Vocabulary Building Activity: Comic Strips

Author

Sarah D. Reid, PhD, Illinois State University

Standards and Benchmarks (see page 3)

Activity Description

Comic strips are popular, and effective, ways to teach academic content and concepts, including Tier 3 vocabulary words (low frequency words that are content specific). This *after-learning* activity invites students to apply their understanding of targeted Tier 3 vocabulary words by creating a visual narrative: Students create a 3- to 5-panel comic strip that illustrates a targeted Tier 3 vocabulary word in a relevant or real-life scenario. The activity can be completed individually, with a partner, or in small groups (as presented here).

Grade Level

3-12

Objectives

Students will be able to

- illustrate [targeted vocabulary word or concept] in a short visual narrative, and
- explain [targeted vocabulary word or concept] through a short visual narrative.

Time Required

40-60 minutes

Materials

- 4" x 6" blank index cards, one card for each vocabulary word or concept <u>plus</u> 3-5 cards for each student group
- Assorted drawing materials for each group, such as pencils, erasers, markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.
- A dry erase set (small dry erase board, dry erase marker, and eraser), one for each group
- Digital camera or tablet with a camera app
- Printer (optional)

Preparation

- Select 4-6 Tier 3 vocabulary words or concepts from a lesson or unit.
- Write one vocabulary word or concept on a blank index card. Repeat for remaining vocabulary words or concepts.
- Create a sample comic strip using a Tier 3 vocabulary word or concept and index cards.

Procedure

1. Review the vocabulary learned in a previous lesson: Invite students to think about the vocabulary terms they learned, and list the terms on the board as students share. Once students have finished sharing, highlight the terms that will be used in this activity, and add any that may have not been mentioned.

2. Explain to students that they will participate in a comic strip vocabulary activity using the vocabulary terms.

3. Display your sample comic strip. Invite students to look at the panels and think about what vocabulary word or concept is being depicted. Discuss the following:

   - Which visual cues and elements in the comic strip helped you figure out the vocabulary word or concept?

   - What visual cues or elements would you have used to illustrate the vocabulary word or concept?

4. Divide the class into groups according to the number of vocabulary words (i.e., 4 vocabulary words = 4 student groups).

5. Distribute one index card with a vocabulary word or concept, 3-5 blank index cards, drawing materials, and a dry erase set to each group.

6. Instruct each group to use their dry erase set and brainstorm a possible story or event that would clearly illustrate the concept or meaning of the vocabulary word. Encourage students to use real-life scenarios or events rather than fictional or fantasy-derived stories.

7. Each group should then map out their visual narrative on their dry erase board so that it can be told in 3-5 panels.

8. Instruct students to illustrate their comic strip on the blank index cards with one panel per card. Encourage students to use both written and visual information in their comic strip.

9. When each group is finished, tell students to display their comic strip in sequential order (e.g., on a table or bulletin board) around the room in stations.

10. Invite all groups to participate in a Gallery Walk to view each comic strip.

11. Instruct students to read the comic strip at each station and decide what vocabulary word or concept the comic strip is depicting. Students should discuss the following after deciding on the word or concept:

    - What did the creators do well in helping illustrate the word or concept?

    - What are some other ways that the word or concept could be illustrated in a comic strip?

12. As a class, invite students to share out about the Gallery Walk.

13. Print out or upload photos of the comic strips to an accessible place where students can review and refer to them.

Standards and Benchmarks

Elementary

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3 and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Middle School

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

- Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

High School

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3

- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.