



EK BOOKS TEACHER NOTES & RESOURCES

Title: What If ... ?

Author: Lynn Jenkins

Illustrator: Kirrili Lonergan

Publisher: EK Books

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ISBN: 9781925820973

Publication date: Sep 2021

Audience age: 4-8 years

Key Curriculum Areas: English, Science, Visual Arts, Health & Physical Education



SYNOPSIS:

Issy uses the words 'what if...' a lot. *What if there is a monster in my cupboard?* she wonders before going to sleep. Or *What if my floor turns into quicksand and swallows my bed?* For her, 'what if...' are two little words that start worries and lead to uneasy feelings. But maybe they can be used for something a little more fun...

Share Issy's wonder and excitement as her mum shows her that asking 'what if...' can lead to imaginative adventures far beyond the everyday. After all, *What if trees had cupcakes hanging from their branches instead of leaves?* Or *the clouds were purple and orange and green?* These kind of 'what ifs' are what this creative and hopeful story is all about.

Showing children that their 'what ifs' can lead to feelings of fun, happiness and freedom is key in teaching them how we can change the way we feel simply by changing the way we choose to think. Written by an experienced author/clinical psychologist and illustrator/art therapist duo, *What if...?* is an exploration of how little worriers think, and how they can choose to turn those worries into wonders. Young children, parents, carers, teachers and therapists alike will find methods to manage anxiety and to open conversations about worry in this playful and accessible tale. Plus, kids will love the imaginative adventures their 'what ifs' can create!

THEMES:

Anxiety. Imagination. Adventure. Creativity. Freedom. Mental Health.

SELLING POINTS:

- A book with universal appeal due to the widespread issues of anxiety and 'what if' thoughts.
- A fun way to start conversations about the power words and our choices have over how we feel.
- Ideal for early and primary education on mental well-being
- A fun, imaginative, and beautifully illustrated approach to talking about worries
- A positive psychology approach from a clinical psychologist with over two decades of experience working with children who suffer from anxiety.
- The 'topsy-turvy' nature of the different scenes actually engages a different part of the brain to the part that is dominant in anxiety. Therefore, using the 'fun type' of 'what ifs' is a worry management 'strategy' as well.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

To give kids, parents and teachers a way to talk about the power that the words 'what' and 'if' have. These two words have the power to lead to tremendous worry AND tremendous fun, depending on which path you choose.

We are the bosses of our brains and can choose to think in ways that make us feel how we want to. I wanted to create a fun and empowering way to start conversations about the power words have over how we feel; to encourage children to think about 'How do you want to feel? Which ending to your 'what if...' would you choose to achieve this outcome?'

WRITING STYLE:

Imaginative and creative.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE:

The illustrations are bright, colourful, whimsical and playful. Many hours have been spent mastering the individual facial expressions of Issy and her trusty ally, cat, as well as playing with colour palettes, body language and settings to reflect the various moods throughout the book.

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

Lynn Jenkins is a clinical psychologist, author and mother of three. She is passionate about early intervention in the social and emotional development of children. She has written several children's books on such topics including the Lessons of a LAC series and *Ollie's Treasure*.

Kirrili Lonergan is an illustrator, art therapist and mother of four. She has a passion for visual storytelling and encouraging self-expression through art. She enjoys sharing her skills with children and relates warmly to their needs through her former years working as a paediatric nurse. Kirrili has several books, including the Lessons of a LAC series, also written by Lynn Jenkins.

Lynn and Kirrili were shortlisted for the Speech Pathology of Australia Award for *Ollie's Treasure* (EK Books) in 2018.

INTERVIEW:

AUTHOR

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Coming up with the weird and wonderful ways in which 'what if' can end.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

Continuing to come up with the weird and wonderful ways in which 'what if' can end!

What is the inspiration for this story?

To highlight the idea that 'what if' thoughts can end in fun instead of worry. We are very familiar with the catastrophic endings to 'what if' thoughts, but why do those two little words have to end in yuckiness? I wanted to give kids and adults alternative endings that are fun and novel. And these qualities, i.e. humour and novelty, excite the 'smart' brain. When the smart brain is engaged, the 'worry' brain isn't. Levels was astounding. I saw first-hand the damage and angst that can be caused, not just for all the children involved and those onlooking, but also for their siblings, parents, and the centre's staff and policy development.

