

Comic Life *in Education*

The Benefits of Comic Life in Education

Making comics is fun for everyone, and Comic Life makes it easy. Teachers and students will find Comic Life a very useful software tool, and now it's available for both Mac and Windows platforms.

Technology not only changes how we write, but it also changes what writing is. Education will need to re-evaluate which writing skills teachers should pass to their students. Digital graphic writing is one genre students need to be fluent. Comic Life is the "word processor" of digital graphic writing.

Easy to Learn

Students and teachers need only a short time to learn the basics of Comic Life. It's easy to add images from digital cameras, computer web-cameras, clip art from CD's and the web, stills from QuickTime movies, scanned photos and drawings -- just about any on-screen image can be used in Comic Life. Adding captions and word balloons is as easy as drag and drop.



Inexpensive

Schools often don't have money to buy expensive software. At \$19.95 for a single license, however, any teacher will find Comic Life a bargain, and administrators will find the cost of licensing Comic Life for labs affordable.

Inspires Creativity

Teachers are often asked to identify talented and gifted students by their ability to make "unusual connections." Talented and gifted students offer creative explanations for their answers which seem to come out of nowhere. Comic Life is the perfect software tool for all students to be creative. Comic Life will inspire everyone — teachers and students — to approach learning in new ways.

The Benefits of Comics in Education

Comics are beneficial to learning in the classroom and not just a fun art-enrichment activity.



Reading

Comics provide narrative experiences for students just beginning to read and for students acquiring a new language. Students follow story beginnings and endings, plot, characters, time and setting, sequencing without needing sophisticated word decoding skills. Images support the text and give students significant contextual clues to word meaning. Comics act as a scaffold to student understanding. As Stephen Cary, a second language learner specialist and author of *Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom*, says; "Comics provide

authentic language learning opportunities for all students... The dramatically reduced text of many comics make them manageable and language profitable for even beginning level readers."

Also according to Cary, comics motivate reluctant readers. They engage students in a literary format which is their own. Comics speak to students in a way they understand and identify with. Even after students learn to be strong readers comics give students the opportunity to read material which combines images with text to express satire, symbolism, point of view, drama, puns and humor in ways not possible with text alone.

Writing

Many students read fluently, but find it difficult to write. They complain that they don't know what to write. They have ideas, but they lack the written language skills to create a beginning, follow a sequence of ideas and then draw their writing to a logical conclusion.

Students frequently ask if they may draw a picture when they're writing. They are reaching for images to support their language ideas. Allowed to use words and images they will resolve problems of storytelling which they would not otherwise experience using words alone. Like reading, comics provide a scaffolding so that students experience success in their writing. Students transfer specific elements directly into text-only writing. For example, students learn that whatever text found in a word balloon is put inside quotes in their text-only writing.

Using Comic Life students have a new publishing medium. Comic Life documents can be printed, emailed to parents or posted as a website very easily.

Key benefits of using comics in education

- A great visual Representation of Knowledge
- Presents what is essential
- Easier to remember a visual graphic containing key information
- Engaging through thinking, creating and writing.
- Perfect avenue for writing dialogue
- Incites students with low interest in writing
- Helps organization through storytelling and storyboarding
- Using visual images convey meaning to a story or topic
- Develops creative and higher level thought processes
- Develops composition techniques through visual-verbal connections
- Enriches reading, writing, and thinking
- Serves as an assessment and evaluation tool
- Sequencing promotes understanding

The key benefits for students using Comics, summarised by Marilee Sarlito (Technology Director, Kildeer School), found in "*Creating Comics: Visual and Verbal Thinking in the Ultimate Show and Tell*" by Janette Combs, College of William and Mary, July 17, 2003.

Comic Life Goes To School!

Comics are really a way of framing events, putting them in a sequence and choosing what the characters say. And this is really what media is all about, and what a good deal of art is about as well. It's a way of either telling your story that no-one would hear otherwise, OR, re-telling an event from your own perspective.

Comic Life makes it easy to sandbox this process, to let kids play and learn with these concepts; most other art forms and media manipulations are too slow to try iterations of ideas to learn from them.

Kids these days are exposed to huge amounts of media, TV, computer games, movies, internet etc.

Students in Poland using Comic Life

Comic Life makes an excellent tool to help them better understand the power (positive and negative) of the art-form of media. example:



Comics as a way to understand the power of framing/perspective

- Framing techniques, which are the same in movies, TV shows, computer games, photographs in newspapers etc. Comics let you re-frame the exact same information in different ways to get different effect; for example
 - You can frame an image to make a person look dubious, or small, or powerful, or noble. This applies nicely to an understanding of how media frames certain issues and people
 - How can different framing techniques effect how a person looks? A face shot is more personal, a full body shot less so
 - If you zoom in, you can often lose the context of an image
 - If you zoom out, you often lose the emotion on a face, or a particularly important focal point
 - If a character is facing out of the frame, and the majority of 'space' in the frame is behind them, then the feeling will be ominous
 - The organization and shape of frames can be used to make a scene look calm, or chaotic, or mechanical, exciting etc. How do advertisers do this?
 - Artistically, the same photo can be used across multiple frames to imply motion of the character, or motion of the camera
 - How can page layout, and story unfolding generate tension/release? "Will he make it?? Turn the page to find out...". Television series for example, use this same narrative techniques
 - How can you change the meaning of the exact same comic with different text balloons? How about using the same text balloons and different images?
 - How does context (the story before the story) affect the current story?

As an idea, perhaps you could give the exact same images to different students, and only using different panels and framing, let them make a simple comic. Their aim would be to give the 'consumer' an impression which you secretly hand to them on a piece of paper. For example, did the puppy steal the sandwich or not? Then have the class vote to see if they did sway the class' opinions.

