

## **Appendix D: Selecting texts for RMI and RMA**

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Finding and selecting appropriate materials for personal and instructional reading for RMI and RMA purposes takes a great deal of knowledge about the readers and the uses for the material. The selection of reading materials for the purposes of evaluation and instruction should be central in discussions about RMI and RMA. Teachers and students should be consciously aware of this important aspect of reading. It is useful to hold discussions in teacher education programs, among all the teachers involved and the students throughout the grades, about the importance of thoughtful selection of reading material that is of interest to and serves the needs of readers.

In relation to selecting materials, we use concepts of accessibility as well as focusing on natural, predictable, familiar, and complex language. These terms need to be considered based on knowing as much as possible about the reader and how these concepts relate to readers' background knowledge, experiences, interests and capabilities.

### **Choice**

Avid readers spend time selecting materials that are right for their purposes. They know which bookstores that have selections they like. They frequent libraries and other places where books and magazines are plentiful. The books and magazines that avid readers would purchase for themselves should be offered to all students as well. Classroom, school and community libraries should be rich with a range of print and digital materials.

Visiting reading recovery sites in New Zealand, Yetta was part of a textbook selection experience that involved classroom teachers. The teachers were sitting at a large table piled with recently published books. Teachers working collaboratively based on the age of their students or the content/subject matter areas they taught read and selected books for their classroom and school libraries. As they read, they began to categorize the features of the books they thought would be best for their students. These criteria became the rubrics used to establish a sense of readability for the books. They developed their own labels to represent the difficulty of the

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books. Later in their classrooms, some teachers worked in a similar vein with their students and even developed their own labels. In this way, the students were better able to understand the teachers' categories and the issues surrounding what makes reading material hard or easy.

Some classroom libraries had books organized on shelves labeled *Easy to Read*, *Just Right*, and *A Challenge but Worth It*. Being involved in such an experience lead students to understand why libraries have categories for book selection and how different categorical systems have been organized over the years. Librarians are invited to discuss these issues with students.

Readability formulas have been developed by individual scholars and publishing companies over the years to support teachers and parents in selecting material for students. In order to be computerized, such formulas have included simplistic information such as the number of words and sentences, the ratio of hard words to easy words, the number of syllables in words, etc. These formulas provide some information but do not focus on the two aspects of book selection that are most important to learners: how the material relates to what the individual reader is interested in and how the material relates to the knowledge and capability of the reader to allow connections between the reader's background and the content of the material.

## Material to Answer Questions Raised by the Student and/or by Assignments

When we first started working with teachers, we provided lists of children's books that related to students' interests. We stopped doing that when we discovered that there were so many such lists available on the Internet. For example, when one student or a group of students want to know about basketball, we can use the Internet to find basketball reading lists or children's literature on friendship.

## Developmental Interest

Based on teachers' and students' intuition and experience it is possible to determine if the story or content is likely to appeal to readers. Texts are selected that focus on topics or characters of interest to the students and appropriate for

the age group. A picture book with humor or irony may be a good selection for older students who need an “easier” text. Many picture books, especially in the content areas, have sophisticated information about science, history, and other subject matter that older students find useful. A younger child who is reading at a more “advanced” level still needs a topic or plot appropriate for his/her age group. Adolescents don’t tend to enjoy stories as much if they are about older adults.

### **Predictability:**

Texts that contain natural story language, that have inviting illustrations, and that are interesting and meaningful for the reader tend to be more predictable and accessible. Keep in mind the things in each of the following areas that make texts more for predictable for the reader:

- Language
- Experience/conceptual background
- Interest
- Meaningfulness for the reader
- Illustration, diagrams, photos, etc.

### **Personal Preference:**

Interview students or students can interview each other to discover how they respond to the following aspects of the texts for selection:

- Genre
- Topic
- Style
- Media (is reading on a tablet, laptop or phone preferred over paper books or magazines?)

### **Texts That Typically Work Well:**

- Picture books

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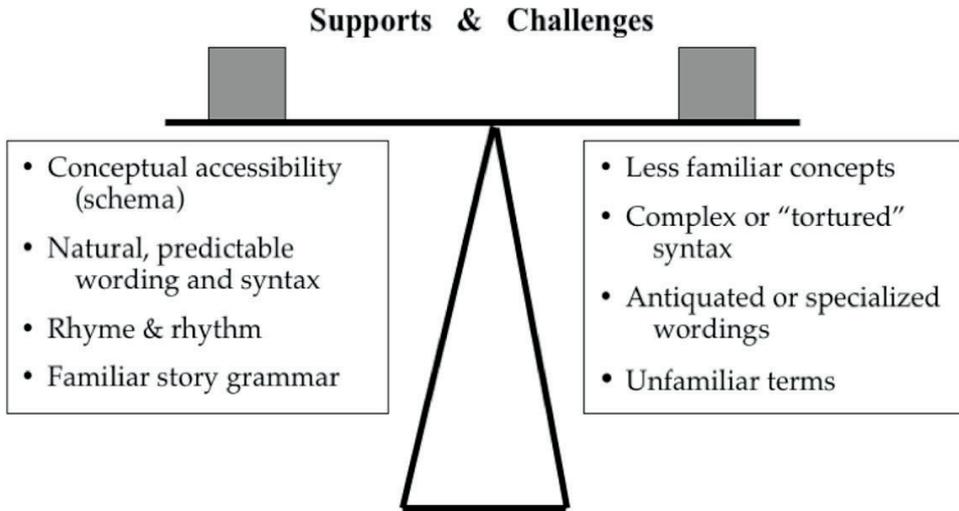
- Complete short stories
- Informative articles on relevant topics
- Folk tales with several concrete events
- Plays that might lend themselves to collaborative RMA

### Texts That Don't Typically Work Well for Miscue Analysis (especially for the initial sessions):

- Book chapters. A chapter excerpted from a book is usually not suitable, especially when it occurs later in a book. Book chapters generally don't "stand alone" because there are often too many characters who may have been introduced in earlier chapters, or events that are mentioned and not explained that are relevant to the meaning. All things considered, whole, stand-alone texts work best.
- Texts that rhyme
- Abridged texts
- Unfamiliar topics
- Texts only about adult characters used with young children
- Controlled vocabulary texts ("artificial" texts written solely for instructional purposes)

### Supports and Challenges:

- Readers may find reading uninteresting and less engaging if the text does not offer any sort of challenge to them. When selecting a text, the idea is to strike a balance between the aspects of texts that "support" meaning construction and those that "challenge" a reader just enough to push a reader slightly beyond the comfort level (Clay, 1972; Y. Goodman, 1982; Mooney, 2004).



It is useful to involve the readers in discussions about selecting books related to the above categories and to expand on the categories. This provides teachers with greater insight into the selection process