

Animating Your Instruction: Using Comics and Graphic Novels in the English Language Classroom

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.

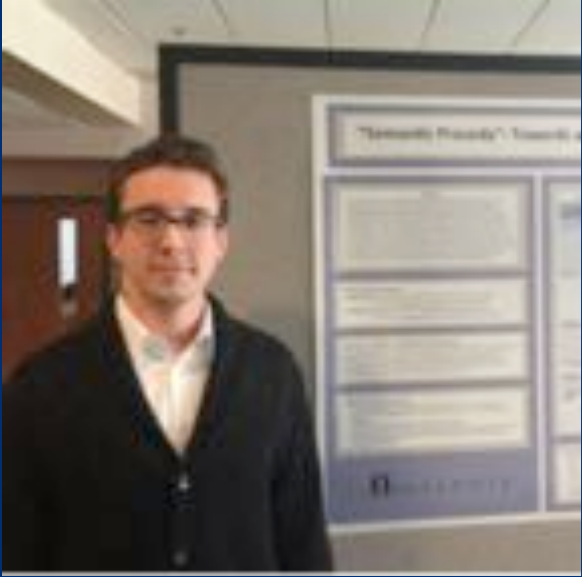
Resources such as comic strip generators and example comics will be shared.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE





Animating Your Instruction: Using Comics and Graphic Novels in the English Language Classroom



© 2019 by John Kotnarowski. *Animating Your Instruction: Using Comics and Graphic Novels in the English Language Classroom* for the Office of English Language Programs. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License, except where noted. To view a copy of the license, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Webinar Outline: Comics & Graphic Novels

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



Critical Question



Created by dDara
from Noun Project

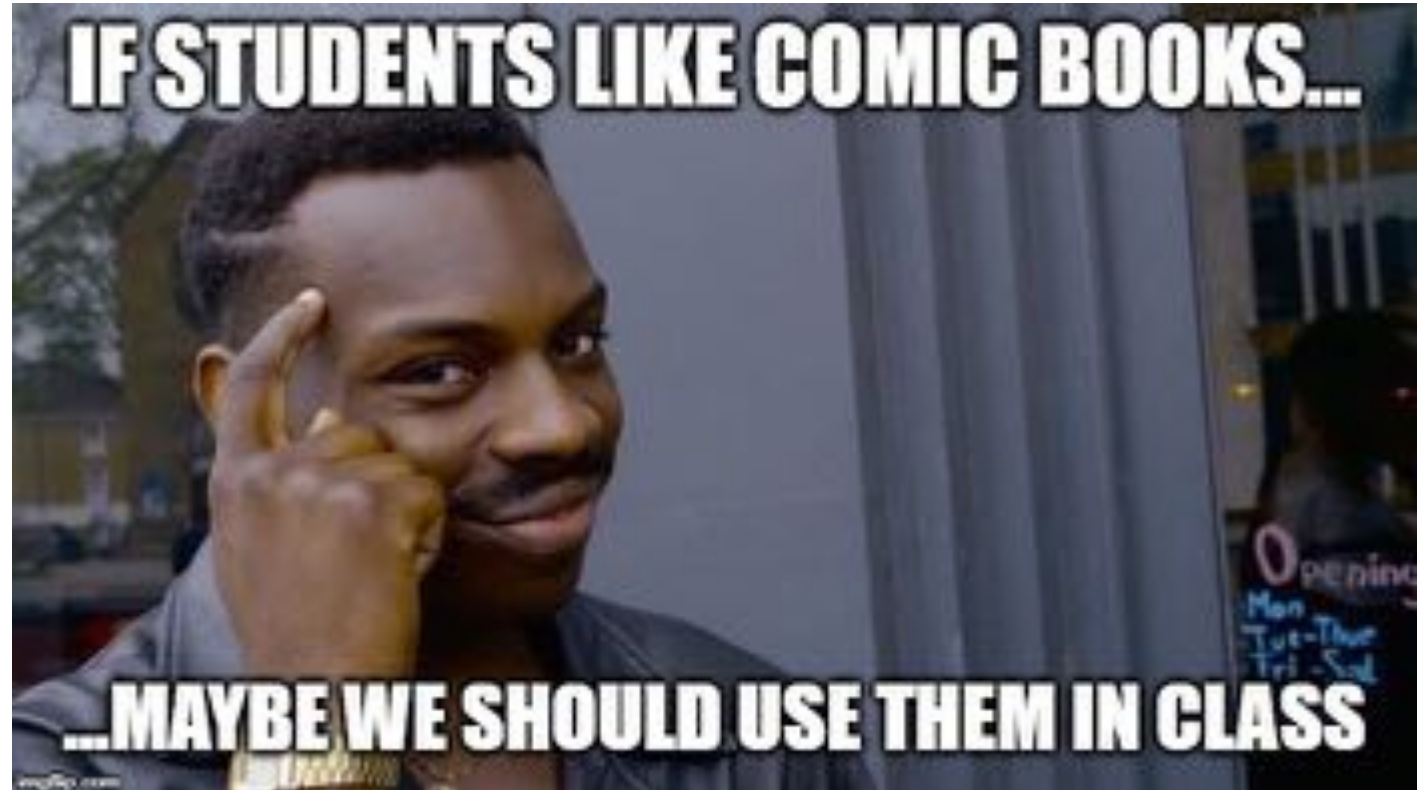
Why do images
help us when
communicating?



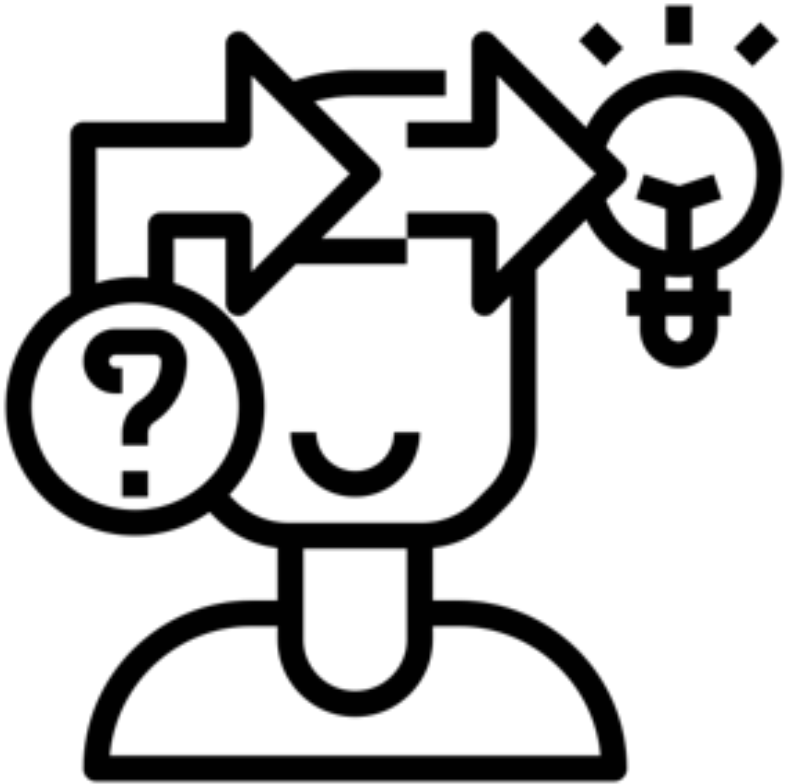
Humans have
used images as
a way of
communicating
for a long
time...