Comics as a narrative device

- Pixar makes excellent use of storyboarding; all movies are meticulously story-boarded before work is started on a computer. Some of their DVDs contain excellent mini-documentaries on the process of storyboarding. Let the kids storyboard a movie, then make it themselves using iMovie/Windows Movie Maker software. How closely does the finished movie match the storyboard?
- Act out historical stories in comics, "to do is to know"
- Game comics - computer games are an important part of kids life and games like The Sims are often used to tell stories, utilising screenshots in comics. Red VS Blue is another popular use of game engines to tell a story.
- Stylistic changes from the 50's to comics. How are they different socially? What are some reversals of the stereotypes that kids could act out? Women saving a helpless man, Super-villains and Heroes negotiating to come to better understanding to avoid violence etc.
- What are some cultural differences between manga and western comic books - manga have a lot of close-up shots, and read back-to-front! Manga is very hip in the US currently



Comic created using 'toys'

- Plasticine models/toys, and a movable iSight camera make for fast and flexible storytelling - the kids can adjust the characters and tell the story on the go, which is more about improvisation, another valid form of expression
- Relationships between people. What are some different ways the same story could end. If there is a 'conflict' in the story, is there a way to resolve it/come to better understanding? Hollywood loves to blow stuff up to resolve issues, but there are other options

Tips to remember when using Comic Life

- Keep captions aligned within panels
- Adjust/tweak speech balloons so there is even space between the words and the edge
- Touch up dark/low contrast images by selecting the image and changing the sliders in its Details tab (required 10.4 on Mac)
- Make sure balloon tails come out of mouths, but not covering.
- Thought balloons originate from the temples, not the mouth
- Trial different panel and caption styles

The following section will focus on "Collaborative Digital Graphic Writing" in the Classroom, specific examples of other student use of Comic Life in the Classroom are separated and can be located in the various subject tabs above.

Student Use of Comic Life in the Classroom

Collaborative Digital Graphic Writing



Comics have a history dating back thousands of years. If the growing number of graphic novels is any indication, comics are experiencing a greater readership today than ever before. Comics are not just for kids, but kids strongly relate to the combination of pictures, color and text. Students often ask teachers if they can draw pictures to go with their writing.

Graphic Novel by Summerland Primary

Giving students the opportunity to not just add an illustration, but to use sequential images and text to tell a story or relate their understanding of learned materials in the past has been difficult. Not every classroom has access to a lab. A single computer, Comic Life and an overhead projector is all a class needs to create a comic. In the process students learn and reinforce their collaborative skills in ways which they might not otherwise

experience.

Whole Class

The process for creating a comic as a whole class can be fun as well as an excellent experience for students to polish their interpersonal communication skills. The process, however, is likely to

be very different from any other kind of writing and will require students and the teacher to quickly change roles.

Elements of Whole Class Collaborative Digital Graphic Writing

Tapping Talents

As Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences suggests not everyone learns, or works, in the same way. Not all students have the same talents and skills. Creating comics as a whole class activity will allow students to apply their interests to different aspects of comic making. For example, some students may prefer to work on images (either hand drawings, photos, or manipulated photos), others might develop the storyline, while still others might write dialog. Some might work on lay-out. Students, however, may not formally group themselves accordingly, but may find themselves filling these roles more so than others.

Pitching Ideas

If a student has something to contribute, she must learn to sell it to the whole group. The idea might be incomplete or undeveloped, but he must persuade enough interest among his classmates to incorporate his concept into the comic.

Friendly Amendments

After pictures and text are dragged into panels students should be encouraged to make friendly amendments, suggestions which retain the spirit of the original but improve it. The class can approve or deny these amendments.

Leap Frogging

Leap frogging is a dynamic in which one student makes a suggestion and then another student inspired by the idea builds on it. The process repeats itself until a highly-developed endpoint is reached which students working independently would never have otherwise achieved.

Revision

Students suffer from what might be called the "Clark Kent syndrome." In the 1950's television series 'Superman', Reporter Clark Kent was often late in writing his story for the next edition of the Daily Planet — a common occurrence due to his duties as a super-hero. He always overcame his dilemma by typing at super-speed, fingers blurred until he ripped the page from the carriage of his typewriter. Clark never had to stop and think what he was going to write next, never re-read his writing, never changed anything once it had been typed. Maybe that's just what makes Superman super, but we puny earthlings must re-read, think and especially; revise.

Students believe that revision means to correct spelling errors and add punctuation where needed. This is not surprising since correcting spelling errors and adding punctuation where needed is often how their writing is evaluated. Revise, however, means to "look at again."

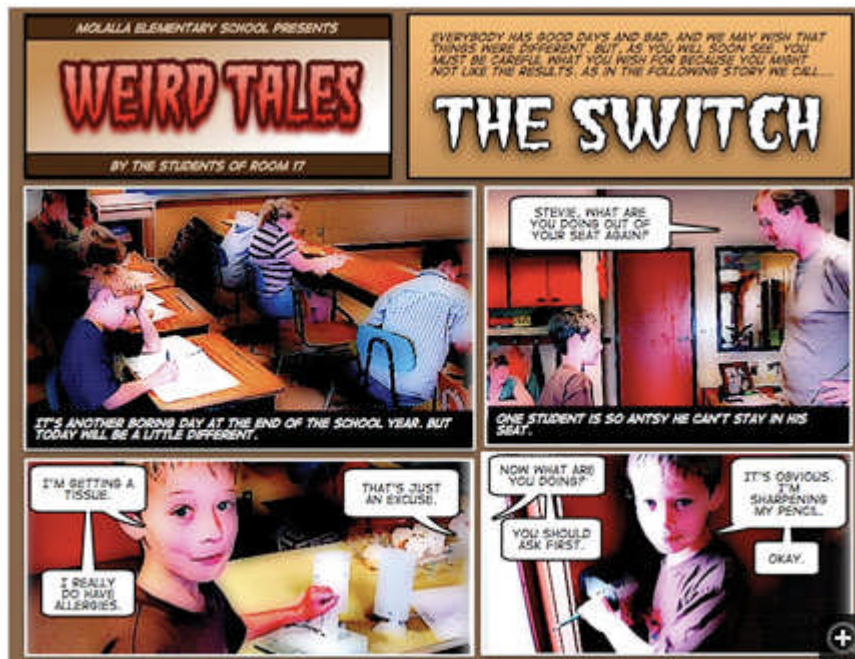
With digital collaborative graphic writing there are many opportunities for students to see revision modeled and to revise the work in progress. Students quickly pick up that every word, every image is subject to revision. It doesn't make any difference who wrote it or drew it. As the story grows, the images and words may need to change to strengthen the story.

