

A CLASSROOM GUIDE TO

PETER H. REYNOLDS'S

creatrilogy



sky color

• the dot • ish



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A Message from the Author-Illustrator

I'm thrilled that the books in my Creatrilogy — *The Dot*, *Ish*, and *Sky Color* — have found their way into the hands of educators. But I'm even happier that people have understood that the messages go well beyond art. All three stories provide encouragement for children — and grown-up children — to discover, explore, and develop their voice and express it in a unique way. It takes courage to do that, unfettered by self-doubt, unproductive feedback, or preconceived ideas.

The Dot is about getting started — getting unstuck. It is also about creative teaching, exploring an idea in many ways, and sharing our gifts with others.

Ish is about not getting squashed by the opinions of others and finding the vocabulary to defend your ideas. I use the Ish Approach with kids to help them relax in order to express themselves. Ish-ful strategies can allow art, writing, or problem-solving to flow creatively. You can't become better at something you don't do.

Sky Color is about developing perspective, examining the world from varying points of view, thinking outside the box, and pushing yourself to the next level. The star, Marisol, is very confident in her artistic ability, but she comes to an important revelation after she is inspired to move beyond learned conventions by observing the world more mindfully.

I hope the suggested activities in this guide will serve as a springboard for you and your students to explore and celebrate creative self-expression — and to be brave enough to share your voices with the world. **So make your mark and see where it takes you!**

Wishing you a most creative journey,

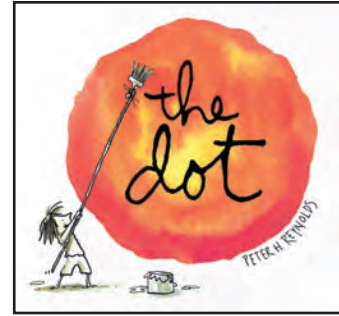


Photo by Gretje Ferguson

Peter H. Reynolds is a *New York Times* best-selling illustrator who has created many acclaimed books for children. He is the author-illustrator of *Rose's Garden*, *The North Star*, *So Few of Me*, *The Smallest Gift of Christmas*, and *Playing from the Heart*, as well as the illustrator of Megan McDonald's Judy Moody and Stink series. Born in Canada, Peter H. Reynolds now lives in Dedham, Massachusetts.

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Classroom Ideas for the dot



HC: 978-0-7636-1961-9

**Celebrate International Dot Day
on September 15!**

For more details, visit www.thedotclub.org.

This is a rough sketch of possible ways to introduce and follow up on *The Dot*. Feel free to adapt it to your grade level. Have fun!

