Tips for Using Picture Books in the Classroom (Pre K and Elementary)

1. Include visual literacy in literacy education.
   - Encourage children to use illustrations to decode meaning from text
   - Encourage children to form mental images when reading text
   - Help children to describe, compare, and value both visual and written communication

2. Begin teaching children visual literacy skills even before they can read.
   - Start with the literal and concrete then move to more abstract concepts
   - Challenge children to think about what they see in an illustration
   - Encourage children to reflect on illustrations such as how the illustration helps them understand what is happening or predict what will happen next

3. Use illustrations in children’s picture books to teach aesthetics.
   - Teach children the traditional design components of line, color, and shape
   - Have children evaluate illustrations for strength, mood, and feeling
   - Children practice expressing their opinion by describing why they like or don’t like particular illustrations

4. Have children compare the book’s illustrations to the text.
   - Ask children to identify the setting and atmosphere through the text and illustration
   - Ask children to describe the characters using both text and illustration
   - Encourage children to study the validity of the content depicted in illustrations

5. Have children compare the mental images they generate in reading a book to the book’s illustrations.
   - Encourage children to imagine what the main characters in a book would look and act like and then compare their thoughts to what is in the books drawings
   - Challenge children to analyze if the illustrations in a book accurately reflect what the author had in mind
   - Have children generate their own book illustrations and see how they compare to the ones in the book

   - Encourage one child to read the text as the other child examines the illustrations
   - Have the children compare and contrast how their own mental images of the story compare with each other’s’ well as the book’s images
7. Read picture books to children of all ages.
   - Read a wordless picture book to children of all ages and invite the children to help tell the story
   - Read a picture book to older children in which the drawings support the story and analyze how the text and illustration work together
   - Read a postmodern picture book in which illustration and text have unique roles. Explore with children how this contributes to reading comprehension.

8. Use picture books to teach reading comprehension.
   - Discuss with children how visual literacy contributes to their understanding of a story
   - Have children analyze how illustrations present new meaning to what is offered in the text
   - Have children analyze how illustrations reinforce and extend the same content that is presented in a book’s text

9. Emphasize the cognitive nature of art.
   - Encourage children to use art to both think and feel
   - Help children see the relationship between a book’s meaning and its art

    - Have children write a book without illustrations and then have them write the same story, including illustrations
    - Have children develop a traditional storybook in which the text and illustrations are mutually supportive
    - Encourage children to try writing and illustrating a postmodern picture book.

Source: Reading Is Fundamental

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