Polish

One of the advantages in using software like Comic Life is that students are able to give their finished project a much higher level of polish than they would had the technology not been

available. Students' ideas often are more developed than their ability to produce them. Technology, well-utilized, can help bring their finished project closer to their own vision.

But polish means more than that. Polish also refers to taking care that details have been attended to: all the word balloons positioned in a pleasing way, all text spelled correctly, all colors carefully chosen to suit the subject. A dialog balloon only has so much space available. What are just the right words to convey a character's thought? What are just the right pictures to show what is taking place in the story?



The Switch: Whole Class Collaborative Digital Writing example

Small Group Digital Graphic Writing

Older students may wish to create comics in smaller groups. The dynamics from group to group will vary, and the teacher will need to monitor and make suggestions as necessary. Otherwise the process will be similar to the one above.

Digital Graphic Writing as a Solitary Pursuit

Students can make comics individually, of course, and may much prefer it to collaboration. How much is text and how much is graphics will vary from student to student, project to project. Comic Life can be used to produce work which is mostly text and fewer images as well as graphic dominated comics. Students may use Comic Life for a variety of different writings.

A number of these variations are looked at in the different subjects categories listed at the top of this page.

Class Newsletters

Parents appreciate knowing what's going on at school. When they ask their children, however, they usually get a variation of the below dialog. One of the ways elementary teachers keep parents informed about school activities is to send home a weekly Class Newsletter. Typically these newsletters tell parents about what students will study the following week and include important information about field trips, needed supplies, etc. Teachers often use simple clip art to dress their newsletters up.



HINT: Innovative teachers will email the newsletter to parents who have Internet access either at home or at work. (Emailed materials have a much greater chance of getting to parents than loose sheets of paper stuffed in students' backpacks.)

With Comic Life's ability to quickly manage photos, it's easy to create attractive Class Newsletters.

Step 1: From your week's digital photos of students at work select a couple images.

Step 2 : Add a caption or a funny word balloon if appropriate. (*You might want to have the student approve it first or have him or her make a suggestion.*)

Step 3 : Drag in caption boxes to add the text of your newsletter. You will want to enlarge them to hold more text.

Step 4 : Spend a little time dragging the text and photos around until you find an arrangement which is pleasing to your eye. Save, print and/or email to parents.


TIP : *You can create a group in your email program to easily send the newsletters to your parents. It's a good idea, however, to protect parents' privacy by sending the group email to **yourself** and **BCC** the parents.*

WELCOME TO ROOM 17


Class New #1

Hello Parents,

Welcome to a new school year. I'm your child's teacher, and I'll be sending you a weekly newsletter very much like this one to keep you informed about the activities in our classroom this year. If you have email at home or at work, please make sure I get your address, so that I can send you Class News electronically. (Papers, as you already probably know don't always make it home.) If you don't have email, then be sure to ask your child for the current class news each Monday. Parents with email will receive their copies during the previous weekend.



Mr. B



Picture Time!

Picture Day will be September xx, 2007. Expect to see a note sent home in the next few days from the photography studio with prices and other important details. In the meanwhile--Keep Smiling!

If you have any questions or concerns you can phone me at xxx xxx-xxxx during school hours or email me any time at xxxxx@xxxx.edu

Spelling words

Every monday students will receive a spelling list and new vocabulary to study for the test on Friday. *This is homework.* During class we will concentrate on using words from these lists in our writing, but we won't use class time for the practice and memorization needed to master the words. Please help out by setting aside 30 minutes each evening for your child to work on this.

Digital Graphic Writing!

You may call them comics, but the students in class this year will be using Comic Life to create comics in their learning. With our new lab students will be able to incorporate photos into comics which we will be publishing on our class's space on the web. You won't want to miss an exciting episode. When we've posted our first comic, I'll be certain to send you the url.

Looking forward to the School Year!

Class Newsletter Template

Uses of Comic Life in Language

There are many different ways Comic Life can be used. Here are some of the most frequent and exciting uses of Comic Life. Comic Life is not only just for creating comics using the students' native language, but is also very useful for students learning other languages.

Student Reflections

Often it's useful for students to take a moment to clear what is on their minds. They may be thinking about the puppy they got the night before or what they will be doing the next weekend. Using Comic Life's ability to link to built-in digital cameras or web-cams students can quickly grab shots of their own expressions and drop them into panels. Next they add thought or dialog balloons to express what is on their minds.

The reflections need not be confined to clearing their minds. Students may be asked to reflect on a reading selection or reveal a difficulty they are having in understanding a math concept. Using comics may be a better way of finding out what students don't understand than asking them to raise their hands.

Using the iMacs' built in camera and photo booth to take photos of the kids and then put them in Comic Life to highlight the different moods that we experience from time to time, happy, sad, angry etc and the kids wrote little bubble captions to explain what the photo represented and why they might feel this way.

It is such fun to create something like this the kids quickly forget that they're doing schoolwork. It's a great motivational piece of software to stimulate writing for children of

all different abilities. It's a great way of publishing a student's work and the ideas for using it are limited only by a teacher or student's imagination.

Rob Hourigan, Teacher, Gympie West State School (Australia)



Student Reflections: My Life

Conflict

If two students have a personal problem, they might use Comic Life as a means of examining the issue. The end result might not be to resolve the conflict, but to give each student the opportunity to make clear what she believes the problem to be. Sometimes that alone is enough to defuse the issue and permit the students to return to learning.

Comic Life helps students engage the students through thinking, creating and writing photo-novels.

Comic Life is so easy and fun to use that you can forget about the tool itself. You are free to think what you have to say, and don't need to spend time on specific instructions that slow down the process. Here are two samples of a photonovel by 4th-5th grade students (9-10 years old in Spain) made in 2006.