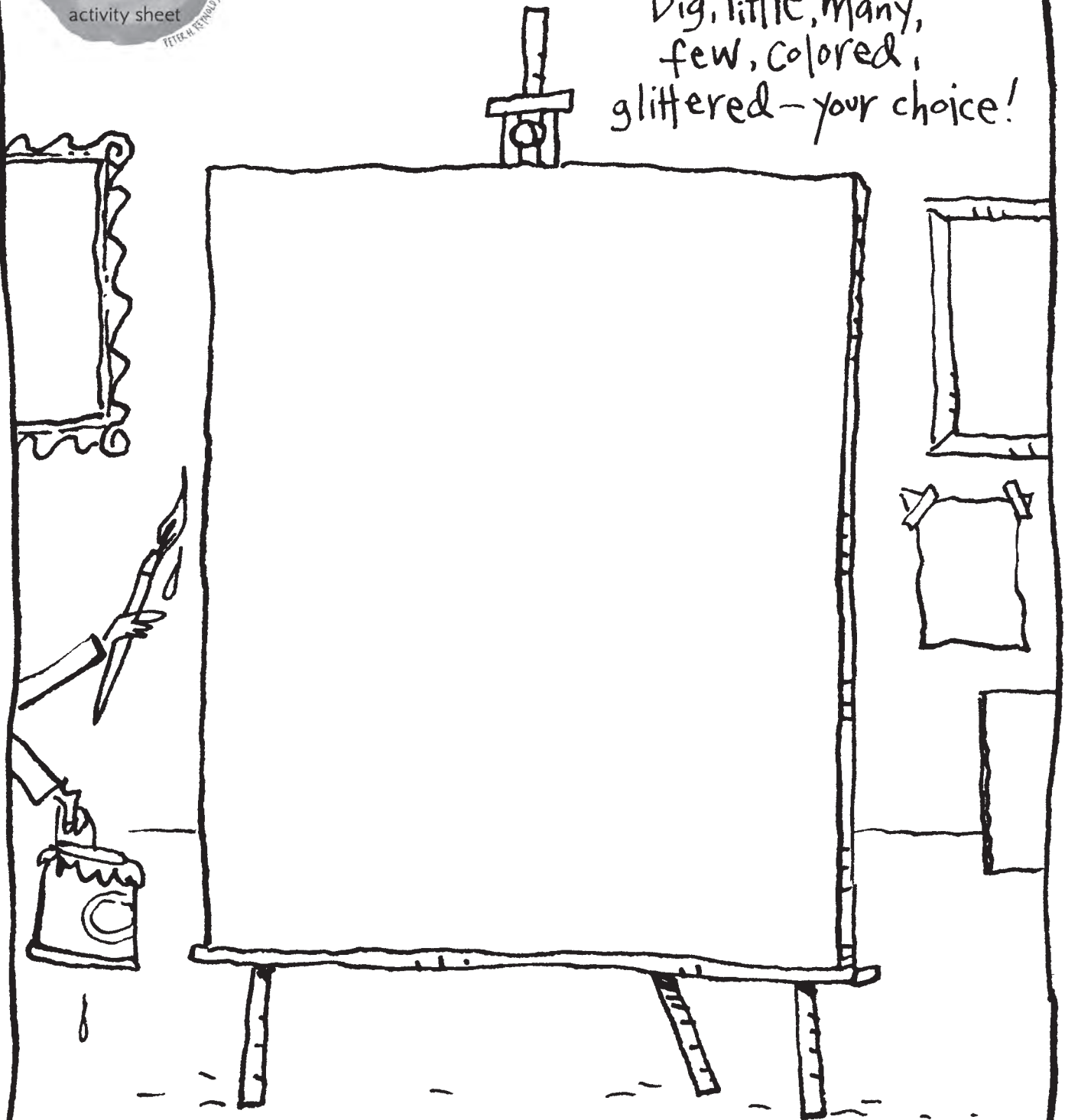
- Before reading the book, have a talk with your students about how we feel when we are starting something new. (This is especially apt at the beginning of the school year.)
- How do we feel when things seem difficult to do?
- Ask how many students like to draw.
- Tell them you are going to read a story about a girl who does not think she is good at drawing and what happens to her when she goes to art class.
- Follow the reading with a discussion about the story.
- Pass out large dots (paper circles) to your students and have them write their names on them, as well as some activities they enjoy.
- Have the students draw dots on the reproducible easel page provided. They can then carefully cut out their dots and paste them into their own swirly gold (or any color!) frame on the next reproducible page.
- Invite your students to choose another shape or object. Have them explore this idea by making as many different versions of the same thing, varying size, color, or texture, using negative space, etc.
- Provide your students with blank-page journals for them to "make a mark" in every day (a word, a picture, something funny that happened that day, a doodle, a squiggle, a dot!).

One dot
can launch the
journey.
↓



Make your mark! Make your own dot!

