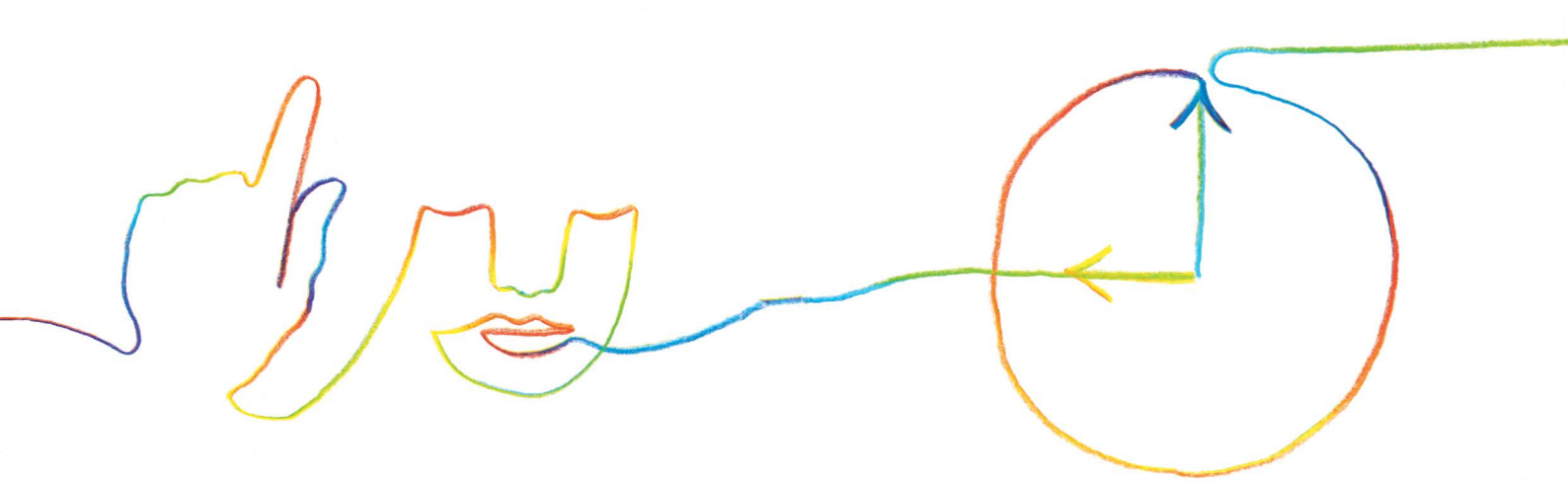
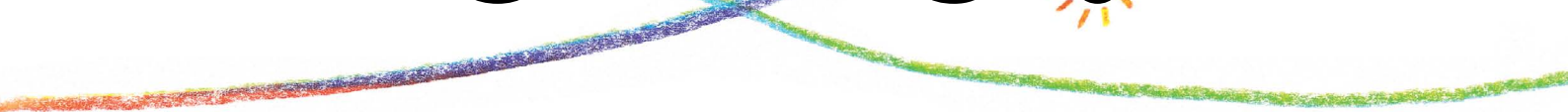
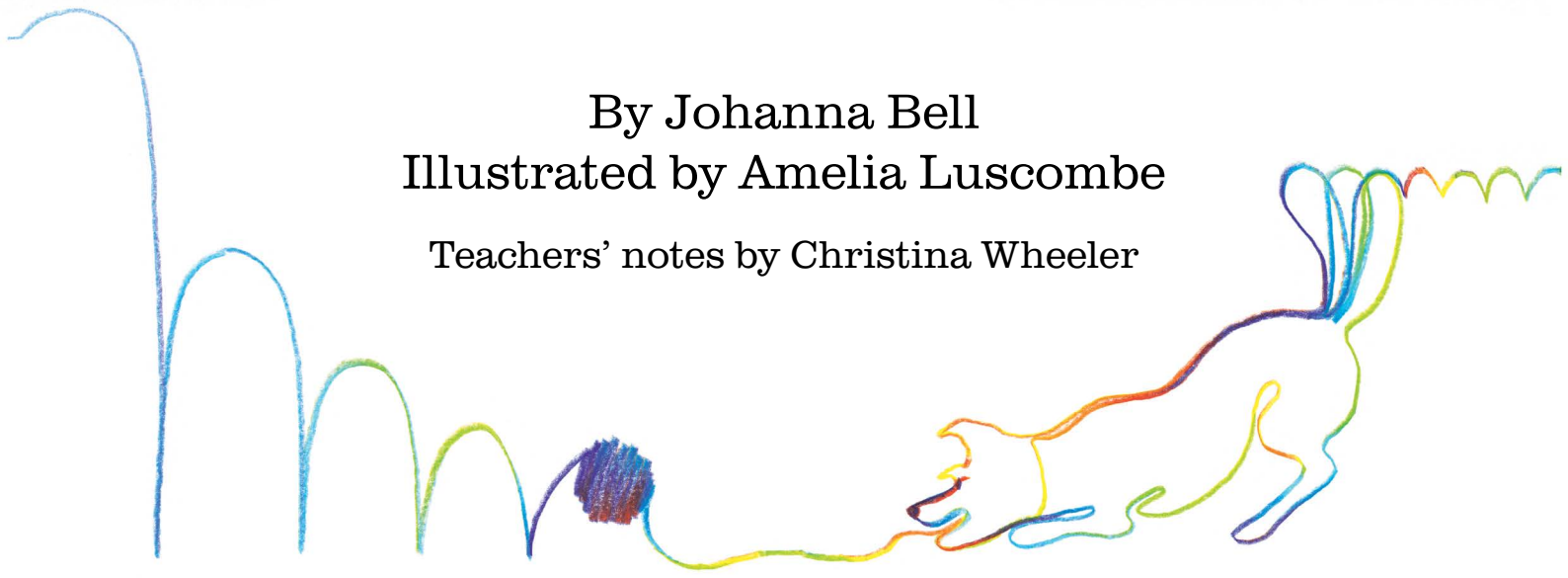