Fran Iglesias, [Proyecto Grimm](#), Technology and Education



History Of Equality: Conflict resolution on the theme of equality
by [Junta de Andalucía 4B students](#)



All equal: Conflict resolution on theme of everyone being equal
by [Junta de Andalucía 5B students](#)

The two stories talk about prejudices, racism and xenophobia. In the first one, the kids don't want to play with a new girl because she is not white. In the other, the prejudice is about ugliness. The prejudice ends when the kids think about the person inside, not in what she looks like. Plot, photos and comic layout was made by the kids.

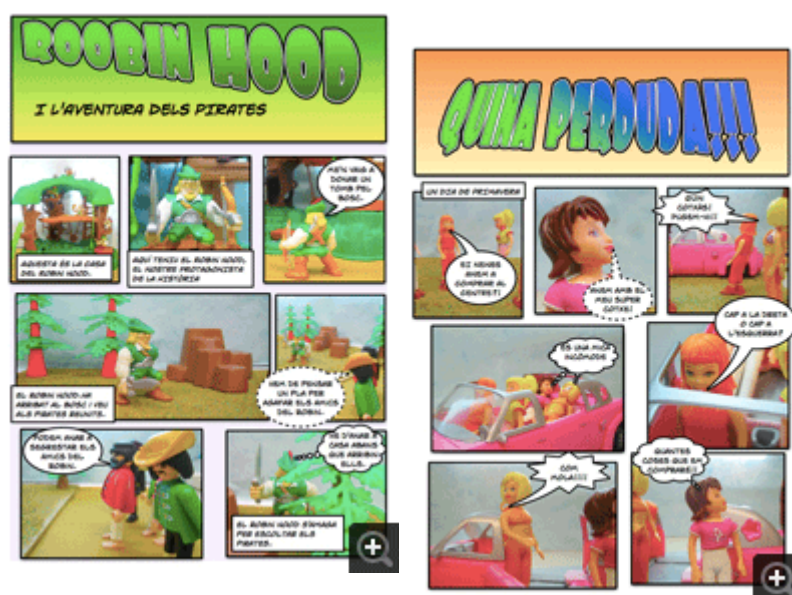
Fran Iglesias, [Proyecto Grimm](#), Technology and Education

Toy Comics

Images in Comic Life don't always have to be photos of people or drawings to tell a story. One way to get elementary school age children to recycle their toys is to ask them to bring a bag of their broken toys to school. Then using glue, tape and whatever other tools are available students can recombine parts of old toys into new toys and take photographs of the new toys to tell stories using Comic Life. Alternately, plasticine models/toys, and a movable iSight camera make for fast and flexible storytelling. Students can adjust the characters and tell the story on the go, which is more about improvisation, another valid form of expression.

We 5th graders have done some comics invented by ourselves. Characters are created with toys we had at home. We photographed them at classroom, made them do and live a thousand adventures. We hope you like them.

Luis Turón's 5th grade, "Institució Montserrat" school



Toy comic examples

These comics were done by primary students at Barcelona school "Institució Montserrat", with their teacher, Luis Turón. They won an award with these comics. The comics are written in Catalá Language. They used Lego and other toys to compose scenes, photographed them and published with Comic Life.

Storytelling

Of course, students can also use Comic Life to tell stories — imaginary or from their own experiences. They can use photos they've taken for the digital content. They may use drawings if they are so gifted. Or they may wish to use and re-purpose images found on the internet.

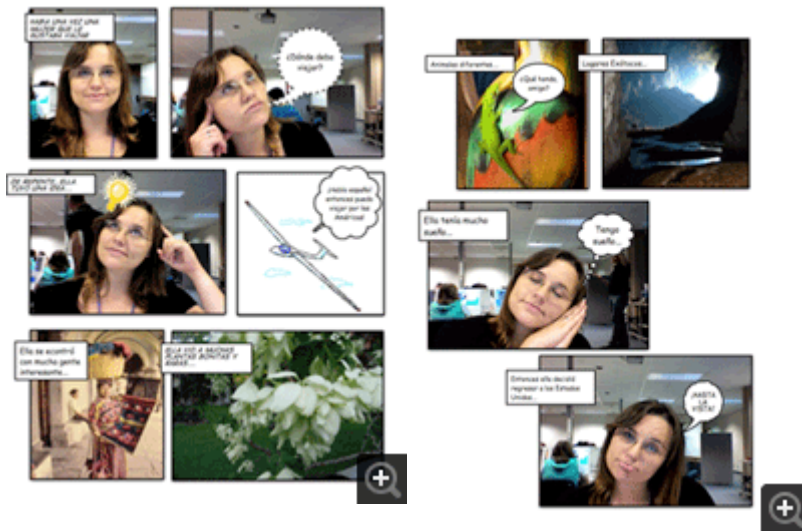
Second language teaching device

Comic Life presents great potential for the language acquisition classroom because students are able to be creative with the language. As high school teachers of second languages (foreign or ELL), we minimally want students to be able to leave our classrooms with some basic ability to orally interact using only Spanish/French/German/etc. Doing this spontaneously requires moving students from the novice to the intermediate level of language proficiency. In order to move students to the intermediate phase of language production, they must be given mountains of input in the second language AND they must be given the opportunity to be creative with the language.

Comic Life presents this opportunity and more. Students have the opportunity to produce the language, they are able to be creative with it, they are able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and they are finally able to enjoy and comment upon the skills and knowledge of their classmates (while receiving a mountain of L2 input) should an instructor allow students to share their final projects with peers.

For example: A teacher may finish with a thematic unit addressing foods, and the assignment may be that students use their newly acquired vocabulary and Comic Life in order to prove that they could successfully order from a menu in a restaurant and exchange pleasantries using only Spanish. Some students might actually go to the restaurant and use a digital camera to catch their Spanish use in action, but others might simply simulate eating at a restaurant and take pictures (this depends on students' schedules and economic situations). Regardless, the end product would be a Comic Life creation that would focus on the student producing language (written in this case) in order to demonstrate knowledge of and skills with language and culture.

Janine Theiler, Lincoln Public Schools.



Second language learning device example
by Tamina Hartman

Idioms



Some students can find it hard to make connections between idioms and the meaning behind them. Linking an idioms meaning with an image is a great way to get the meaning across in a fun way!

