

# ENGLISH

## CHAPTER 8: WHAT IF



## WHAT IF?

### ~Summary~

**-by Sheldon Allan Silverstein**

The poem "**What if**" is written by **Shel Silverstein**. It is a **light verse** where the **speaker** of the poem asks a series of 'what if' questions to himself.

When the speaker was lying and **thinking** the previous **night**, a group of '**what ifs**' entered his **head** through the **ears**. They **pranced**, **partied**, and **sang** their old **what if song**. In short, the speaker spent the entire night worrying over various **absurd** and **possible** scenarios that may or may not even take place.

The speaker has **concerns** that are common to **students** of his age. He is worried that he might be treated as a **stupid person** in his school or **fail** in his examination. But he also voices out the **concerns** faced by **young kids**, such as being **ill-treated** at school or elsewhere, **hated** or **ignored** by people, **parents** getting **divorced**, and such. Moreover, the **poem** reveals the **insecurities** of **kids**, such as whether they would grow **taller** or their **teeth** would grow even. Also, the speaker wonders what would happen if he never learns to **dance** as it has a huge role to play in him becoming popular and also stepping out to adulthood.

On the other hand, the poem also contains **questions** and **concerns** that are absurd. **Green hair** growing on his **chest** or **head** getting **smaller** are some of his **pointless worries**. However, they also reveal the **imaginative** side of kids.

Hence, a big list of '**what ifs**' runs through the speaker's **mind**. As the night **breaks** into **dawn**, the what if song also comes to an **end**. The speaker seems **happy** and **relieved**, but unfortunately, the '**what if**'-**thoughts** reappear during the **night** to keep him restless.



The poem contains a series of questions beginning with what ifs



### ~Conclusion~

The poem "What if" is written by Shel Silverstein. It is a light verse where the speaker of the poem asks a series of 'what if' questions to himself. When the speaker was lying and thinking the previous night, a group of 'what ifs' entered his head through the ears. They pranced, partied, and sang their old what if song.



## NCERT SOLUTIONS

### Questions (Page No. 122-123)

#### (Working With the Poem)

Question 1.

- i. Who is the speaker in the poem?
- ii. With your partner list out the happenings the speaker is worried about.
- iii. Why do you think she/he has these worries? Can you think of ways to get rid of such worries?

Answer:

- i. The speaker in the poem is the poet, Shel Silverstein.
- ii. The speaker is worried about the following things:
  - What if he is dumb in the school?
  - What if the swimming pool is closed?
  - What if he gets beaten up?
  - What if there is poison in his cup?
  - What if bolt of lightning strikes him?
  - What if he gets sick and dies?
  - What if he doesn't grow taller?
  - What if his parents get divorced?
  - What if his teeth don't grow straight?

- What if he never learns to dance?
- iii. Such worries arise because of the fears in our mind. Some of such fears arise when we have seen something similar happening around us.

Such fears and worries can be avoided by sheer will power and an optimistic mindset.

Question 2. Read the following line.

Some Whatifs crawled inside my ear.

Can words crawl into your ear? This is an image. The poet is trying to make an image of what she/he experiences. Now with your partner try and list out some more images from the poem.

Answer: Some of more such images from the poem are:

“And pranced and partied all night long

And sang their same old Whatif song:”

“Everything seems swell, and then

The night-time Whatif strikes again!”

Question 3. In groups of four discuss some more ‘whatifs’ that you experience in your day to day life and list them out.

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_

iv. \_\_\_\_\_

v. \_\_\_\_\_

vi. \_\_\_\_\_

And now write a poem of five or six lines with the 'whatifs' that you have listed.

Answer: Do it yourself.



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