# **The Importance of Picture Books in Education: Visual Literacy, Enjoyment and More**

**Source:**[www.twinkl.co.in](http://www.twinkl.co.in)

Picture books are a crucial tool for developing a child’s literacy and language skills in their early years, and often even beyond. They’re also simply fun - their bright and colourful illustrations catch the eyes of children and adults alike, making them a delight to read. These two reasons alone give picture books a significant role in a child’s life, but just how much value should we place on the importance of picture books in education?

## **Why should I use picture books in education?**

### **Literacy and Language Skills**

One of the most essential things a child can get from reading picture books is developed literacy and language skills. The short captions often used in picture books allow children to read at their own pace without becoming overwhelmed or discouraged by a large amount of text on the page.

The rhythmic nature of the text in picture books also allows children to learn to recognise patterns and sounds within language. Many [picture books use rhyme](https://www.twinkl.co.in/resource/stop-telling-fibs-ebook-t-or-1373) to capture children’s attention - learning to recognise rhyming words is vital for learning the sound patterns of words. As a whole, reading picture books increases children’s phonological awareness, developing their reading skills.

### **Visual Literacy**

The visual aspect of picture books is what makes them stand out against other forms of books. The illustrations help young and developing readers to understand what they’re reading and let their imaginations come alive. For new and struggling readers, these illustrations are essential for understanding the story.

The images aren’t merely decorations to spruce up the page - they add depth to the story that aids understanding. By looking at the illustrations and parsing together what they’re saying throughout the book, children develop the ability to analyse visually. These analysis skills will also help them when they come to read longer texts later on.

### **Reading Comprehension**

Visual learners may struggle with reading comprehension in text-heavy books. Picture books allow them to develop crucial reading comprehension skills without spending their energy simply trying to understand the words on the page in the first place. The images tell the story just as much as the words do, which is perfect for helping struggling readers develop comprehension.

Young readers can also build early comprehension skills when reading picture books. The illustrations pull together a narrative alongside the text, which is great for asking questions about. After reading the book, you can point to an illustration and ask questions such as, ‘What happened to the character in this part of the story?’

### **Story Sequencing (Inference and Prediction)**

The images used in picture books are perfect for helping children with their story sequencing skills. Pointing at an image from the story, you can ask children when this event took place - was it at the beginning, the middle or the end? The images can also be a great reminder if you’re encouraging the child to story sequence using words alone.

This is also a fantastic opportunity to introduce or develop inference and prediction skills. Looking at one picture together before you turn the page, you might ask a child what they think will happen next. The repetitive nature of picture books for young children makes them a great tool for this in the early years - they also help children to spot patterns and make predictions based on their inferences.

### **Opportunities for Reflection**

Images and illustrations offer lots of room for interpretation and reflection. When reading picture books with children, you can use the images to encourage and promote discussion. For example, ask questions like, ‘What do you think is happening in this picture?’. You can encourage the child to look at the details and see if they can spot anything the words aren’t telling them.

When working with older children, you could dive a little deeper with the questions you ask. Do you think the colours represent anything? How is the character feeling right now? How do you know? What does the picture make *you* feel? Reflecting like this will make children consider the meaning and message behind the work. Not only does this help with analysis, but it will also inspire children to think about the importance of books and stories and how they influence us.

### **Increased Engagement**

Bright and colourful images and illustrations naturally appeal to any child (and any adult!). This makes grabbing their attention to read much easier, especially if they might be considered a reluctant reader. The illustrations will give a snapshot of what’s to come in the story, helping to keep them engaged as they learn.

Picture books also tend to have short captions, which are great for those who have shorter attention spans. The images break up the text and will help these readers to stay focused on the page for longer, allowing them to develop the reading stamina that they’ll need to tackle longer texts.

### **Social-Emotional Learning**

One of the greatest strengths of the picture book is its ability to tackle difficult subjects in such an accessible format. Many adults would shy away from a novel that attempts to dive into a complex and devastating emotion like grief, but picture books make this kind of subject more approachable and digestible, allowing us to teach children about these inevitable parts of life.

Picture books can also help to teach social cues and cultural differences in the same way. Exploring the topic through images and small chunks of text makes it much less intimidating and will give children a better understanding overall. The illustrations in these kinds of books also tend to have a deeper meaning than you might think at first glance. With older children, you might consider discussing what parts of the images symbolise or what they might represent.

### **Improved Vocabulary**

Despite what you might think, picture books can be a brilliant source of vocabulary for children. Picture books allow children to play with language, often in a lyrical and rhythmic sense, which increases the number of words at their disposal. Talking about the illustrations on the page is also a wonderful way of improving vocabulary - potentially discussing important topics as well as the meaning of the story.

Non-fiction picture books can be an even better source, as many of them contain a glossary with plenty of new vocabulary words for children to learn. These allow you to dive into a specific topic and let children learn a variety of words related to that topic, all while they enjoy the beauty of a picture book. If you’re starting a new topic in the classroom, you might consider using a non-fiction picture book to introduce it!

### **Inspire Learning**

You’ve probably heard of the expression ‘monkey see, monkey do’, and we’re not saying that children are the same as monkeys, but children do love to copy what they see.

Say you’re reading a picture book where the main character is baking a cake. There will be illustrations of the character weighing out ingredients, mixing them, and eventually decorating - and of course, the picture book paints this as something fun and exciting to do.

This just might inspire the child reading it to want to start baking too. This is the same for any kind of action a child might see in a picture book. It inspires them to try new things and explore their interests.

###  **Pure Enjoyment**

Picture books are simply FUN. They’re designed to invoke a love of reading and language, and they do exactly that. With their wonderful stories and beautiful images and illustrations, picture books work to create an enjoyable experience that children will remember forever.

This helps to create a positive association with reading, encouraging children to continue to read for pleasure throughout the rest of their childhood and their lives.