Idioms: A teaching device

I created this cartoon for the San Juan USD summer institute. We are focusing on idioms.

Uses of Comic Life for History

A lot has happened in the past! Using Comic Life for History related topics is a great way to condense the information into memorable bits of information. Coupled with images depicting specific times in history, Comic Life is an invaluable tool for students.

The comic format can be very enriching raised from other areas of knowledge. For example, the creation of a comic based on an historical era. This type of project would require research on dress, architecture, arts, culture and everyday life, similar to the needed for an essay about the same subject. A great number of examples of commercial comics about historical themes exists that can be used as a model and didactic resource to support and to propose the creation of small comic strips from them.

History examples

A Day in the Life of a Slave



Students in 5th grade learned about slaves, indentured servants and colonists. Each student was assigned a different character and researched that person to find out what a typical day was like for them. Using the planning sheet, students planned out their person's day including morning, mid-morning, noon, afternoon, dinner and evening. Using the pre-selected template, students found graphics to drag and drop in each box on the template. After all the graphics were added, students added text, title and any needed subtitles.

Explorers

Students in 5th grade studied explorers. Each student picked a different explorer and researched that person. Using the planning sheet, students planned out their explorer's journey. Using the pre-selected template, students found graphics to drag and drop in each box on the template. After all the graphics were added, students added text, title and any needed subtitles

Marilee Sarlitto, Technology Director, Kildeer School

Exploring Explorers



Uses of Comic Life for Mathematics

Comic Life is a terrific tool for creating worksheets. Both teachers and students can utilise Comic Life for this purpose for Mathematics class. Creating a worksheet takes more involvement with the subject material than simply answering a worksheet due to having to think more deeply about it. Getting students to create their own Mathematic worksheets are great way to get more involved, and then swapping with friends to answer is a fun way to enhance and increase interactive learning.


Mathematics examples

Math Puzzlers

**THIS WEEK'S
MATH PUZZLER:**

42 tennis balls were used during a school sports tennis lesson. Each student received 3 tennis balls each.

How many students attended the tennis class?



Flash cards

$$\begin{array}{r} 4 \\ \times 4 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 5 \\ \times 4 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Uses of Comic Life for Science

The perfect combination of images and text makes Comic Life into a great tool for creating science reports, science research projects, science project templates and for succinctly demonstrating Newton's third law: "Law of reciprocal actions".

Science examples

Magnetic Properties Lesson Plan

This lesson plan is designed for students to learn which materials have magnetic or non-magnetic properties.

Lesson Plan: Magnetic Properties

SUBJECT: SCIENCE **GRADE:** 2

OBJECTIVE: STUDENTS WILL LEARN WHETHER IRON IS MAGNETIC OR NON-MAGNETIC MATERIALS

MATERIALS: MAGNETS, PAPERCLIP, COIN, RUBBERBAND, STAPLER, ALUMINUM FOIL & OTHER MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

ANTICIPATORY SET: ASK STUDENTS IF THEY KNOW WHAT A MAGNET IS. DEMONSTRATE WITH A PIECE OF MAGNETIC STRIP. ASK THEM TO TRY TO PICK UP OTHER MATERIALS. ASK THEM TO RECORD IF MATERIALS ATTRACTED TO THE MAGNET OR NOT.

TIME: 15 MINUTES

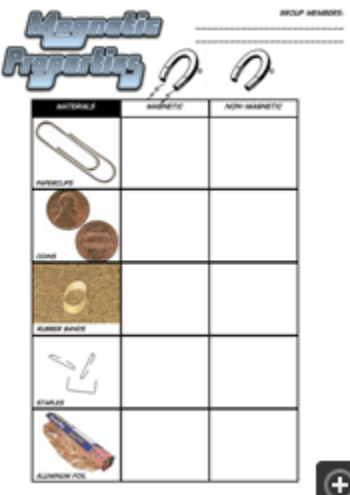
STEP BY STEP PROCEDURE:

1. DIVIDE STUDENTS INTO GROUPS OF TWO TO FOUR STUDENTS.
2. ASK EACH GROUP A MAGNET AND A PAPERCLIP, A COIN, A RUBBERBAND, A STAPLER, AND A PIECE OF ALUMINUM FOIL. ASK THEM TO TRY TO PICK UP EACH MATERIAL AND RECORD THE APPROPRIATE BOX ON PART OF THE MAGNETIC PROPERTIES CHART.
3. ASK STUDENTS TO SELECT OTHER MATERIALS FROM THE CLASSROOM TO TRY AND RECORD IF THEY ARE ATTRACTED TO THE MAGNET OR NOT. ASK THEM TO RECORD IF THEY ARE ATTRACTED TO THE MAGNET OR NOT. ASK THEM TO CHECK IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX--MAGNETIC OR NON-MAGNETIC.

TIME: 15 MINUTES

Magnetic Properties Lesson Plan

GROUP MEMBERS: _____



MATERIAL	MAGNETIC	NON-MAGNETIC
PAPERCLIP		
COIN		
RUBBER BAND		
STAPLER		
ALUMINUM FOIL		

Life Cycles



The Cycle of a Frog

MY MOM AND DAD TAKE CARE OF ME UNTIL I HATCH. I WILL HATCH IN 8-10 DAYS. THEY WILL BE SO PROUD!

I AM A TADPOLE. I NOW HAVE GILLS LIKE A FISH SO I CAN BREATHE IN WATER.

LOOK MOM I CAN SWIM!

AFTER ABOUT 8 WEEKS I GET MY LEGS. MY TAIL IS GETTING SMALLER THOUGH!!

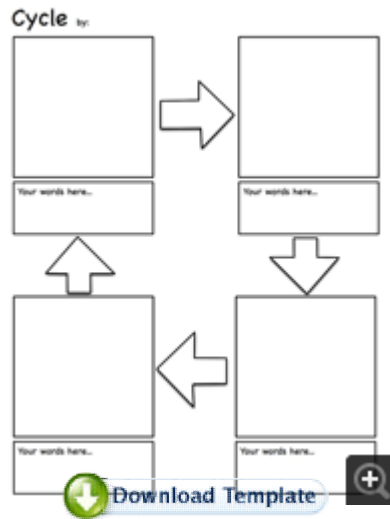
TADPOLE I AM A FROG. I KNOW I LOOK GREAT. I CAN BREATHE ON LAND AND SWIM IN THE WATER.

