



What If . . . : A Lifetime of Questions, Speculations, Reasonable Guesses, and a Few Things I Know for Sure

Shirley MacLaine

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What If . . . : A Lifetime of Questions, Speculations, Reasonable Guesses, and a Few Things I Know for Sure Shirley MacLaine

From Academy Award-winning actress and bestselling author Shirley MacLaine, a collection of imaginative ruminations: “Fun and thoughtful by turns and told in MacLaine’s feisty, funny voice, this should appeal to fans and doubters alike” (*Booklist*).

Beloved actress and bestselling author Shirley MacLaine contemplates everything from the everyday to the esoteric in this collection of ideas and observations, each of which begins with two simple, powerful words: *What if?*

Taking this as her starting point, Shirley explores a wide range of matters—spiritual and secular, humorous and profound, earthbound and intergalactic, personal and universal. Along the way, she also reflects on joining the cast of *Downton Abbey*, receiving the prestigious American Film Institute Lifetime Achievement Award, and introducing a new puppy into her formerly one-dog home.

From Shirley’s questions emerges a striking portrait of a constantly curious woman who thrills to new ideas and discoveries—all while enjoying one of the most extraordinary and enduring careers in Hollywood. *What if . . .* captures the one and only Shirley MacLaine at her witty, acerbic, imaginative, and irresistible best.

What If . . . : A Lifetime of Questions, Speculations, Reasonable Guesses, and a Few Things I Know for Sure Details

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Lyn *GLITTER VIKING* says

"What if most **Holocaust victims were balancing their karma** from ages before, when they were Roman soldiers putting Christians to death, the Crusaders who murdered millions in the name of Christianity, soldiers with Hannibal, or those who stormed across the Near East with Alexander? The energy of killing is endless and will be experienced by the killer and the killee."

"Did [Stephen Hawking] "create" the disease that has crippled him in order to learn to be dependent on caregivers and the kindness of strangers so that he could free his entire mind to the pursuit of knowledge?"

NO. NO NO NO.

Nancy Narma says

"Waiting For What's Next"

I have not had the privilege of reading any of Ms. MacLaine's previous works—but I certainly did enjoy this volume. Quirky, provocative, spiritual, Actress (presently portraying Martha Levinson on "Downton Abbey") and Kennedy Center Honoree Shirley has given me pause with her thought-provoking "What Ifs". She has included some personal reflections and revelations, political taunts and humorous accounts, but, moreover, just Shirley MacLaine being her outspoken, insightful and always questioning the universe self. I believe one of my favorite passages (and I have several I'm partial to) is "The 140 Definitions of Love". What an eye-opener ! Running a very close second are the tales about living another life while you sleep. Fascinating! Ms. MacLaine poses the questions and gives her interpretation, leaving us to scratch our heads in wonder and come to our own conclusions. She doesn't claim to know all of the answers, but she sure takes us on a journey so we may explore our own speculations and in some cases, certain revelations due to our life experiences. The only fault I could find with this book is the wasted page space that could hold more of the Author's insights. All in all a very clever, entertaining, and thought-provoking read. Now I have a "What If". "What if there was no Shirley MacLaine?" Answer: "What a sad and empty world this would be!"

Nancy Narma

Pamela says

Shirley is my ultimate guide to the wonders of our universe and makes me ponder all the mysteries of our past, current and future lives. I find such comfort in her acceptance of aging and the wisdom and acceptance she finds. I met her years ago at her publisher's book party when she had just written and published *Out on a Limb* and I continue to listen to her audio performances of each new book. Without a doubt I believe in her

WHAT IF? theories about human origins, interpretations and messages in the Old Testament and her embracing the concept of reincarnated lives. Upon finishing WHAT IF? I am less fearful, content with my evolving soul and karma and more curious about what it all means. Thanks, Shirley.

Marilyn says

What If we were all more open-minded?

Then more of us would appreciate this book. As it is, it's an easily readable mishmash of questions in her search for spiritual self, packed with some nostalgia about the fun & simple times of her Rat Pack days; her thoughts on ETs and reincarnation, plus personal stories (too much detail about her Lifetime Achievement Award); her interesting take on TSA airport "security," the profitability of war, and a funny list of 140 definitions of love. She loses me at astral projections, but I don't DISbelieve that such things like life on other planets & reincarnation may be real. Would be a good starting point for an interesting book club discussion if you could keep from ridiculing the more nutso elements.

Her first page is quite apt:

"All truth passes through three stages: First, it is ridiculed; second, it is violently opposed; third, it is accepted as self-evident."

Arthur Schopenhauer

Michelle says

Wow. Ole Shirl should just ask herself one question, "What if my head weren't so firmly planted up my ass?" I can handle outside the box thinking but this one is just plain stupid. The constant name-dropping, the rationalizations, and the utterly insulting. Her comments nearly justifying Holocaust suffering are staggering. I've heard this shit before by people I almost respect. Almost. I thought there would be some wisdom by an older actress who has been in the business for awhile. There wasn't. Only ego-tripping of galactic proportions.

"What if many trees weren't wasted on this so-called 'book'?"

Mandy says

Beside being a beloved and multi-talented stage and screen actress, Shirley MacLaine is well known for her eccentric beliefs, including spirituality, extraterrestrials and metaphysics. Much of her newest book, What If... A Lifetime of Questions, Speculations, Reasonable Guesses, and a Few Things I Know for Sure encompasses many of these topics and expands on her beliefs.

While I didn't always necessarily agree with her perspective, I appreciated its uniqueness. Her honest and thought-provoking insights are refreshing. She is thoughtful about herself and the world around her and is

not shy about sharing her wisdom. A few of my favorite insights:?