what is a dot?



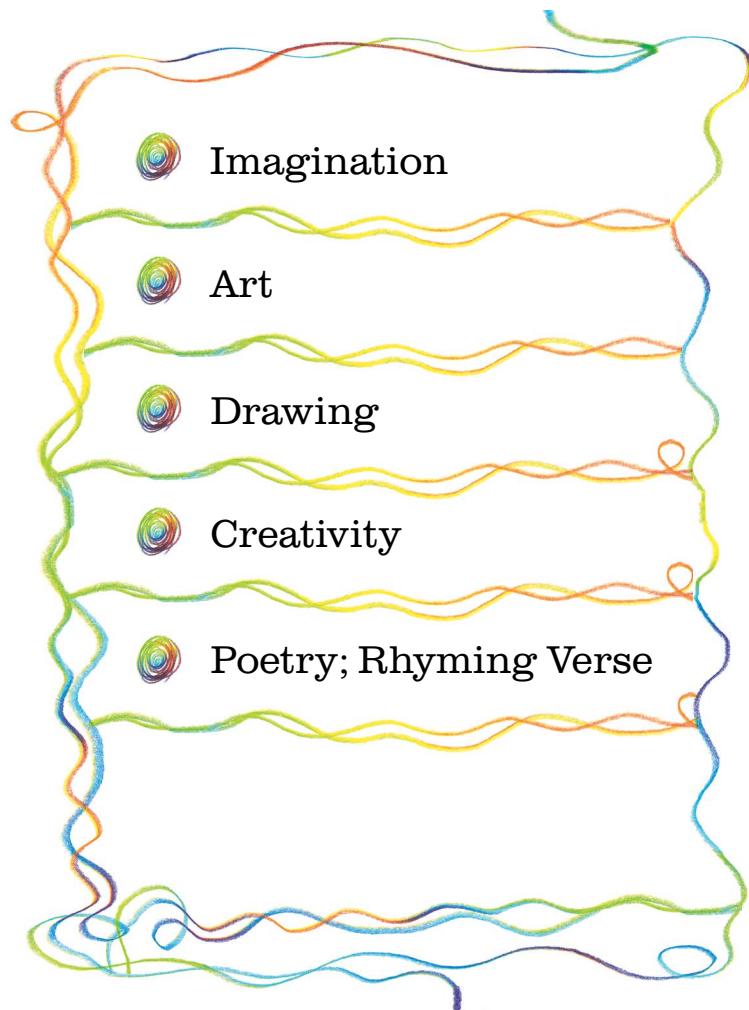
By Johanna Bell
Illustrated by Amelia Luscombe
Teachers' notes by Christina Wheeler



Synopsis

A fun, playful and engaging book. *What is a Dot?* ignites the imagination and tickles the brain as a simple dot quickly becomes a line that twists, turns and transforms. Told through delightful poetic verse accompanied by simple yet striking drawings, this hands-on reading experience celebrates curiosity, creativity and endless possibilities.

