

★ Purposes for Comics ★

★ Research

- Report interesting facts from the point of view of the research subject.
- Sequence the research process or other library processes.
- Create book reports.

★ Language Arts

- Explore dialogue from a text by inserting it into speech bubbles.
- Retell a critical scene from a book.
- Define vocabulary words or idioms through visuals and speech (one approach: <http://pncassano.blogspot.com/p/cartooning-project.html>).
- Use figurative language such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, or irony.
- Find additional lesson ideas at <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/comic-creator-30021.html?tab=1#tabs>.
- Distill the plot of a graphic novel.

★ Math

- Illustrate mathematical terms.
- Identify geometric forms in buildings (using pictures).
- Create a word problem and instruct others on how to solve it.

★ Science

- Illustrate scientific processes such as the water cycle or food chain.
- Teach safety procedures.
- Promote environmentally friendly behaviors.
- Record an experiment.
- Explain science concepts such as simple machines, animal adaptations, etc.
- Conduct tours of biomes, ecosystems, human body systems, etc.

★ Social Studies

- Present historic events from opposing viewpoints.
- Sequence historic events in visual timelines.
- Explain procedures, such as how a bill becomes law.
- Conduct tours of other countries or cities.
- Capture the lives of famous people.

★ Health

- Teach anti-bullying strategies.
- Develop campaigns for healthful living, such as anti-smoking or anti-drug abuse campaigns.
- Advocate for healthful lifestyle choices.

★ Art

- Add speech bubbles to classic artworks.
- Create cartoonish class mascots.
- Critique an art movement, such as pointillism, through conversation among characters about an artwork in that movement.
- Identify art concepts, such as line, hue, shape, etc., within an artwork.

★ Physical Education

- Illustrate the rules of a sport or game.
- Define good sportsmanship.

★ Music

- Have characters discuss the characteristics of instrument families.
- Illustrate music vocabulary.



Applications



Elementary teachers have fewer resources for comic building than secondary teachers. Because of the Children's Online Protection Privacy Act of 1998 (COPPA), some of the most popular cartoon generators prohibit children under the age of 13 from using the sites. For instance, children under the age of 13 are not permitted on the free areas of Bitstrips and Pixton. However, both of these resources have subscription-based education sites: Bitstrips for Schools and Pixton for Schools. If your school has purchased licenses for either of these sites, consider using them because they offer the ability to save, publish, print, and make multiple comics without needing to acquire signed parental permission slips.

Presentation Software. Most schools already have a form of presentation software loaded on their computers, and that software handles comics well. Photographs can be imported as backgrounds for the slides or as graphic objects on the page. Students have access to clip art, as well. Shapes on the drawing toolbars include a variety of speech and thought bubbles, which resize automatically to fit the text. Slides could be divided to form 2-, or 4- panel comics, or pages can be printed with multiple slides to a page. If each slide is a separate panel for the comic, printing multiple slides to the page will still not look like a cartoon, since the program automatically separates each slide from the next with white space. It may be best used as a single panel comic.

MakeBeliefsComix (www.makebeliefscomix.com) is free and is geared toward children. A limited number of characters and props for students to use in their comics makes this an easy-to-master tool, and speech can be written in English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, or Latin. Reproducibles are also available so that children can plan their cartoons first. Finished cartoons can be printed or emailed, but not saved, so students must complete their final cartoons in one sitting.

Marvel Comics (superherosquad.marvel.com/create_your_own_comic) offers Create Your Own Comic for Kids. Children have access to Marvel action heroes, backgrounds, and dialogue boxes to create superhero comics as either a strip or a whole comic book. Because there is no registration, projects cannot be saved, but they can be printed. Students must complete their final cartoons in one sitting. *Note: Several backgrounds feature explosions.*

Primary Access (www.primaryaccess.org) is a free digital movie, rebus, storyboard, and cartoon making tool. Teachers can register for an account and manage a class list. The intent of this site is to enable students to create comics based on primary documents, although pictures from the Web may also be uploaded. Projects can be saved into the teacher's account and are published on the Primary Access website. Instructions on how to use the tools are included as .pdf files on the site.

Creaza Cartoonist (www.creazaeducation.com/cartoonist) states that anyone under the age of 15 needs parent permission to work on the site. This requirement enables the site designers to comply with COPPA and still make the site accessible to students. Parents must return signed permission slips before elementary students can create accounts. The advantage of the site is that comics can be saved and completed at another time. Watch the short video on the registration page to see how to use the tools.

Comics Sketch (mainada.net/comicssketch/show_content/info) is an open source project, free for anyone to use to create comics. Registration requires an email, but subsequent logins are nicknames and passwords. Under COPPA rules, because of the required email registrations, teachers must have signed parental permission slips for elementary students to use the site before letting them register. Registering has the advantage of allowing students to save their work. The tools for creating comics are simple and intuitive, although the site has no pre-drawn characters, speech bubbles, or backgrounds. Students would need to create everything from scratch. Finished comics are posted on the site and have codes for placing them on blogs. Every comic created with the software is visible on the site; although I saw nothing problematic when I visited, it's possible that inappropriate materials could be posted.