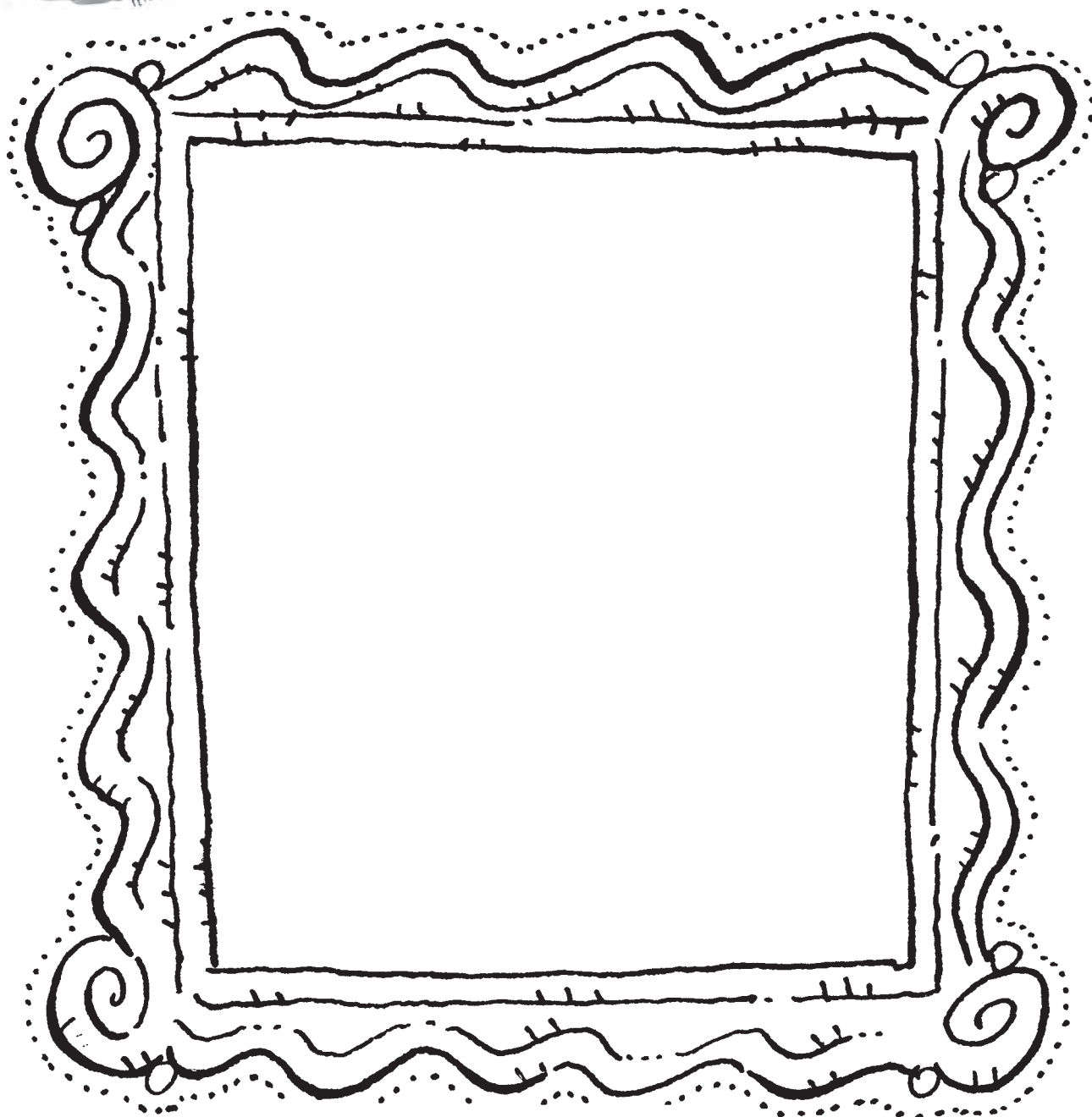
Big, little, many,
few, colored,
glittered—your choice!



Be sure to sign and date your work! Peter



Here's a swirly frame for your creation!



Cut out the frame, add your art,
and hang it up to share.

Classroom Ideas for *ish*



HC: 978-0-7636-2344-9

This is an Ish-ish list of possible ways to introduce and follow up on *Ish*. Feel free to adapt it to your grade level. Have fun!

The Squiggle-ish Game: Have two students each squiggle a line for the other and trade sheets of paper. Then ask them to make a drawing from the line their partner made. They can add some paint, cut out their images, and mount them on a darker piece of paper. Be sure to have BOTH artists sign their name to each finished drawing.

Ishing — Not Dishing: After reading the book, discuss what Leon could have said to Ramon to be kinder. Have your students heard people say hurtful things about someone's art or their attempt to try something new? Brainstorm some things you can say to encourage rather than discourage.

Ishful Portraits: Have the whole class create ishful self-portraits, or have pairs do portraits of each other. Label them ishfully; for example, Peter-ish or Wanda-ish.

Ishful Gallery: Start a gallery of art that is ishful. For example, print out a Picasso portrait — you can label it "Face-ish." Look online using a search like "abstract boat" or "Greek painting boat" or "children face art," print out the images, and add them to the gallery. Ask the class what each one is. Students will learn to see patterns, be more imaginative, be more generous in their interpretations, be less literal, and develop open minds.



Ishful Feelings: Brainstorm moods. Have students select a mood to paint or draw. Label them ishfully; for example, stubborn-ish or happy-ish.