Emojis & Memes



Critical Question



Created by dDara
from Noun Project

Why do images
help us when
communicating?



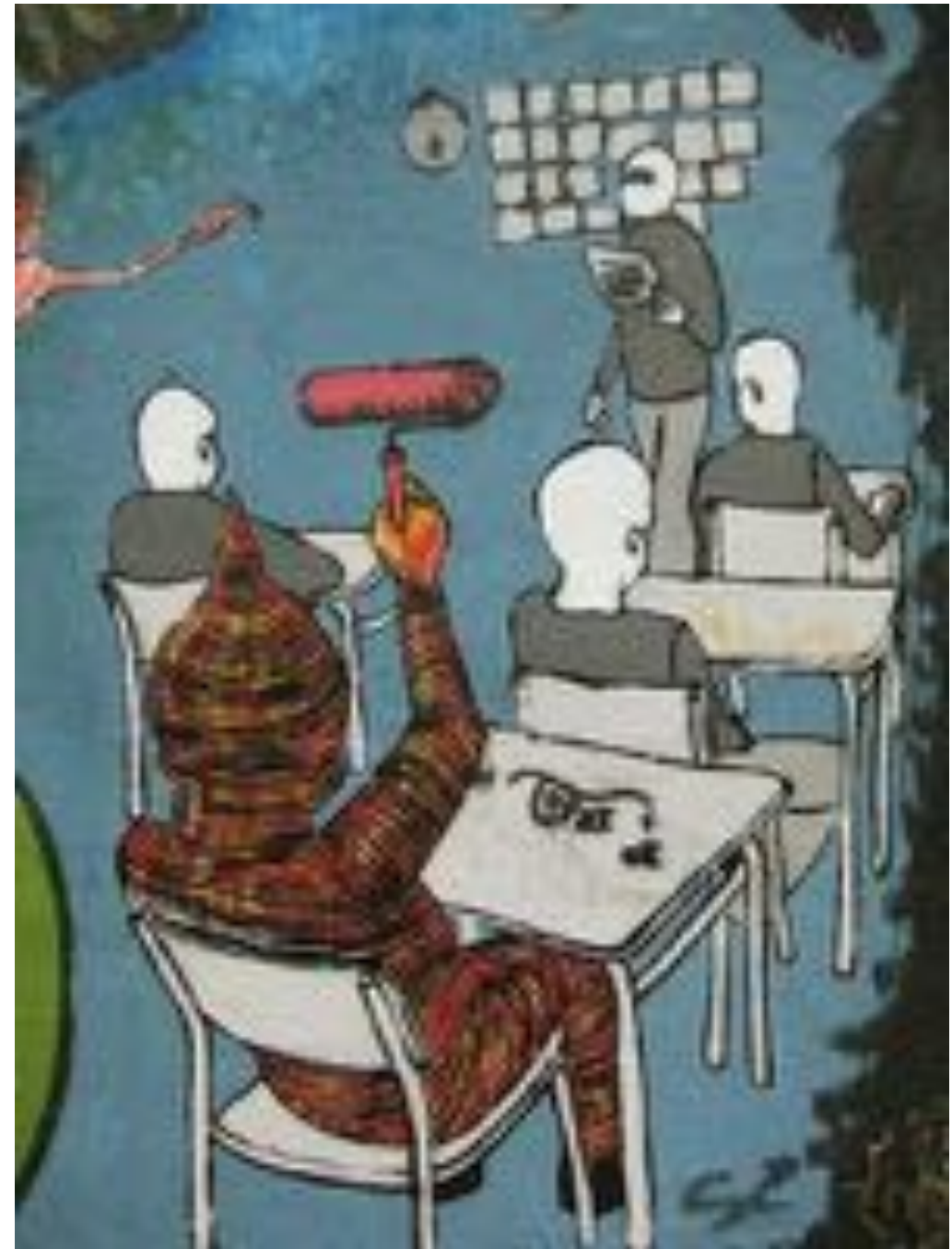
...because sometimes *a picture is worth 1,000 words*



Comic Books & Graphic
Novels Have Both **Images**
and **Words**!



