

# *Reading Process & Practice, 3rd Edition*

## Constance Weaver

### Case Studies Drawn from Reader Profile Projects

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These case studies are offered as a supplement to the third edition of *Reading Process and Practice*, in order to help teachers better understand some of the insights that can be derived from doing a miscue analysis and developing a Reader Profile, as discussed in Chapter 8 of the book. Those involved in the projects were mentioned and thanked in the preface to that text. Here, in chronological order, we present data from, analysis of, and recommendations for Victoria, a first grader who tends to sound out words letter-by-letter; Jaime, a fourth grader whose miscues suggest she doesn't read for meaning; and Jacob, a seventh grader whose strategies for reading are both effective and efficient, though he doesn't like reading. Though the two younger readers have in common a lack of focus on meaning, each of the three readers demonstrates somewhat different miscue patterns and strategies, leading to a unique set of instructional recommendations for each.

#### **CASE STUDY OF VICTORIA, A FIRST GRADER**

Victoria is a six-year-old who has been identified by her teacher as reading at an "early second-grade" reading level. She and her twin brother spend much time around adults; consequently her verbal and nonverbal behavior have been characterized as mature by those who know her.

#### **The Reading Interview**

Victoria likes to read "because it's fun," but was still nervous and somewhat shy during the prereading interview. The interview provides essential information about her reading strategies and feelings about herself as a reader. She indicated that her mother and teachers taught her how to read by "sounding out the letters." (V stands for Victoria and N stands for Nichole, the interviewer):

N: What do you think reading is? What does it mean?

V: I think it just helps you write and spell more better.

N: When somebody has a book open and they are looking at it, what are they doing?

V: They look like they're sounding out the letters and looking at the pictures.

This brief exchange provides two important pieces of information regarding the strategies that Victoria uses when reading. First, she relies heavily on phonics by sounding out the letters. Interestingly, it's not the words she attempts to sound out, but individual letters (she refers to this specifically on three occasions throughout the interview). This means she seldom recognizes sight words or word chunks, but labors over the individual letters and phonemes of each word. The limitations of this strategy become apparent as she reads from the selection. She also equates reading with spelling, which again emphasizes her reliance on individual letters. In addition, she identifies looking at the pictures as a part of the reading process, indicating her knowledge of using pictures as strategy for getting unfamiliar words. Like many readers, she seems tentative about defining what she believes the reading process actually is.

Next the interviewer asks Victoria about her views of herself as a reader:

N: What about how you think you are as a reader?

V: I think I'm just a little bit good.

N: A little bit good. [Shows her a scale of 1–9] A #1 is not very good, #3 is so-so, #5 is good, #7 is very good, and #9 is you are a super reader. What one do you think you are?

V: [circles #5, "good"]

N: You think you're a good reader. Why do you think you're a good reader?

V: Other kids, they know how to read better than me, so I think I'm a good reader like them.

....

N: What would make you a better reader? What do you think you could do to become a better reader?

V: Just sounding out the letters.

N: Sounding out the words would make you a better reader than you are now?

V: Mmm huh.

N: When you are reading and you come to a word that you don't know, what do you do?

V: I just ask my friends or I just sound out the letters.

N: Is there anything else that you do?

V: No.

Again, Victoria refers to her strategy of sounding out the letters. When Victoria reads from her selection, her strategy of focusing specifically on individual letter sounds without blending them into words impedes her reading progress. Also, during the reading interview, Victoria didn't identify other strategies, not even using pictures for context clues, when she was directly asked about the strategies she uses for dealing with problem words. It is apparent that her concept of reading is primarily phonics-based; she wants to sound out letters correctly. Nowhere in the interview does she talk about what a word or story *means*.

It is encouraging, of course, to note that Victoria loves reading and is often an engaged and highly interested reader. When the interviewer asked her if she enjoyed reading, she enthusiastically responded with a yes and rated reading as a "#9" on a scale from 1–9. She particularly enjoys reading the books she picks out herself, and fortunately she is allowed to choose her own books both at home and at school.

### Miscues, Miscue Analysis, and Retelling

When Victoria read aloud for the reading analysis, her primary strategies for getting unfamiliar words were to sound out individual letters and to use clues from the pictures. Because she was intent on pronouncing individual letters, however, blending the letters into a familiar word often proved too difficult for her. Her first attempt at reading for the analysis was abandoned altogether when she was so baffled by the word *naughty* that she completely stopped reading. The pictures were of no help, trying to sound out such a word letter-by-letter was essentially impossible, and without other strategies to fall back on, she could not continue. When prompted, she said she had no idea what to do next. The interviewer finally encouraged her to read a different text entitled *Thank You, Angelica: The Rugrats Book of Manners* (Schoberle & Resto, 1999) and the analysis continued.

Victoria continued to sound out words letter by letter. Throughout her reading, meaning would break down as she focused more on individual letter sounds than on understanding the story. She read hesitantly and very slowly, trying to pronounce each letter. For example, when she attempted the sentence *He loaded up his dump truck with oatmeal cookies, and sent it rolling across the table*, she slowly attempted to sound the letters of most words. Thus the sentence came out sounding like this:

He d- de- dem truck with uh- oet- m- e- l cookies and s- sh- e- n- t it r- r- ro- a- k- r- sh the table.

