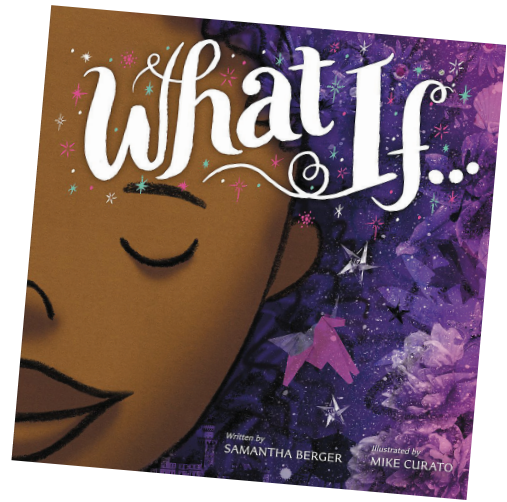


Reviewed by Roxanne Dixon

What If...

Written by Samantha Berger/Illustrated by Mike Curato
Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018



58

A powerful question-starter, *What If...* has been reverberating in my mind recently. Asking ourselves *what if* can help us solve student engagement or management problems, can spur us to launch new projects, re-imaginings, programs and collaborations, and can help us stay creative and engaged throughout our teaching careers. Asking our students *what if* invites them to co-create, imagine, experiment, apply ideas, analyze, and explore with any variety of repertoire, media, or inspiration. Creating a culture of *what if* means our students begin asking *what if* themselves—stretching and reimagining our lessons, owning the collaborative and artistic work we do together.

Berger's *What If...* provides a beautiful opening for guiding our students to feel their own resiliency, embedded within a celebration of creative expression and imagination.

Orff Schulwerk is really all about *what if*, as in our Orff-inspired classrooms we play together with our students, follow interesting ideas and explore how music, movement, and speech can inform one another. Author Samantha Berger and illustrator Mike Curato's beautiful book *What If...* specifically uses this question to explore creative limits and resiliency. Inspired by the author's experience

losing her art supplies in a flood, we join a young artist/author to consider, what if her pencil "one day disappeared?" The answer, illustrated with mixed media origami, comes as, "I'd fold up the paper till stories appeared." And what if the paper were gone, and on and on, the girl considers one limitation after another, always reaching beyond to continue to create—snow angels, sand castles, shadow puppets, dancing. Finally, we see the girl's face, close-up, eyes closed. "If I had nothing, but still had my mind ..." The answer is revealed in a bright, fanciful fold-out illustration, "There'd always be stories to seek and to find."

Teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic pushed us all to create and educate in ways that overcame limitations we had never imagined. Berger's *What If...* provides a beautiful opening for guiding our students to feel their own resiliency, embedded within a celebration of creative expression and imagination. Consider exploring creative limitations and *what if's* together, beginning with familiar repertoire or stories: What if you could no longer move your feet in this dance? What if we arranged this song with only non-pitched instruments? What if we moved the home tone to shift into a different musical mode? What if we accompanied our story with shadow puppetry? As this book illustrates, creative limitations can open the window to new ideas. In our classrooms, *what if* questions invite joyful, collaborative exploration.

Is it a surprise virtual-learning day due to snow or other events? Challenge your amazing students to think like the narrator in *What If...* For instance, what can they create with the things available today at home? Let Berger and Curato's colorful, thick-paper hardcover book or paperback edition provide inspiration across settings.

Can we empower our students with the curiosity and confidence to ask *what if* within and beyond our classrooms? Can we help build individuals who are alive and engaged with the world? Who are thoughtful and critical learners? Who are equipped to notice, question, and challenge systems of

injustice? Who are innovators and leaders? *What if* we can change the world one question at a time? ■

ROXANNE DIXON is an educator and clinician focused on engaging curiosity, creativity, and questioning across the curriculum. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses at Messiah University (PA) and pre-K through Grade 8 music at the Londonderry School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Roxanne holds a master's degree with an Orff Schulwerk concentration from the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota. She has served on the Philadelphia Area Orff Schulwerk Association executive board and currently serves on the editorial board of *The Orff Echo*.

THE HARTT SCHOOL

SUMMERTERM 2023

SELECT WORKSHOP OFFERINGS

- A General Music Ukulele Curriculum
- Arranging for Choral and A Cappella Singing
- Jazz for the Common Pianist
- Movement-Based Active Learning Through Orff Schulwerk: A Process Developed by Phillis Weikart
- Multiple Intelligences in the Music Classroom
- Technology for Student-Centered Music Instruction

SUMMERS ONLY MASTER OF MUSIC EDUCATION

Earn your MMusEd during the summer. Choose an emphasis in Pedagogy or Kodály and complete 37-42 credits in just three summers!

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

hartford.edu/hartt/summerterm

Warren Haston PhD, Director, Hartt Summerterm haston@hartford.edu 860.768.5526