



What If...?

Anthony Browne

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Joe is nervous about his first big party, and as Mum walks him along the darkening street to his friend's house, his imagination starts to run wild. They search for the right place, looking through the windows, wondering "What if...?" while making surprising discoveries along the way.

What If...? Details

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From Reader Review What If...? for online ebook

Jemma Routledge says

I thought that this book had a lot of intertextuality that would be fantastic for children to discover when they are reading. It's also a great opportunity for children to discuss anxieties that they may have.

Erica says

The illustrations are beautiful, but as a story I think a lot was lost on me. I get the whole anxiety about attending a party by yourself for the first time, but I did not understand the illustrations of the houses that they passed.

Neda says

I could guess how it would end but it was good all the same.

Sally Sugarman says

Anthony Bowne has been one of my favorite children book author/ illustrator since I saw his first book. There is something both realistically specific and other worldly in all of his work. Browne captures childhood and its anxieties better than anyone. Joe is going to his first party and has lost the address of the party. In opposite page spreads we see Joe asking his mother some of the possible negatives involved in party going. These are depicted in a blue wash. On the opposite page is a colorful well detailed house that they are approaching. The next double page spread shows them looking into a window at a succession of houses that are clearly not the party. One of an elderly couple reading with a hint of something strange about them. Following the pattern of the opposite pages of blue washed images of Joe's concerns and a solid house, followed by the colorful double page spread of an inappropriate house, one of an elephant, one of some strange boys, one of a Brueghel like orgy until they come to the end of the block and the door opens and Tom welcomes Joe in. The next image is of mother wondering what if only to find a happy Joe when she goes to pick him up. This is both a visual delight and a reassuring story.

Rocha Gilmore says

WHAT IF...? by Anthony Browne is a wonderful book, it is about a boy name Joe who is invited to a birthday party and begins to question himself as they find the house. The pages have a pattern has they try to find the house. The verso images have Joe and his mother with at least four white border images having a conversation with speech bubbles and the two character are like an ice blue color. The recto image gives a full color page with a white border walking by and looking inside to find Joe's friend house. On several pages, you can see the that character faces are a blur but on the next page their faces are clear. The following

page would be a full bleed of a cropped window from the previous picture. Which I thought was interesting. I really enjoyed this book, many children would relate to this book with many questions and feeling uneasy to a new environment.

Sarah says

Cute. A little bizarre. But I like bizarre...

Hannah Lambert says

Lots of pictures in this books, which give away clues - very good for reading comprehension. Very simple and enjoyable story with big font. Maybe a guided reading book for lower KS1.

Cornelius Library says

Joe is invited to a birthday party, but he lost his invitation. He knows what street the house is on, but cannot remember the house number. He is walking with his mom trying to identify which house the birthday party is at, but he is very anxious. He is unsure if he will have fun, if he will like the food, or if he will like the games. He is trying to convince his mom that maybe it's best that they go back home. His mom has been reassuring him along the way that it will be fun, that he will enjoy the party, etc.

When they finally find the right house, Joe goes inside and his mother has told him she would come back after a couple of hours. However, now she is the one who is anxious, wondering if he is ok, if he is having fun...

This is a good book for those that are anxious about new environments, first time going to a friend's birthday party, etc.

Joe fue invitado a una fiesta de cumpleaños, pero perdió la invitación. Él sabe por cual calle esta la casa, pero no recuerda el número de la casa. Va en camino con su mamá, recorriendo la cuadra y tratando de identificar cual es la casa en la cual se está festejando la fiesta de cumpleaños, y está muy ansioso. No está seguro si se va a divertir, si le va a gustar la comida, los juegos, etc. Él está tratando de convencer a su mamá que es mejor que se regresen a casa. Pero su mamá lo ha estado animando a que todo va a estar bien.

Cuando finalmente encuentran la casa, Joe entra a la fiesta y es su mamá le dice que regresa por el en un par de horas. Ahora es su mamá quien se encuentra ansiosa y preguntándose si se estará divirtiendo, si está bien, etc.