Part Two
Defining Key Terms



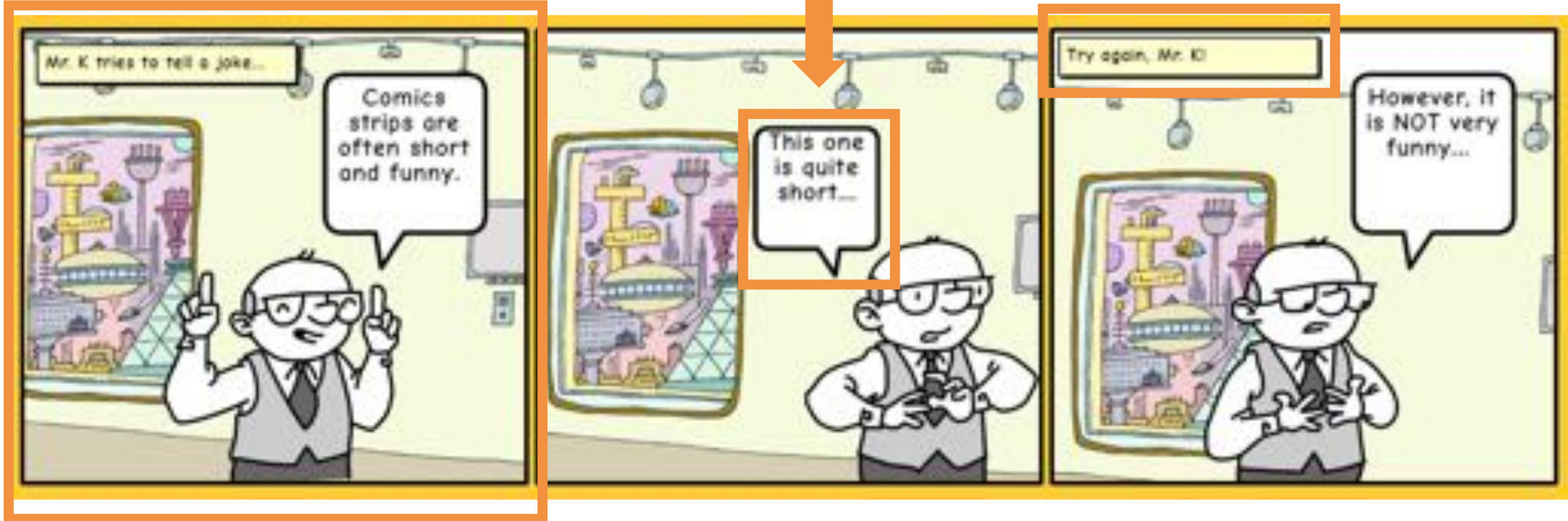
Panel (this comic has three panels)



Text Balloon
(used to share thoughts and speech)

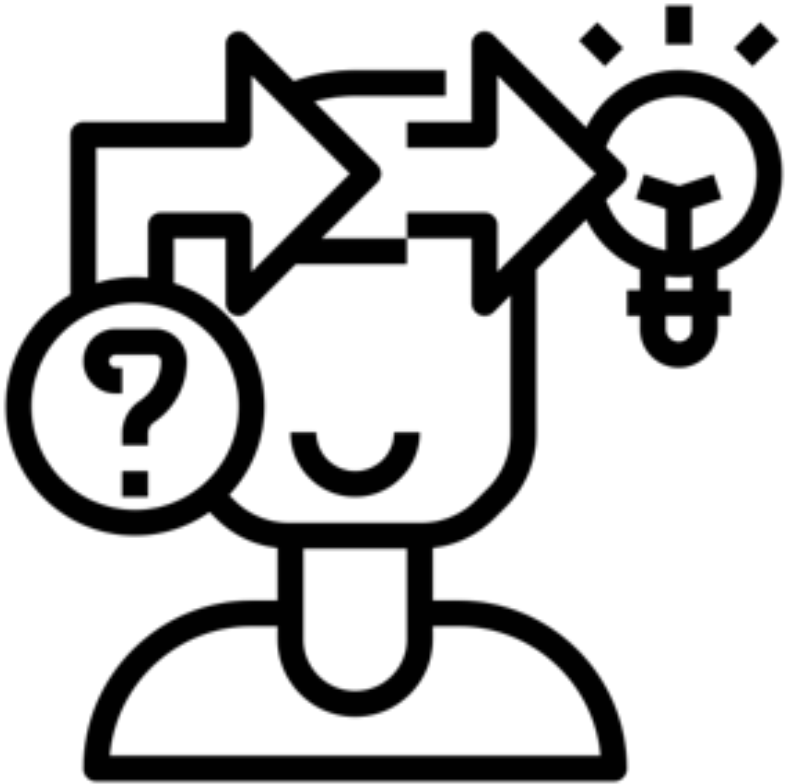


Caption (used to provide additional information)



Comic created at makebeliefscomix.com

Critical Question



Created by dDara
from Noun Project

What are the
differences
between comic
books and graphic
novels?

Types of Illustrated Texts		
<i>Type of Text</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Comic (Strip)		
Comic Book		
Graphic Novel		