By the time she worked through the sentence, the meaning had been lost. Because meaning had broken down in this sentence, she couldn't predict what was happening in the next sentence: *Faster and faster it raced toward Tommy*. She read the sentence thus:

F-a-s-t and fast-er it r- ra- k- t t- a- w- a- r- d Tommy.

Even given the picture of the truck with cookies in it, she could not determine what the meaning of the sentence was. Because she had lost the meaning of the story, she could not use strategies of monitoring for comprehension or drawing upon prior knowledge to correct her miscues, and she simply pressed on through the rest of the story. None of the above miscues were corrected, nor did Victoria even attempt to do so.

However, throughout the story, she was able to correctly pronounce all of the characters' names, which would indicate prior knowledge of the Rugrats cartoon. The babies, Chucky and Tommy, continually mispronounced the word "manners," which it appeared in the text as *manders*. For example, when the text read *Is that good manders?* Victoria read orally, "And they good manners." It is interesting that Victoria miscued with the actual word "manners" each time it appeared in the story as *manders*, even though she didn't get some of the easier words in the story. This suggests that she was using prior knowledge and predicting that the characters in the story were discussing manners. In these instances, she did not sound out each letter in the word. She was better able to get meaning from the text when she used her prior knowledge and the strategy of predicting, even though she was not conscious of the fact that she was doing so.

### The Retelling

Victoria initially had difficulty with the retelling. The interviewer allowed her to review the story once, primarily looking at the pictures, before she told the story again. Consequently, when she had finished, she was better able to retell some of the main ideas. She knew that Angelica was the queen in the story and that she was trying to teach the rest of the babies some manners. She

knew that the children had been watching TV, and that Angelica was upset about something, but she didn't know what it was. Both of these details in the story were depicted quite clearly in the pictures. Victoria was able to recall that Chuckie had "put some cookies in a truck . . . and the truck fell." When the interviewer asked her what kind of cookies they were, she initially said they were chocolate cookies. The interviewer pressed further:

N: They were chocolate?

V: Um . . . I think oatmeal.

N: OK, you think they were oatmeal. Do you remember what kind of truck Chuckie was playing with?

V: [shakes her head, no]

Even though Victoria had miscued on the word *oatmeal*, she had sounded out enough of the letters to get the word when she really thought about it, enabling her to determine, with some insecurity, the kind of cookies the babies were eating. She was unable to recall what kind of truck Chuckie had put the cookies into, but it is difficult to determine whether that was due to a lack of prior knowledge about dump trucks, or whether she hadn't used the simple strategy of checking the picture to help her get the word.

While it is clear that Victoria is enthusiastic about reading and is building a repertoire of reading strategies, it is also clear that she overly relies on phonics to "sound out" the letters of an unfamiliar word, without even trying to blend them to get the word right. The result is that she overlooks other strategies that would be helpful for getting meaning from a sentence and may even become so frustrated or stuck on one word that she abandons a text altogether.

### From Assessment to Instruction

A teacher, tutor, or parent could help Victoria focus on meaning by doing guided writing with her, then helping her read and reread the text repeatedly. That is, the adult could help Victoria compose what she wants to say, write the sentences, illustrate the text, and make a book from her own writing. (See the next case study on Jaime for details as to how guided writing can be done; see also Chapter 10 of *Reading Process and Practice*.) Reading texts that she herself has composed should help Victoria focus on meaning and encourage her to read entire words instead of sounding out the letters of every word. Then she should read and reread each text she composes until she is fluent with it.

The classroom teacher can use similar guided writing strategies with the class or a small group, as well. The class or group can compose with the teacher, who writes what they are composing on large chart paper, a transparency on the overhead projector, or a dry erase board. As the class or group composes, the teacher can use the opportunity to emphasize letter-sound combinations, while emphasizing one-to-one correspondences between the spoken words and the written words as a whole. Such correspondences are reinforced, of course, when teacher and children read and reread the text together, with the teacher pointing at the words as they read.

Because Victoria tries to sound out each letter in the words of a sentence, it is especially important to help her make connections between spoken words and written words as a whole, while reading for meaning. Another way to do this is through the shared reading experience. Victoria could choose a book that interests her, and a parent, teacher, intern, or teacher's assistant could spend some time previewing the book with her. Together, they could examine the cover and title, look through the pictures, and predict what the book might be about. Then they could read the book together, with Victoria echoing the adult as needed, as one or both of them point to the words. Of course it is absolutely crucial to discuss the story, not just say the words.

On repeated rereadings, Victoria and her partner could stop to talk about letter-sound patterns, focusing on onsets and rimes, and on blending these into words. When Victoria has become somewhat competent at reading the book, she could read one page and her partner could read the next, alternating through the entire book. In this way, she might sometimes experience the other reader's monitoring and correcting strategies and perhaps be able to draw upon some of her partner's strategies and make them her own.