ILLUSTRATOR

What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.

The illustrations have all been sketched by hand and then completed digitally. There are lots of layers and overlapping of different techniques to produce the desired effect.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

The most rewarding part of the process was playing around with the different emotions throughout the story. From the darker, yet playful, illustrations portraying worry to the lighter and brighter illustrations, full of humour and wonder, illustrating What if...? was a fun experience and a joy to be in different worlds each day.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

On reading the initial manuscript I knew that the most challenging part was going to be creating all the various worlds that What if...? takes you to. It was the exploration of different worlds coupled with achieving a visually pleasing balance when individual pages sit side by side that made this book challenging yet rewarding at the same time. I enjoy a challenge!

TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

Before Reading

- Write 'What If...?' on the board. Ask children what they think this means. Can they finish the sentence with their own scenarios? Discuss whether their responses are based on imaginative questions, or ones of worry / anxiety.
- Look at the cover of *What If...?* What do you see?
- What do you think the girl is feeling? What might she be thinking about? Why might she ask, 'what if'?

During Reading

- Why do you think Issy thinks of scary 'what ifs'?
- Do you think these things can actually happen?
- What would you do if that scenario did happen?
- What do you think of Mum's 'what ifs'?

After Reading

- What was the story about? What is the main idea?
- What did you like / dislike about the story?
- How did the story make you feel?
- What does the word 'anxious' or 'anxiety' mean? Have you ever had thoughts or worries like Issy's?
- How were Issy's first thoughts different to Mum's ideas / wonders?
- How did Mum help Issy? What does Mum mean by 'you can choose the direction they (the words 'what' and 'if') take us'? What direction would you choose?
- How did Issy's busy mind change from the beginning to the end of the story?
- Do you think Issy made good choices in the end?
- Why is it important to have a positive mindset, or to make 'fun' choices instead of 'scary' ones? What are some other good ways to turn worries into wonders?
- What are some of the words and actions that Mum used to ease Issy's worries? For example, '*listened*', '*held her hand*, *smiled...*', '*What if... two powerful little words*'
- What do you like about the illustrations? What do you notice about Issy's facial expressions when she's scared? Does this change as the story goes on? What do you notice about her cat companion? Why do you think the cat is important in this story?
- Can you add any more 'what if...?' scenarios to your list?

ENGLISH

Vocabulary

([ACELA1429](#)) ([ACELA1438](#)) ([ACELA1817](#)) ([ACELA1818](#)) ([ACELA1820](#)) ([ACELA1457](#)) ([ACELA1459](#)) ([ACELA1778](#)) ([ACELA1471](#))
([ACELA1472](#)) ([ACELA1825](#))

'*What if falibbertyschnozzel was a word? What would it mean?*'

- Ponder this imaginative term – 'falibbertyschnozzel'. As if this was a word, brainstorm and write down its meaning.
- Write down and illustrate other non-sensical words, and their definitions.

Synonyms

(ACELA1434) (ACELA1437) (ACELA1464) (ACELA1470)

Issy always wondered, 'what if...?', scaring herself with what she imagined. This means that she is worried or anxious.

- Make a list of synonyms (words with similar meanings) for these feelings.
 - o For example, *scared*, *concerned*, *fearful*, *uneasy*, and so on.

Comprehension – 'What If...?' Sentence Sorting

(ACELT1578) (ACELT1591) (ACELY1648) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1658) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- Draw up a table (or use the template BLM 1) to sort these sentences into 'fun choices' and 'scary choices'. Leave space for children to add more from the book or write their own sentence for each column.
 - o *Scary*: There is a monster in my cupboard. An alien takes me in the middle of the night. A vampire bat comes through my window. Quicksand swallows my bed.
 - o *Fun*: Clouds smell like fairy floss and popcorn. You could walk on your hands all day. There are stars in the night shaped like elephants. Penguins could be pets.

