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**Video Tutorial on MakeBeliefsComix.com**

<http://youtu.be/nRna4PY04PQ>

### **Synopsis of MakeBeliefsComix**

MakeBeliefsComix is a great tool that allows students to create their own comics by selecting characters, moods of characters, settings, and adding captions to their comics. This tool can be used to spark imagination, discussions and creativity among students, and help them to summarize content. Students' interests will peak as they use MakeBeliefsComix to read, write, reflect and revise their own stories.

### **How to Use MakeBeliefsComix**

It is very easy to use create your own cartoon in MakeBeliefs Comix. First, go to [www.makebeliefscomix.com](http://www.makebeliefscomix.com). You can get a quick demo or overview by clicking on "demo" illustrated by the bird with the male human head. However, let's go through the step-by-step process on how to use [makebeliefscomix.com](http://www.makebeliefscomix.com). Click on the "Enter Here" button on the home page. Then choose whether you would like your cartoon to appear in 2, 3, or 4 panels by clicking on the "panel choices" on the bottom right corner of the page. And, you can edit your choices at any time. Next choose your character near the bottom where it states, "our diverse cast of characters." You may scroll all the characters offered by sliding the red diamond to the right and or left. Once you click on the character you want in your panel, it appears to the "selection window." Now it's time to choose an emotion for that character by clicking the red arrows at the bottom of the selection window to change the character. Once you like your choice, click the character. The character will now show up in "panel #1" if that is the panel that is highlighted by a red square. If you want the character to show up in panel #2 or #3, then click on that panel #. If you would like to change the size, position, or direction of you characters, click on the character and then click on the demands above the menu word. If you need help click on "menu help." So for example, when the characters are rather large, click on one character, and then click on "scale." Size the character by sliding the scale arrow to make your character smaller. Or, maybe you want a giant character! Now, you can add your talk or thought balloons and start your character talking or thinking. Click on "8 talk balloons" to have a talk balloon appear in the selection window. Scroll through the talking balloons of choice by using the red arrows. Once you choose a talking balloon, click on it and it will appear in your panel window. Click the demo text in the talking balloon to add your own words or text. Continuing adding more characters, emotions, and talking balloons to start conversations among your characters in the panels. To add settings, scenes, and objects click on "our many objects and scenes." Scroll through the scenes or objects you would like in the "selection window" and click on your choice to have it appear in the panel window. Jazz up your comic by changing the background of your comic to the color of your choice. Add objects or things to your comics to help illustrate your idea or story. In addition, add panel prompts such as "to be continued." Continue enhancing and editing your comic to get it to your specifications. Don't forget to type the name of your comic and your name of the author on top of your comic. Now click the arrow to the right of your final window panel. This will take you to the review, print, and email page. It's important to note that if you have some final edits to make to click on the "go back and edit button" and not the browser button, otherwise your cartoon will disappear. It's a good idea to print your cartoon and email it to someone. That way you will always have a copy. When you email it to someone, they will receive a

link to your created cartoon. Once the link of your cartoon is clicked, the completed cartoon will appear on the webpage.

Now that we have the basics of creating a cartoon down let's look at everything that MakeBeliefsComix has incorporated into this tool!

Down at the very bottom of the webpage are other options everyone can use such as: teacher resources, lesson plans, special needs, free printable, how to play, homeschool and family fun, other languages, writing prompts, digital write-ables, daily comic diary, family literacy resources, and story ideas. Also, notice another helpful link called, "Saving Comix."

English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and students will enjoy incorporating the following languages within MakeBeliefsComix: Spanish, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Portuguese. ESL teachers will be able to provide students', comics already created in a student's home language and have the student's translate that comic into English. Just click on "other languages" at the bottom of the page. On the "different languages" page, click on the language you would like to access, such as Spanish. You will be directed to [www.typeit.org](http://www.typeit.org) to type your words or phrases into Spanish that include the accents. For example, we can type *Hola! ¿Cómo te va?* And this translates to, "Hello! How are you doing?" Then we just highlight the phrase, control + "c" to copy the phrase. Now when we go back to our original comic, we just paste our Spanish phrase by using control + "v."

### **Benefits and Educational Uses**

Many uses exist for using MakeBeliefsComix in an educational setting.

It helps with enhancing reading, writing, and communication skills. It can help with summarization of reading content in any subject. It helps with team collaboration by having groups create comics together. Students can use it for vocabulary by using the new vocabulary words within their comic. This is a great tool to introduce students to creative and journal writing. When students participate in journal writing they can express themselves in writing about their feelings, achievements, and challenges. This tool is also a great way to get students to create a story and add to their comic every day until the end of the school year. Careers can be introduced using comix by having student create comix that introduce them certain jobs or what skills are needed for certain jobs. When connecting MakeBeliefsComix, for example to project based learning, the teacher can create a guiding question in the form of a comix and provide it to the students. The students can work on their project and summarize their findings within the comix to communicate back to their peers and the teacher. Within the template area of MakeBeliefsComix are many ideas for problem or project-based learning. For example, under the theme of music is a template for writing a rap song about music. It states, for students to write a rap song about the war that will be played on the radio around the world. This rap can be incorporated into any type of war the students are studying within the classroom. Students can also practice their communication and speaking skills by reading their created comix to others. Story boards can also be used within the classroom to have students illustrate poems,

books, plays, or articles. Imagine in social studies, students recreating the Revolutionary War in comix to convey their comprehension skills.

Comix can also be utilized for social and behavioral skills for children. Guidance counselors can talk to students about their emotions and have the children create comix to display how they are feeling during certain situations. Teachers of autistic children can use comix to help modify their behavior by creating characters with acceptable behavior. Or comix can help autistic children communicate with others.

ESL teachers and students can use comix to translate languages and expand on their communication skills by reading and writing. ESL students can also create vocabulary words between their home language and the English language.

In addition, MakeBeliefComix has lesson plans already created on their website for teachers to use.

Special education teachers will find many suggestions to use comix for students with special needs such as being deaf, speech impaired, brain injuries, and reluctant learners.

Templates sorted into themes such as art, music, science, etc., also exit to start the creative thinking process in students. For example, a template exists for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills where students need to write what skills future leaders will need to be successful.

### **Limitations of MakeBeliefsComix**

The choice of characters is limiting along with the choice of objects and scenes. It would be more enhanced if students' could upload their own characters, object, or scenes. Only eight activities exist under the lesson plan section for teachers to utilize. The lesson plan section needs to expand across more content areas. When a student finishes a comix and wants to save it for future use, only 2 options exist: print or email. The tools won't save the work in a file on the internet to be opened at a later time. So if students want to work on a month long project, for example, the students will have to capture a screen shot using a snipping tool or by holding down the print screen key. Then the students can paste the screen shot into another program like Word, Paint, PowerPoint, Photoshop, or FireWorks. Once the students crop their cartoon, it can be saved as an image file such as ".JPF" or ".GIF" or ".TIF". Then, the students can work on a cartoon series. Also advertisements exist on MakeBeliefsComix.com that can be a distraction for students.

### **Conclusion**

MakeBeliefsComix provides many creative possibilities for students and teachers. It is an easy tool to use and learn. Comix can be used across all content areas and for many different types of learners such as ESL, special needs, and reluctant. This tool helps provide a base for higher order thinking skills, collaboration, reading, writing, and communication. Resources exist for families and educators such as templates, lesson plans, idea generators for projects and lesson. This tool is

limited in its saving capabilities and the amount of lesson plans provided. The greatest strengths on MakeBeliefsComix is that it can be incorporated into any content area and over 350 templates exist.