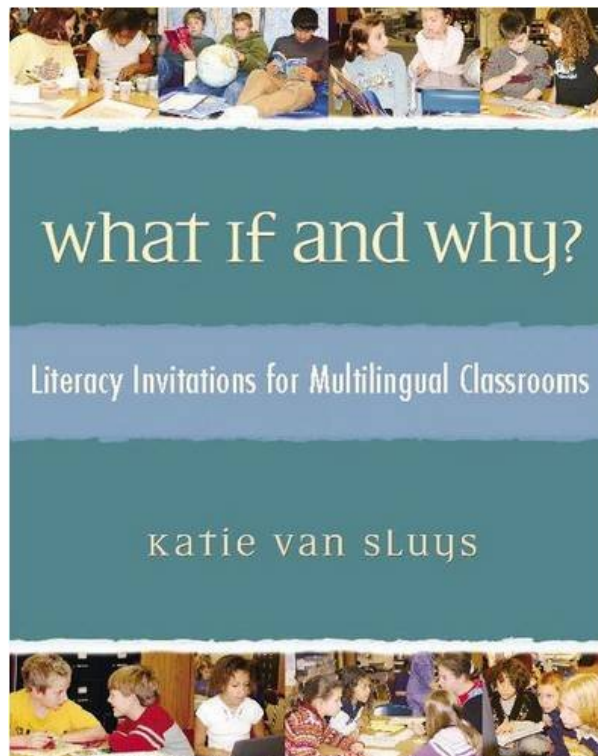
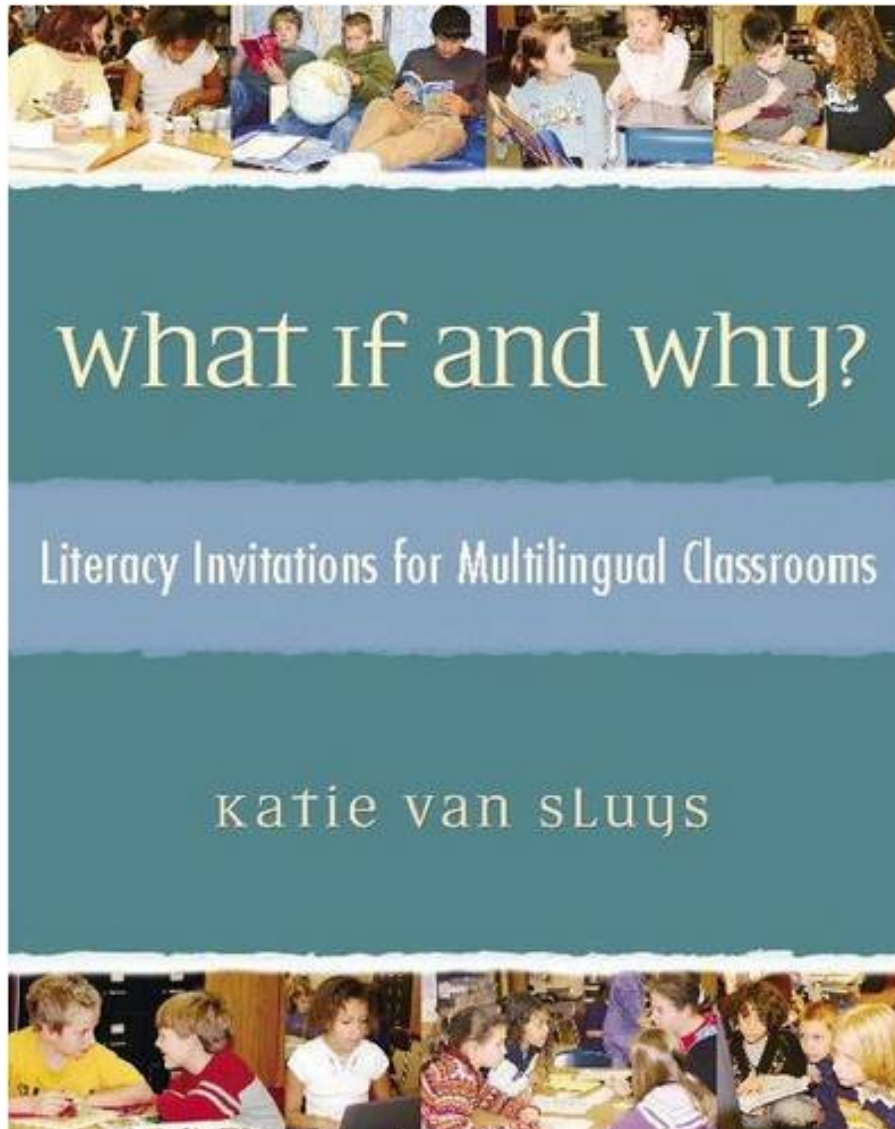


WHAT IF AND WHY?: LITERACY INVITATIONS FOR MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS BY KATIE VAN SLUYS



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About the Author

Katie Van Sluys is an assistant professor at DePaul University and teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy education and teacher inquiry. She also works with elementary communities, focusing on what it means to be literate in today's world. Her teaching and research address critical literacy and classroom curriculum, multilingual classroom communities, teacher inquiry, and collaborative teacher education.

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Wouldn't it be great if you could create learning opportunities flexible enough to attend to each child's needs equally while making the most of the diverse resources, skills, and backgrounds each child brings to school?

Now you can.

In *What If and Why?* Katie Van Sluys offers a framework for building critical reading, and writing skills in multilingual classrooms. Through rigorous group projects called invitations, elementary students, including English language learners, are invited to investigate topics of their choice, developing language skills through inquiry processes like researching, reporting, and presenting, as well as through language-based artistic and technological media. As children mine the seemingly simple question at the heart of their invitations, they engage with the increasing complexity of the subject, deepen their critical-literacy abilities, and cultivate a community where respect and risk taking are valued.

Van Sluys offers fifteen field-tested, cross-curricular invitations that you can add to your lesson plans right away or, better yet, use as a template for creating your own invitations. In addition, she goes inside the process, describing real classrooms that show not only the wonderful things students are capable of doing during invitations, but also what you can do to help them make the most of the experience.

Whether you're new to multilingual settings or whether you're a veteran looking for a fresh, new way to nurture students' growth, take an invitation from Katie Van Sluys. Read *What If and Why?* and discover for yourself a powerful approach to expanding the literacy practices of all students.

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Easy and useful read for teachers

By Dana

For one of my graduate classes (MS in Education), I got to choose one of my textbooks from a long list of books about inquiry or critical literacy in the classroom. Three of us chose *What If and Why?* and made a little study group. We all agreed that this book is wonderful! It is really refreshing to read. Unlike a lot of textbooks, it is written by a teacher for teachers. It can easily be read (and understood) in a few sittings. There are a lot of examples of invitations and the responses that students created. Some of the invitations include descriptions of how the students and/or teacher came up with the idea for the invitation. There are also ideas and example forms for ways students can reflect on their work and ways teachers can observe and evaluate students.

I cannot wait to try these out in my classroom! However, I have to caution teachers who work in conservative districts or schools with very strict, scripted programs. This book may not be for you! Make sure that critical literacy is valued in your school/district before you spend the money on this book. As long as you have support from those you work with, this book is a great choice for critical literacy.

If you like critical literacy . . . I have also heard fabulous things about L. Heffernan's *Critical Literacy and the Writer's Workshop* and V. Vasquez's *Getting Beyond "I Like the Book"*. These three books were very popular with students in my graduate reading classes this term.

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