The Dot

By Peter H. Reynolds
Text Type: Fiction: Narrative—Realistic Story

Summary: This book shows how an intuitive teacher provides a student with the confidence to create and express herself through her art. In turn, this student shows confidence in another student.

Text Features
• quotation marks
• exclamation marks
• text in childlike printings

Visual Literacy
• simple illustrations
• words in capital letters
• environmental print

Strategy Teaching
• integrated throughout the lesson
• prompts focus on a range of strategies (Analyzing, Sequencing, Making Connections, Predicting, Inferring, Synthesizing, Evaluating, Self-Monitoring]
• the comprehension purpose for listening highlights Analyzing/making connections

Assessment Opportunities
Note each student’s ability to:
• attend to story reading
• participate in partner and whole-class discussions
• understand the inquiry question
• make connections between Vashti’s experiences and their own experiences in
• expressing themselves through art

Time: approximately 30–35 minutes

BEFORE READING

Establishing the Inquiry Focus
• Explain that you will read to the students a book that shows how one little girl expressed herself through her art, her words, and her body language.

• Show students the front cover of the dot and read the title and the name of the author. Discuss the picture. [Analyzing/making connections/predicting]
• Point to the way the author’s name is printed around the outside of the dot. Tell the students that the title page is also written in an interesting way and you will show them that page, as well.

• Show the students the back cover. Discuss the reason for the same illustration of the dot. [Predicting]

**Activating and Building Background Knowledge**

• Ask students what they like to draw at home or in art class. Ask students to turn and tell a partner one thing they like to draw. [Making connections]

**Setting a Purpose for Reading**

• Ask students to listen to find out about a little girl who did not think she could draw anything and what happens. [Analyzing/making connections]

**DURING READING**

• This book has such interesting but simple illustrations that you will want to pause frequently (every page) to discuss what the girl and her teacher say, and the illustrations that show their body language. Alternate between asking students to discuss as a whole group and with partners.

• Prompts for discussion include:
  - What feeling is Vashti expressing through her body language? [Analyzing/making connections]
  - Why do you think the teacher said Vashti’s drawing was a 'polar bear in a snowstorm'? [Inferring]
  - How is Vashti feeling when she jabs the paper? What body language tells us that? What in the illustration shows us action? [Making connections/analyzing]
  - How does the teacher encourage Vashti to draw? [Synthesizing/analyzing]
  - How does Vashti change over the week? [Synthesizing/analyzing]
  - What do you notice about the change in her body language? [analyzing]
  - What are the changes in what she says? [Analyzing/synthesizing]
  - Where do you see her doing her drawing? Why do you think she changes where she is drawing? [Analyzing/inferring]
  - What two colours make purple? [Analyzing]
  - What does Vashti put on each of her pieces of artwork? [Analyzing]
  - What do you think will happen when the little boy says, ‘I can’t draw a straight line with a ruler’? [Predicting]
  - As Vashti is looking at the little boy’s squiggle, what do you think she will say? [Predicting]
  - How do you think Vashti was feeling at the end of the story? How can you tell? [Synthesizing/inferring]
AFTER READING

- Invite students to work with a partner to discuss Vashti, the artist. [Analyzing/synthesizing]

- As a class, discuss the way the teacher helped Vashti begin to draw. [Analyzing/synthesizing]

- Provide students with a piece of paper and a variety of crayons or paints and have them draw or paint something using only dots. Encourage them to try something different with their dots.

- Ask students to share their work in small groups.

- Display each student’s picture and discuss the different ways that the dot and the colours were used.

FURTHER READINGS

- You may decide to explore some other visual resources before you reread the dot (e.g., those suggested in the following section, Extending the Inquiry, or others you find).

- When you reread the dot, emphasize visual and textual comprehension. Ask students to think about the display of Vashti’s art and if it was effective. [Evaluating/inferring]

- Discuss comprehension of vocabulary concepts, e.g., ‘glued to the chair,’ ‘watercolours,’ ‘made a splash,’ or ‘squiggle.’
EXTENDING THE INQUIRY

Young students explore and research in multiple ways. Consider using some of the following suggestions to extend the inquiry.

- Provide objects that are a ‘dot’ shape (e.g., lids of jars, coasters, paper cups, or anything in a circle) for students to use to draw and cut out. Have them make collages on a page. They can create different dot shapes out of different colours and materials (e.g., magazines, cloth, construction paper).

- Display the collages. Discuss how the students expressed themselves by how they designed their page. Have student partners discuss why they chose that particular display and how they felt about it.

- Read other books about expressing oneself through art to your students and place them in the reading centre so that students can look through them individually or with a partner. Encourage students to talk about their learning and to ask questions. Suggestions include:
  - *Augustine* by Mélanie Watt: Kids Can Press, 2008 (Fiction: a penguin moves and misses all her familiar things and friends, but she uses art to discover how to express herself and break the ice with her new classmates)
  - *The Cloud* by Hannah Cumming: Child’s Play (International) Ltd., 2010 (Fiction: a quiet, withdrawn girl in art class appears to have a cloud over her head, but one determined classmate helps her come out of herself as they work on an art piece together)
  - *Beautiful Oops!* by Barney Saltzberg: Workman Publishing, 2010 (Fiction: a mistake creates something beautiful, encouraging artistic expression)