Talking With Trees

learning life lessons from creatures who’ve been around for generations

Book 3

What If?

By Colleen Doyle Bryant
Illustrated by Manuela Soriani
To my momma, who taught me to ask “What if?” and helped me fix it when I didn’t.
Perched high on a swaying branch, in a massive mulberry tree, a boy was just about to jump down when a friendly voice rippled up through the tree’s leaves.

“Excuse me. Have you asked yourself, ‘What if?’”

“What? Who?” the boy looked around, confused.
“Since you’re standing on my head, I think I should point out that jumping from that height might not be a great idea,” said the tree.

Peering down to the grass below, the boy said, “Now that I think about it, I am pretty high up.”
Hearing the unfamiliar voice, the boy’s sister jumped up and looked around, but she saw only her brother. “Who were you talking to?” she asked.

“I think… I was talking to the tree,” the boy said.

“Really.” The girl asked, with her eyebrows raised high on her forehead. “What’d it say?”

“She said I should ask myself, ‘What if?’” he shrugged.

“So it not only talks, the tree is giving you advice?” the girl sassed.
“Oh sure. I’ve given advice to lots of children,” chuckled the tree.

“Acorn sandwiches!” cried the girl. “She’s really talking!”

“Oh now, I don’t drop acorns. But I do hand out these helpful ‘What if’ seeds.

“You see, your brother isn’t the first to notice my branches are great for climbing. But when those lovely children leaped without thinking first, broken arms and twisted ankles spoiled all their fun.

“I felt sick inside watching them hurt themselves. So now I hand out these special ‘What if’ seeds.

“You just tuck that in your pocket for later,” winked the tree.
Before you act, ask yourself

**What if I do this, what could happen?**

If

- You can hurt yourself
- You can hurt someone else
- You’ll make your momma mad

**Change your action**

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What would you do? In each of these situations, ask yourself “What if” to see how you can keep having fun, without the trouble.

Your ball rolls into the street. You want to run out and grab it before it rolls down the street.

Your classmate makes a mistake writing on the whiteboard, and you think of something really funny to say about it.

You are supposed to finish your homework before you go out and play. You only have a few math problems left to do, but your friend is ready to play now.

You are waiting in line at the grocery store with your parents and it’s so boring. You look at your brother and think it would be fun to poke him in the stomach.

A “What if” Seed can help you remember to think about what could happen if you do or say something. Cut out the seed and place it in your pocket, hang it up, slip it in your backpack... or put it wherever it can help you remember to ask “What if?”.

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