BY MS. MOULDER'S 1ST GRADE CLASS
IMAGES FROM PICTOBLAZING.COM

This project was created as a whole group project with 1st graders. The teacher found the graphics, created the comic and presented it to the class without text. Students brainstormed information to go in the speech bubbles

Marilee Sarlitto, Technology Director, Kildeer School

Life Cycle of a Frog

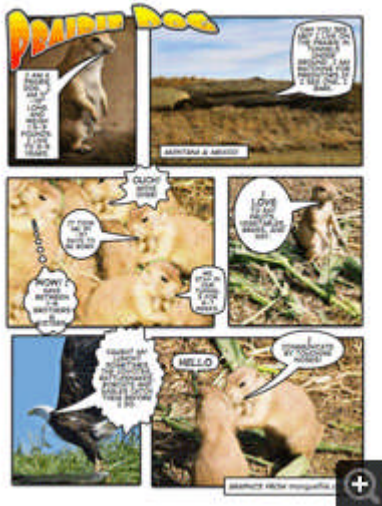


**Life Cycle Template by Marilee Sarlitto,
Technology Director, Kildeer School**

Habitat Studies

Students in 4th grade studied habitats. Each student selected an animal from their assigned habitat and researched that animal. Using the planning sheet, students planned out their comic, making sure to include the required information. Using the pre-selected template, students found graphics to drag and drop in each box on the template. After all the graphics were added, students added text, title and any needed subtitles.

Marilee Sarlitto, Technology Director, Kildeer School



Habitat study of Prairie Dogs

Animal Planning Sheet

Names _____

1	2	1. Animal Characteristics (description, external/internal) Caption _____
3	4	
5	6	2. Biome & Habitat description Caption _____
7	8	3. Adaptations: (structure & function- how it survives in the biome, other physical or behavioral) Caption _____
4. Diet: (herbivore/carnivore/omnivore- what does it eat) Caption _____		
5. Predators: Caption _____		
6. Interesting Facts Caption _____		

**Animal Planning Sheet Template
by Marilee Sarlitto, Kildeer School**

Uses of Comic Life for Various Other Subjects

Yearbooks

Yearbooks are expensive, time-consuming projects. Many companies provide yearbook services, but at a cost. For small schools, Comic Life can be used to create yearbooks in an easy, organized manner. The end-product can then either be printed or burned to DVD.

Tips for using Comic Life to create a school yearbook

- Make a separate folder for each classroom of your school in iPhoto/My Pictures
- Be certain each photo is correctly labeled with the name of the student. (*This will save hours of frustration*)
- Place student pictures in their appropriate folders
- Make a classroom template (or use/modify the one provided) -- usually two pages per classroom. One page on the left, the right facing the left.
- In your template drag a caption box under each student's picture for their names
- In your template use a different font than Digitalstrip for students' names. You can put any two words into the captions of your templates and change them to the appropriate names when you add the pictures

Print version:

- Use a vertical format. Books which are bound along the longest edge are more durable. File > Page Format... > Orientation: Portrait
- Make photos at a large size even though the pictures may be small on the page. This will make for clearer details when printed
- Make a separate Comic Life document for each classroom rather than trying to put the entire school into one Comic Life document
- Export pages: File > Export > Export to Image(s)... Format: TIFF Resolution: 300 dpi

DVD version:

- Use a horizontal Comic Life format to match the horizontal format of television screens. File > Page Format... > Orientation: Landscape
- No need to take photos at a large size
- Depending on the speed of your computer and the number of students you may want to create the yearbook as one Comic Life document
- Export pages: File > Export > Export to Image(s)... Format: JPG Resolution: 72 dpi

Once students photos are in the appropriate folders it's only a matter of dragging the photos into the templates.



Yearbook Template Left Page



Yearbook Template Right Page

Field Trips Debrief

Field trips are great experiences for students. They involve traveling to a destination outside of school, seeing and hearing information in a setting which is different. One way to emphasize the important points is for the teacher (and other students with digital cameras) to take pictures of students learning at the field trip site.

1. Upon returning to the classroom, connect the computer to a projector, turn it on and show it on a screen where all students can see. It is important for all students to watch and participate in the process
2. Transfer the photos from the camera(s) into iPhoto (Mac) / My Pictures (PC)
3. Open Comic Life
4. You may need to adjust the amount of viewing area for the pictures. Do that by dragging the horizontal divider up

Scroll through the pictures and ask students which picture they think should go first. Either drag in a panel or template and place in the picture. Then ask students, "What did you learn here?" When students agree what they had learned at that point, then ask them to suggest either a caption or a word balloon to demonstrate what they learned. Continue adding pictures and panels as necessary. When complete post it to the web or print it and add the pages to the class's ongoing notebook of learning activities.



Port Blakely Farms
Field Trip Example



TechEd

Technology in Education

How to Use Comic Life in the Classroom

Charles Thacker

Thursday, March 8, 2007

There's a [long history](#) of comics in the classroom, and the list of references at the end of this article is a great starting point for learning about this concept. While there's still resistance to this medium being used in education - whether by staff or students - there is also a growing movement to use every valuable tool available. Comics have some great uses in the classroom and in a variety of curricula. From pre-readers to high school students, from English to ESL to Science and Math, comics can help students analyze, synthesize and absorb content that may be more difficult when presented in only one way.

Why Comics in the Classroom?

For the pre-reader, a comic can be purely graphical in nature and help provide practice with sequencing as well as concrete to abstract transitions using illustrations instead of written words. The written component of a comic can be introduced when the early readers are ready to connect words with images. Comics can help early readers or readers with language acquisition problems by providing visual clues to the context of the narrative.

