



What If...

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Creativity, the power of imagination, and the importance of self-expression are celebrated in this inspiring picture book written and illustrated by real-life best friends.

This girl is determined to express herself! If she can't draw her dreams, she'll sculpt or build, carve or collage. If she can't do that, she'll turn her world into a canvas. And if everything around her is taken away, she'll sing, dance, and dream...

Stunning mixed media illustrations, lyrical text, and a breathtaking gatefold conjure powerful magic in this heartfelt affirmation of art, imagination, and the resilience of the human spirit.

What If... Details

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From Reader Review What If... for online ebook

Bethany M. Edwards says

What if you had only 5 minutes to evacuate your home? Would you know what to take? What would you leave behind? Author Samantha Berger faced this scenario when her house flooded and she only had time to grab her sketchbook. Nevertheless, out of this trauma bloomed a beautiful story of creative expression and resilience.

Award-winning team, as well as friends in real life, Samantha Berger and Mike Curato bring us the beautiful story of magical art and the power of creativity.

Disclaimer: I was provided a copy of this book from the publisher to facilitate this review. As always, all opinions are my own.

There will always be people in life who want to dim your light from shining to make themselves feel better. However, your imagination and your spirit belongs to you, and only you. When everything goes wrong and all of our expectations are smashed, what happens next? The heart warming story of What If... shows us a little girl who is determined not to allow her circumstances to stop her from achieving her goals.

When this little artist dreams of creating, she takes us through a reflective journey. She imagines losing every object she would normally use to create her magic. As her pencils, paper, and space to create her art disappear one by one, she fearlessly continues her mission.

Instead of traditional mediums, she can use floorboards and dirt, leaves and snow, light and shadows, and even her own voice to create the story she wants to tell through her art.

And as long as she lives, she will always create.

What If... is a new picture book that tells the heart warming story of creativity and resilience. The curly haired girl protagonist reminds us that no one has the power to take away our imaginations. This diverse picture book is sure to encourage and inspire young children to find a way forward no matter what.

The always brilliant Mike Curato uses sugar cubes, flower petals, sand, paper bags, marbles, sequins, and more to compose these gorgeous and vibrant illustrations. The rhyming verse will have you truly visualizing what it is like in the protagonist's world full of dreams. The culmination of a fold out spread where you literally and figuratively dive inside her mind's eye is genius.

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The Power of Losing Everything

Like author Samantha, I too went through a time where I lost everything. When the Egypt Revolution began just 3 weeks after I had my daughter was born in Cairo, I was trying to get her to sleep to the sound of gunshots. As I was reading aloud, there were military tanks roaring down my street.

All over Cairo, grocery stores were running out of food and water, the ATMs were empty, and the internet and phone lines were shut down. The country was crumbling before my very eyes, and I had no choice but to

evacuate.

So 3 1/2 weeks after my C-section, I flew by myself over 7,000 miles home to California with a 3-week-old, her emergency passport, and the clothes on our backs.

I share this here so you can understand why I cried through the entire story of What If... because I have been there.

And so many kids have too.

Every child and the adults who are reading to them needs the chance to feel empathy or even solidarity through the struggle of overcoming real and sometimes scary obstacles. We owe them this book.

The Power of Imagination

As a teacher, I am responsible to guide students to learn a myriad of skills. One skill that I cannot teach without is imagination. The more imagination children have, the more they believe in what is possible. And the more they believe in what is possible, the more each one of my students will change the world.

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The most powerful thing I can do is not have my kids memorize information, but give them the power to dream big. I have been teaching all over the world in international schools the last decade in efforts to teach globally minded kids. Some of my schools have had huge dedicated art rooms. Others schools have had one art closet for the whole school to share for the entire year.

I think you can guess which students had more powerful creations. Like in this beautiful story of a creative, brown-skinned girl with glorious purple curls, sometimes you don't have a choice. Sometimes this means you are better off than those with access to everything.

Recommended age: 4-8

Laura Harrison says

Absolutely spectacular in every possible way!

Lesley Burnap says

Gorgeous illustrations! Beautiful words! Inspiration for readers of ALL ages! What more could you want! (Look for Little Elliot!)

La Coccinelle says

This book is really an ode to creativity. What if, as an artist, you didn't have your traditional supplies? *What If...* explores that question through simple rhyming verse and unique mixed-media illustrations.