Comic
Books

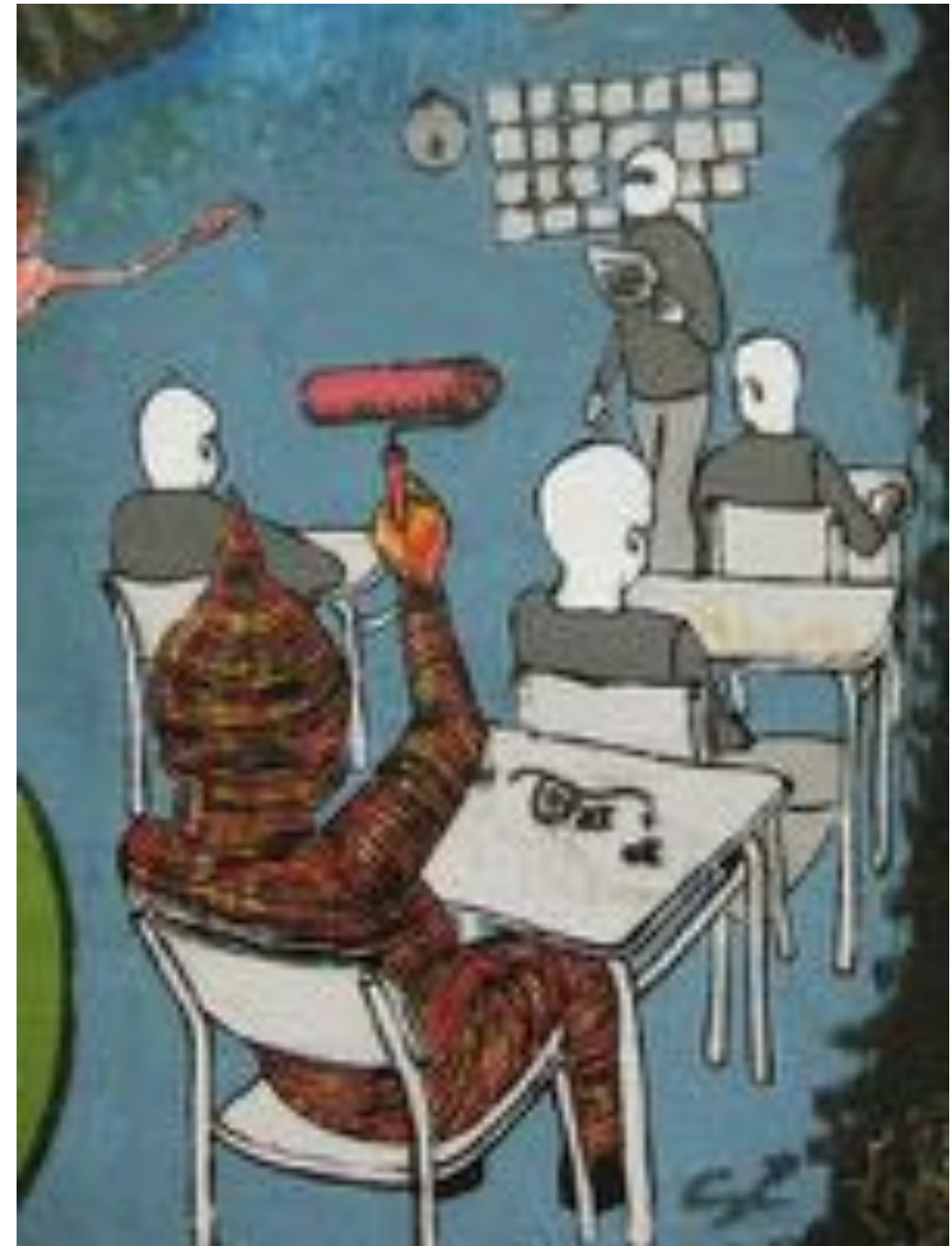
Comic
Strips

Graphic
Novels

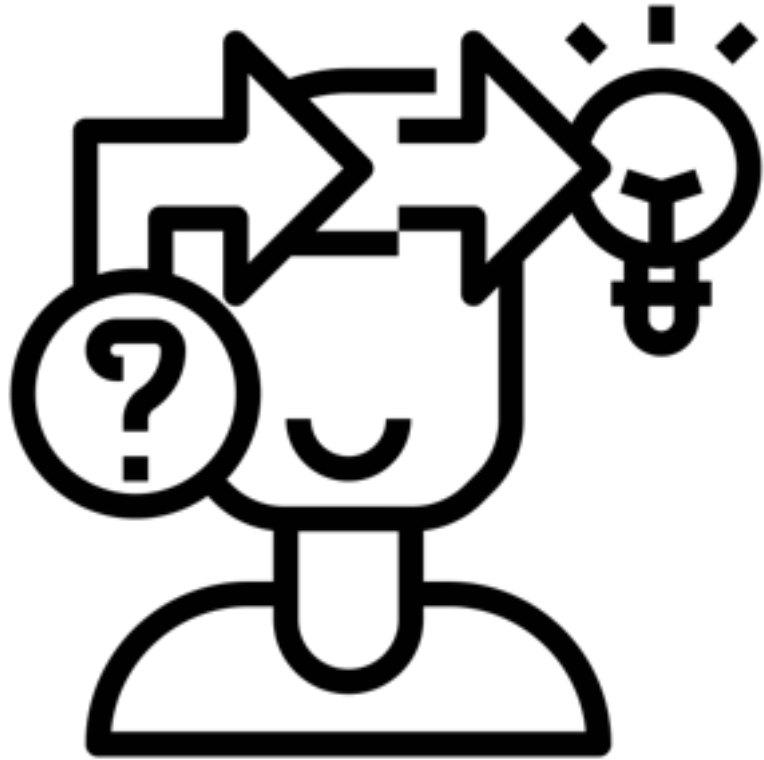
Use
Images to
(Help) Tell
Stories



Parts Three & Four
Benefits & Challenges



Critical Question



Created by dDara
from Noun Project

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

The Benefits of Using Comic Books & Graphic Novels

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)

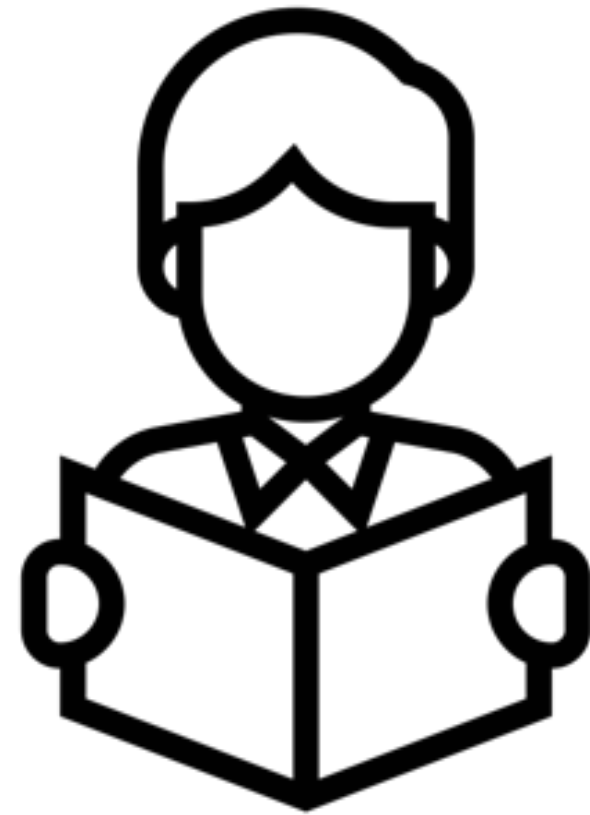


Created by DailyPM
from Noun Project

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)

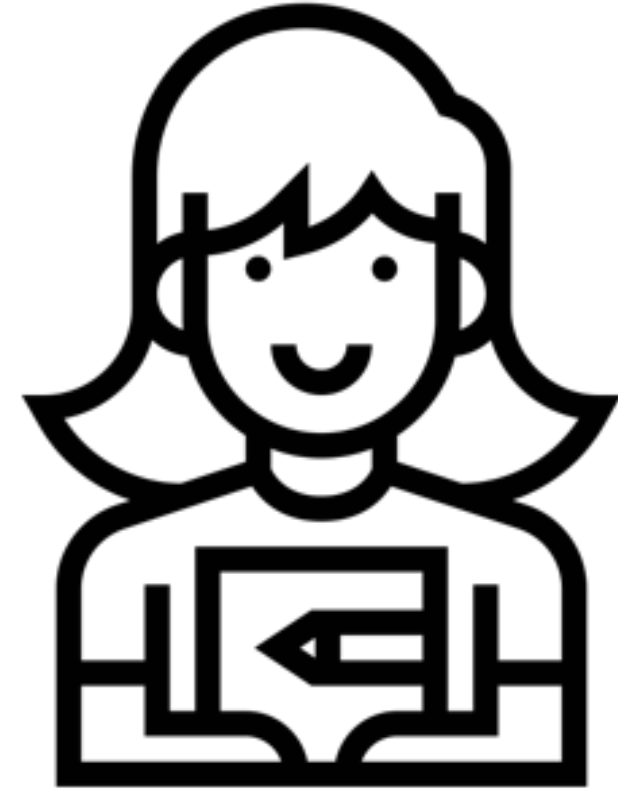


Created by Eucalyp
from Noun Project

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)