Themes



Writing style

Inspired by Paul Klee's quote, 'a line is a dot that went for a walk', *What is a Dot?* is a book that children will want to read again and again. The clever interplay between the written and illustrated text offers instant engagement and promotes creative thinking. Told in rhyming verse with poetic devices including alliteration, onomatopoeia and word play, it has numerous classroom applications from early childhood to those in older primary grades.

Author and illustrator motivation

From the author, Joanna Bell:

A few years ago, I was in a little gallery in Darwin and I saw a drawing that was made up of hundreds of tiny shapes drawn in very fine black liner. When I looked closer, I saw that every shape had a face and some had little arms and legs. They were everyday objects like chairs and pot plants as well as imagined creatures and little people. I stared and stared at the drawing and I heard a poem starting in my head. I quickly wrote down what I heard and then, back at home, I played with the words until they started to rhyme. When I was happy with it, I showed it to Amelia, the artist who drew the artwork. I asked if she might like to make a picture book with me and luckily for me she said yes!

It took lots of experimenting but a couple of years later (Yes, that's how long it takes to make a picture book!) we finished *What is a Dot?* It actually took us a long time to work out what the book would look like. At first, Amelia drew the dot and the line that followed in black ink. I liked it but we agreed that it didn't feel playful enough. Then Amelia experimented with lots of different pencils and textas and crayons but they still weren't right. It was only when Amelia remembered how much she loved drawing with multicoloured pencils that the book clicked.

From the Illustrator, Amelia Luscombe:

This is the first book I have ever worked on. Working with Yo meant that the process was collaborative from the very beginning, to the very end. Yo and I really enjoyed this way of working and bounced ideas back and forth for two years! Most of our correspondence was via email and phone calls after we each moved interstate, to opposite sides of the country.

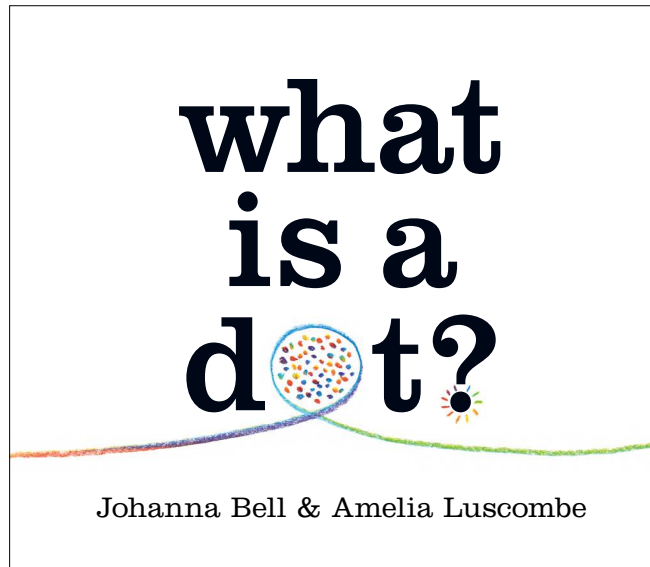
We liked the vibrancy of the colourful pencil line and the surprising way the colour transitioned with every twist of the pencil. Drawing with the rainbow pencil was very nostalgic for me. I have a memory of a crayon from my childhood that was made up of many different coloured shards of wax. I remember it looking a little like a magical stone.

The pencil that appears on the final spread is akin to a magic wand. When the child picks it up, the line it produces can become anything! A spark is ignited in the child's imagination, and the magic flows.



