

EAL & NEW ARRIVALS · GRADES 2–5

Bilingual Story Prompts

Write in any language — or both

Why bilingual writing matters

Older research suggested EAL children should be encouraged to use English exclusively. Modern research has firmly debunked this. Children with strong first languages do BETTER at acquiring English, not worse. A child's first language is not a deficit to overcome — it's a foundation to build on. These prompts encourage children to write in whatever language feels most natural. Some will write in their L1, then translate. Some will write half in each. All are progress.

Prompts about home and family

<p>1. A meal at my house</p> <p>Describe a meal your family eats together. What foods? Who cooks? Who sits where? What do you talk about?</p>	<p>2. The story of my name</p> <p>Where does your name come from? Who chose it? Does it mean anything in your language?</p>
<p>3. My favourite person</p> <p>Who is your favourite person in the world? What do you do together? Why do you love them?</p>	<p>4. A celebration in my country</p> <p>Describe a special day or festival from your home country. What happens? What do people eat or wear?</p>

Prompts about journey

<p>5. Where I came from</p> <p>Describe the place you came from before you came here. What was it like? What did you love about it?</p>	<p>6. The day we left</p> <p>Tell the story of the day you left to come here. (Only if comfortable — sensitive for some.)</p>
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7. My first day at this school

What was the first day at your new school like?
Who did you meet? What did you not understand?

8. Same and different

What's the same about this country and your home country? What's different?

Prompts about identity**9. Two languages**

Tell me about your languages. Which do you speak at home? Which is easier? Which feels more like 'you'?

10. A word that doesn't translate

Is there a word in your language that doesn't really translate into English? What does it mean?

11. The best of both

What's something brilliant about your culture that English-speaking people don't always know about?

12. A letter to younger me

Write a letter to yourself before you came here.
What would you tell yourself?

How to use

1. **SHARE** the prompt orally first. Talk through it as a class or in a small group. 2. **INVITE** writing in any language. 'You can write in [their language], in English, or in both.' 3. **DON'T** correct first-language writing if you can't read it. Focus on the act of writing, the engagement. 4. **DISPLAY** some bilingual writing on the wall (with permission). It signals that all languages are valued. 5. **INVITE** them to read aloud — in either language. Hearing their language at school, in front of classmates, is powerful for self-image.

