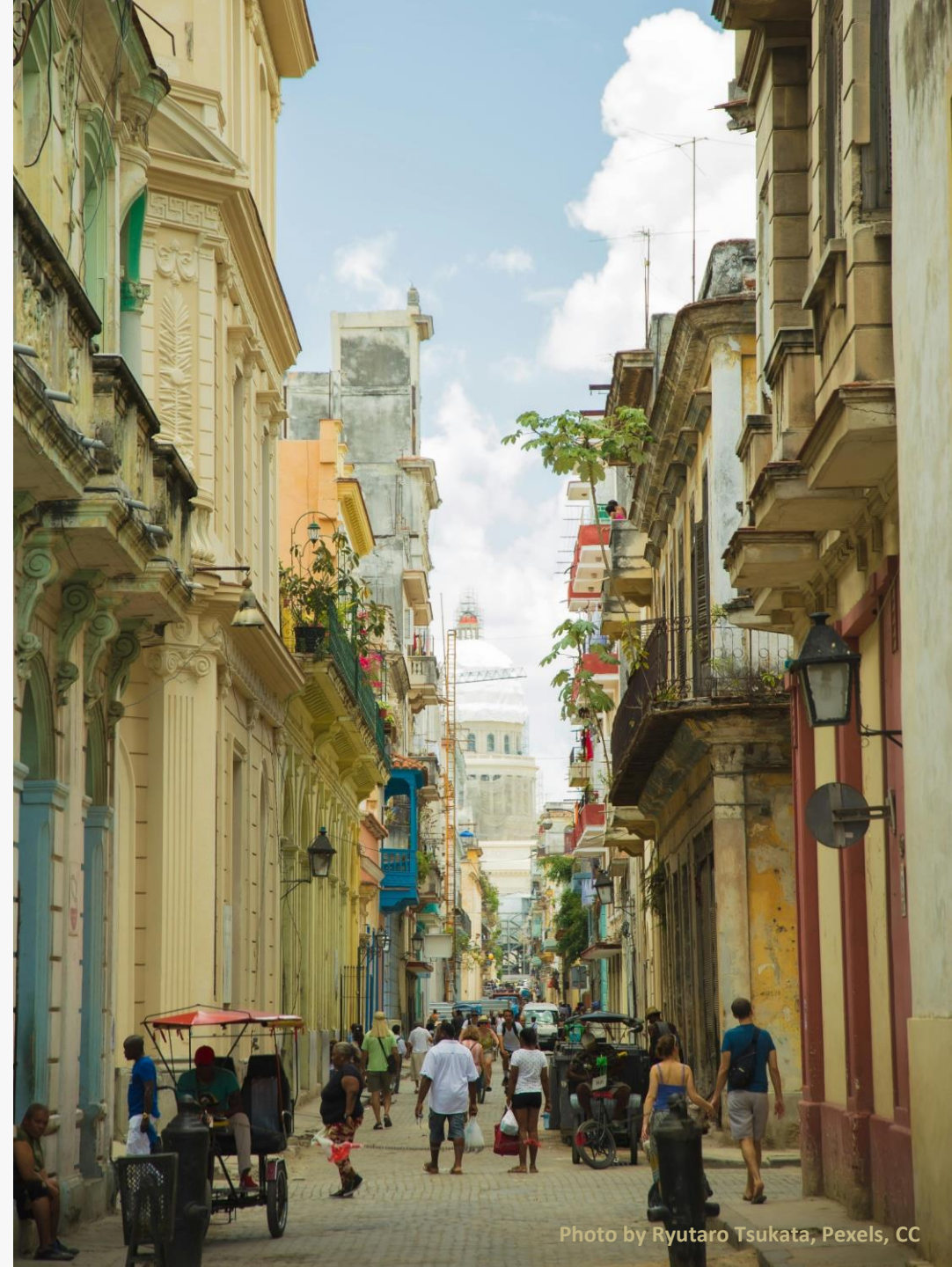
**Benefits:** Practice creative thinking and imagination, persuasion skills, improvisation skills.



# From ground up setting

**Task:** Pick a random place in the world. Then try to write a description of the place like you are a local: sights, smells, kinds of people you meet, etc.

**Benefits:** Practice world-building and research, creating realistic and persuasive story settings.



# „What if?“ Pixar method

**Task:** Explore or present a story idea using the “What if?” question to introduce an extraordinary perspective or situation.

**Examples:** “What if our toys are sentient and they go on adventures when we are not looking?” or “What if our emotions were like little people in our head”.

**Benefits:** Develop extraordinary story concepts.



# Next steps

**Untill end of June**

**Work, refine, ask\***

Draft your stories, use advice from the course, webinars, and free AI tools.

**1 July**

**Slam final deadline**

**To apply for the Slam**, you need to send your story by email:

[stoyan.kanatov@interact.eu](mailto:stoyan.kanatov@interact.eu)

**1 July**

**Academy deadline**

On the Academy platform and you will receive the certificate.

# Cooperation **works**

All materials will be available on:

**Interact Academy**