Reading along with a tape recording of a book she chooses would also help Victoria become more fluent in her reading. It is important for her to notice how the voice on the tape emphasizes the meanings of words and sentences. Initially, however, it could be very helpful for her to have books recorded at slower than usual speeds, as done in the Carbo Recorded-Book™ method (see Chapter 10 of *Reading Process and Practice*). Using books with rhymed text is another way to help Victoria begin to recognize larger chunks of words.

Victoria needs to develop all of the basic reading strategies discussed in *Reading Process and Practice*: predicting, monitoring comprehension, and using fix-it strategies when her words don't fit the context and meaning is going awry. During these shared reading sessions, the adult working with Victoria should help her learn to draw upon prior knowledge, pictures, and context to predict. When this foundational strategy is well developed, the assisting adult can guide Victoria in learning to monitor comprehension by asking questions like "Does that make sense?" and "Does that sound right?" When Victoria's answer is "No," the adult can help Victoria develop strategies for correction, such as "Start again here and reread. Think what would make sense." For additional prompts, see Chapter 14 of *Reading Process and Practice*.

Only when Victoria has made substantial progress with using effective reading strategies, identifying whole words, and sounding out in chunks more than letter-by-letter would it make much sense to do Retrospective Miscue Analysis with her. The tape recording of her reading could be played for her, and she or her teacher could stop the tape when she identifies a miscue or stretch of text that doesn't make sense. It is important to talk about why a word or group of words doesn't make sense in context. The adult working with Victoria can then help her with fix-it strategies as needed, including such strategies as rereading and trying again (sounding out in chunks, if need be); reading on and coming back; just reading on.

As the previous discussion indicates, Victoria needs to be guided in reading for meaning; developing basic reading strategies of predicting, monitoring comprehension, and using fix-it strategies; matching spoken words with written words and identifying words on sight; and sounding out words in pronounceable chunks rather than letter-by-letter. Shared reading sessions and individual, tutorial conferences should quickly help Victoria become a competent and confident reader, since she already enjoys reading.

## REFERENCE

Schoberle, Cecile, and Resto, Ed. 1999. *Thank you, Angelica: The Rugrats Book of Manners*. New York: Pocket Books.

## JAIME, A NINE-YEAR-OLD

Drafted by Connie Weaver and written in her voice, this is a case study of Jaime, mentioned in Chapters 9 and 10 of *Reading Process and Practice* (pp. 227–229 and 238). At the time of the miscue analysis discussed below, Jaime was just beginning the fourth grade. She had been receiving extra help with language and with reading through a pullout program. When asked reading interview questions, Jaime gave no evidence of thinking that reading involves meaning



In these three sentences, we see that once Jaime loses meaning, she seems to address the rest of the words in the sentence as if they stood in a word list. That is, she no longer uses prior knowledge and context to predict something that would fit.

When Jaime was asked to tell what she remembered about the story, it was clear from the pained and panicked look on her face that she had no confidence that she could retell the story, and indeed she responded that she didn't remember it. Unfortunately, the interviewer did not ask questions like "Who were the main characters in the story?" and "What happened first?" Many, many students who have never been asked to retell a story before are unable to do so, or unwilling to try, without initial prompting and then follow-up questions like "Who else was in the story?" and "What happened next?" While we don't want to get too detailed with recall questions, a foundation of recall can lead to more sophisticated questions and responses, including genuine conversation about the reading selection.

### From Assessment to Instruction

To become a more proficient reader, Jamie clearly needs to continue predicting, but also to notice when her miscues don't make sense in context, and to correct meaningless words and the meaning in general by reprocessing the visual text itself—perhaps by rereading, perhaps by reading ahead, and probably by predicting meanings (and grammar too) and then reconsidering the letter patterns in the word, in order to come up with a real word that fits the context. Eventually, Retrospective Miscue Analysis could be used to help Jaime develop these fix-it strategies (see Chapter 9 of *Reading Process and Practice*). For now, however, she needs help with more basic things, such as attending to the words on the page: that is, matching written words with spoken words. When she read aloud for the miscue analysis, she did much better when running a finger under the words than otherwise, so this might be encouraged as a temporary prop.

However, Jaime's difficulties appear to go deeper—not only much deeper than what can be solved by an assistive strategies like temporarily using a finger to help keep her place in the text, but even deeper than can be solved by developing a repertoire of correction and fix-it strategies to use when meaning has gone awry. Jaime's most fundamental "reading" difficulty is that she lacks the broad spectrum of life experiences that would make many texts more comprehensible. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 9 of *Reading Process and Practice*, she has probably never crossed a toll bridge before and would have no idea what one is. Thus "giving" her the pronunciation of the word *toll* would be no help at all, conceptually. While many children develop vicarious experiences when parents read and talk with them about books, Jaime may not have had extensive experience with books in the home. And like so many of our children from urban or rural homes, she may not be able to understand, much less relate to, a great deal of what is described in seemingly simple children's picture books, including *Clifford Takes a Trip* (Bridwell, 1966). In Jaime's case, different kinds of assessment had indeed already suggested the need to expand her knowledge and the range of her vicarious experiences.