For more advanced readers, comics can contain all the complexity of 'normal' written material which the student must decode and comprehend, such as puns, alliteration, metaphors, symbolism, point of view, context, inference, and narrative structures. A comic can also be a stepping-stone to more complex and traditional written work. A single pane in a comic can represent paragraphs worth of written material in a manner that is enjoyable and effective for the early or challenged reader.

Comics also have the ability to meet the needs of students in a variety of learning styles. Tom Hart illustrates how comics address many of Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences in [this short article](#). I strongly recommend that you read through the articles in the reference section below as many others have covered the concept of comics in education in far more detail than I do here.

Using Comic Life to Facilitate Student Participation

With the time educators have for research and professional reading becoming increasingly scarce, I know that a quick 'What can I do with this tomorrow in class?' concept must be

presented. For this, I will select an example (the book report) that is simple and quick to implement, although there are far more effective uses of comics in the classroom.

We have staff using Comic Life to facilitate student participation in assignments that traditionally would have been written assignments with little to no imagery included. The book report is a classic example of how Comic Life can breathe new life into an old assignment. Often dreaded by students (including myself), the book report is a staple of the classroom for several reasons. First, it provides a way to evaluate whether or not a student has read the assigned material. It also allows a student to show how they synthesize and analyze information contained in written material. Depending on the course requiring the report, this may include character and plot analysis, thematic content, purpose, story development, historical reference, and personal evaluation or judgment.

The book reports we often see in classes are, well, boring. Comic Life can help students create reports that are interesting to themselves and the class - reports that are fun to create and share. The panelled interface of a comic lends itself to breaking larger concepts into smaller, easily digested ideas that can be strung together in a coherent and entertaining way. Creating the imagery used in the comic can draw a student into the story or character in a way that a written report simply can't.

Use Comic Life to help break down complex ideas and to create entertaining content for material that can sometimes be dull. Here are some assignment ideas that lend themselves to the use of Comic Life:

- Timelines (history, events, sequences)
- Historical figures (history of, life of)
- Instructions (step by step, details, illustrations, easy to follow)
- Dialogue punctuation
- Character analysis
- Plot analysis
- Storytelling
- Pre-Writing Tool
- Post-Reading Tool
- Teaching Onomatopoeias
- ...and on and on

What is Comic Life?

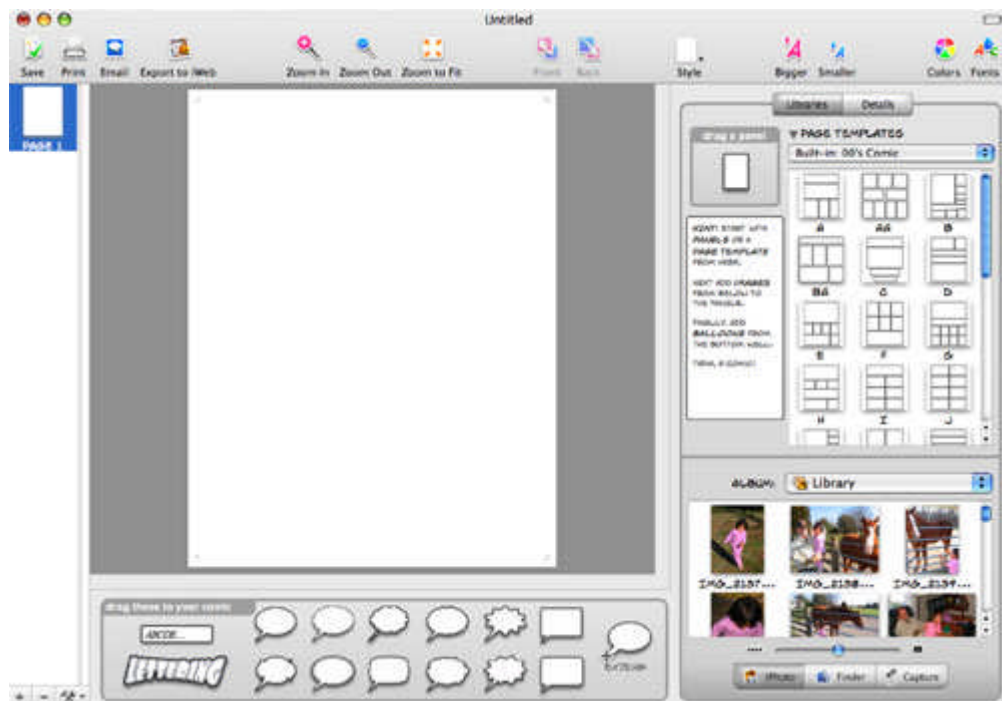
Comic Life is an award winning application for creating not just comics (obviously), but also annotated images, dynamic photo albums, greeting cards, scrap books, story books, and instruction guides and brochures. In the classroom, it is an excellent tool for creating reports of almost any kind. Comic Life allows you to create page layouts with boxes for images and text. Styles can be applied to create just about any type of 'feel' for your document. Captions can be created with tails in order to have thought balloons, speech boxes or just additional annotations. Filters are available to turn your digital images into a variety of hand drawn looking graphics to enhance the comic appearance of your work.



With the ability to export your comic into a variety of formats (HTML, images, iPhoto Album, QuickTime or use your .Mac account to create a blog complete with RSS) you can share your work with others no matter where they are. Use [Apple's iPhoto Kodak print services](#) to print out a hardback, linen covered, professionally printed book to really impress visitors with your creativity.

The Comic Life Interface

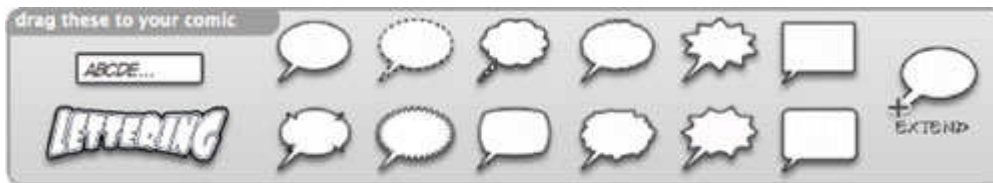
Comic Life gives you a clean and simple interface to use when creating your comic masterpiece. The main window is divided into four major panes.



