This session explores the popularity of illustrated stories among teachers and students and offers suggestions on how to use them to “animate” your classes.

During this presentation, we will:

• examine some of the benefits and challenges of using these graphical texts
• review activity ideas for integrating these creative resources into the way you teach reading, writing, critical thinking, and visual literacy.

Resources such as comic strip generators and example comics will be shared.
John Kotnarowski

John has spent the last ten years teaching English to speakers of other languages. He has taught in Ecuador, China, and the United States, and he was an English Language Fellow in Moscow, Russia during the 2014-15 academic year.

He currently works at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a Lecturer in the Linguistics department. His teaching interests include all levels of academic writing as well as materials design and development.

Outside of teaching, he loves watching movies and hiking with his wife and their little dog.
Animating Your Instruction: Using Comics and Graphic Novels in the English Language Classroom

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Webinar Outline: Comics & Graphic Novels

1. Introduction
2. Key Terms
3. Benefits
4. Challenges
5. Activity Ideas
Critical Question

Why do images help us when communicating?
Humans have used images as a way of communicating for a long time...
IF STUDENTS LIKE COMIC BOOKS...

...MAYBE WE SHOULD USE THEM IN CLASS
Critical Question

Why do images help us when communicating?
...because sometimes a picture is worth 1,000 words
Comic Books & Graphic Novels Have Both Images and Words!
Part Two
Defining Key Terms
Panel (this comic has three panels)

Text Balloon (used to share thoughts and speech)

Caption (used to provide additional information)

Mr. K tries to tell a joke...

Comics strips are often short and funny.

This one is quite short...

Try again, Mr. K!

However, it is NOT very funny...

Comic created at makebeliefscomix.com
Critical Question

What are the differences between comic books and graphic novels?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Text</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comic (Strip)</td>
<td>A sequence of drawings, contained in panels, used to tell a story (usually funny) with text in balloons and caps.</td>
<td>• Peanuts (Charlie Brown)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use Images to (Help) Tell Stories

- Comic Books
- Comic Strips
- Graphic Novels
Parts Three & Four
Benefits & Challenges
Critical Question

What are some of the benefits of using comic books and graphic novels in the classroom?
Learner Motivation

1. Reduce anxiety and lack of confidence among learners with low/unstable proficiency (Issa, 2017; Liu, 2004)

2. *Increase student motivation and interest* (Norton, 2003)
The Benefits of Using Comic Books & Graphic Novels

Reading Comprehension

1. Images help readers with low proficiency better understand stories (Maples et al., 2016)
2. Images can help students learn new vocabulary (Krashen, 1993)
The Benefits of Using Comic Books & Graphic Novels

Writing Skills

1. Comics & Graphic novels help teach different elements of story (like plot) (Issa, 2017)

2. They can help students generate and share more complex ideas for writing (Leber-Cook & Cook, 2013)
Visual Literacy Training

“Students today cannot just learn to read words; they also require training in the literacy of images, gestures, space and sound. Comics provide an especially rich genre for this kind of training.”
(Issa, 2017, p. 312)
Critical Question

What do you think are some of the challenges of using comic books and graphic novels?
The Challenges of Using Comic Books & Graphic Novels

**Solutions**

1. Use the comic from this presentation 😊
2. Read through the comics yourself first
3. Use activities that show students how thoughtful and creative these texts can be.
Finding Comic Books & Graphic Novels

Where to Find Comics & Graphic Novels

1. Searching online ("free comics and graphic novels")
2. The American English "Teacher’s Corner" website
3. The links posted after this presentation
Part Five
Activity Ideas
Sequence of Activities

1. Pre-Reading Activities
2. Reading & Comprehension Check Activities
3. Post-Reading Creation Activities
“A free(libre) and open-source webcomic” created by David Revoy about a young witch named “Pepper” and her cat, “Carrot”.

Pepper & Carrot
Pepper & Carrot – Episode One: The Potion of Flight
Pre-Reading *Discussion* Questions

**Instructions**

1. Put students into pairs and ask them to discuss the following questions

2. After they finish discussing, the instructor should discuss the answers with the whole class
1. What does the expression “a picture is worth a thousand words” mean?

2. What kinds of information can we get from a looking at a picture that we cannot get from simply reading?

3. We are going to read a comic book called, “Pepper & Carrot”? What is a comic book? Can you think of any other examples?

4. “Pepper & Carrot” is a comic about magic (kind of like Harry Potter). How would you describe magic using only words?

5. What does magic look like? Draw a picture!
Pre-Reading *Prediction* Questions

**Instructions**

1. Now, show the class the first panel of the first episode of “Pepper & Carrot”

2. Ask students prediction questions like:
   - Who will the story be about?
   - Where will it take place?
   - What do you think will happen in this story?
...and the last touch

SHI SHI
Instructions

1. Now, the class will read the first episode (either all together or individually).

2. Read through twice. Before the second reading, give the students two questions to think about as they read:
   - In 1-2 sentences, what happened in this story?
   - After reading this story, how would you describe “Carrot” the cat?
...and the last touch
...mmm probably not strong enough
ha... perfect
NO!
Don’t even think about it
What a funny little cat 😊
Reading *Comprehension* Questions

**Instructions**

Now, after reading through, discuss the answers to the comprehension questions, *first individually, then in pairs, finally as a whole class.*

1. In **1-2 sentences**, what happened in this story?
2. After reading this story, how would you describe “Carrot” the cat?
Ordering Panels Activity

**Instructions**

1. Cut up the panels of a short comic strip or page from a comic book and rearrange them.

2. Ask students to work with a partner to put them into the correct order.
Instructions

Put these panels into the correct order from first to last. Be sure you can explain the reason you chose to order them this way.
Critical Question

What kinds of activities can you do to get students to create something themselves?
Creating Dialogue Activity

Instructions

1. Put students into groups of 3-4.
2. Provide the groups with a copy of a comic with the dialogue removed.
3. Ask the students to brainstorm dialogue and add it to the panels using text balloons.
I’m almost finished!

I’m trying to sleep...

Hm. I think I need more magic powder.

...zzzz...

Don’t put in too much...

It’s so beautiful!

What did you do?!

Do NOT touch my broom...

But...

I just want to try a little bit. It looks so pretty...
After creating their new text balloons, ask each group to present their comic to the class!

I’m on top of the world!!!

Oh, Carrot...
Picture Prompt Activity

**Instructions**

1. Finally, provide students with an interesting image from the comic.
2. Provide a few brainstorming questions to get them started.
3. Then, give them time to create a short story based on the image you’ve shared.
Brainstorming Questions

1. Where are Pepper and Carrot?
2. What is this place like?
3. What are they doing in this place?
4. Why are they running?
5. What is in Pepper’s bag?
6. What is the building in the distance?

Make sure everyone has a chance to share their story 😊
Final Review

1. Using comic books and graphic novels can help teach new vocabulary, improve student reading ability, and inspire students to be creative in their own thinking and communicating.

2. Take time to choose a comic book or graphic novel that will be interesting and appropriate for your students. Ask them what they would like to read (but read it yourself first!)

3. When using these illustrated texts in class, start with questions that get students thinking about images and end with an opportunity for students to show their creativity!


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