Since unfamiliarity with a wealth of diverse experiences and concepts underlies Jaime's seeming difficulty with words, I would use Janet Norris' communicative reading strategies with her, focusing on such incidents as Clifford's encounter with the man whose truck needed to be taken to a garage, the incidents with the wet cement and the traffic jam, and the encounter with the toll bridge and the river Clifford needed to cross. Each of these incidents occurs in *Clifford Takes a Trip*, and each involves concepts and language that appear to have been a challenge for Jaime. I developed the following example together with Janet Norris, of Louisiana State University, as an illustration not only of how to help Jaime, but of Norris' "communicative reading strategies" approach to developing concepts, language, and reading strategies (Norris, 1988, 1991).

### Helping Jaime Through Communicative Reading Strategies

In *Clifford Takes a Trip*, the incident involving the toll both at the bridge is depicted by a two-page spread, with the toll bridge beginning on the left-hand page and concluding on the right. The left page shows Clifford stopped by a man in front of a toll booth, and another man inside the toll booth, holding out his hand for money. On the toll booth itself, it says “TOLL BRIDGE - 25 ¢.” When reading for this assessment, Jaime had read “tall beginning” for *toll bridge*, in the phrase that begins the left-hand page, . . . *he came to a toll bridge*. This suggests that Jaime’s schemas for a toll bridge may not be adequate for interpreting the scene. Has she ever ridden over a toll bridge? I’d elicit from her whatever understanding she might have or I could generate from the pictures, then supply the relevant background knowledge as needed. With Jaime having these relevant schemas for a toll bridge and toll booth, I’d point to the words *And then . . .* on the previous page, turn the page and point to the next word, *he*, and ask Jaime to read the rest of the sentence: *he came to a toll bridge*. Next I’d point to the beginning of the sentence *Clifford had no money* and say, “Find out why Clifford couldn’t just tip-toe across the cars on the bridge” (referring to the incident where he tip-toed over the cars in the traffic jam). After Jaime read the sentence I’d point from the word *money* back to the word *toll*, reiterating that Clifford did not have enough money to pay the toll. I expect that Jaime would be able to read, independently and with expression, the final sentence in this episode: *But that didn’t stop him*. The pattern of the story episodes and the sentences should be very familiar and easy for her to coordinate by this point in our reading—assuming we had already worked our way through the other troublesome incidents together in like fashion.

Of course this is only one example of how a teacher or tutor could help Jaime develop relevant concepts and language, then draw upon these along with grapho/phonemic cues, in order to help Jaime construct meaning from texts. Such concept and language development would be done while simultaneously leading Jaime to activate already existing schemas, consider cause-effect relationships, draw inferences, and think evaluatively and critically. In other words, Jaime would be led to develop the cognitive strategies discussed in Chapter 14 of *Reading Process and Practice*, and to become metacognitively aware of using and choosing these strategies. Teaching through such extensive scaffolding reflects a constructivist model of learning that allows for varying amounts of direct or directive instruction for different learners. It also reflects the complexity of the redundancy model of reading discussed in Chapter 5 of *Reading Process and Practice*, according to which various kinds of processing occur and support each other, more or less simultaneously.

### Helping Jaime Through Guided Writing

Helping Jaime write her own reading materials is another way to help her understand that reading must be a meaning-making process. When a student drafts material to be read and then reads and rereads it repeatedly, she automatically brings meaning to the text, and that is one of the most important things Jaime must learn to do, in order to construct meaning from texts. Working individually with Jaime, I would provide substantial scaffolding in order to help her write. For example, together we might:

- Decide upon a topic and a form, perhaps the form of a patterned story Jaime had been reading or an original story about a favorite character such as Clifford the big red dog (Jaime’s favorite)

- Brainstorm for events, perhaps with me writing down key words and phrases in a semantic web, branching tree diagram, or timeline (and thus also providing conventional spellings that Jaime can draw upon)
- Orally rehearse some of the sentences Jaime might use to communicate her ideas in writing, so that grammar and word selection are planned in advance of writing
- Get a first draft written, with Jaime using invented spelling and her knowledge of letter-sound relationships when she does not know the conventional spelling of a word (perhaps she could compose on a computer)
- Discuss the evolving text as she writes, encouraging her to reread and see if she has written what she wants to write (especially if using a computer, which makes rereading and revision easier)
- Reconsider what she has written, including things like the sequence of events, cause-effect relationships, and connections between words and ideas
- Do a second draft, ideally with one of us typing the words on computer (if I did the typing, I would of course use conventional spelling at this point)
- Divide her text into chunks that she would illustrate, each on a separate page
- Edit her writing for spelling (if still needed) and for punctuation
- Assemble the book
- Encourage Jaime to read or reread or the book (when together, I would help her focus on reading strategies if/or as needed)

Many, many children need the kind of scaffolding for reading and writing that is illustrated in this discussion of ways to help Jaime.

## REFERENCES

- Bridwell, Norman. 1966. *Clifford Takes a Trip*. New York: Scholastic.
- Norris, Janet A. 1988. "Using Communication Strategies to Enhance Reading Acquisition." *The Reading Teacher* 47: 668–673.
- Norris, Janet A. 1991. "From Frog to Prince: Using Written Language as a Context for Language Learning." *Topics in Language Disorders* 12(1): 66–81.