Created by Eucalyp
from Noun Project

The Benefits of Using Comic Books & Graphic Novels

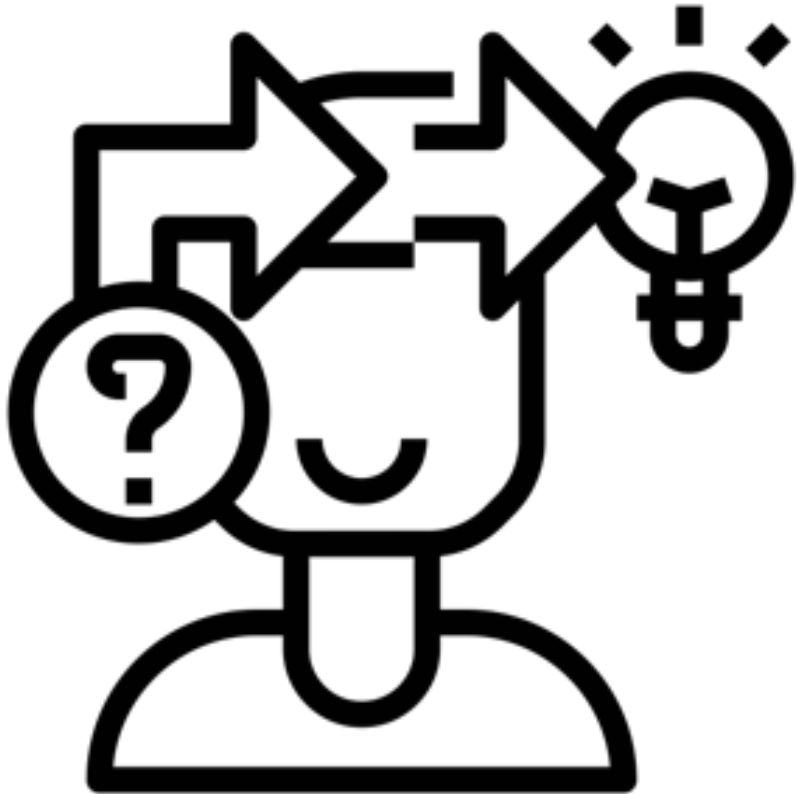
Visual Literacy Training

“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



Created by dDara
from Noun Project

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.



Created by Adrien Coquet
from Noun Project
Created by Noun Project
from Noun Project

Finding Comic Books & Graphic Novels

Open-source and permissive

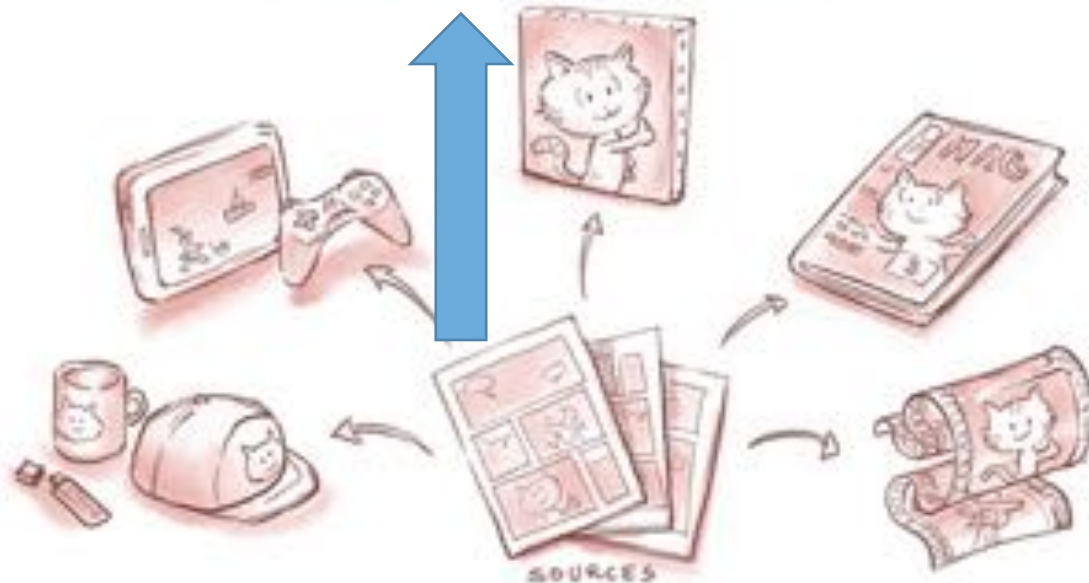
I want to give people the right to share, use, build and even make money upon the work I've created.

All pages, artworks and content were made with Free(Libre) Open-Sources Software on GNU/Linux, and all sources are on this website, 'Source' menu.

Commercial usage, translations, fan-art, prints, movies, video-games, sharing, and reposts are encouraged.

You just need to give appropriate credit to the authors (artists, correctors, translators involved in the artwork you want to use), provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the authors endorse you or your use.