Verbs

(ACELA1451) (ACELA1452) (ACELA1454) (ACELA1467) (ACELA1468) (ACELA1470)

- Identify and list the actions (verbs) that Mum and Issy did to ease her worries.
 - o For example, 'Mum **listened** to Issy. She **held** her hand, **smiled** and said, 'What if, two powerful little words. / We can **choose** which direction they **take** us, you know.'

Brainstorming

(ACELA1437) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1578) (ACELY1651) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1832) (ACELT1832) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1674)

'What if...?' Clouds:

- Draw a picture of yourself on a page. Surround the portrait with several clouds. Brainstorm and write down your 'what if...?' wonders in the clouds, such as 'What if clouds in the sky were purple and orange and green?' (see BLM 2).

Creative Writing: Innovation on Text

(ACELA1435) (ACELA1451) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1831) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1832) (ACELT1833)

- Brainstorm ideas for your own imaginative or fun scenario. Write a sentence beginning with 'What if...'. Illustrate.
- Children could be extended by writing first about a scary 'what if' scenario, and then a fun scenario to turn it into a positive thinking situation. For example, 'What if, there was a monster in my cupboard? What if, the monster wore my undies on its head and taught me cool tricks?'

Narrative Writing

(ACELT1580) (ACELY1651) (ACELY1652) (ACELT1832) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1672) (ACELY1674)

- *Idea 1:* Expand on one of the sentences from the above ‘innovation on text’ task and write a narrative story. Will it be about a scary or a fun ‘what if’? For example, ‘*The night a vampire bat flew through my window*’, or ‘*Adventures in the Fairy Floss Clouds*’.
 - o Who are the characters? What do they do? What kinds of events or problems happen? How will they be resolved? Begin your narrative with a sizzling start, such as dialogue, onomatopoeia, action or scene setting. Set it out with a beginning, middle and end.
- *Idea 2:* Brainstorm, from a different perspective, what it might be like to either ‘*walk around on your hands all day*’, or ‘*if your ears were upside down*’. What would the world look or sound like? Where would you go with this ability? What adventures would you go on? What problems might occur, and how will you resolve them?

Information Report

(ACELA1430) (ACELA1786) (ACELA1447) (ACELA1450) (ACELA1453) (ACELA1463) (ACELY1648) (ACELY1651) (ACELY1658) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1668) (ACELY1671)

Science Links: (ACSSU002) (ACSSU017) (ACSSU030)

- Create a poster or digital presentation with a collection of facts about caring for penguins (or another animal, like a cat or a vampire bat!). Be sure to include a title, interesting facts, diagrams or pictures, and captions.

Recount / Reflective Writing

(ACELA1437) (ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELY1651) (ACELA1787) (ACELT1582)

- Think about a time when you felt worried or anxious in anticipation of an event, or an experience that made you feel nervous. Include how you felt, how you managed the situation, the challenges and outcomes.

Thinking Tools / Graphic Organisers

(ACELA1429) (ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1583) (ACELT1589) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- *Ranking Ladder:* make a list of your own worries, or those from the book. Order them from what you perceive as the most worrisome to the least. Alternatively, list your own choice of fun ‘what if’ wonders, and rank them from the most exciting to the least. Explain your reasoning. See BLM 3.
- *Y-Chart:* imagine yourself, or Issy, in one of the scenarios in the book, such as picking cupcakes from a tree, or having purple and green spots in your hair, or being guarded by a glowing dragon at night. Complete the graphic organiser with the headings: Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like. See BLM 4.
- *De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats:* Think about the impact of Issy’s worries on her mental health and how she can improve her thinking with the use of the six hats:
 - o Red (fears, feelings, intuition), White (information, facts), Yellow (benefits, positive thinking), Blue (big picture, focus, learnings), Green (creative thinking, alternatives), Black (risks, problems, obstacles).

SCIENCE

Cornstarch Quicksand

(ACSSU003) (ACSSU018) (ACSSU031) (ACSHE013) (ACSHE021) (ACIS011) (ACIS233) (ACIS012) (ACIS024) (ACIS038) (ACIS027) (ACIS041)

'What if my floor turns into quicksand and swallows my bed? With me in it!'