## JACOB, A SEVENTH GRADER

Jacob is thirteen years old and in the seventh grade. He is a child full of energy, interested in skateboarding, baseball, swimming, and spending time with his friends. He has been surrounded by books and reading materials since birth, and still enjoys being read to, but is loath to pick up a book and read on his own. The miscue analysis of Jacob's reading was a key component in determining whether Jacob's reluctance to read stemmed primarily from difficulties in using reading strategies or a lack of interest in the materials he was offered in school.

### The reading Interview

Jacob discussed his feelings about reading quite frankly in the prereading interview (*L* is for Lisa, the interviewer; *J* is for Jacob):

- L: What do you do inside your head when you read?  
J: Picture what I'm reading.  
L: How do you know what to picture?  
J: The details in the book.  
L: When you come to a word you don't know, what do you do?  
J: Read over it.  
L: Skip over it, you mean?  
J: Yeah, read it but just don't really care what it means.  
L: How did you decide to do that?  
J: Just to get the reading over with.  
L: What else might you do?  
J: Use context clues or look it up in the dictionary.  
L: What's a context clue?  
J: When you use the other words in the sentence to figure out what it means.

We can see from the reading interview that Jacob does have some strategies with which to approach a text. He can visualize details, skip an unfamiliar word, and use context clues to still construct meaning. However, it is quite telling that he uses these strategies to “get the reading over with” rather than to read better or to enjoy a story. In fact, he emphasizes frequently in the interview that he doesn't like to read. He claims “It takes too much time” that he could use for other things and says his friends don't like reading either. Most interesting was his response when asked if girls like the kind reading done in school more than boys: “That's the kind of stuff that most girls in my English class read anyway.”

### The Oral Reading, Miscue Patterns, and Reading Strategies

For the reading itself, Jacob chose Homer's *Odyssey*, “Book IX,” because he had to write a report for his Language Arts class on the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus. He was given many different options of texts to read for the miscue analysis, including primarily recreational materials and informational selections on topics that might interest him, but he wanted to get the school reading “over with” while he was reading for this analysis. He was not eager about doing the reading for either purpose.

While Jacob seemed to be relaxed as he read, the selection was difficult and he struggled with unfamiliar words. He was tired at the end of the reading, but never stopped during the reading to complain that it was too difficult, ask any questions, or ask if he could stop. Nor did he stop to correct many miscues, preferring instead to go on, getting as much as he could out of the selection while spending the least time possible on it.

During the reading, Jacob seemed unable to use prior knowledge about the story context and syntactic structures within the text. The version of *The Odyssey* was a traditional one, complete with formulaic phrases and archaic vocabulary. Consequently, there were many instances in which Jacob was presented with a word that he could not possibly know. In some cases, this interfered with his understanding and pronunciation of specific words. He did not labor over any of the words, however, but was content to give them his best guess and go on.

One instance in which the meaning was not left intact occurred in the following sentence:

③ The ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> limb from limb <sup>and</sup> supped upon them. ④ supid

Because Jacob had no prior knowledge for the word *supped*, he could not understand, by this sentence alone, that the Cyclops had eaten Odysseus' men. Miscue 5, substituting the for *them*, indicates that Jacob was predicting the use of *limb* as the direct object of the verb *tore*, which further confused Jacob in trying to understand *supped*. He repeated the word and to get a running start as his eyes tried to take in the unfamiliar word coming next. Even with his manipulation of syntax, the context clues were not enough for him to correctly get the meaning of the word *supped*, so he resorted to simply looking at the word and saying something that incorporated some of the letter-sounds. He didn't try very hard, though, and didn't interrupt the flow of the narrative by repeatedly attempting to sound out the word. He read on, seeming to be confident that more contextual information would be coming to help him comprehend what was happening. Fortunately for Jacob, the next sentence in the story immediately retells the event, giving him that opportunity to comprehend what had just occurred and allowing the essential meaning of the selection to remain intact.

Jacob's reading of the next sentence indicates he was actively monitoring for meaning as he restructured the syntax to make sense of it:

② He gobbled them up like a lion <sup>in</sup> the wilderness, flesh, bones, marrow <sup>and</sup> entrails, without leaving anything uneaten. ④ the <sup>the</sup> entrails

entrails, without leaving anything uneaten.

The omission of *up* and substitution of "the" for *and* does not change the meaning of the sentence or make the sentence ungrammatical, but Jacob's repetition of the first part of the sentence suggests he understood that he had just missed something. He repeated the phrase "He gobbled them up like a" to buy some time for catching up intellectually with what he was reading. This indicates again that Jacob was using several strategies to get the meaning of the passage, even though he had missed a key word in the previous sentence.

Another particularly interesting example of Jacob's pronunciation of an unfamiliar word was his substitution of the word *neat* with the nonsense word "nam" in the following phrase:

... washed down his meal of human flesh with a drink of neat milk ...

Obviously the context of the word *neat* was unfamiliar to Jacob; he had never before heard the word *milk* referred to as *neat*. Thus Jacob began preparing for the word as he repeated "flesh" and "with" to gain momentum for the unfamiliar placement of *neat* coming up. Again, he made no attempt to correct the word or to make it fit with the semantic cues in the sentence. It seems

that in a familiar context he would easily have gotten the word. These examples indicate that, while Jacob did not get the particular word in question, he was using several strategies to get the meaning of the passage.