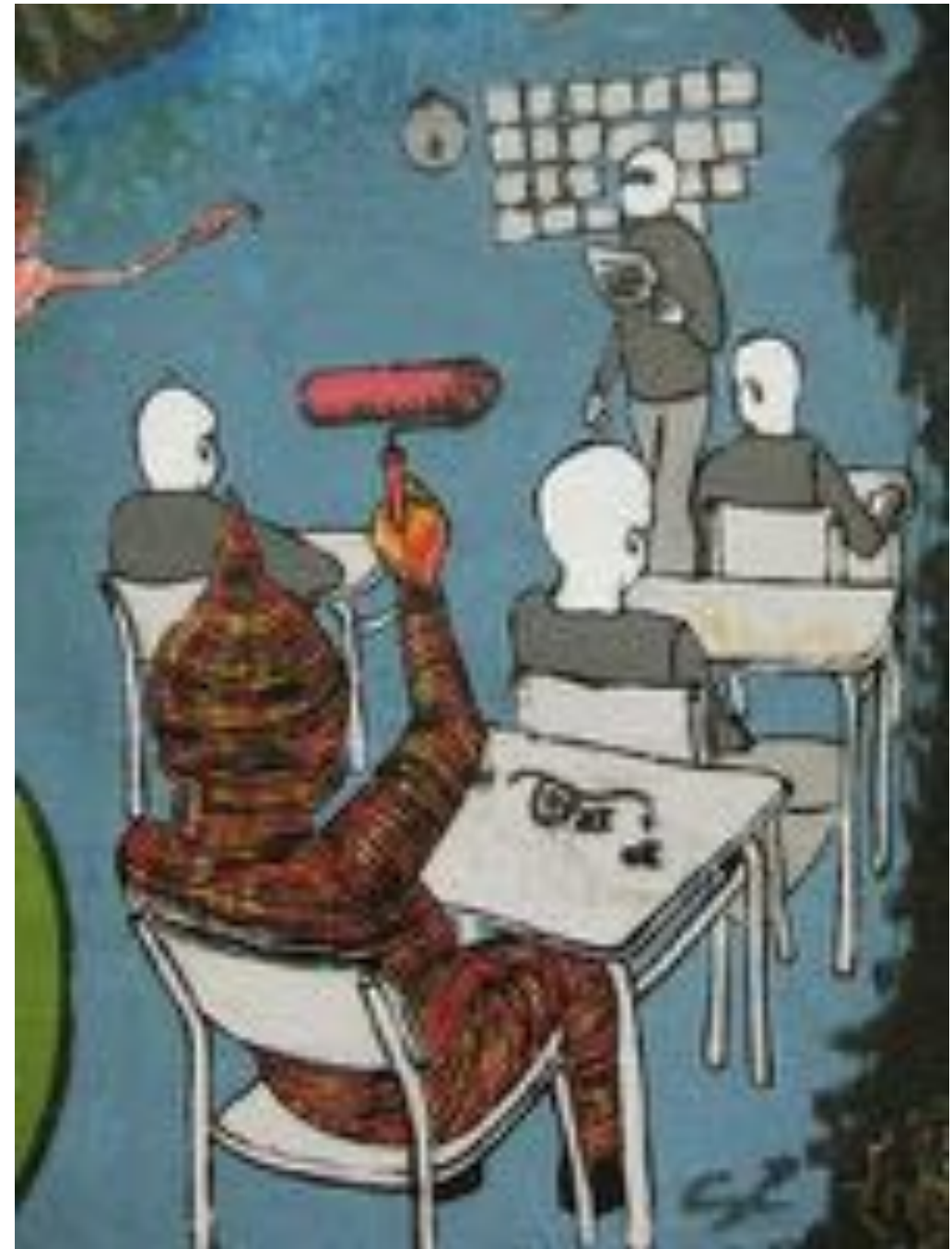
[License: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0](#)



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

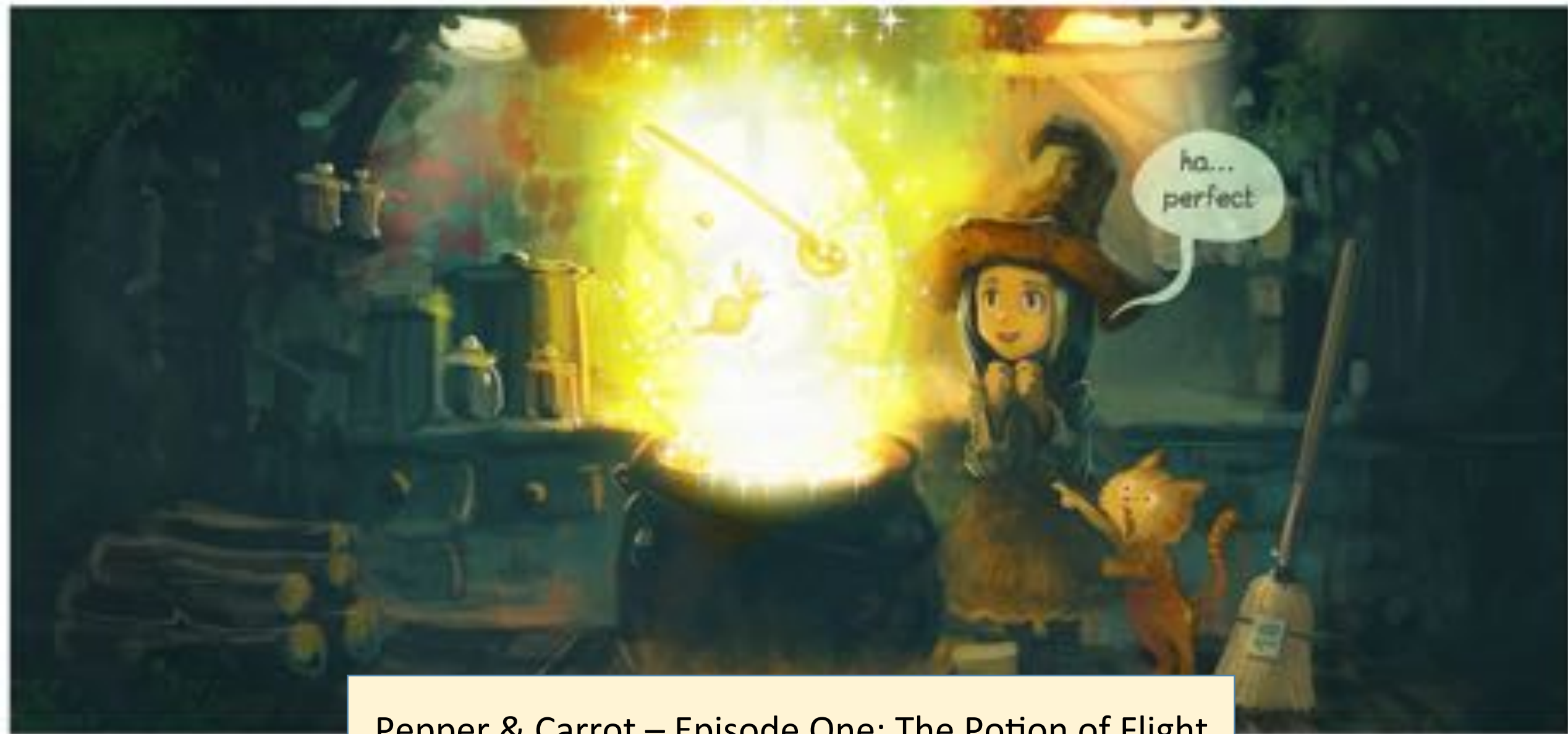


Created by Mochammad Kafi
from Noun Project

Selected Text



“A free(libre) and open-source webcomic” created by David Revoy about a young witch named “Pepper” and her cat, “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



Created by Rose Alice Design
from Noun Project

Pre-Reading *Discussion* Questions

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?



