Creating Comics to Think Critically

This session provides strategies global educators can use to help English language learners create comics as a means of developing their language and critical thinking skills.

During this presentation, we will:

• learn how comics tell stories and ways in which comic readers process information
• explore how learners can make their own comics to demonstrate problem solving and communication skills
• consider how learners can create memoirs and non-fiction
• address how educators can take advantage of the link between genre fiction (science fiction, fantasy, super heroics, mystery, etc.) and comics
Dan Ryder

Dan is the Success and Innovation Center Director at the Mt. Blue Campus in Farmington, Maine, where he has taught for 20 years.

Co-author of 2017’s Intention: Critical Creativity in the Classroom, he presents his work on critical creativity and empathy-fueled problem solving all over the United States. Dan is an Apple Distinguished Educator and recipient of the National Education Association Foundation’s Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence.

His recent work for the U.S. Department of State’s Office of English Language Programs includes developing a comic book to support educators using comic creation as a tool for critical thinking and language acquisition.
CREATING COMICS
TO
THINK CRITICALLY
OUR SESSION

PART 1: How We Experience Comic Books

PART 2: How Comic Books Work

PART 3: How to Make Comic Books

PART 4: How to Think with Comic Books
PART 1: How We Experience Comic Books

Art by Josh Alves from forthcoming American English publication Creating Comics to Critically Think
QUESTION!

How might you find out what your students already know about making comics?
Step 1: Students make a chart that lists what they already KNOW

Step 2: Students list what they WANT to KNOW

Step 3: Students list what they LEARNED
### K-W-L CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you <strong>KNOW</strong> about making comics?</th>
<th>What do you <strong>WANT</strong> to know about making comics?</th>
<th>What have you <strong>LEARNED</strong> about making comics this lesson?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superheroes</td>
<td>Are cartoons and comics the same thing?</td>
<td>Anyone can make comics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin Tin</td>
<td>Do you read the words or pictures first?</td>
<td>Making comics helps us think about solving problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word balloons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of movies about comics</td>
<td>Are there comics about baseball?</td>
<td>Comics helps us learn language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

K-W-L CHART
Step 1: Students brainstorm and reflect on experiences with comics

Step 2: Students create a timeline that demonstrates their experience with comics
QUESTION!

What are some of your experiences with comic books?
PART 2: How Comic Books Work
PART 2: How Comic Books Work

- Panels
- Pictures
- Word Balloons
- Thought Bubbles
- Captions

Comic book creators create relationships between those elements
PART 2: How Comic Books Work

The magic of comics is in the gutters
PART 2: How Comic Books Work

Our brains fill the spaces between the panels with our imagination.
PART 2: How Comic Books Work

Comics have worked this way for centuries
PART 3: HOW TO MAKE COMICS

Art by Josh Alves from forthcoming American English publication Creating Comics to Critically Think
In what ways might creating comics be difficult for your students?
PART 3: HOW TO MAKE COMICS

Should students start with the art?
Should students start with the words?
Should students start with the story?

It doesn't matter where students start.
PART 3: HOW TO MAKE COMICS

Any way your students make comics is the right way to make comics.
David: I hope my new landlord lets me play my music loud.

Ken: I hope so too! My sister is my landlord and she lets me play my music loud.
Step 1: Cut out word balloon, thought bubble, and caption shapes
Step 2: Cut out photos of people from newspapers and magazines.
Step 3: Arrange the shapes

WORD BALLOON
REARRANGE
Step 4: Add dialogue, thought, and narration.

May I please have one large coffee with sugar?

How do I tell him we are out of sugar?
Concerned about materials?

Write the script on separate paper and reuse the cut outs.
QUESTION!

What tools and materials are available to your students for making comics?
PART 3: How to Make Comics

Art Supplies

Digital Tools

Found Materials
QUESTION!

What are some English skills you could practice by making comics?
PART 4: How to Think with Comics
PART 4: How to Think with Comics

FOUR Ways to Develop and Express Ideas

1. Compare Two Experiences
2. Connect Learning to Life
3. Make Decisions
4. Empathize with Others
How might students show their understanding of American culture by making comics?
Create a comic that compares your students' daily routines to an American student's daily routine.
Ask your students to make a list of their routines throughout the day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORNING</th>
<th>AFTERNOON</th>
<th>EVENING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Breakfast</td>
<td>• Lunch</td>
<td>• Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Getting dressed</td>
<td>• Meeting with friends</td>
<td>• Checking social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Washing</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Going to work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compare Two Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MORNING</th>
<th>AFTERNOON</th>
<th>EVENING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>• Breakfast</td>
<td>• Lunch</td>
<td>• Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Getting dressed</td>
<td>• Meeting with friends</td>
<td>• Checking social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Washing</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Going to work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choose one from the list to compare to a typical American routine.
Ask your students to make a one-page comic of their daily routine.

Compare Two Experiences
Ask students to research and make one-page comics of American routines.

Compare Two Experiences

My friend Dow lives in Thailand and has a different breakfast.

Dow walks to work and passes many stalls.

It almost always buys the same thing: a bowl of Khao Tom.

This is my favorite Khao Tom.

It has rice, egg, chicken, and red pepper.
Compare the two side by side and discuss

Compare Two Experiences

My friend Dew lives in Thailand and has a different breakfast.

Every morning, I make a quick breakfast in my kitchen.

I put my bread in a toaster.

I get bread from my fridge.

I cover it in peanut butter and eat it while I drive to work.

He almost always buys the same thing: a bowl of Khao Tom.

This is my favorite Khao Tom.

Dew walks to work and passes many stalls.

Rice

Red Pepper

Chicken
How might students create comics to connect their new English skills to their day to day lives?
Create a story showing how your new English skills can be used in your day to day life.
Ask students to list their new vocabulary
Ask students to identify situations in their lives where they could use that vocabulary
Ask students to create a one-page comic that shows them using their new vocabulary.
QUESTION!

How might students create comics to help them make decisions?
Create a comic that shows the benefits and harms of two or more different choices.
Predict Possible Outcomes

Ask students to identify potential benefits and harms of each choice.
So I will... work close to home so I can save enough to move to the next town.
After I finish university, I need to find a new job in my career field!

Choice #1
Work close to home

Benefit: 10 minutes from home and I can walk there.

Harm: My mother and father want me to find my own path.

Choice #2
Work in the next town

Benefit: There are more jobs that pay better.

Harm: I don't know where to live there and it costs more.

So I will...

Work close to home so I can save enough money to move to the next town!
How might students practice their listening skills and create comics at the same time?
QUESTION!

What subjects or topics might your students make comics about?
Questions to Consider:

How might you use your experiences with comic books in your teaching?

How might you provide opportunities for students to practice both writing and drawing comics?

How might you add a comic book creating activity or assessment to one of your current lessons?
Three Big Points About Creating Comics

1. Creating comics challenges students to think in different ways

2. There are many ways to practice English language skills through creating comics

3. There are many, many ways to create comics and they are all correct.
Thank you!

Email: americanenglishwebinars@elprograms.org

AE Live - Ning Community of Practice: americanenglishwebinars.com
AE for Educators Facebook page: facebook.com/AmericanEnglishforEducators

AE website: americanenglish.state.gov
AE YouTube channel: youtube.com/StateAmericanEnglish
AE Facebook page: facebook.com/AmericanEnglishatState