Further evidence of Ryan's lack of prior knowledge and his subsequent use of fix-it strategies for predicting occurred in this sentence:

(R) When the child of morning <sup>rosy</sup> ~~fingered~~ Dawn, appeared he again lit his fire,  
~~the~~ <sup>e-wes</sup> ~~his~~ goats and ~~ewes~~, (R) ~~all~~ <sup>quiet right now</sup> quite rightly, . . .

Jacob was unfamiliar with the formulaic phrase of Homer's epics, and he predicted the word *rosy* would actually be the verb "rose." This prediction makes perfect sense, given the preceding grammar; his restructured opening clause, "When the child of morning rose," reflects his existing prior knowledge of modern grammatical structures. At first glance, it seems that the meaning of the sentence, as Jacob read it, was changed. Jacob read the sentence as if *the child of morning* was simply a reference to the Cyclops. His restructuring of the rest of the sentence, however, indicates that he did correctly infer from the context cues that the main subject *he* was the Cyclops, who *milked his goats and ewes*. Jacob did not concern himself with comprehending what a "fingered Dawn" might be. Jacob also lacked prior knowledge of the phrase *quite rightly*, as it is used in this context, and the phrase followed closely on the heels of *ewes*, another word with which Jacob was unfamiliar, causing him to resort to restructuring the text in a way that made sense to him. Because the Cyclops had just milked his goats and ewes, it makes sense for Jacob to predict that they would be "quiet right now."

If considered individually, Jacob's miscues could have changed meaning somewhat. When they are considered together, however, they provide evidence that Jacob was monitoring for meaning as he struggled to predict without having sufficient knowledge for some of the words he encountered. In the end, though, the sentence as he read it made good sense within the larger context of the story.

Throughout the selection, it seemed that Jacob just felt it was too much work to figure out unfamiliar words; he has had enough experience with text to know he could pick up sufficient meaning for his purposes from the rest of the selection. He did mention using context cues as a way of getting meaning during the prereading interview, and his pattern of miscues would substantiate his use of this strategy.

Taking into consideration his oral reading, his thoughts about reading, and his miscues while reading the selection, it is apparent that Jacob has learned and actively uses some good strategies to get meaning from what he reads. He uses semantic and syntactic cues to predict meaning, resorts to grapho/phonemic cues when he encounters an unfamiliar word, tries to use context to get the word, and, finally, simply moves on to get meaning from the rest of the selection.

Of primary concern is his "get it over with" attitude, lack of curiosity about unfamiliar words and contexts, and low interest in reading. He lacks aesthetic appreciation because he rarely allows himself to enter into the story world. This could be due to the kind of reading material Jacob is presented with in school. During the prereading interview, he did indicate that he was rarely offered a choice of materials and that often the readings were simply excerpts in anthologies. This hardly inspires enthusiasm for reading in an active thirteen year old.

## The Retelling and Discussion

When Jacob retold the story, it was clear he had constructed meaning from the text and understood the main story. He knew that the protagonist of the story was Odysseus and that Odysseus had also called himself “Noman” when he talked to Polyphemus. Jacob understood that Odysseus had used trickery to escape from the Cyclops, saying “He used the wine to make him drunk so he would fall asleep and to hide under the sheep to get away.” Jacob clearly picked up on how often the Cyclops feasted on the men, even though he had missed key words like *supped* during the reading. When asked if he ever felt sorry for the Cyclops, Jacob said he did not, “Cause he ate people.”

In his retelling, Jacob recognized that Odysseus had made mistakes, and that he gave himself away to the Cyclops at the end. He pointed to “how happy he [Odysseus] was and how stupid the Cyclops was.” Jacob also believed that Odysseus made a mistake by “going in the cave.” But, at the same time, he recognized that Odysseus used his wits to be a hero, calling him a “trickster.”

While Jacob did pick up on some of the details and events of the story, he was more concerned about getting the reading done quickly because, as he very clearly indicated, he did not find the text interesting and would not want to read any more of the story about Odysseus. This lack of interest in assigned reading material interferes with his comprehension and enjoyment. Jacob did not elaborate on his perceptions of Odysseus and his men, the deliciously gory details, or his feelings about the Cyclops. His favorite part was when Odysseus stabbed out the Cyclops’ eye, saying “It was the only exciting part.”

See the following figures, Reader Profile Summary Form and Retelling and Discussion Notes, completed for Jacob.

## From Assessment to Instruction

While Jacob is utilizing some good reading strategies, obviously his lack of motivation to read and his preconceptions about reading as a rather tedious school activity keep him from reading for enjoyment. In addition, he doesn’t read enough to have an opportunity to experience a text that draws him into engaged reading or to further develop his reading strategies. Offering alternative, response-based reading activities might encourage engagement with text for a reader such as Jacob.