Created by shashank singh
from Noun Project

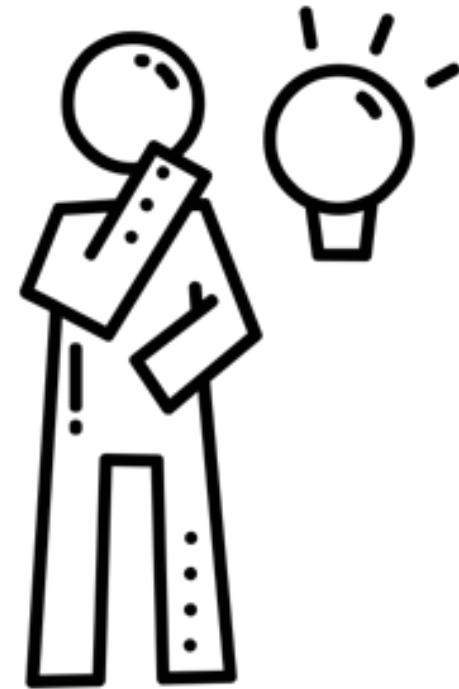
...and the last
touch



Reading *Comprehension* Questions

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?



Created by Saeful Muslim
from Noun Project



Panel 1



Panel 2



Panel 3



Panel 4



Panel 5



Panel 6



What a *funny*
little cat 😊

Panel 7

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?

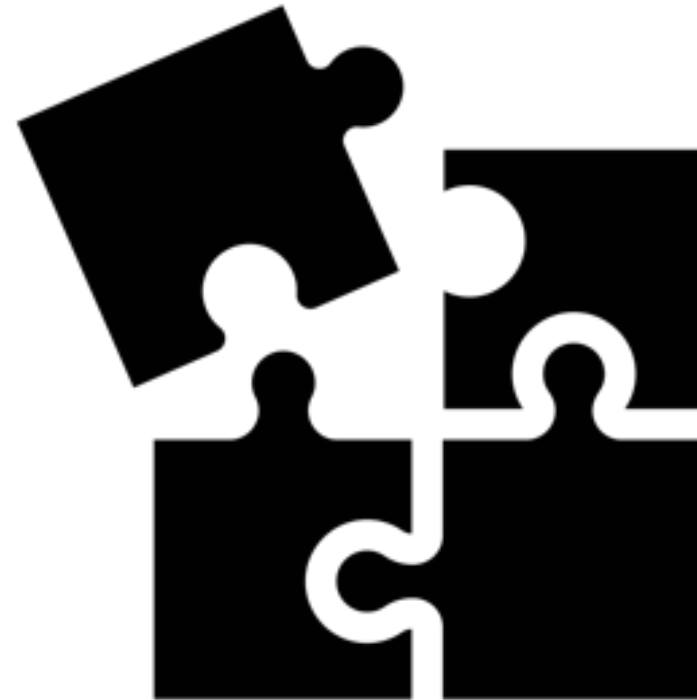


Created by Fahmihorizon
from Noun Project

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.



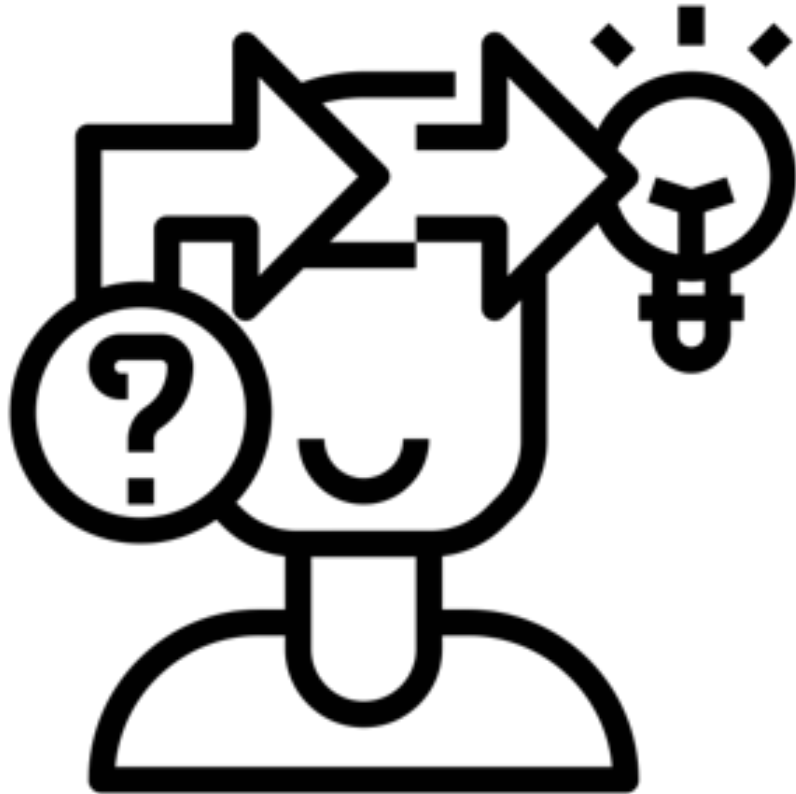
Created by Nikita Kozin
from Noun Project