- Experiment with this 'anti-anxiety' science activity to make your own quicksand from cornstarch. Learn the science behind the reactions of the mixture; known as a Non-Newtonian fluid because of its properties of both a liquid and a solid at the same time.
 - o You will need sand, cornstarch, water and yellow food colouring.
 - o Instructions for this experiment can be found at:
<https://raisinglifelonglearners.com/cornstarch-quicksand>

Rain Cloud in a Jar Experiment

(ACSSU004) (ACSSU019) (ACSHE013) (ACSHE034) (ACIS014) (ACIS011) (ACIS233) (ACIS012) (ACIS024) (ACIS038) (ACIS027) (ACIS042)

'What if, clouds in the sky were purple and orange and green?'

- Explore clouds and rain with this simple science activity, and turn your clouds whatever colours you like!
 - o You will need a large jar, shaving cream, food colouring or washable paints, droppers, water.
 - o Observe what is happening below the shaving cream cloud as you squirt coloured water (rain) on top. Note that the cloud gets heavy and drops the rain through the air.
 - o As an optional extension, squirt scented rain on the clouds for a sweet experience!
 - o Instructions for this experiment can be found at:
<https://funlearningforkids.com/rain-cloud-jar-science-experiment>

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Fun Healthy Mind / Healthy Body Ideas:

(ACPPS003) (ACPPS004) (ACPPS005) (ACPPS006) (ACPPS017) (ACPPS018) (ACPPS020) (ACPPS021) (ACPMP008) (ACPMP012) (ACPMP025) (ACPMP028)

- Alien in a sensory bottle
- Cupcake baking
- Walking on your hands
- Crazy hair day (colour your hair with safe hair products)
- Role play – silly teacher for a day
- Elephant torch light / projector for night-time safety (cut out an elephant silhouette from paper, tape it over a hole in a box, and shine a torch through the box)
- Relax with a pet
- Dress Up Day (wear undies on your head!)
- Say 'good morning' to the sun and 'good night' to the moon everyday

VISUAL ARTS

Mythical Creature Night-time Painting

(ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108)

'What would you choose if you could choose?'

- Use your choice of media to create an imaginative painting that illustrates your choice of mythical creature (dragon, unicorn, Loch Ness monster, etc.) on a night-time adventure of your choice!

3D Hot Air Balloon Craft

(ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108)

- Make a 3D hot air balloon that can be hung anywhere!
 - o You will need a paper tube, 5 different coloured papers, string, scissors and glue/tape.
 - o Cut out five hot air balloon shapes from each colour and fold in half. Glue each half side to another colour to make it 3D. Cut the paper tube for a basket (and decorate), and tape 3 pieces of string from the basket to the balloon. Cut and tape another longer piece of string to the top of the balloon to hang.
 - o An example can be found at:

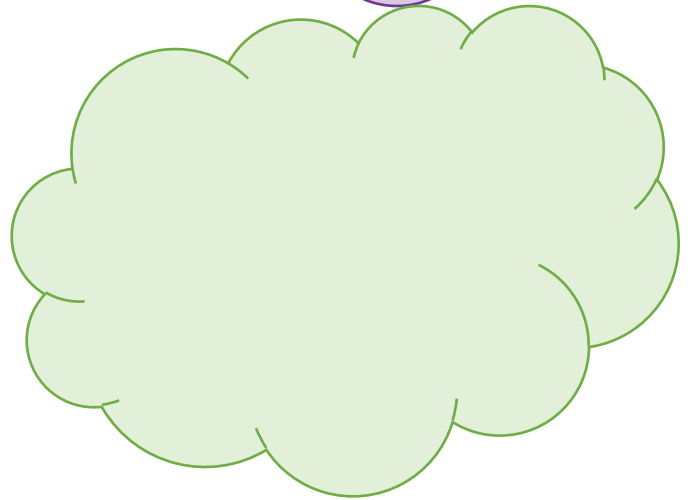
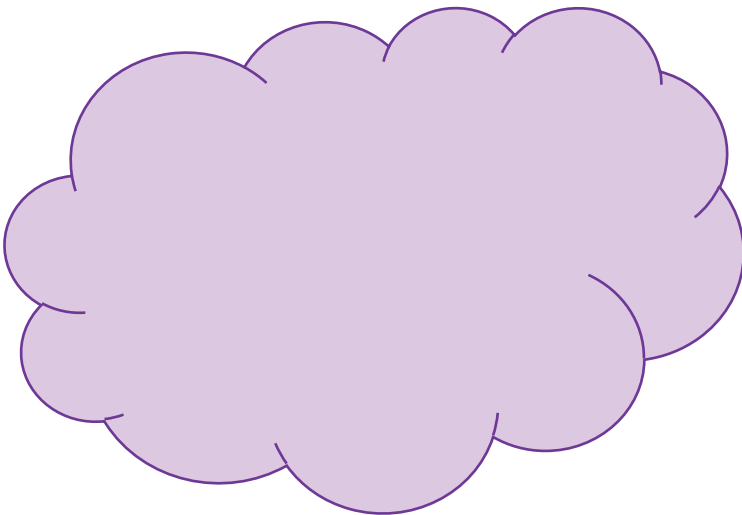
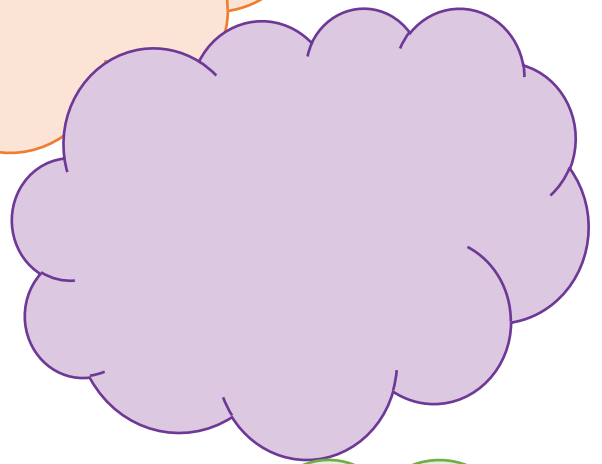
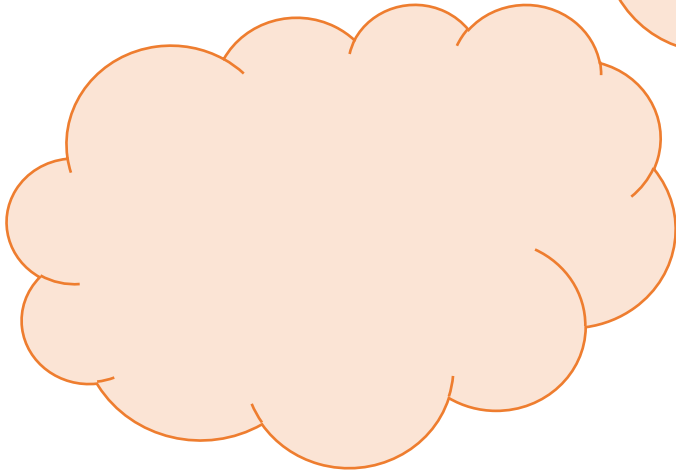
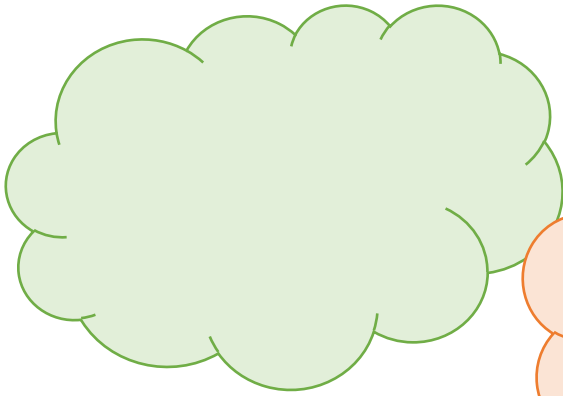
<https://www.craftymorning.com/spinning-3d-hot-air-balloon-craft-for-kids-to-make>