Study notes

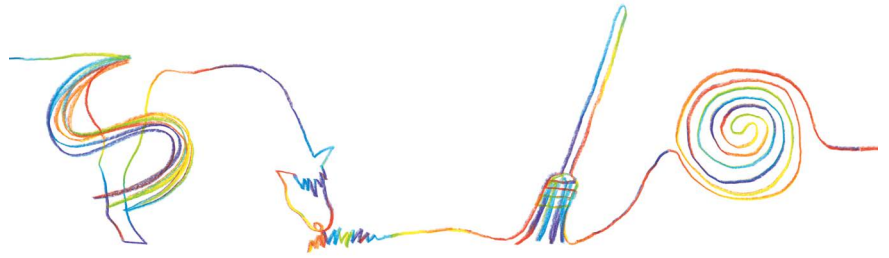
- Before reading *What is a Dot?* look carefully at the front cover and blurb. What are you wondering about this book? What do you think is the connection between the dots and the multi-coloured lines? What might happen if we follow these lines?



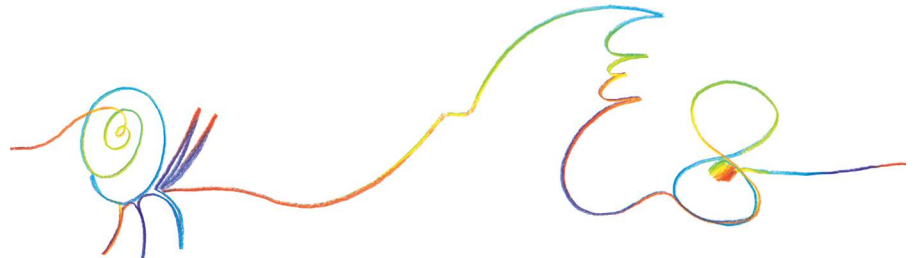
- Before reading the book in its entirety, share just the written text (see transcribed below). Discuss the use of rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia and word play. Choose some of the verses to illustrate, making predictions about how the illustrator may have made connections with the words. Share your ideas with a friend. After reading *What is a Dot?* together with its illustrations, compare your drawings with those in the book.
- Discuss the question posed throughout the book: 'What is a dot/When a dot is not?'
- With reference to the page opening below, discuss the link between 'bounce', 'ball' and 'wag'. Why isn't the word 'dog' included? Create your own illustrated verse similar to this about a different pet such as a cat, guinea pig, goldfish or budgie, being sure not to use the actual name of the animal in your written text.



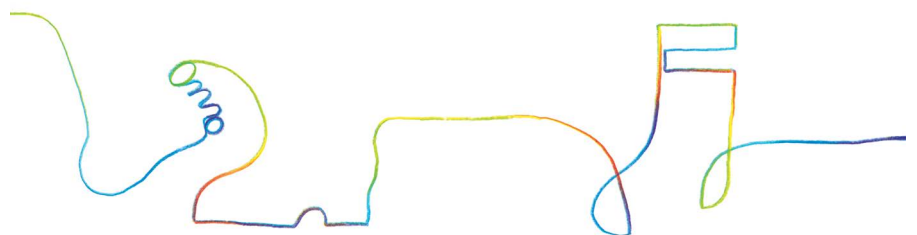
- Alliteration and onomatopoeia are used in the page opening below. Using a different farm animal such as a cow, sheep, llama or goat, use these poetic devices to create an illustrated verse.



- Using the two-page opening below as inspiration, brainstorm creatures and features of a beach setting. List words that best describe how these creatures move. Draw one of these creatures and continue the line to include two other beach/ocean-related subjects.



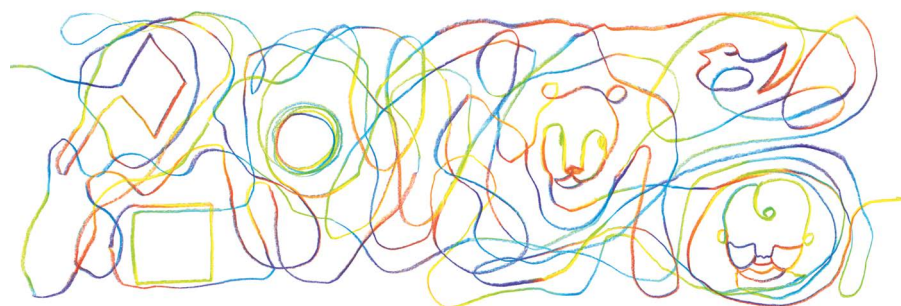
- Create an illustrated passage like the one above using a different setting such as a rainforest, desert or jungle.
- Innovate on the idea below by writing a verse about another body part such as an arm, leg or head.



- Illustrate the page below using different drawings.

