

## Chapter 5

### **New Teacher Spotlight: Preparing for Read-Alouds and Reading Critically**

The best read-alouds are carried out when you share a well-loved book. While we understand that it takes years and continual commitment to become deeply grounded in children's literature, we recommend that you develop some habits in preparing for a read-aloud. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) believes strongly that "the right book in the right hands can transform a life" (NCTE, Build your Stack). For this purpose, they have put in place the Build Your Stack initiative through which teachers receive recommendations of quality books from other teachers. We strongly support this initiative as it provides teachers with a focused way to build their classroom library. Teachers need to be knowledgeable of children's books. We recommend that you start with a selection of 10 to 20 books that you will study carefully.

In preparing for the read-aloud, we believe it is best that you read the book at least once by yourself before sharing it with the students so you can become familiar with the storyline and are aware of the different characters. During this first reading, you want to notice descriptions the author uses that make the story come alive. It would also be helpful to know some details about the author and illustrator's life and work. This way you help the children see that authors are people just like us. You will also want to ask yourself, "What draws me to the book?"—as it's important to consider how you connect meaningfully to each book you share with your students.

Prepare for the read-aloud with a critical perspective. Cassany (2019) draws on Freire's ideas (1970, 2000) that no text is neutral because behind each text there is a human. Therefore, we must help readers to develop the capacity to examine the point of view of the author in relationship to who we are in this world, what our beliefs are, and what our perspectives are. Cassany explains that to be a critical reader is to examine what the other is trying to persuade us about. This stance towards reading is asking the reader to go beyond distinguishing between facts and opinions. For emergent bilinguals, engaging in critical reading means involving one's entire self, including the child's full linguistic repertoire. Ultimately, it is important to keep in mind that a teacher who reclaims spaces for authentic reading experiences is forging a path for the formation of citizens who are free and autonomous, who have been challenged to read the word and the world critically (Gallart, 2017).