Ish Upon a Star: Have each student draw a star on a note card, paint it, and sign their name. Then glue them all to a big banner, creating a night sky. You can label it "When You Ish Upon a Star." Ask students if there are two stars that are exactly the same. Then discuss what a real star is. What does it look like? Show images from www.nasa.gov of real stars and ask the class if their stars look like the photos. Let them discover that their drawings are actually star-ish!



fish-ish

Ishful Poems: Read Ramon's poem from the book and some poems that don't rhyme or have innovative structure. Have students brainstorm their favorite words. Perhaps those words will trigger some ishful poetry. Magnetic poetry is also helpful for ishing up a good poem.

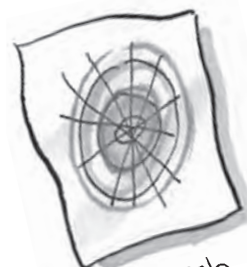
Ishful Math: Estimation is a skill students will use throughout their lives. Show the class photographs of groups of items, but only for a few seconds. Then ask students to estimate how many items were in the image. For example, how many chickens in the farmyard? Perhaps a dozen-ish? The number of muffins in a bakery store window — a hundred-ish? The number of people in a baseball stadium — twenty thousand-ish?



tree-ish

If a student is stumped in math class, encourage them to put down an "answer-ish." If they show you some work or an answer, even if it is wrong, they will have provided you with something to help you see the pattern of their thinking. This will give you some insight into how you might be able to help them.

Ishful Science: Show the class images of familiar animals. Then begin showing some that are less familiar and ask students to identify them. If they are unsure, encourage them to use ishful thinking: monkey-ish, raccoon-ish, etc. Write down their ishful names and then discuss the possible connections between the animals — is that leopard-ish animal related to a leopard somehow? This kind of thinking allows scientists to make an educated guess or hypothesis, which is one step of the scientific method.

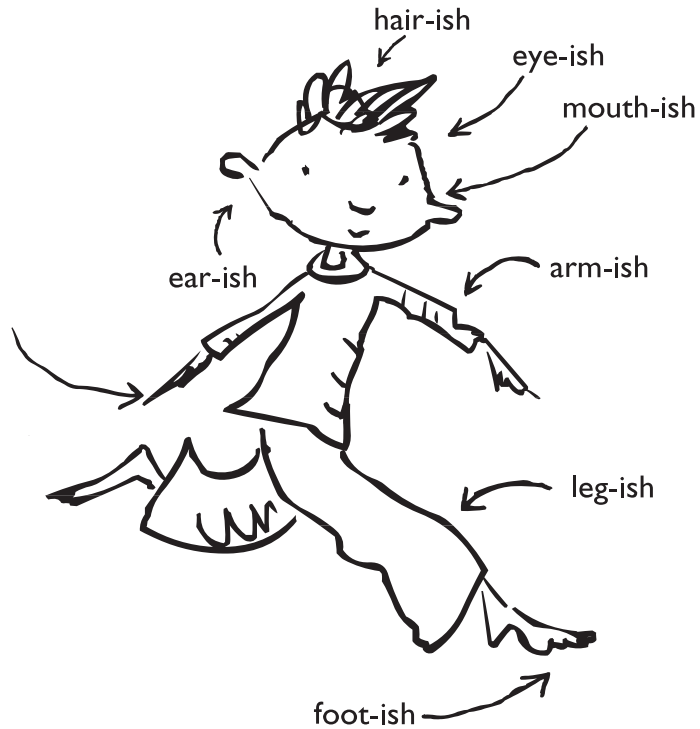


sun-ish



This is an ishful boy.