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



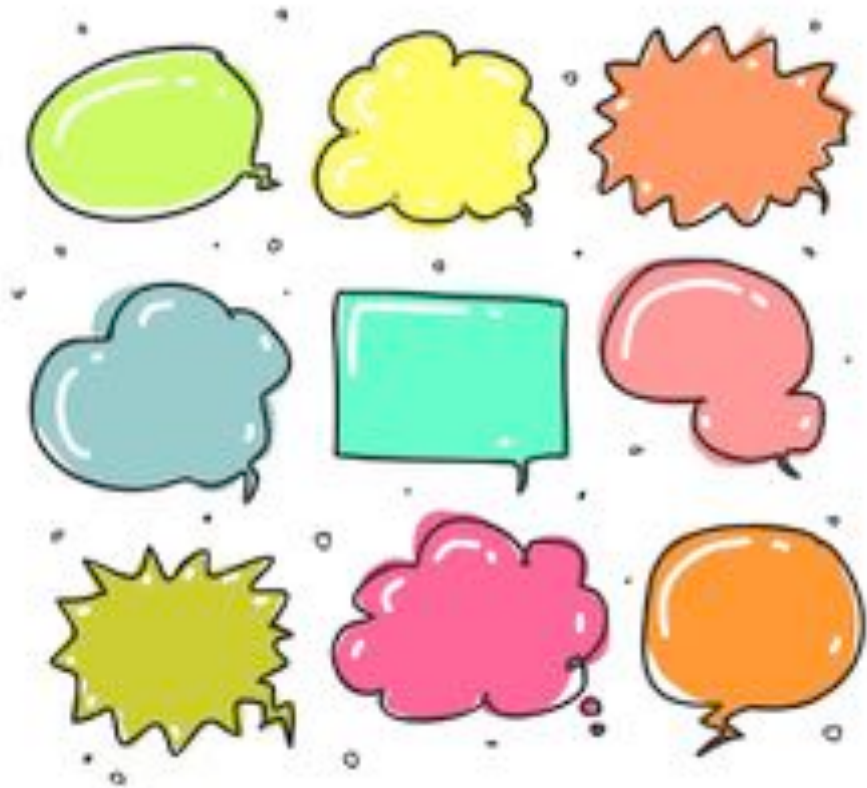
Created by dDara
from Noun Project

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...

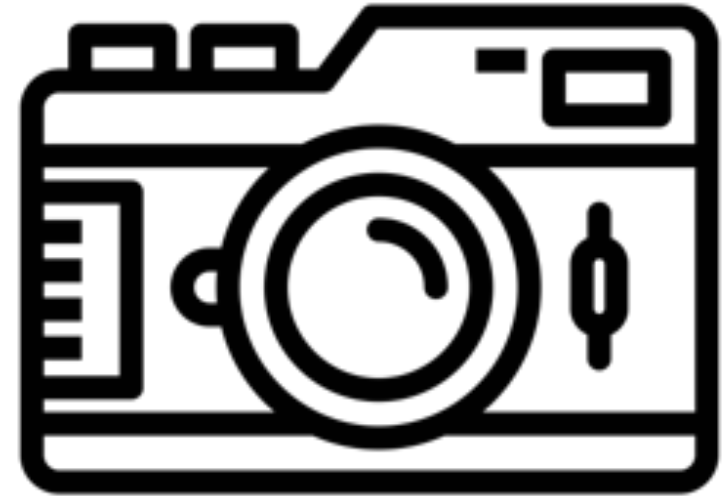


After creating their new text balloons, ask each group to present their comic to the class!

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.



Created by SUHYEON JUNG
from Noun Project



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!

References

- Chun, C. (2009). Critical literacies and graphic novels for English-language learners: Teaching Maus. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(2), 144-153. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40344359>.
- Hecke, C. (2011). Graphic novels as a teaching tool in high school and university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 56(4), 653-668. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23509434>.
- Issa, S. (2018). Comics in the English classroom: A guide to teaching comics across English studies. *Journal of Graphic Novels & Comics*, 9(4), 310. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login?direct=true&db=edb&AN=131906695&site=eds-live&scope=site>.
- Krashen, S. (1993). The power of reading: Insights from the research. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.
- Leber-Cook, A and Cook, R T (2013). Stigmatization, Multimodality and Metaphor: Comics in the Adult English as a Second Language Classroom In: Syma, C. K. and Weiner, R. G. eds. *Graphic Novels and Comics in the Classroom: Essays on the Educational Power of Sequential Art*. Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Company, Inc., pp. 23–34

References

- Liu, J. (2004). Effects of Comic Strips on L2 Learners' Reading Comprehension. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(2), 225-243. doi:10.2307/3588379
- Maples, J., Cianca, M., & Maloy, M. (2016). Using graphic novels to engage English-language learners. *Vanguard*, 45(1), 37-39. Retrieved from https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_facpub/56/.
- Norton, B. (2003). The motivating power of comic books: Insights from Archie comic books in the classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(2), 140-147.
- Thomas, J.L. (Ed.). (1983). *Cartoons and comics in the classroom: A reference guide for teachers and librarians*. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.

Image Attributions

All Images from Pixabay.com Unless Otherwise Noted
All Icons from [the Noun Project](#)

Slide 10: [Cover of “Outer Space No. 20”. Dick Giordano](#). Public Domain.

Slide 12: [Cave painting from the Tassili n’Ajjjer mountains](#) by unknown. Public Domain.

Slide 13: Meme created by John Kotnarowski using [imgflip Meme Generator](#)

Slide 15: [Image from Shaun Tan’s personal website](#). [Permission information here](#).

Slide 16: Meme created by John Kotnarowski using [imgflip Meme Generator](#)

Slide 17: Photo by John Kotnarowski

Slide 18: “Mr. K tries to tell a joke” by John Kotnarowski. Created using [Make Beliefs Comix](#).

Slide 22: Photo by John Kotnarowski

Image Attributions

All Images from Pixabay.com Unless Otherwise Noted
All Icons from [the Noun Project](#)

Slide 27: Photo by John Kotnarowski

Slide 30: [Pepper & Carrot Permissions](#) by [David Revoy](#) (www.davidrevoy.com) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Slide 31: Photo by John Kotnarowski

Slide 33: [Pepper & Carrot Logo](#) by [David Revoy](#) (www.davidrevoy.com) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Slide 34: [Pepper & Carrot – Episode 1: The Potion of Flight](#) by [David Revoy](#) (www.davidrevoy.com) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#) /Cropped from original.

Slide 38: [Pepper & Carrot – Episode 1: The Potion of Flight](#) by [David Revoy](#) (www.davidrevoy.com) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#) /Cropped from original.

Slides 40 – 46: [Pepper & Carrot – Episode 1: The Potion of Flight](#) by [David Revoy](#) (www.davidrevoy.com) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#) /Cropped from original.

Image Attributions

All Images from Pixabay.com Unless Otherwise Noted
All Icons from [the Noun Project](#)

Slide 49: [Pepper & Carrot – Episode 1: The Potion of Flight](#) by [David Revoy](#) (www.davidrevoy.com) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#) /Cropped & Re-sequenced from original.

Slides 52-53: [Pepper & Carrot – Episode 1: The Potion of Flight](#) by [David Revoy](#) (www.davidrevoy.com) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#) /Cropped from original.

Slide 55: [Adventure](#) by [David Revoy](#) (www.davidrevoy.com) is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Slide 57: Drawings by John Kotnarowski.

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



AMERICAN ENGLISH