

## **GRADE 8 English Language Arts** **Reading and Responding: Lesson 16**

Read aloud to the students the material that is printed in **boldface type** inside the boxes. Information in regular type inside the boxes and all information outside the boxes should **not** be read to students. Possible student responses are included in parentheses after the questions.

Any directions that ask you to do something, such as to turn to a page or hand out materials to students, will have an arrow symbol (  $\Rightarrow$  ) by them.

*Optional:* At some point during the lesson, you may read the passage aloud so students can hear fluent, expressive reading and the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words. You may read the passage aloud immediately before or after students have read it independently, or at another point during the lesson, as you feel appropriate. The decision to read the passage aloud should depend on student needs, the degree of text difficulty, and the particular lesson.

### *Purpose of Lesson 16:*

In this lesson, the tutor and students will

- read and respond to a poem,
- identify author's purpose,
- connect literature to personal life, and
- practice analytical thinking.

### *Equipment/Materials Needed:*

- Student Worksheet Reading and Responding Lesson 16-1
- Student Worksheet Reading and Responding Lesson 16-2 (duplicate copy of *Whatif*)
- Student Worksheet Reading and Responding Lesson 16-3
- Chart paper on stand
- Pencils
- One or more copies of Shel Silverstein's books (optional)

## Introduction:

To begin the lesson, hold up a copy of Silverstein's poem "Whatif," close enough for students to notice the print, but not close enough for them to read. Ask what kind of passage this one is. Most will recognize it as a poem. Ask students to explain how they know it's a poem. (It looks different; no lines are indented; there are no paragraphs; the first word on each line begins with a capital letter.) After discussing how poems look different from other types of print such as stories, give students a copy of the poem and discuss the purposes of poems.

**Do any of you like to read poetry? What are some of your favorite poems?** Take a few minutes to discuss students' experiences with poems.

**For those of you who don't like poetry, can you tell why?** Pause.  
(Poems are confusing; they don't make sense, etc.)

⇒ Distribute Student Worksheet Reading and Responding Lesson 16-1.

**Do poems have the same purpose as do stories or articles?** Pause. Yes, they're written to communicate a message. That means poems should make sense. Sometimes poems are confusing and don't make much sense to us, just as some textbooks. We can use strategies for poems just as with other kinds of materials we have a hard time understanding. We can pay close attention to the title and punctuation and use context clues to read words we don't know.

**One reason poems are confusing to some is that they are written differently from other things we read, such as books or articles. Poems usually don't have paragraphs, but lines or stanzas like songs. Poems are meant to be read aloud so we can enjoy the rhythm and special way the words go together. Sometimes the author makes up words. Usually these words are funny and are meant to make us laugh. We may have to hear the way these made-up words sound in order to figure out what they mean.**

**Now look at this poem. Do you recognize the author?** Pause. Shel Silverstein's poems are enjoyed by all sorts of people--students, teachers, parents. If you have read Silverstein's poetry, you know this poem will probably make us think about our everyday lives in a funny way. (Ask any students who have read Silverstein to share).

**Look at the title. I've never seen this word; but if I take it apart, I see two smaller words I know. This word looks like one of Silverstein's made-up words. Even though it's a made-up word, I have said this word many times; have you ever asked, "Whatif...?"** Pause.

**Now take a few minutes to read this poem to yourself.**

After a few minutes, read the poem aloud to the students or ask a student to read it aloud.

**What is the main idea of this poem?** Pause. Before saying that the poem is about worrying, encourage students to share their thoughts. Have them share some of their worries or *whatifs*. Then share some of your own worries (Whatif I don't get the house clean before my company comes?)

After this discussion, continue the lesson with two activities:

### Activity #1

- ◆ Ask students to reread the poem and write a check mark in front of each *whatif* they have worried about. Before having students do this activity, tell them you will also do the activity and model how you would think about a couple of the *whatifs*.
- ◆ ***What if I'm dumb in school--Now that's a whatif that really bothered me when I was in seventh grade. I worried a lot about this one because I had so many assignments and tests I thought I would never be able to keep up in class. I was always losing things and forgetting things like homework or books because I had so many classes in one day. To get rid of this annoying Whatif, I made up my own: Whatif I write down all of my assignments everyday and try extra hard to remember everything I need for class.***
- ◆ After completing the activity, have volunteers share their *whatifs*.

⇒ Distribute Student Worksheets Reading and Responding Lesson 16-2,16-3.  
Activity #2

Before giving instructions, prompt students to think about the different kinds of worries represented by the *whatifs*.

**Did anyone notice the different kinds of worries in this poem?** Pause. Students may or may not be aware of the different categories; prompt them to think about this question by discussing one of the *whatif* lines.

**What kind of worry is *Whatif I don't grow taller?*** Pause. (worries about looks) **Look at the other *whatifs* and think about the kind of worries they are.** Pause. **Now look at the directions on the coding chart and follow along with me as I read aloud.**

**Directions:**

1. Read the first line that begins with *whatif*.
2. Look at the categories below. Which one best describes *Whatif I'm dumb in school?*
3. The first category, school worries, best describes that line.
4. The code letter for school worries is S.
5. Write S in front of *Whatif I'm dumb in school?*
6. Read each *Whatif* line and decide to which category it belongs. Then write the code letter in front of the line.

