



ESL MiniConference

MakeBeliefs.com

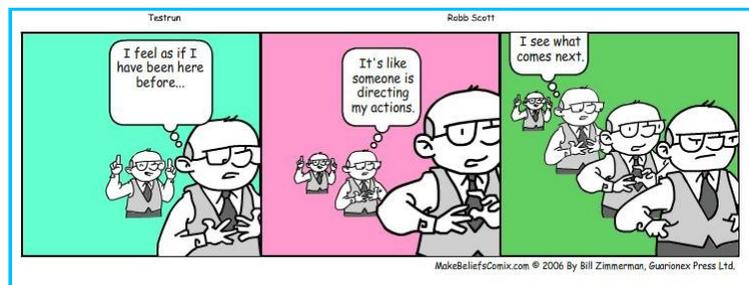
Bill Zimmerman's New Online Tool Adds Creativity to ESL/EFL Lessons

There is a very interesting new resource online for teachers and students who want to add creativity to their English language learning activities. Bill Zimmerman--and graphic artist Tom Bloom--have produced the Web site, makebeliefscomix.com, where it is very easy to create two, three, or four-panel cartoons with their unique user interface.

The cartoon generator allows a person to select from among ten different characters, ranging from a dog face, a cat face, a reptile face, a rabbit face, a rat face, and five different human faces. For each face/character, there are four different gestures/expressions to reflect various emotions, and there are talk balloons as well as thought balloons.

In addition, figures can be scaled, brought to front, flipped horizontally, and moved around using a simple set of very nicely intuitive tools. It is also easy to delete a specific item or to start over.

Below is a three-panel cartoon I was able to generate in about 10 minutes the first time I opened these fun pages.



The authors also provide story ideas for students or teachers developing cartoons using this neat interface. Here are some of Bill Zimmerman's ideas for cartoon themes:

- "Travel to a Mysterious Place"
- "A Day at School"
- "Write a Love Story"
- "Healing Words"
- "Finding Your Courage"

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Achievement Profile: Greg Kessler

Achievement Profile: Naomi Ossar

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For each of these and his other ideas, Zimmerman adds explanations and further details to help authors with their cartoons.

It is a relatively simple Web tool concept, and an exciting way to engage ESL/EFL students in creative new activities where they can experiment with the social contexts of language use.

"MakeBeliefs" creator Bill Zimmerman can be reached at billz@makebeliefscomix.com, or at Guarionex Press, Ltd., 201 West 77th Street, NY, NY 10024. Again, the Web link is www.makebeliefscomix.com.

By Robb Scott

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