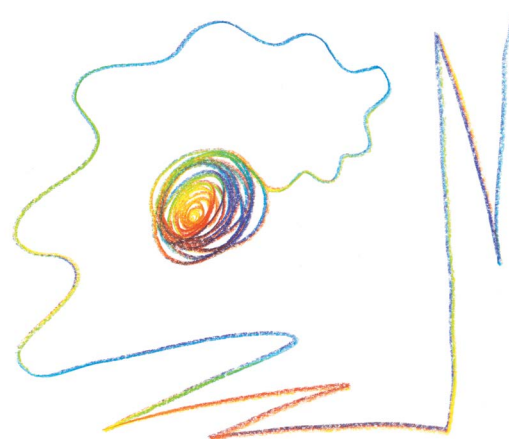


- Create a drawing like the one below with your own hidden objects. Write a rhyming verse to match your drawing.



- Which is your favourite page opening of *What is a Dot?* Why is this your favourite? Share in a reflection.
- Read other picture books that share the joy of imagination, creativity and drawing as companion texts to *What is a Dot?* For titles out of print, consider using online readings. Suggestions include:
 - *Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson (Harper Festival)
 - *Lines that Wiggle* by Candace Whitman (Blue Apple Books)
 - *The Pencil* by Allan Ahlberg and Bruce Ingman (Candlewick)
 - *The Dot* by Peter H Reynolds (Candlewick)
- Perform *What is a Dot?* as a play. Present to a neighbouring class or at your school's assembly.
- Using coloured stickered dots, create your own artwork to represent one of the verses in *What is a Dot?*

- Investigate famous artists who have used dots to create their artworks. Suggestions include:
 - Yayoi Kusama
 - o [Yayoi Kusama-Inspired Dot Art Activity](#) (Harn Museum of Art)
 - Georges Seurat
 - o [Study for "A Sunday on La Grande Jatte"](#) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)
 - o [Pointillism Georges Seurat Art Lesson](#) (Happy Family Art)
 - o [Seurat Pointillism Narrated Digital Storybook for Kids](#) (YouTube)
 - Roy Lichtenstein
 - o [One Dot At A Time, Lichtenstein Made Art Pop](#) (NPR)
 - o [Lichtenstein Ben-Day Dot Art Activity](#) (twinkl)
- Include ideas shared at the following site to help students explore the artistic style of Pointillism:
 - [Pointillism for Kids](#) (twinkl)
- To further foster creativity and the joy of drawing, watch short YouTube clips of [Mr Squiggle](#). Invite students to provide squiggles for the class to complete. Squiggles can also be found [online](#).
- View the following [YouTube clip](#) influenced by Paul Klee's quote, "a line is a dot that went for a walk".
- First Nations artwork has long featured dots. Explore examples and explanations of such pieces from different nations such as those found at the sites below. You may also find suitable texts in your school library. Within this context, respond to the question: *'What is a dot, when a dot is not?'*
 - Texts by Bronwyn Bancroft such as:
 - o Patterns of Australia (Littlehare)
 - o The Art in Country: A Treasury for Children (Hardie Grant)
 - Selected pages of Come Together by Isaiah Firebrace (Hardie Grant)
 - [Aboriginal Dot Art](#) (Artlandish Aboriginal Art Gallery)
 - [Aboriginal Dot Paintings and their Origin](#) (Kate Owen Gallery)
- With younger students, provide a range of 'Join the Dots' tasks to help make the connection between dots and lines:
 - [Early Childhood Dot-to-Dot Worksheets](#) (My Teaching Station)
 - [Dot to Dot – Connect the Dots with Numbers 1 to 20](#) (My Teaching Station)





What is a Dot?

by Johanna Bell

What is a dot
When a dot is not?

Is it a squiggle?
A zig? A Zag?
Is it a bounce?
A ball? A wag?

Is it a swish?
A sweep? Or a Swirl?
Is it a scurry?
A wave? Or a pearl?

What is a dot
When a dot is not?

Is it a hand?
A face? Or a clock?
Is it a foot?
A shoe? A sock?

Is it an A?
A B? Or a C?
Is it a one?
A Two? Or a three?

What is a dot
when a dot is not?

Can you find a diamond?
A circle? A square?
Can you see a baby?
A bird? Or a bear?

Is it a nibble?
A carrot? A hole?
Is it a hill?
A mountain? A mole?

What is a dot
When a dot is not?
When you hold the pencil,
You decide what!