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| ◆ <u>school worries</u>                           | Code as S. |
| ◆ <u>how-I-look worries</u>                       | Code as L. |
| ◆ <u>family worries</u>                           | Code as F. |
| ◆ <u>health worries</u>                           | Code as H. |
| ◆ <u>what-other-people-think-about-me-worries</u> | Code as P. |
| ◆ <u>things-go-wrong-worries</u>                  | Code as T. |
| ◆ <u>weird-things-happen-worries</u>              | Code as W. |

Discuss reasons for including *whatifs* in certain categories. Student answers will probably vary. Explain that, even though their opinions are different, they are valid as long as they can be supported, or backed up.

After students have finished coding the *whatifs*, compare their responses. There should be general agreement on most categories; but there may be varied responses on some such as *Whatif I start to cry*, which may be coded P or L. Ask students to help you count the number of *whatifs* in each category and record them on the chart paper. The number in each category should be close to the following:

- ◆ School (2)
- ◆ Looks (3-4)
- ◆ Family (1)
- ◆ Health (1-2)
- ◆ People (3)
- ◆ Things (8-10)
- ◆ Weird (1-3)

Rank order categories in order of most frequent to least frequent.

Although numbers may vary, ranking should be close to the following:

- ◆ Things go wrong (8-10)
- ◆ How I look (3-4)
- ◆ What other people think of me (3)
- ◆ Weird things (1-3)
- ◆ School (2)
- ◆ Health (1-2)
- ◆ Family (1)

Ask the following questions and discuss the answers together:

- ◆ **What kind of *whatifs* cause the most worry in this poem?**  
Things that go wrong.
- ◆ **Are these *whatifs* very serious? No. They are annoying, but not serious. What would happen if the wind tore your kite? You might be disappointed. Maybe you would get a new one. It wouldn't be so serious that something terrible would happen.**
- ◆ **Have some of these things happened to you? Did horrible things happen as a result?**
- ◆ **What do you think the most serious worry is? Why?**

For the last part of this lesson, have students determine which *whatifs* are serious and which ones are not. Have students circle the serious ones.

**Let's look at the *Whatif* poem one more time. This time draw a circle around the *whatifs* you think are really serious. There are no wrong answers for this activity. Can anyone tell me why there are no wrong answers?** Pause. (Students have different opinions about what is the most serious.)

After students have completed this activity, ask for volunteers to share their answers. Be sure to ask them to explain why they chose their answers. Students' answers may vary considerably because the students have different worries. Some students worry about *not growing taller*, while others don't care. It is important to validate all students' responses if they make sense.

*Optional:* At the end of the lesson, read aloud one or two poems from one of Silverstein's books.

*(continued in lesson 17)*

Student Worksheet Reading and Responding Lesson 16-1

**WHATIF**  
Shel Silverstein

Last night while I lay thinking here,  
Some Whatifs crawled inside my ear  
And pranced and partied all night long  
And sang their same old Whatif song:  
Whatif I'm dumb in school?  
Whatif they've closed the swimming pool?  
Whatif I get beat up?  
Whatif there's poison in my cup?  
Whatif I start to cry?  
Whatif I get sick and die?  
Whatif I flunk the test?  
Whatif green hair grows on my chest?  
Whatif nobody likes me?  
Whatif a bolt of lightning strikes me?  
Whatif I don't grow taller?  
Whatif my head starts getting smaller?  
Whatif the fish won't bite?  
Whatif the wind tears up my kite?  
Whatif they start a war?  
Whatif my parents get divorced?  
Whatif the bus is late?  
Whatif my teeth don't grow in straight?  
Whatif I tear my pants?  
Whatif I never learn to dance?  
Everything seems swell, and then  
The nighttime Whatifs strike again!

“Whatif” by Shel Silverstein, from *A Light in the Attic*, Copyright © 1981 by Evil Eye Music, Inc. Used by permission.

Student Worksheet Reading and Responding Lesson 16-2

**WHATIF**  
Shel Silverstein

Last night while I lay thinking here,  
Some Whatifs crawled inside my ear  
And pranced and partied all night long  
And sang their same old Whatif song:  
Whatif I'm dumb in school?  
Whatif they've closed the swimming pool?  
Whatif I get beat up?  
Whatif there's poison in my cup?  
Whatif I start to cry?  
Whatif I get sick and die?  
Whatif I flunk the test?  
Whatif green hair grows on my chest?  
Whatif nobody likes me?  
Whatif a bolt of lightning strikes me?  
Whatif I don't grow taller?  
Whatif my head starts getting smaller?  
Whatif the fish won't bite?  
Whatif the wind tears up my kite?  
Whatif they start a war?  
Whatif my parents get divorced?  
Whatif the bus is late?  
Whatif my teeth don't grow in straight?  
Whatif I tear my pants?  
Whatif I never learn to dance?  
Everything seems swell, and then  
The nighttime Whatifs strike again!

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Student Worksheet Reading and Responding Lesson 16-3

Directions:

1. Read the first line that begins with *whatif*.
2. Look at the categories below. Which one best describes *Whatif I'm dumb in school?*
3. The first category, school worries, best describes that line.
4. The code letter for school worries is **S**.
5. Write **S** in front of the line.  
example:

**S** *Whatif I'm dumb in school?*

6. Read and place a code letter in front of each *whatif* line.

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| ◆ <u>school</u> worries                             | <b>S</b> |
| ◆ <u>how-I-look</u> worries                         | <b>L</b> |
| ◆ <u>family</u> worries                             | <b>F</b> |
| ◆ <u>health</u> worries                             | <b>H</b> |
| ◆ what-other- <u>people</u> -think-about-me-worries | <b>P</b> |
| ◆ <u>things</u> -go-wrong-worries                   | <b>T</b> |
| ◆ <u>weird</u> -things-happen-worries               | <b>W</b> |