Title of lesson: Theme in Comic Strips

Suggested grade/age: Grades 7-8

Approximate time needed to complete lesson: 180 minutes

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:
• This lesson is important in the development of my students' knowledge because identifying themes in literature is a first step towards making inferences, or understanding what is meant by something that is not written explicitly.
• I want students to identify and describe the theme of a text, as well as create a short personal narrative with a theme.
• This lesson builds on students’ prior knowledge by introducing theme in classic comic strips, a format accessible to emerging and expert readers alike. It combines both written and visual language to convey meaning. This provides more avenues of engagement for students with different learning styles.

Brief summary/outline of lesson:
This lesson begins a unit on theme in literature.
1. Analyze themes or life lessons in a variety of comic strips using the sentence frame “The author wants me to know that…”
2. Draw a simple map of your school and label three places on the map where you learned a life lesson.
3. Complete a three-minute freewrite on each life lesson explaining what happened at the place on the map and you learned there.
4. Share freewrites in groups of three or four students. Groupmates tell author what life lesson they want to hear more about. That life lesson is the one the author uses to create her/his own comic strip.
5. Identify comic strip’s parts and tools to use in creating own comic strip.
6. Use storyboard for first draft of comic strip. Sketch second draft with pencil. Draw final draft with pen.

Related Resources:
• The Essential Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson
• A Right to be Hostile: The Boondocks Treasury by Aaron McGruder
• Peanuts Vol. 1 by Charles Schulz
• Art for Kids: Cartooning by Art Roche

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:
• Storyboarding for comic strips can be used to introduce paragraph organization.
• MAUS by Art Spiegelman can be used as a model text for retelling the story of someone in a student’s community.

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