One option is Literature Circle groups, as discussed in Harvey Daniels’ book *Literature Circles* (2002). A key aspect of literature circles is the emphasis on allowing students to choose the novels for group reading and discussion. This would enable Jacob to read material that is more interesting to him, and allow him the opportunity to discuss what he’s reading with his peers, instead of answering formulated questions. He would have to construct meaning from the text in order to fulfill his responsibilities for his role in the Literature Circle. He is smart and an enthusiastic participant in peer interaction, so he should quickly realize that his usual “get it over with quick” reading would not be sufficient to maintain an in-depth discussion with peers. In addition, he would see comprehension, engaged reading strategies, and a greater enthusiasm for reading modeled by his peers. Because the discussion would be student generated, it would relate directly to student interests and, consequently, Jacob would be more likely to participate and to delve more deeply into the story. Jacob’s current reading strategies would sufficiently enable him to participate in the discussion, but he might also be inspired to read closely in order to be a more active member of his group.

Another method for encouraging more engaged reading experience for Jacob is through the use of dramatic and visual arts, as suggested by Jeffrey Wilhelm in “*You Gotta BE the Book*” (1997). Alternate assessment through dramatizing and/or drawing scenes from a text would give Jacob an opportunity to construct meaning, discuss his interpretation with peers, and experience

READER	<i>Jacob</i>	AGE/GRADE	<i>13/7</i>	DATE	<i>1/23/01</i>
RATER	<i>Lisa</i>				
TEXT READ	<i>The Odyssey: Book IX</i>				
Does the sentence, as the reader left it, make sense within the context of the whole text? (Do a running tally on the Yes and No lines, total them, then compute the comprehending score.)					
YES	<u>IIIIIII</u>	TOTAL	<u>8</u>		
NO	<u>I</u>	TOTAL	<u>1</u>		
Comprehending score = number of "yes" sentences, divided by the total number of sentences: RATIO <u>8:9</u> PERCENT <u>88%</u>					
Miscues per "no" sentence = number of miscues in the "no" sentences, divided by total number of "no" sentences (can be computed if the miscues have been recorded): RATIO <u>3:1</u> PERCENT <u>3%</u>					
<b>NOTES FROM READING INTERVIEW</b>					
<i>Jacob's responses to interview questions seem to indicate inconsistencies of reading and his expectations for reading in school and home. At home, he reads informational sources like The Guinness Book of World Records and information on the Internet. He finds this reading to be different than reading in school because "It is what you want to read." But he doesn't seem to view this type of reading as "reading" per se; when he thinks of reading activities, he thinks of the type of reading done in school, where he has little choice of material and finds little of interest. It is interesting that he reads informational selections at home, but not at school.</i>					
<b>NOTES ON MISCUE PATTERNS AND READING STRATEGIES</b>					
<i>Jacob's miscues throughout the selection are consistent with his reading interview. He wants to get through a reading quickly, to "get it over with." He often did not attempt to correct unfamiliar words, but instead read quickly over them. He was able to get the meaning of all but one of the sentences from the context, however, so this strategy actually worked quite well for him. Often he lacked prior knowledge of the characteristics of Homeric epic language, which caused some difficulties for him as he tried to predict and monitor for meaning. He did, however, successfully restructure text without changing meaning several times throughout his reading. He often used repetition of words and phrases to slow down the reading and check for understanding, often giving himself a "running start" when he came to an unfamiliar word.</i>					

Completed reader profile summary form, long (adapted from Y. Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987); from Constance Weaver, *Reading Process & Practice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Heinemann, 2002; ©2002 by Constance Weaver; may be reproduced for use.

**NOTES FROM RETELLING AND DISCUSSION SESSION**

*After Jacob had finished this selection, which was long and difficult, he was tired and ready to be finished. I had to question him to draw out his understanding of the story. At one point, he even asked to turn off the tape recorder. I should have let him have a rest and come back to it later; I think he would have been more talkative then. But he did know the major events in the plot and had made some good inferences about the characters. His resistance to talk about what he had read further emphasizes his overall disinterest in reading.*

**SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND NEEDS AND/OR OTHER COMMENTS**

*Jacob uses some good strategies to gain meaning from what he reads, but he is unaware that he is doing so. He is able to focus on the information that is necessary for comprehension, and skim over details that are not crucial for plot and character development. This strategy, while indicative of an intelligent and resourceful student, prevents him from truly engaging with a story. This could lead to further trouble later, as he may begin to rely too much on skimming and restructuring text. The result could be that he doesn't gain the deep meaning of what he reads.*

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN**

*It is crucial that Jacob find a text that engages his interest and helps him look past his pre-conceived idea that reading is "boring." He needs to experience a text and follow-up activities with other engaged readers, so he sees the results of getting into the story world. Literature circle groups, drama, and visually illustrating events from the story would help. Involving him in activities and discussion with his peers will provide Jacob with positive feedback about reading. It is also important for him to realize that he is a good reader and uses some excellent reading strategies. Encouraging metacognitive awareness of how he creates meaning would be extremely helpful. Activities like questioning the text, listening for his reading voices, visualizing the "movie in his head" as he reads would help him to become more aware of his skills and he would feel more confident. Allowing him some choice of reading material in school is a crucial part of the process of helping Jacob place a higher value on reading in school.*

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Reader Profile Summary Form (Continued).