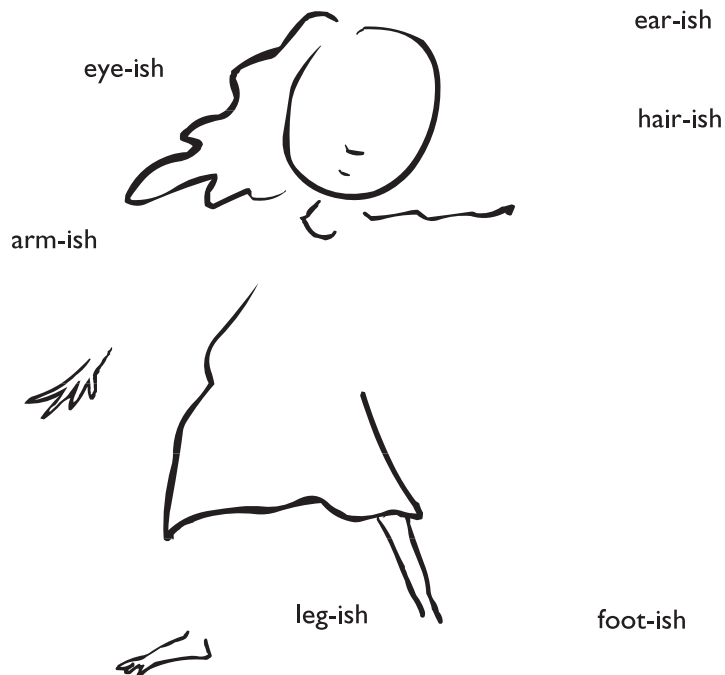
Is this a hand?
It looks like a
squiggle, but we're
sure it's a hand
because it's at the
end of his arm!
It is a hand-ish!



If you'd like to, paint this ishful boy.
Paint on him or around him.



Fin-ish this ishful girl.





Relax. Have fun.

Draw your own versions of what Ramon drew.

tree-ish

house-ish

boat-ish

afternoon-ish

fish-ish

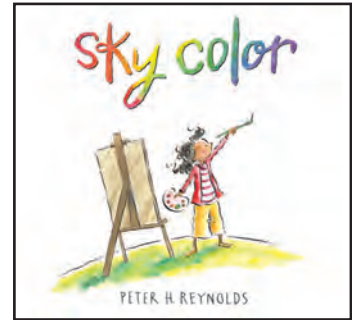
sun-ish

peace-ish

excited-ish

What other things can you draw ishfully? Try writing a poem-ish about your ishful art!

Classroom Ideas for sky color



HC: 978-0-7636-2345-6

Here are some ideas on how to think colorfully in the classroom.

Apple Color

Before reading the book, pass out crayons and paper and ask students to draw and color an apple. Move this along quickly, since the point of the exercise is to get kids to give their knee-jerk response to the prompt. Don't answer any "Am I doing this right?" questions. Be sure to have students sign their work.

After you've finished reading the story, pose this simple question: "What color is an apple?" Most kids will immediately blurt out "RED." Wait a few seconds, and students will gradually launch into a much more expansive list of colors: yellow, green-speckled, and so on. Watch as they smile and laugh at their own "aha!" moment. It's a beautiful thing.

As a science experiment that ties in to this activity, ask kids to bring in real apples and see how many different colors they can be. Photograph the apples, including close-ups of the apple skin. Cut the apples in half and examine the colors of each apple's interior. A quick response might be that an apple is white inside, but when kids observe more closely (a trait of a good scientist), they will most likely notice a green or yellow tinge. Have them look at the color of the seeds, and ask them to observe what begins to happen to the flesh as the sliced apple is left exposed. It becomes beige and brown. Document this process with more photos—and invite kids to write in journals—to describe the apples' changes in color. Leave the apple for a few weeks and have kids notice the colors again. You can even compile the images into a slide show and share them with the world!

Sky Journal

Marisol notices how the sky changes color as the sun sets and how the sky isn't blue at all during the night or on a rainy day. Have your students use the reproducible sky journal provided to track the colors of the sky at various intervals. They can simply write about what they see or they can take or draw pictures. Students may want to approach this project in different ways, such as taking a series of sunset photos or photographing the sky every five minutes. You can adapt this activity for observations over a week, month, or year. The key here is to encourage mindfulness about the myriad color possibilities that are beyond basic blue sky.

Color Mix

How many colors are there in the world? How many colors are visible with the human eye? What are the three primary colors? What happens when we mix colors? What are secondary colors? This topic provides an opportunity for rich discussion and exploration.



