
Foreword

Building Classroom Reading Communities: Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA) and Socratic Circles

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... we sought to involve the entire class in RMA discussions. (It is important to suggest "full" class, as this is one of the most vital points to our version of RMA.)

To put it mildly, those words captured my attention.

The search for a classroom community in which mixed-ability students are fully engaged in becoming better readers is a quest Rita Moore and Vicki Seeger pursued and now share in these pages. Through the use of Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA) within a classroom community of Socratic Circles (SC), the authors lead us in the investigation of an exciting literacy experience for readers. They help us consider ways of inviting students to explore their language, ways of motivating readers to pose and ponder questions, and even ways of including parents in the experience.

RMA grew out of Kenneth Goodman's research into students' reading and his consequent theory that reading is a meaning-making literacy event. RMA is grounded in Goodman's work and developed by Yetta Goodman as an *evaluation tool* in which readers participate in the examination of their

attempts to make meaning from a variety of texts. RMA is also an *inquiry strategy* that engages readers in the investigation of their strengths and needs. Within the social context of SCs, thought-provoking conversations emerge about text and involve students in helping themselves and their peers become more insightful readers by way of supportive questioning and discussions about their reading. SCs help students become aware that there is more than one way of tackling a problem and to understand that sometimes answering a question by asking a related question helps them think for themselves rather than waiting for the teacher to tell them what and how to think.

By bringing together the two powerful strategies of RMA and SCs, the authors unite a means and a setting by which creative thinking and critical reflection can emerge. Through RMA, students pay attention to and value their own past and current life experiences, especially their reading experiences, and they relate their prior knowledge with new knowledge they are gaining. Within the safe and inviting SCs, there are no longer invisible students, *all* readers are free to question themselves and their peers, to search for connections to other texts, connections across the curriculum, and to do something they may never have considered doing in the past—to question authors' writing styles, vocabulary, and points of view.

Through reflection and discussion of their reading abilities and problems, students become more serious and sensitive readers. With the help of each other and their teacher, they realize that as they investigate their reading, *strategies for making sense of what and how they are reading* become increasingly evident and usable. In addition to becoming aware of their growing power as readers, students also realize why and how their ability is increasing, and they are eager to share their newly gained knowledge and successes with others. The ability to articulate what they are doing gives students a firmer handle on the reading process. Similarly, RMA within SCs helps teachers clarify and articulate their curricular strategies, consequently strengthening themselves as teachers and researchers of the reading process and literacy curriculum.

The authors present powerful and telling vignettes in which we see students seeking the opinions of their classmates, and as a result, unraveling puzzling reading issues. Within SCs children seek and offer insightful advice based on their own struggles and successes with reading. We see students developing sharper listening skills, consequently increasing their respect for the abilities and needs of others. The vignettes show a growing democratic community in which students are eager to participate and are at all times respectful of others.

We know, through Ken Goodman's research followed by the research of myriads of educators, that with the understanding of miscue analysis

comes the realization that we will never view reading in the same way again. Our authors propose that when we experience the combined power of RMA and SCs, we may never teach in the same way again.

Rita and Vicki have ventured into a challenging and creative learning experience in which important cognitive and social abilities are fostered and celebrated. Through the pages of their book, they invite all educators (preservice, special education, and classroom teachers; administrators, teacher educators, researchers, and parents) to join them in a stimulating and thought-provoking experience.