It's a fun book to look at, and while I wholeheartedly appreciate the overall message, I'm a bit wary of some of the early ideas. No paper? No problem. Just chisel the table and carve the chair. No furniture? Chip the paint off the walls (you'd better hope your house doesn't still have lead paint)! I'm not sure these are the best things to be suggesting to bored kids who might not have access to art supplies.

Overall, though, I liked the message of using what you have (even if it's just your voice) to create art. The mixed-media illustrations are pretty neat, and could offer inspiration to budding young artists.

Ireadkidsbooks says

An exuberantly imaginative child ponders the many ways she would persist in creating art even in the face of limited resources. Intricate mixed-media collages enhance the rhyming verse with their variety, movement, and texture.

I appreciated that a range of arts and creative outlet were shown, from origami to dance. The very affectionate author and illustrator's notes elevate the story's ode to creativity. A few rhymes felt a bit forced ("If I know nothing but one bit of fate....[page turn]...create." What does "If I know nothing but one bit of fate" MEAN, and would a child that age really think or say that?) but overall the story will leave young readers feeling bold and inventive like the creative little girl in the book.

Paula says

Samantha Berger (author) and Mike Curato (illustrator) are real life best friends. Together they collaborate on a book about sharing our creativity with the world. No matter what we may have taken away -or never have- we can find a way to express ourselves with art, music, dance, writing...A powerful message of resilience and determination in a gorgeous picture book.

Elisabeth says

Power of self expression beautifully delivered in story and art.

Tj Shay says

Eight stars out of five. I love this book so much, I've read it three times. It's message stays with me like few picture books ever have. Stunningly beautiful with a message that speaks to the importance of creativity. Definitely a great Dot Day companion book,

I plan on buying many copies to share. This is an important book that needs to be seen.

Abigail says

What if you wanted to tell a story, but your pencil disappeared? What if you were creating art, but all of your art supplies were suddenly gone? What if all the things you thought to use to make beauty began to go away, one by one, leaving you with nothing...except your mind, and that impulse to create? Author Samantha Berger and illustrator Mike Curato address that experience in this beautiful new picture-book tribute to the power of human artistry and ingenuity, concluding that: *"If I had nothing, but still had my mind... / There'd always be stories to seek and to find."*

Pairing an engaging and thoughtful narrative told in rhyme with gorgeous mixed-media illustrations, What If... is a marvelous new picture-book to add to that body of titles - Peter Reynolds' "*Creatrilogy*" books, Corinna Luyken's The Book of Mistakes, Faye Hanson's The Wonder - that are meant to encourage young people to cultivate their own creativity, whether artistic or literary. Inspired, according to the afterword, by a flood which left author Samantha Berger temporarily homeless, with no art supplies in the midst of an intensive art project, it is also meant to highlight the diversity of materials around us, that can be used in creative projects. Mike Curato's accompanying illustrations reflect this as well, incorporating any number of objects - autumn leaves used to create a dragon, sugar cubes used to make an igloo - into his colorful, immensely engaging work. This is one I would highly recommend, to all young would-be authors and artists, and to anyone looking for beautiful new picture-books about the creative process, and the resilience of the human spirit in the faces of challenges.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

A girl resolves to create even if she has few resources. The experience of reading this bright, colorful book is made richer when you learn she wrote it when her home was flooded and her usually writing materials were ruined and that the artist used found materials to illustrate the story.

Shani says

This book is very cute and adventurous! Would recommend for any imagineer!

JenLovesBooks says

There was good meaning behind this book and it's one that should be talked about more often, but isn't always because of what that would mean. The game of "Ka-Ching" starts off the rest of this story as Snowboy follows the villain of the story Greenbackboy into gaining more ka-ching, disregarding what that means for the world or the ones in it.

There was just something about the name Greenbackboy that I didn't much care for, along with my daughter going ahead and asking what it meant and why it was such an odd name he had. Not sure, but I'm thinking maybe something having to do with only being about that green paper? Maybe? Not sure, but I couldn't really give her an answer, just that it's what the author named him.

Aside from that, the illustrations were cute and told the story clearly enough for a child to comprehend. My

daughter liked how Snowboy saved the trees by keeping one safe through using his cloak of many uses, how he began questioning the game and making choices for himself, and that Greenbackboy realized that Ka-Ching didn't help anyone breathe or eat on its own merit. A good book overall.

Lauren says

This rhyming, thrillingly illustrated book about the power of creativity and imagination will sweep you of your feet! A treat to read

Shauna Yusko says

Great for inspiring creativity. And promoting that there are many forms of creative endeavors.

Donalyn says

A beautiful book about creativity, imagination, and believing in yourself.