Reader <i>Jacob</i>		Grade 7	Age 13
Date <i>1/23/2001</i>			
Text (selection) read: <i>The Odyssey: Book IX</i>			
Score(s), if desired			
Information from text		Inferences, predictions, and connections beyond the text	
<p>Important characters and character development  <i>Jacob knew that the protagonist was Ulysses and Noman, and that both names referred to the same character. He also recognized the Cyclops as the antagonist. He identifies U. as a hero because he “thinks of ways to get out of the cave and saving his people.”</i></p>		<p><i>He also identified Ulysses as a hero because he was “thinking of ways to get out of the cave and [save] his people.”</i></p>	
<p>Events and plot  <i>He told about the stabbing out of the Cyclops’ eye, and that Ulysses had to “spin” on the stick to get it in the eye. He recalled the details of Ulysses’ tricks: the wine, hiding under the sheep, the Noman name.</i></p>		<p><i>He recognized that Ulysses made some mistakes: going in the cave in the first place and yelling “how happy he was [to get away] and how stupid the Cyclops was.”</i></p>	
<p>Inferences about theme, larger meaning  <i>Jacob compares Ulysses to other heroic characters he has read about, calling Ulysses a “trickster.” He is particularly aware of the dichotomy of Ulysses’ craftiness on the one hand, but his obvious mistakes on the other.</i></p>			
<p>Other connections, predictions, comments  <i>Jacob never sympathized with the Cyclops because “he ate people.” Discussing the Cyclops and his motivation in a literature circle might allow him to develop some sympathy for the Cyclops’ situation. Unfortunately, Jacob makes it quite clear in the retelling that he would not read more of this if he could, and that the only exciting part of the story was the stabbing out of the Cyclops’ eye.</i></p>			
<p>Misconceptions  <i>Jacob struggled with the word “ewe,” and in the retelling confused it with another word. When he was questioned about the word specifically, he insisted that the word also contained an “m.” Obviously, he did not recognize the word as one he attempted to get during the oral reading. However, he didn’t seem to have misconceptions about the story events or characters.</i></p>			
<p>Teacher comments  <i>It is very encouraging that Jacob is able to recall specific details from the story and to infer much about the characters and their motivation. Unfortunately, he lacks motivation and seems to be trying to resist taking any interest in what he’s reading.</i></p>			

*Completed retelling and discussion notes (adapted from Y. Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987; Wilde, 2000; and Board, 1976).*

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literature as a participant. Because Jacob is a very active and social student, using elements of drama would appeal to him and perhaps inspire him to read more closely. Activities that might also appeal to Jacob include those involving visual arts, such as drawing, picture mapping, and creating collages or “Symbolic Story Representations” involving cutouts that represent characters, settings, and other key details of a text (Wilhelm, 1997). Such activities might encourage Jacob to read more closely for details.

Helping Jacob understand his own reading strategies, both their strengths and weaknesses, is another method to encourage his improvement as a reader. A teacher could help him think about how he is reading, encouraging metacognitive awareness of his approach to textual material. By understanding that he is transacting with text, that a “strategy” is an intentional plan he uses to make meaning as he reads, he could become a more active participant in the process. Cris Tovani in the book *I Can Read It, But I Don't Get It* (2000) suggests questioning activities, such as having students write “I wonder” poems in response to something they are reading, in order to stimulate reader awareness of meaning making. This particular activity encourages students to question a text, which helps them recognize their use of prior knowledge in comprehension and leads them to a deeper experience of reading. Encouraging Jacob to choose texts that interest him personally would enable him to generate questions he may unconsciously ask as he reads instead of forcing him to answer textbook questions that interrupt his inherent curiosity during the reading process.

Tovani also suggests that teachers point out to students that many people monitor their thinking in other activities, like sports or music, to improve their performance. This notion made good sense to Jacob; he had never considered that this strategy can also apply to reading. He knows what it means to be in “the zone” when he’s running, playing baseball, or wrestling, but he hadn’t considered it as a method of getting “into” reading.

Because Jacob loves to chat with friends and family on the computer, and is quite comfortable engaging in computer activities, I would also recommend capitalizing on Internet messaging systems to further emphasize reading strategies. Establishing a “reading buddy” online would encourage him to read and share his interpretation of a story via informal journal-style writing. An online reading buddy could be someone from another class, school, state, or even country. Roles similar to the Literature Circle roles could be assigned (or just assumed by reading buddies). Students could engage in real-time messaging through any messaging service (such as Microsoft Instant Messaging, AOL chat, or teacher-established threaded discussion software) or engage in discussion via e-mail.

The advantage of chatting is twofold: Jacob would have the forum for recording his own questions regarding a text, for summarizing, exploring meaning, and recording his observations in a format suitable for printing later. And because the buddies would have their ideas and impressions saved as informal written communication, writing assignments could be generated from the discussions that develop.

Of primary concern to us as educators is capitalizing on Jacob’s interests and attitudes in order to help him develop a more aesthetic stance toward reading. If he is ever to enjoy reading, it is crucial that he view reading as more than simply reading the prescribed text and answering the prescribed questions.

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