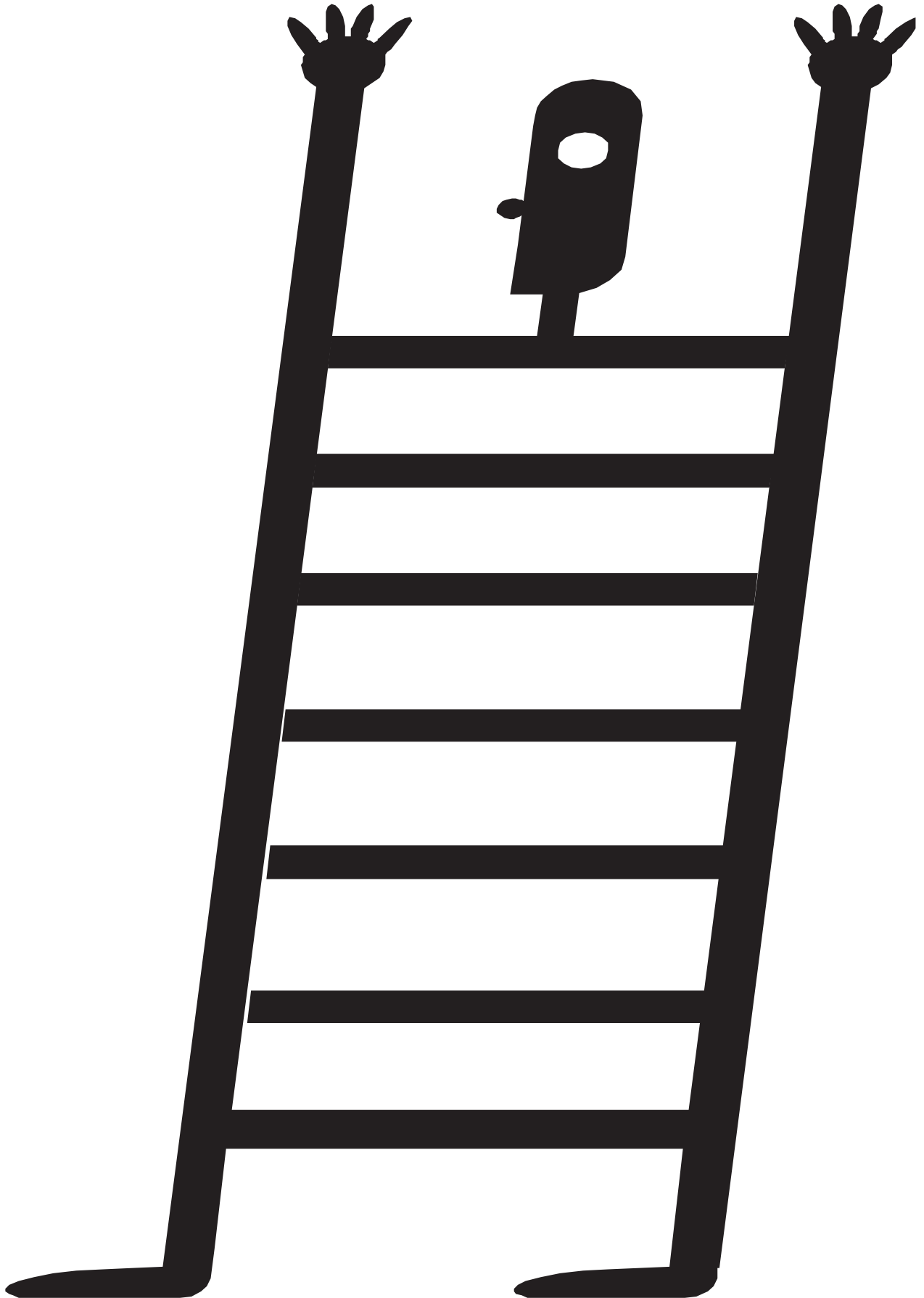
What if...? Choices

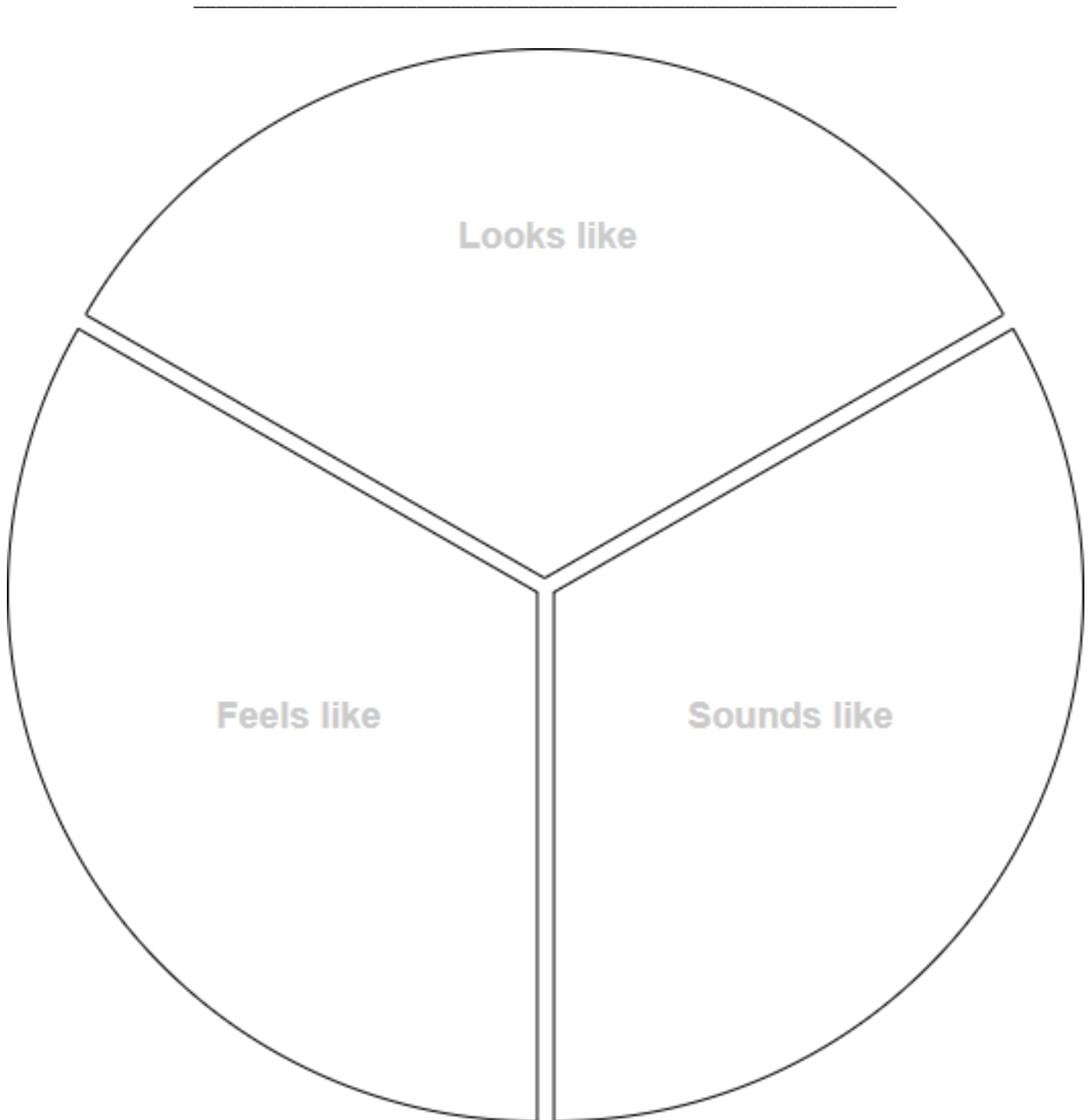
Fun	Scary

A monster in my cupboard.	Clouds smell like fairy floss and popcorn.
You could walk on your hands all day.	An alien takes me in the middle of the night.
Stars in the night shaped like elephants.	A vampire bat comes through my window.
Quicksand swallows my bed.	Penguins could be pets.

What if...? Clouds







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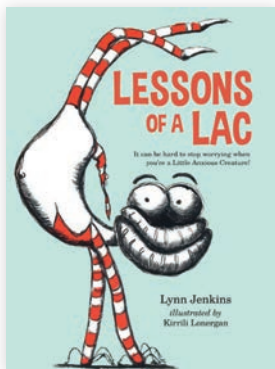


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