

Teachers as Mediators



Classroom Demonstrations

by Wendy Hood

That Story Makes Sense Now!

School started August 20th. On August 21st, it was Jo's turn to read to me. I handed her the book *Rain Rain* by Joy Cowley (*Ready to Read*, Wellington, New Zealand). The story is supported by detailed illustrations. As she read, I sat alongside her taking a miscue analysis of her reading. I noted each miscue Jo made as she read.

Once - yup tent

We went up the track

comes done

and the rain came down.

How puts up

We put up the tent

comes don't

and the rain came down.

mill

Dad cooked a meal

comes

and the rain came down.

© Now's-^{sum} p mom
"No sun," said mum.

"Too bad," said dad.

of out down

Off came our boots.

of out s-

Off came our socks.

people swimming

We paddled in the stream

keeps

and the rain came down.

Rain.

Rain.

Rain.

After she read, we discussed the story. "I didn't like it. It didn't make any sense," she said right off. "The words were silly."

Jo's reading and her response let me know that, although she had some useful reading strategies, at this point in second grade, seven-year-old Jo did not realize that all texts should make sense whenever she reads, nor did she seem to believe that it was within her grasp to create meanings from texts. While she was aware that a text that did not make sense was "silly," she did not deem it necessary to look for meaning in the text.

This informed my instructional decisions for Jo. She had a basic understanding of grapho-phonetic relationships (she basically controlled what sounds may be used for some letters), she had perseverance, yet she did not focus on meaning much at all. During my Language Arts time block, I worked with Jo and a few of her classmates in a homogeneous group in guided reading strategy lessons. Our focus was building meaning.

We read patterned language books predicting meaning based on picture cues and our own expertise. I chose books that had simple basic patterns with complex changes. Such as Joy Cowley's *Where Is Miss Pool?* In this short book,

a group of children are looking for their teacher. The line, "Where is Miss Pool?" repeats as the children look around the school. Place names, such as *playground* and *staffroom*, challenge the kids. The familiar context, clear illustrations, and repeated, natural language support them. "What could it say?" "What would you say?" "Does it say that?" and "How do you know?" are key questions I use to guide the small group members into sharing the strategies they use to probe the unknown. I don't push for perfection but rather keep the focus on meaning. When the kids refer to the teacher as Mrs. Pool, I say nothing. Later the text reveals, "She's at home in bed with a cold in her head." The following page shows a sick teacher at home surrounded by cards from students with the text, "Get well, Miss Pool. We miss you at school." At that point, we discuss the meaning and spelling differences between Ms., Miss, and Mrs.

I continued to work with Jo in small heterogeneous group about twice weekly throughout the year. This was by no means the only reading. As part of a well-balanced program, I did the guided reading, read to Jo, and encouraged her to read alone. We wrote and read a wide variety of genre daily. I monitored Jo's reading strategies throughout the year as well. By November, she was focusing on meaning, so I changed focus to build a wider repertoire of predicting strategies. In February, I saw a major change. Jo made many miscues, but most were corrected and all were meaning-related. When pictures were unavailable to support the text, Jo could be heard saying, "What should it say?" By April, Jo was able to read texts like Lobel's *Frog and Toad* or Mayer's *There's a Nightmare in My Attic* with ease. She even completed an *Amelia Bedelia* (Parish) and read through two *Nate the Great* (Sharaat) mysteries with a friend.

For a point of comparison, on April 30, I asked Jo to read *Rain Rain* to me again. She was happy to oblige:

trees

We went up the track

comes

and the rain came down.

We put up the tent

and the rain came down.

cooks the

Dad cooked a meal

and the rain came down.

"No sun," said mum.

© It bade says "It's come?"
"Too bad," said dad. looks at teacher
looks back

© Off came our boots.

© Off came our socks.

© We paddled in the stream

and the rain came down.

Rain.

Rain.

Rain.

"Hey," she said, "That story makes sense now. Did you know that I went camping with my mom and my dad and my brother and my uncle, and it rained the whole time, and we got soaked and then..."

→ See: Goodman, pp. 20, 53, 58, 59, 72, 73, 146, 147, 148.

Wendy Hood teaches second grade at Warren Elementary School in Tucson, AZ.

Book Note

Language and Learning



Marie Emmitt and John Pollock
1991; 198 pp.
Oxford: Oxford University Press Australia

A very complete book on its subject, *Language and Learning* examines the nature and functions of language to assist

teachers in decision-making processes and classroom practices. The authors present the theories and concepts most significant for teachers and discuss implications for their classroom use. Emmitt and Pollock encourage the reader to be involved in an interactive process of negotiating meaning while reading. After completing the book, readers should be able to construct their own theory of language and language learning. Topics the authors consider include: functions of language, language as a social process, semantics, communication, culture, language variation, linguistics and phonology, morphology and lexicology, syntax, and discourse analysis.

Terri Tarkoff

Book Note

Collaborative-Apprenticeship Learning: Language and Thinking Across the Curriculum, K-12



Ann Shea Bayer
1990; 146 pp.; \$12.95
Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen

For present and future teachers of language arts, reading, and writing, *Collaborative-Apprenticeship Learning* presents important ideas—such as

greater student responsibility for learning and heterogeneous class groupings—for educational change. While the theoretical base is broad, there is an emphasis on social learning as detailed in L. S. Vygotsky's writings. Specific strategies for changing the curriculum, planning within a specific content area, evaluation, and communicating results are discussed. Case studies, which include actual class discussions and written exercises, illustrate how the model works in classrooms from kindergarten through college.