Este libro es ideal para ellos que se encuentren ansiosos por algún lugar nuevo, o si es la primera vez que va a una fiesta de cumpleaños, etc.

Zoe says

Like all of Browne's books there's a lot that can be unpicked / explored in the illustrations. I personally am not a huge fan of his style, but the story is one that will resonate with young children and their grown ups, as

well as working well in schools doing "homes" as a topic.

Wilde Sky says

This story (for children) examines the fear / worries of 'What If'

I thought the basic story and illustration were good - a good read for children with a positive central message.

Overall rating 3.5

Sam Davis says

Like most of Anthony Browne's books, the text in "What if..." can be very simple, but the illustrations convey a lot of the meaning. This is a story that many parents and children can relate to. In "What if...?" Joe is nervous about going over to a friend's house for a party, so each time he passes a house with his mom he imagines crazy scenarios of what is happening inside. When he worries about the games they will play, inside the house he sees people playing a life size version of snakes and ladders. When he worries about the food at the party, he sees characters from "Alice in Wonderland" eating unusual foods. The framing on each of the pages distances the reader from the story, making them look in on the story, and see both Joe and his mom's point of view. There is no framing when Joe and his mom look in the house, which lets the reader stop and focus on the important and unusual details on those pages. The colors on each page convey the mood of the story, with blues at the beginning until the end when Joe is happy and the color is yellow.

Kaethe says

Natasha and I read this aloud together, because we enjoy doing that sort of thing, even at our respective advanced and very advanced ages. And this is a fun one to spend time reading closely. Well, examining the pictures closely. The text is straightforward: Joe's mother is taking him to a birthday party, and he's nervous, and as they walk down the street in front of the doors, he's asking about specific situations that might arise. His mother is reassuring him. But what we see through the front windows is every one of his concerns brought raucously to life. Joe's friend has some interesting neighbors. Not only is each living room showing off a weird vignette, but other details in the row of houses reflect the nature of each one, so the Waldo-seekers of the world have something to enjoy in a more straight-forward picture book. The more worldly will enjoy the allusions to both works of art and literature.

A picture-book that is rewarding for adults and teens as well as young children. This book makes it obvious why Browne is so successful in his field. He's got lots of fun titles under his belt.

Library copy

Edward Sullivan says

A young boy worries about all sorts of things that could go wrong as he goes to his first party. Artful, subtle, and astute.

Tom Atkinson says

Joe and his mother walk down a street trying to find a party. As they travel they peer in through the windows and see bizarre scenes which scare Joe. More terrifying than all is the party Joe is going to attend. Nothing his mother says can persuade him otherwise.

Visually rich the illustrations and story offer great opportunities to explore inference, building an image of the ultimate party. A class which built up predictions together might be surprised. Others in the class might demonstrate their understandings of literary conventions and tropes to make deeper predictions from their personal knowledge that they brought to the text.

Lisa says

Opening:

Today we're going to read "What if...?" by Anthony Browne, which is about a little boy named Joe who is nervous about going to a party. We'll be able to tell Joe is nervous because he keeps trying to convince his mom that he shouldn't go. Have you ever felt nervous about doing something new or meeting new people? What happened? (Students share with partner or with group.) This book has some interesting literary structures that we should notice. First, I want you to see how the author uses boxes and dialogue bubbles when Joe is talking with his mom. Now, notice how what Joe sees inside each house changes and becomes bigger or scarier. Why do you think the illustrator did that? What does that show us about what Joe feels? (Students share.) Let's read and find out how Joe feels once the party is over.

Opening Moves:

Provide important background information.

Invite personal connections.

Alert students to unusual literary structures.

Rationale:

I selected "What if...?" for my "Feelings" text set because it illustrates a different feeling that many students can connect to: nervousness or shyness. This would be a valuable book for students to read because it shows a little boy overcoming a difficult feeling and learning from the experience. Students would connect to the theme of the story and learn along with the main character.
