

It is often said that life is a journey. But sometimes it's hard to know which path to follow when signs point in so many directions. In *The North Star*, Peter H. Reynolds encourages readers to observe, to wonder, and to consider diverging from the well-worn path to pursue their dreams. Certainly every teacher hopes that his or her students will find the best path for themselves, and these classroom activities are designed to support that goal in fun and inspired ways.

Book Talk

The North Star is the sort of book that offers a lot of jumping-off points—layers of meaning that can be uncovered through thoughtful questions and dialogue.

Here are some questions you might use to start a conversation with the class:

Why does the book end with “The Beginning” instead of “The End”?

What is strange about some of the signs the boy finds along the path?

Why doesn't the frog follow the boy out of the swamp?

What things does the boy like? What is the shape of his constellation?

If the book had a sequel, what do you think would happen next?

What inspires you on *your* journey? *Who* inspires you? What are you good at?

1. Have students create their own questions and lead discussions in small groups. Encourage creativity and critical thinking by asking students to add “What if?” questions.
2. Have the groups share their lists of questions and some of their discussion points as a whole class.

Special Talents Scavenger Hunt

Starting the year with the “Special Talents Scavenger Hunt” helps students learn about their new classmates’ interests and talents.

1. Begin by asking your student-navigators to make a list that includes their favorite subject at school, a favorite game or sport, something they like to do at home, and something they would like to learn how to do. For example:
 - My favorite subject is math.
 - I play baseball.
 - I collect foreign coins.
 - I want to learn to skateboard.
2. Invite students to compare lists with their classmates. Have them find fellow navigators whose responses match theirs, as well as those who have different responses. In doing so, they will begin to learn about one another's special talents.
3. To extend the project, have students draw a self-portrait and write a story or paragraph about themselves. Don't forget to date and save it in their portfolios!

At the end of the year, repeat this activity so that students can see how much they have grown and changed in the course of a year.

Hemisphere Project

Creating a *North Star* Hemisphere is a fun way to help foster social skills and build a positive community in your classroom.

1. Begin by having students brainstorm a list of good behaviors that promote a desirable learning environment.
2. Reach a consensus with students as to which behaviors are the most important, and narrow the list down to ten or twelve.
3. Have children work in pairs to create an island out of construction paper. Assign each pair one of the behaviors from the list to use as a name for their island, such as the Isle of Listening. Have them label their islands accordingly.
4. Glue the islands in the center of a large sheet of blue paper and outline them in gold glitter. Explain that this group of islands will be called the Golden Archipelago and that it is among these islands that they will find smooth sailing and do their best work.
5. Now brainstorm with the class a list of negative behaviors and attitudes that interrupt learning in the classroom.
6. Have students repeat steps 3 and 4 above, this time naming their islands with negative behaviors, such as the Inconsiderate Volcano. Explain that this second group of islands will be known as the Lost Islands.
7. Glue the Lost Islands in a circle around the outer edges of the "Hemisphere" (the large blue sheet of paper).
8. Finally, have each student create a Navigator Ship and write his or her name on it. Attach these ships onto the Hemisphere using double-sided tape or poster adhesive so that they can be moved from one place to another.
9. During the course of the day, ask students to look at the *North Star* Hemisphere and consider which island they think they're on. If it's a Lost Island, ask them to think about what island they need to navigate to, and invite them to move their "ship" to that more-desirable place.

The *North Star* Hemisphere can serve as a gentle reinforcement of positive social skills, as well as a visual documentation of students' day-to-day behavior. It is a reminder to children that *they* are the navigators, and that they have the ability to make a choice to change course and sail in a new direction. Conflict is a part of every journey, but learning to manage it makes everyone's voyage that much easier.

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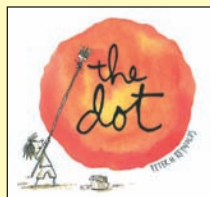
North Star Radio

Many students feel self-conscious about reading aloud, sharing their ideas, or even having their voices heard by their peers. Creating a class radio show allows every student to have an opportunity to practice reading aloud and develop oral communication skills in a comfortable and friendly environment.

Explain to your class that each student will choose a story he or she will write and report to the class. Decide with your class what sort of program(s) they would like to create. Would they like to have short updates each morning with three students giving the weather report, the schedule of the day, and the latest news? Or would they prefer to do one big show with those basics plus reports on sports and cultural events happening at school? Would they like to include entertainment, such as reading *The North Star* aloud and adding their own sound effects or reading their own creative writing? Could there be investigative reporting on something at the school? The possibilities are endless. Make your own path!

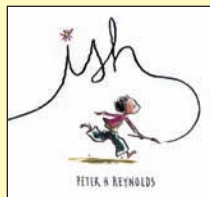
The technology for this activity could be as simple as a microphone at a desk or a mike hooked up to a computer with a CD to be used for recording. Or it could be as complex as a full recording studio.

More books by Peter H. Reynolds:



The Dot

ISBN: 978-0-7636-1961-9



Ish

ISBN: 978-0-7636-2344-9



So Few of Me

ISBN: 978-0-7636-2623-5



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