I wrote and illustrated *The Dot* and *Ish* as a way to help children and “grown-up children” be brave enough to “make their mark.” While the books are about art, they really are about process — about ideas, creative thinking, bravery, expression, original ideas, and sharing.

*The Dot* is about getting started — getting “un-stuck.” It is also about creative teaching, about exploring an idea in many ways, and sharing our gifts with others. Once you get rolling, there is a potential of getting “squashed,” which is what *Ish* is about. *Ish* aims to help give young and old alike some vocabulary to defend their ideas. I use the “Ish Approach” with kids and “grown up” people because sometimes people can’t find words or phrasing to say what they have in mind. When that happens, I ask them to draw what they are thinking about. This is how we can make our ideas clearer. I have found that when people draw or paint, they are more likely to see new ideas and to think more about what they are really trying to say.

I hope my books will encourage and inspire you as you nurture the creative spirit in your classroom — and in yourself. In this guide, you'll find ideas, materials, and activities that can act as a springboard to your own experience of *The Dot* and *Ish* in your classroom. Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg, and I hope that, like Vashti and Ramon, you'll be inspired to keep going as you explore and play with these themes. I'd love to hear from you. Feel free to drop me a note and share!

Wishing you a wonderful teaching and learning journey,

Peter H. Reynolds

*FROM THE AUTHOR:*

*The Dot* and *Ish* have won numerous awards and received countless accolades.

**The Dot**
- The Christopher Award
- Irma S. and James H. Black Honor — Bank Street College of Education
- Chapman Awards for Best Classroom Read-Alouds
- Chicago Public Library Best Books for Children and Teens
- Book Links Lasting Connections Winner

**Ish**
- Publisher’s Weekly Cuffie award for “Favorite Book to Handsell”

**Purchasing Information**

*The Dot* and *Ish* are available wherever books are sold and through educational distributors nationwide.

For a list of educational distributors, many of which give discounts to teachers, please go to www.edupaperback.org and select “Children’s Book Distributors.”

ISBN: 0-7636-2344-X • $14.00

For more ideas go to www.peterhreynolds.com
This is an Ish-ful girl.

This is an Ish-ful boy.

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Relax. Have fun. 

Draw your own versions of what Ramon drew.

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

Make your mark! Make your own dot!

(itty-bitty, many, few, colorful, BIG, little, many)

Teachers: Photocopy this page to share with your students.

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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. (Try it with adults too!) Have fun!

• The Squiggle-ish Game:
  Play this with a partner. Squiggle a line for each other, trade sheets of paper and now try to make a drawing from the line your partner made. Relax, have fun, and use your imagination. Make a collage of the finished drawings. Then, glue it out and mount it 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, *Ish*, discuss what Leon could have said to Ramon to be kinder. Have you 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:
  Create an ish-ful self-portrait. Have the whole class do this. You can also partner up and do a portrait of your partner and them do an ishful portrait of you that is ishful. For example, “Peter-ish,” “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.” Try searching on the web using a search like “Abstract boat” or “Greek painting boat” or “Children face art”, print them out and show them to the class. Ask what each one is. Students will learn to see patterns, be more imaginative, be more generous in their interpretations, be less literal, develop open minds.

• Ishful Feelings:
  Brainstorm moods. Have students select a mood to paint or draw. Label them ishfully. Ex. “Happy-ish” etc.

• Ish Upon a Star:
  Have each student draw a star on a notecard. Have them paint them. Label them with their names. Then glue them to a big banner creating a constellation with your real stars. Ask if their star looks like the photo. Let them discover that their drawing is actually star-ish!

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

• Ishful Math:
  Estimation is a life-long learning skill. Show groups of items in photographs for about five seconds. For example: How many chickens? Perhaps, a dozen-ish? The number of people in a baseball stadium. The number of miles in a day. The number of minutes in an hour. If students don’t know the number of people in a baseball stadium, try counting the number of columns on a page. The number of students in this room. Ask students to estimate how many there are. Then, ask if they have an ishful feeling about it. If so, ask them to explain why. The number of stars on a blanket. If students have an ishful feeling, explain it to them. They will have provided you something to help you see the pattern of their thinking. This will give you something to help you see the pattern of their thinking. This will give you some insight into their thinking and how you might be able to help them.

• Ishful Science:
  Show images of familiar animals. Then begin showing ones that are less familiar. Ask students to identify them. If they are unsure, encourage them to use ishful thinking. This kind of thinking allows scientists to make educated guesses or “hypothesis” which starts off the scientific method.