

- Overheard at the Museum of Modern Art, from a young man staring at Picasso's *Three Musicians*: "Man, that dude had one overactive imagination!"
- Said to the parent of a child who regularly draws pictures of blue cows with wings, six-legged purple dogs, and humans with two heads: "Lee is the most imaginative child in the class."
- Thought by the theatre design student struggling to come up with at least one idea for the next day's project, a preliminary color scheme for Ibsen's *Ghosts*: "Where is my imagination when I need it?"

In the introduction to her exhaustive and challenging book, *The World of the Imagination*, Eva T. H. Brann offers three brief definitions of the imagination from three different perspectives:

In philosophy, the core-definition of the imagination is that it is a powerful mediator between the senses and the reason by virtue of representing perceptual objects without their presence.

In psychology, the preference is for defining the class of representations, that is, the mental imagery, rather than the faculty. Mental imagery is a quasi-sensory or quasi-perceptual experience which occurs in the absence of the usual external stimuli and which may be expected to have behavioral consequences different from those attendant on their sensory counterpart.

In ordinary discourse, finally, the imagination is most likely to be defined straightforwardly as a capacity for seeing things in one's head—the aforementioned "mind's eye."

In other words, some people are particularly interested in the mental faculty that allows us to produce images, others are fascinated by the nature of the images themselves, while most of us simply go about our daily tasks seeing, learning from, being frightened by, enjoying, dreading, drawing pictures, and making three-dimensional representations of the things that mysteriously appear somewhere behind or beyond our eyes.

Reading and exploring a dramatic text and using (or allowing) the results of that exploration to inform the process and the products of theatre design are activities carried out largely in the imagination and reflect all three of these meanings.