



Through the Miscue Window: Yetta M. Goodman

Retellings: Integral to Miscue Analysis

Retelling has always been an integral part of miscue analysis because making sense through a transaction with the written text is ongoing and cumulative. Examining miscues, or unexpected responses, provides a window on comprehending—it is the process of continuously building meaning in response to the printed text. Examining miscues across a whole story or article provides information about the tentative nature of a reader's meaning building and how the growing understanding of a piece of writing changes and builds throughout the reading experience. By the end of the reading, the reader has a cumulative text that has undergone changes and additions throughout the reading. An understanding of the reader's comprehension after the reading can be inferred from the retelling.

Retellings can be evaluated statistically and used as a measure of comprehension. It is important to consider that the measure is only a glimpse of what any reader knows. Readers seldom provide complete retellings. A retelling score only measures what the reader chooses to share about the reading. (Scoring procedures for retellings related to miscue analysis can be found in Goodman, Watson, and Burke 1987.)

Retellings can take many forms. They can be oral or written. In addition to retellings, teachers can evaluate readers' comprehension through a variety of presentations. There are many ways to graphically represent a story; readers can sketch, diagram, map, draw, or create timelines or story game boards. And, of course, there is a wide range of dramatic forms in which readers can engage. Nonfiction reading lends itself to different presentations, such as report writing, debates, and speeches. Anecdotal records or audiotapes of the presentations can be kept for evaluation over time.

All presentations can be done singly or in groups. Each provides a legitimate opportunity to evaluate the reader's comprehension. In this article, the focus is on oral retelling, since this has been the primary presentational format used in miscue analysis.

Retellings take practice on the part of the teacher and the reader. The teacher needs to be patient and wait quietly for the reader's responses and respond in a neutral way. The teacher's smiles and head shaking are used by readers to decide whether they are moving in the right direction. Since it is important to discover their personal responses, the teacher needs to avoid giving signals about the appropriateness of the retelling. Oral responses must also be carefully considered and teachers need to avoid responding or questioning in a manner that suggests that the readers are incorrect or that the teacher prefers one response over another.

Readers' retelling scores usually increase over time, up to a point, because the teacher gets better at conducting the retelling and the students improve as they become more comfortable with the procedures. Some teachers eventually have their students read a story for miscue analysis purposes into a tape recorder and follow up with an unaided retelling without the teacher present. This is especially helpful for those teachers who want the evaluative information miscue analysis provides for all students, but

don't have the time to sit down with each student two or three times a year. The student records both the reading and retelling and the teacher analyzes the tape later at a more convenient time. This, of course, would only be done with students who have become very familiar with miscue procedures. For a more authentic response, some teachers have the reader retell to another student in the class who has not read the material.

In this article, I will explore the three parts of retelling: the unaided, the aided, and an in-depth interaction between the reading and the teacher

| Miscue Analysis Procedure II Retelling Summary | | |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Name _____ | Date _____ | Grade _____ |
| Selection _____ | | |
| Holistic Retelling Score (optional) _____ | | |
| Plot Statements _____ | | |
| Theme Statements _____ | | |
| Inferences _____ | | |
| Misconceptions _____ | | |
| Comments _____ | | |

that could include a reading strategy lesson or a plan for instruction at a later date. The unaided retelling is always done immediately following the reading. The other kinds of retelling occur depending on the teacher's purposes. Some of the specific retellings can occur during a reading conference between the teacher and the student. Those teachers who use the same story or article frequently in miscue analysis often develop a story outline so they remember the story better and can check off the reader's statements. If the teacher does not have an outline, it is helpful to jot notes as the reader retells.

The Unaided Retelling

The unaided part of the retelling allows the reader to tell whatever they remember. It is usually cued when the teacher asks, "Remember I told you I'd ask you about the story when you finished. Would you please tell me what you remember?" During the unaided retelling, the teacher does not interrupt or cue the student in any way, although the teacher should show interest in the retelling. When the reader seems to be finished, the teacher might want to wait for 30 to 45 seconds. Wait time seems to spur some readers to expand on their unaided retelling. Broad questions such as "Anything more?" or "What else do you remember?" may be used to encourage more unaided retelling at the very end.

The Aided Retelling

The aided retelling is used to encourage students to expand on their unaided retelling. The

teacher asks open-ended questions by using the notes taken during the unaided retelling. For example, if the reader says "there were three friends who always hung out together," then the teacher might say: "You told me that the story was about the three friends that always hung out together, can you tell me more about each one? What were their names, what were they like, how did they relate to each other, how did you relate to them?"

The teacher's questions and the way they respond to the answers are of great importance. The teacher must avoid giving students information about a story or article by asking very specific questions. "What games did the children like to play?" provides the reader with a good deal of information about a story, as does "Tell me three things about stars."

Using the student's own language from the retelling, such as names for people and concepts, the teacher asks open-ended questions such as: "You said it was a \$typical [meaning typical] baby, tell me more about what that means"; "Tell me more about [character mentioned by the reader]"; or "You said [character mentioned by the reader] was happy with the way things turned out, tell me more about that." During this part of the retelling, it is helpful to respond to students' answers with questions such as: "Why do you think so?" or "Tell me more about that."

The Specific Retelling

There is a more in-depth retelling that some teachers use that can help evaluate the reader's comprehension and move very specifically into an instructional strategy. Asking the reader to point out places in the text that seemed confusing to them or to tell the teacher about words or ideas that they were uncertain about provides additional evaluative information as well as the opportunity for an instructional strategy immediately following the reading experience. For example, if the student responds that a particular word used over and over again was not familiar, the teacher will help the student see what idea or concept that particular label refers to in the context of the particular story. The lesson is conducted so as to build on what the student knows by referring to the reader's miscues and the retelling.

Keeping anecdotal notes on retellings and doing holistic or specific scoring provide are some of the ways to use retelling information for evaluation of comprehension. Students' retellings are influenced by their interest in the subject matter of the material, the way in which the material is written, the quality of the writing, and so forth. It is helpful to use different materials at different times. Varying the reading materials provides evaluation about the ways in which readers handle different genre, style, content, etc.

Retellings vary from reader to reader and across ages, cultural groups, and different kinds of reading material. It is not possible to explain here how all these influences affect retelling. Younger children have a tendency to retell a great deal of information, while older readers often provide a plot statement with little else unless they are asked to expand. Some cultural groups retell in greater detail than others. Some readers retell chronologically through the story while others start with a major premise and then expand. The more experience teachers have with retellings the more opportunity they will have to understand these differences and how they relate to the evaluation of comprehension.

→ See: Costello, p. 152; Goodman, pp. 20, 53, 58, 72, 146, 149; Meyer, p. 60; Weaver, p. 149.

Reference

Goodman, Y. M., D. J. Watson, and E. L. Burke. 1987. *Reading miscue inventory: Alternative procedures*. New York: Richard C. Owen.