Ocean Color

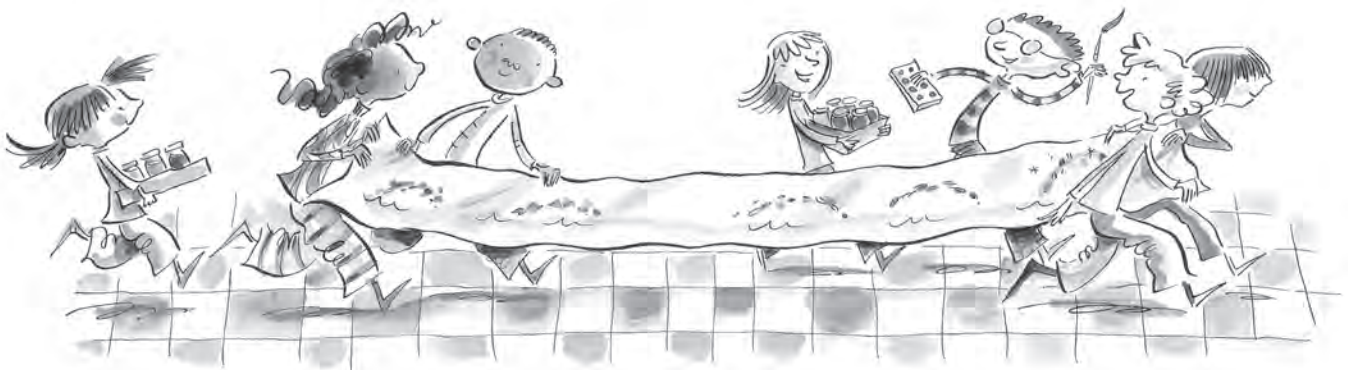
After reading the book, ask students to talk about the color of the ocean. The discussion will help kids move beyond the expected ("the ocean is blue") and explore the notion that the ocean—and other bodies of water—can be many different colors. A murky river leading into an ocean will cause blooms of brown coloration. A stormy sea can churn up the sea bottom, making the water appear grayish. As a class, try to find photos, drawings, and paintings of different bodies of water: oceans, lakes, rivers, puddles, a glass of water, and so on.

Ask students how this activity is similar to Marisol's *Sky Color* dilemma. Have they discovered lots of different colors? Did they find any examples of an artist's interpretation of water to be surprising? Why? If water is actually colorless, how can it appear to have so many colors?

Class Mural

In the book, the students are asked to paint a mural for the school library. Begin this activity by asking the class what a mural is. Ask for examples that students may have seen or heard about.

Together, brainstorm a theme for your own mural. It could tie in to whatever curriculum topic you are currently studying (such as the seasons, the solar system, or ecosystems), or it could deliver critical messages that move beyond the curriculum—social justice, anti-bullying, encouraging creativity, and so on. Use a long roll of paper—either butcher paper or white artist paper works well. Divide the class into groups and assign them various sections to work on. This activity not only allows students to experience *Sky Color*'s story in a personally relevant way, but also encourages communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.



Color of the Day

Host a weeklong series of "Color of the Day" events to celebrate a different color each day. Have children come to school dressed in the color of the day and maybe eat a food of that color as well. This is an opportunity to discuss the health benefits of "eating the rainbow." Celebrate the color throughout the day by playing various games and activities, such as a color treasure hunt in which you have the children search for items matching the color of the day, then collect the gathered objects in one place and notice all the differences in that one color. Another idea is to use only the color of the day when writing or drawing, such as a red marker or crayon for the whole day on Red Day. Challenge the class to paint pictures using various shades of the day's color.

I Feel Colorful

Ask children if they've ever heard someone say that he or she "feels blue." What does that mean? How does a color describe how a person might feel? Explain that sometimes a person who is jealous is called "green with envy." Brainstorm various moods and emotions and ask children to describe what color they identify with that mood. Does excited equal fuchsia? Does calm equal yellow? Then challenge children to use the attached reproducible to draw and write about their mood and the colors that best represent it.





Sky Journal



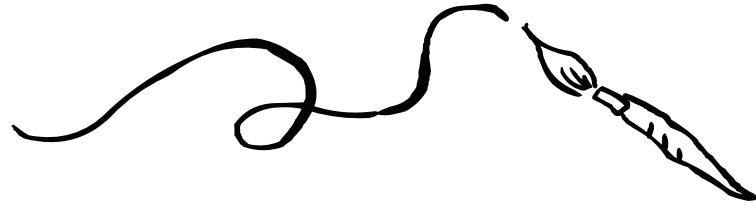
MORNING

AFTERNOON

EVENING

Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			

I Feel Colorful



Today my mood is _____.

The color (or colors) that best fits my mood is

because _____

This is me in my colorful mood: