

Poetry Comics and Cartoons

POETRY COMICS and CARTOONS integrate cartoon characters, comic strip format and the words of poems for the characters' dialogue.

Purpose

To see the humor in poetry. To synthesize a visual idea with verbal information given in a poem.

Materials

"Comic Strip Balloons" worksheet

"Comic Strip Panels" worksheet

Comic pages from daily or Sunday newspapers

Activity #1

Procedure

Distribute comic strip worksheets and discuss the various types of panels and balloons used in comic strips. Have students search comic pages for samples and cut out each type mentioned. These could be made into scrapbooks, posters, or bulletin board displays.

By the time each student has located the different kinds of balloons and panels, he or she will be able to select appropriately when designing original strips.

Activity #2

Procedure

Humor is created in comic strips when the cartoonist takes a serious idea and makes it funny using pictures of characters doing unexpected things or ends the comic strip with an unexpected phrase. For example, in the 8-31-86 "Peanuts" strip, Snoopy uses the line, "You are breath and bread and water to me," while writing a story. The next panel shows him still at the typewriter, deep in thought. Then he adds "And chocolate chip cookies." It is the unexpected switch to the ending phrase that makes it humorous.

Select some short serious poems from your students to work with. (Love poems are great to use and so are poems that give advice, e.g., Kipling's "If.")

Group students in threes or fours to read the poem together and plan out a comic strip of no more than six panels. For characters, they may create their own, trace, cut or copy from others they've seen in the newspaper.

Preparation

Brainstorm with students to get a long list of emotions on the board. Generate as many words as is possible, using synonyms (fear and afraid) too. Then ask students to select one of the words and write it at the top of their papers followed by the word "is." (e.g., Anger is...).

Write

1. Decide which lines of the poem go into each panel. You do not need to use all of the lines if you are rewriting the ending.
2. Plan the scene for each panel. Who is speaking? What is in the background? Keep pictures simple.
3. Decide what type of panels, print and balloons to use to convey the meanings and moods intended.
4. Delegate who in the group will draw, who will write the words, who will color the pictures.

5. Discuss how the pictures will make the words of the poem seem funny. Discuss how the new ending will make the poem seem funny. Revise your ideas if you need to.
6. Write the words first, making sure that they are large enough to be read and then draw the shape of the balloon around them.
7. Do all work in pencil first. Then go over it with a thin marker.

Activity #3

Procedure

Again, supply students with appropriate poems to use. Have them choose a line or two from a poem and cut out one panel from a Sunday comic page. Instruct them to cut the word balloon out so that they can insert the lines of the poem or dialogue instead of what is there. The picture should provide some type of contrast to the words (e.g., A picture of Charlie Brown's kite tangled in a tree with the words, "I think that I shall never see, a poem as lovely as a tree...").

Activity #4

Procedure

Use the title of a poem as the title of the comic strip. Use the last line of the poem as the last thing said in the final panel of the comic strip. Write the rest of the comic strip in between. It does not have to use the meaning or language of the poem.

Activity #5

Procedure

Have students write their own poems and illustrate them in comic strips.

Activity #6

Procedure

Have students swap original poems and illustrate each other's in comic strips.

Activity #7

Procedure

Divide the class into groups of 4-5 students. Group #1 are the "writers" and will compose the words for the comic strip and pass it on to the "sketchers." Group #2 will read the words and come up with a plan for the illustrations. This can be sketched with stick figures and explanations of the kinds of word balloons to use. Group #3 are the "artists." They will use pencils to draw characters and conversation in each panel. Group #4 are the "polishers." They trace over all pencil with thin markers and color in characters and background.

Group students according to their greatest strengths. Revisions of any part must be agreed upon by the composing group.

Comic Strip Balloons

EMOTIONS are shown in many ways.



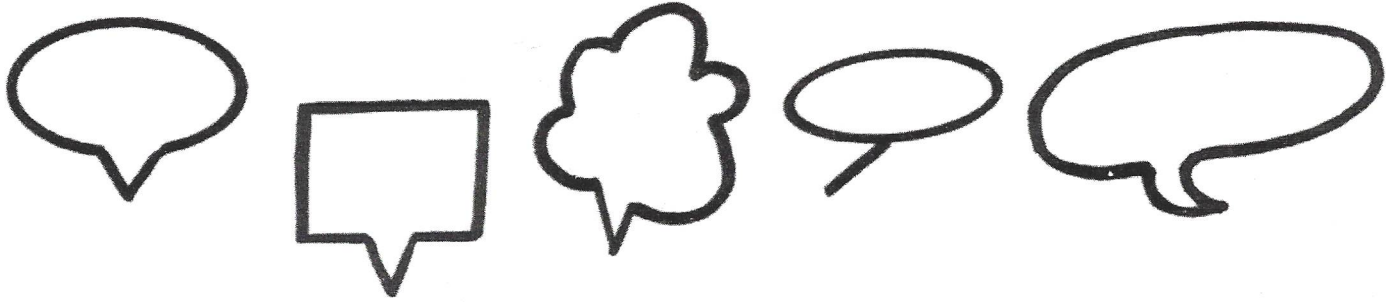
FREE SPACE WORDS are not in balloons. They may be noises or sounds made by animals and objects.

BAM!
Zzzzzz
BOLD PRINT

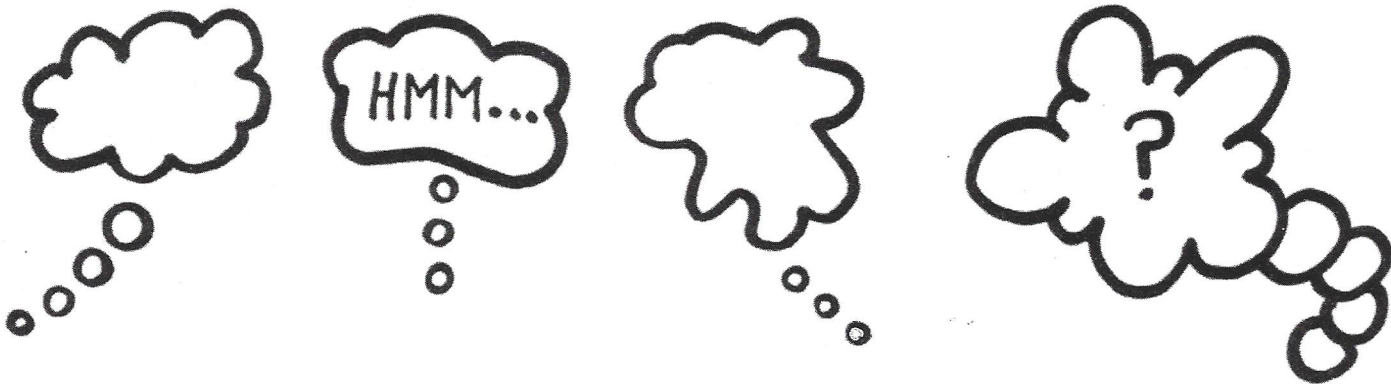
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Comic Strip Balloons

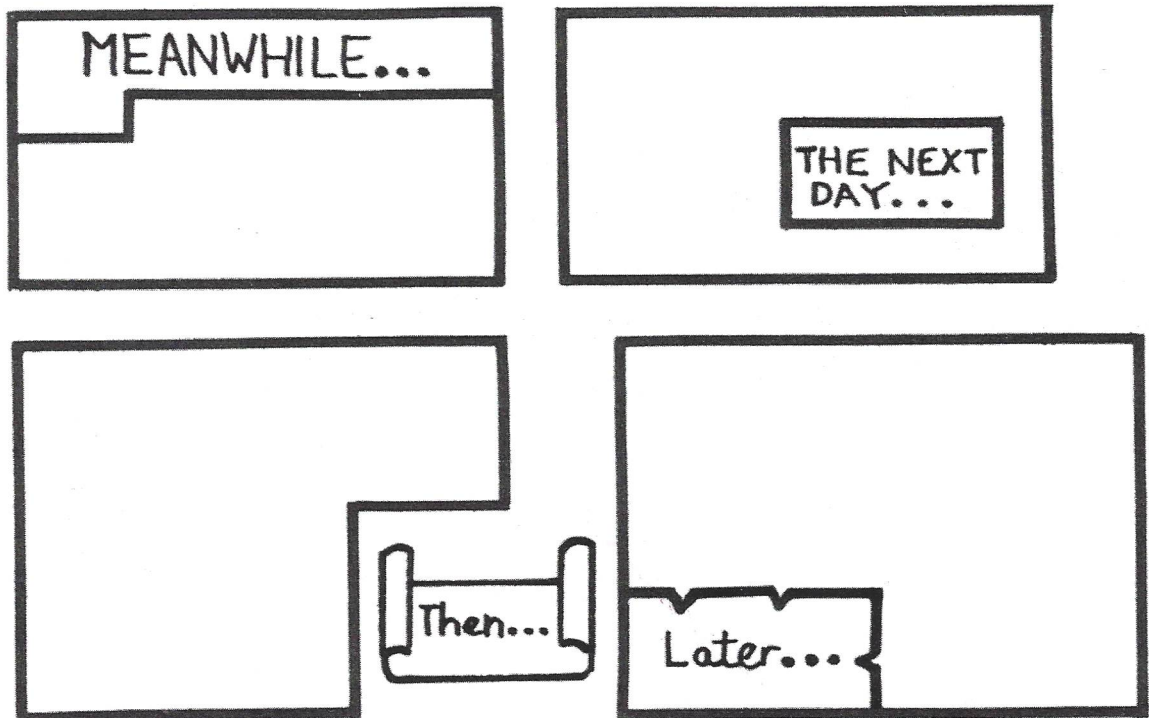
SPEECH BALLOONS have the words of the character. Other characters "hear" what is said to them.



THOUGHT BALLOONS have what the character is thinking. No one can "hear" these words.



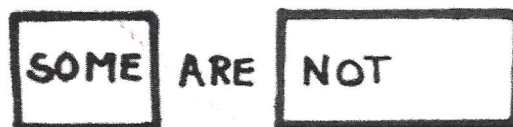
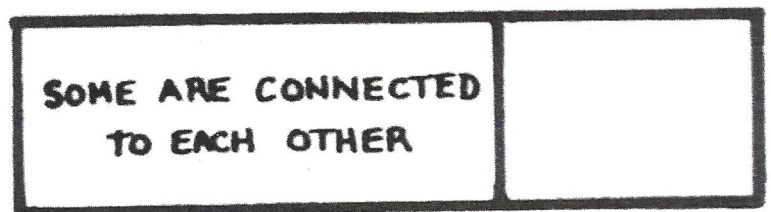
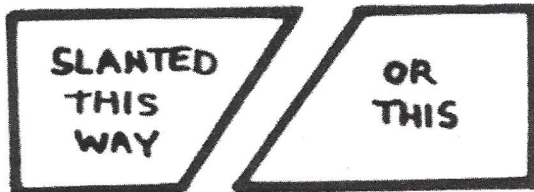
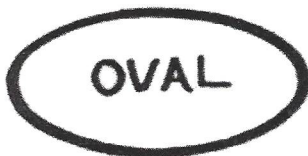
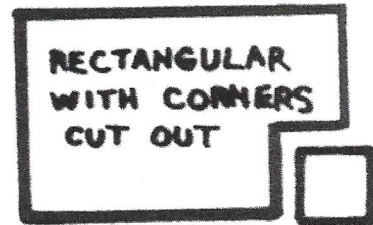
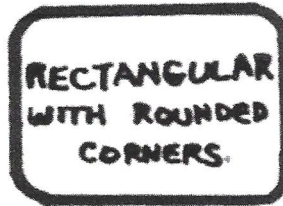
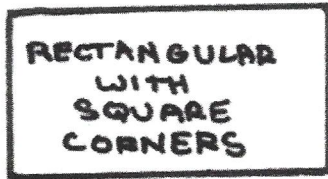
STORY BOXES give information that characters aren't aware of, give stage directions, moods or time changes.



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Comic Strip Panels

PANELS can be many shapes. Usually there are three to six panels in a comic strip.



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