

3 Literacy Strategies for Using Bilingual Picture Books in **Any Classroom**



(Even If You're Not Bilingual)

Why this matters? Bilingual books aren't just for students who speak another language. They build vocabulary, cultural awareness, and comprehension for all students.

1. Use illustrations to drive discussion and inference	<p><i>Let the pictures do the heavy lifting.</i></p> <p>Ask: "What do you notice about the setting?" or "How do the characters feel?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boosts visual literacy• Builds confidence for multilingual learners• No translation required
2. Invite students to compare words or phrases across languages	<p><i>Even if you don't speak the other language, model curiosity.</i></p> <p>Ask: "What do you notice about how this word looks or sounds?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports cross-linguistic transfer• Builds decoding skills• Promotes a welcoming and curious classroom culture
3. Center identity: "Who do you see in this story?"	<p><i>Bilingual books often reflect cultural practices, family structures, and perspectives not always found in traditional texts.</i></p> <p>Ask: "What's familiar? What's new?" or "Who do you think this story is for?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Builds empathy• Validates lived experience• Encourages students to see themselves and others on the page