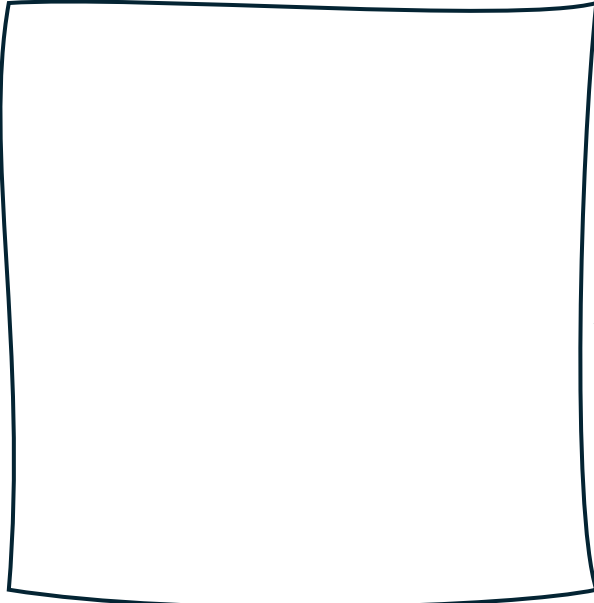


If you had to describe generative AI as something else—an object, animal, person, or tool—what would it be?



Think of a generative AI metaphor that you have used or heard someone else use.

Draw a sketch of your metaphor.

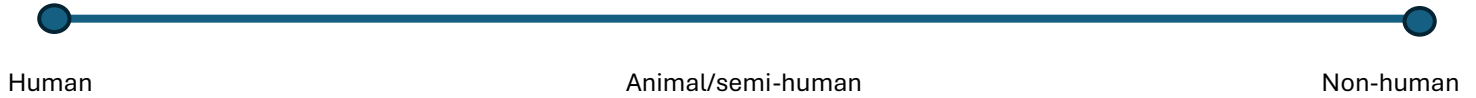
Don't label your sketch or tell others what it is!

Guess the metaphors of your partners as you share your sketches.

With your partners, discuss your answers to these questions:

- 1) Is your metaphor a generally positive or negative view of generative AI?
- 2) How does your metaphor portray the relationship between humans and AI?
- 3) How does your metaphor help you understand generative AI?

4) Where does your metaphor fall on the human to non-human continuum? (plot it.)



5) Where is your metaphor incomplete?

6) How does your metaphor help or hinder your questioning, evaluating, or critically thinking about generative AI?

AI Metaphors Activity Guidance for Instructors

Step 1: Ask participants to think of a metaphor for generative AI and sketch that metaphor in the box provided or on a sticky note. *Pictionary rules apply—no text or symbols should be used in the sketch.

Step 2: With a partner or group, have participants guess the depicted metaphors.

*Options:

- a) participants can place their sticky notes on a display wall, organizing them according to the axes described below.
- b) participants can give their metaphors a title and submit those titles to a Google form, mentimeter, TopHat poll, or other electronic collection system. Gemini can then sort the metaphors according to the described axes using this prompt:

I want you to sort the following list of metaphors used to describe generative AI into a 3x3 table. Please use the definitions I provide below. For metaphors that overlap categories, please choose the single most dominant category.

Definitions for Sorting:

- **X-Axis (based on the VEHICLE of the metaphor):**
 - **Human:** The comparison is to a human being or human role (e.g., 'He is a king').
 - **Semi-human:** The comparison is to a mythological creature, a god, an animal, or a sentient mechanical being.
 - **Non-human:** The comparison is to an object, process, or abstract concept.
- **Y-Axis (based on the PURPOSE of the metaphor):**
 - **Functional:** Describes a tool that helps you get things done (e.g., 'a coach')
 - **Critical:** Expresses an understanding of the effects of the technology on society; indicates that the technology is not neutral politically (e.g., 'a wolf in sheep's clothing')
 - **Rhetorical:** Focused on creation and design, being a producer rather than a consumer, thinking about the audience and how to best reach them (e.g., 'clueless intern').

List of metaphors:

Please format the final output as a LaTeX table.

Step 3: With a partner or group, participants should discuss the 6 questions on the handout.

Guidance: Questions 1 and 2 allow you to measure the group's attitude towards AI, their level of familiarity with AI, and their hopes and fears regarding AI.

Question 3 determines if the group is thinking about the underlying systems (training data, biases, algorithms, business models, etc.) or if the group is working with surface-level understanding.

Question 4 shows whether the group thinks about AI as having sentience, consciousness, or reasoning ability. Note that marketing for AI tends to use human metaphor in order to shape perceptions and encourage usage.

Question 5 is an opportunity for the group to consider aspects of AI they have not included in their previous thinking.

Question 6 encourages the group to be clear and precise when thinking and speaking about AI, focusing on critical evaluation.

This activity was inspired by Bonnie Stachiwiak & [Gupta, A., Atef, Y., Mills, A., & Bali, M. \(2024\). Assistant, Parrot, or Colonizing Loudspeaker? ChatGPT Metaphors for Developing Critical AI Literacies. Open Praxis, 16\(1\), pp.37-53.](#)