The left pane shows your pages and allows you to manage them by adding, removing or re-arranging them. The right side of the window has libraries and settings for page layouts and templates, and also an interface to browse your iPhoto library, albums, and any folder on your hard drive or mounted disks. Use the built-in image capture system in conjunction with a connected/built-in camera.



The bottom section of the window has a collection of text containers to create annotations, speech and thought bubbles in a variety of styles.



The filters you apply to the text elements allow you to create eye-popping effects.

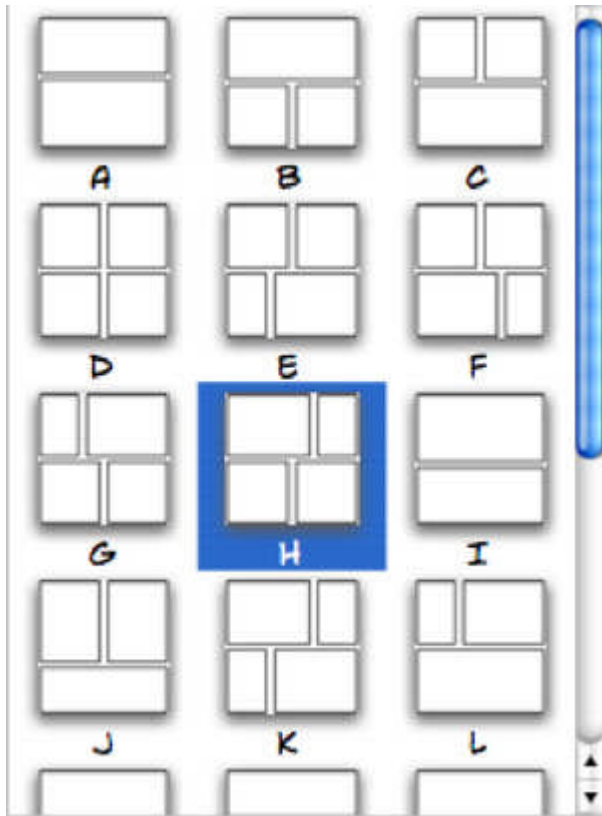


The center pane is where you will complete all of your layout and text entry. It is the pasteboard (or work space) for your pages. With a slick interface, drag and drop convenience, and a huge selection of pre-defined templates and styles, Comic Life allows you to start your comic publishing career in a matter of minutes! More importantly, students will be able to quickly create dynamic content without spending excessive time learning how to use the tool. They will enjoy experimenting with the software and learn how to use it while having fun creating comics.

How to Create a Comic in Comic Life

Creating a comic with Comic Life is a simple 5-step process.

1. **Select a template for your new page.** There are over 200 templates in categories such as comics from the 40's, 60's and 80's, manga, graphic novels, and euro comics. Or, you can create your own layout by dragging panels anywhere you want them.



2. **Add digital images from iPhoto, other disks or a connected digital camera.** You can drag and drop images from the interface of Comic Life (from your iPhoto library or any connected disk), or you can drag items directly from the Finder into Comic Life. If you'd like to capture images directly from a camcorder or camera, such as an iSight, you can use the capture feature of Comic Life and create your comic with images you grab on the fly.

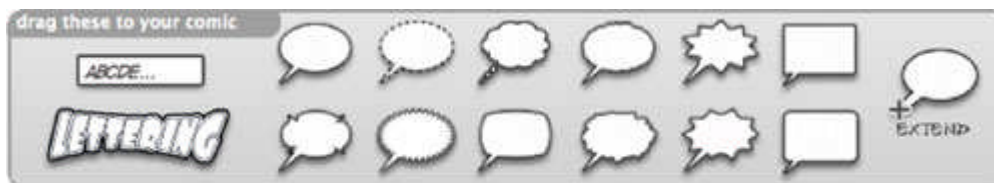
Dragging an image onto a panel will put the image into the panel and crop it so the shortest dimension of the image matches the shortest dimension of the panel. You can adjust the panel size/shape separately from the image's size.

3. **Select a style/filter for digital images.** You can leave your images in their unfiltered state, but Comic Life's built-in filters and styles give you some very cool control over how 'comicy' your comic looks. If you don't like the pre-defined styles, you can enter your own filter settings to get that perfect look.

Don't overlook the fact that you can draw your own images (on the computer, or on paper and scan them in) and then include them in your comic once they are in a digital format.



4. **Add text containers and text.** Just like almost everything else in Comic Life, adding text is a simple drag and drop process. The text containers at the bottom of the window provide you with different text presentations.



Drag a container into your page and enter your text. If you have a balloon selected, you can drag the tail to associate the speech or thought with a particular character in an image. Additional tails can be added for more than one speaker at a time. Other text containers have options for styles and effects to enhance the text. The controls allow you to stretch, scale, skew, colorize, outline, shade and too many other options to list. The pre-defined options are numerous and individual controls let you take them further.

Nothing says WOW like...

The word "WOW" in a stylized, colorful, comic-style font.

5. **Save (frequently) and export to your format of choice.** Your export decisions will be based on what you intend to do with the comic when you're done. Comic Life has several export options that allow you to share your work in digital or paper/printed form. The HTML export creates an interface that allows users to 'flip' through your comic page-by-page. Exporting to an album in iPhoto lets you build a quality book and then have it printed by Kodak. (If you're not using iPhoto for that by now, you better look into it!)

Other Uses for Comic Life

Your imagination is the only thing that limits what you can do with Comic Life. As some of you may have discovered by reading this article, you can create graphics for use on web pages (or other publications) that would be time consuming to create with other tools. Want to show off something that is new or improved? No problem!



Spice up your images, documents, brochures and web pages. Just try not to use New and Improved together. If it's new, there was nothing to improve upon and if it's improved then it's not new; it's something old that was improved!

Tell Your Story with a Comic

When my family was in China to adopt our youngest daughter, we had some problems with the Citizenship and Immigration Services department (which was no surprise to us). To express our frustration and enduring sense of humor, I created a comic to share with family and friends regarding our most recent difficulty. I've included it here as an example of a quick and simple comic used to tell a short story.

