

What If?

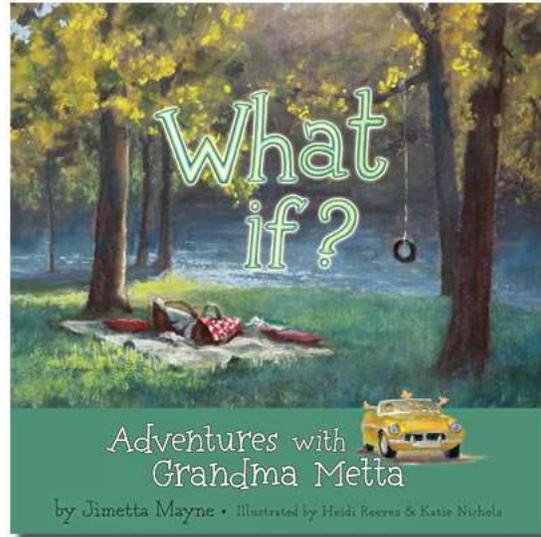
By Jimetta Mayne

★★★★★ (5 stars)

Buy this book if you:

- Have younger children or grandchildren you want to dream with
- Want to integrate coaching values into the way you parent

I've never featured a children's book before on Coach22--but then, I've never seen what I consider a *coaching* children's book before. The author puts her coach training to use in creating stories with questions in them: questions for your children to answer. It makes story-telling an interactive experience, instead of a passive one. I got so excited about the possibilities that I am collaborating with the author to write another one!



Telling the Story

You begin the adventure with Grandma Metta by inserting your children's names into the story, so that they become actual characters in it. As the tale progresses, they ask and answer questions, imagine solutions and possibilities, and flesh out details in the story.

The author uses several devices to get kids involved. One is "what if?" questions. Instead of answering them, Grandma Metta asks the kids to think for themselves and develop an answer. Sometimes the kids in the story have the answer; while on other occasions you ask the children to figure out what to do themselves. Throughout the adventure, the kids are treated as powerful and empowered. They create messes and solutions, decide what to do and discuss things with the adult (Grandma Metta) instead of being told the answers.

Each page also includes a set of "Ask the Imagination" questions that push beyond the bounds of the story itself to help kids imagine and learn. They range from the simple and factual ("What is a cabin?") to questions that touch on dreams and desires, like "What things might you find in the forest?" or "If you could create your dream picnic, what foods would be in it?" Parent-child interactions can so easily fall into a pattern where the adult answers all the questions. Letting your child answer is a great window into his or her heart.

This book is a great resource for parents, too. I remember how bored I got reading stories to my kids, because it was all a one-way monologue. Using this book will help parents get out of telling and monologuing, and help them create space for their children to grow intellectually and feel empowered while doing it.

What If? is a quality book. The artwork is superbly done, as is the printing, and as a hardback it is made to last. It also includes info for teachers on how to use the book as a resource (it is aligned with Department of Education standards for language arts for kindergarten through third grade.)

Summary

What If? is a great way to integrate your coaching values into how you work with young children. It empowers kids to ask questions and use their imaginations, and it can help parents pull back from telling and find their children's dreams and desires.