“What if people were more like dogs? People often tell me that the passing of their beloved dog was more devastating than the passing of a relative. Why? A dog will always tell you the truth, no matter what. . .”
(page 118)

“What if elections focused less on manipulating the negative and more on the emergence of positive new ideas - ideas that are not already society-accepted homilies?” (page 148)?

Each new thought and insight begins on a new page. Some are short, one or two line thoughts, and some are several pages long. While the progression of the questions does seem to go in some sort of organized order, it would have been really helpful if the book was divided into labeled sections. It easily could be read by skipping around between issues, but an actual organizational structure is needed.

I will admit that this was not the book I was expecting to read. I was hoping for a little more of a memoir-type book with insightful observations about life. Despite that, it was refreshing to read about a celebrity with more on her mind than a lavish lifestyle and lucrative career.?

What If... will be published on November 12, 2013 by Atria Books/Simon and Schuster. I received an advanced copy of the book from the publisher.

Mary says

This was a totally engaging and unique book format. I enjoyed her random bits of intelligent trivia, while learning a lot about a lot of different subjects. Shirley is still cool after all these years...I just loved this book!

JoAnne Pulcino says

WHAT IF ... A LIFETIME OF QUESTIONS, SPECULATIONS, REASONABLE GUESSES, AND A FEW THINGS I KNOW FOR SURE

Shirley MacLaine

I love, love, love Shirley MacLaine!!! We all know what a wonderful dancer and actress she is, but this is the personal Shirley MacLaine.

She is an open vessel constantly seeking and searching for awareness and knowledge. Her journey in this lifetime has taken her to faraway places, intimate exchanges with great philosophers, shaman, religious leaders and the man on the street.

She has written this book with many of her ideas and philosophies that challenge you to question how you feel about what she has written. Some of her observations I thoroughly adore, while others I would love to debate with her. But the magic is that she is not the least bit intimidated by what anyone thinks of her or her lifestyle. Oh, if we could all have her freedom and courage.

I love her obsessive and powerful curiosity, I love her probing intellect and her adaptability when challenged by new or far reaching observations. Her outspokenness about her feelings about UFO's, celestial beings, reincarnation and psychic wonders may be to some a little far reaching, but when reading her book you're inclined to open and listen to her intellectual explanations.

Most of all I love her humanity, her brio, her compulsion to grow and learn, and most of all to enjoy living her life her way.

Meredith says

I listened to this on audiobook, which is always great to hear an actor read her own words. As usual, Ms. Maclaine discusses her somewhat 'out there' beliefs. She describes extra-terrestrials in detail (I believe she lists 4 types and where they are from) and how much they do or do not involve themselves in our lives here on Earth and why. She also discusses her religious beliefs with interpretations of Bible verses that are deeply thought out. On the lighter side, Maclaine tells a fabulous story about her experience when she was awarded the AFI Lifetime Achievement award, recalls some of her days hanging with the Rat Pack in Vegas, and her lovely experience working on Downton Abbey. Overall, she just seems like a neat lady. Her favorite description of herself is 'a dancer who thinks'. Keep dancing and thinking, Ms. Maclaine - can't wait to see what you do next.

Michael Thorner says

I was impressed by the form MacLaine chose to take to express her ideas, experience, and worldview. The format in *What If...* allows her to touch on a myriad of subjects, light and weighty. This provides her the opportunity to keep things brief, or get expansive when the topic warrants delving deeper. And most of us are aware of how cosmically wide a thinker Shirley can be. A fun read, and by its construction alone, a real page-turner; especially suited for those who have been altered by the internet age in how—and how fast—one digests what they read.

Min says

As the title says, she poses questions meant to provoke thinking. Some are spoken in a rhetorical sense, with no thought, or answer offered. Those that are addressed are often springboards to stories about her past, such as her AFI Lifetime Achievement Award, or as platforms to further express her ideas about spirituality, and alien intelligences.

I may not agree with everything she says--some of it feels ridiculous for a lack of analytical thinking for more logical conclusions- however, I enjoy the format and hearing other perspectives. Much of the "answers" (as they are not shared as definitive, nor as the only possible question to be asked) are breviloquent.

Her musings about "what if we lost the (electricity) grid" are a bit naive in that she fails to know, or fails to discuss, that the nation would not be as helpless as she describes. Science is more resourceful , and we know the ancients had more capabilities with medicine, for example. Also, she ignores the fact there are those living off the grid with an electrical supply. We, as a people, would indeed need to make some adaptations,

however, none as dire as her predictions. We would still have fuels for vehicles, and an economic system of monies. Communication would slow, although I feel very certain, changes would occur to minimize the shift. She mentions her own self-sustaining systems she has at her ranch so the catastrophic descriptions are exaggerations. The implication is humans would suddenly be more connected to Nature, and thereby more spiritual, which seems a leap of faith without grounds in fact. She makes it sound almost Utopian--if we didn't have that pesky electricity disconnecting us from each other. The Victorian Age was pre-electric, with steam, and natural gas, so artificial light was available.

Agnieszka says

what if someone writes a whole bunch of crap, and no one is there to read it?

Did 9/11 not happen either? the comments about the holocaust are unforgivable.

what a complete nut.

Maura Badji says

Who cares? As a teenager and young woman interested in acting and theater I avidly read Shirley MacLaine's first three memoirs. My interest in her adventures in self-exploration waned as I grew older and her direction seemed to turn down Self-Involved Wackadoo Lane. As I had not read anything if hers in years I thought I'd give it a try and see if perhaps she'd moved on. Nope, still roosting at the same address.

Lori says

I would give this an almost four. I have always liked Shirley MacLaine myself. I have read several of her books. This "what if " book is comprised of those speculations that she has written about. some are only a sentence or two. Others run from two pages on up. Shirley M. had never been shy about sharing her beliefs. she has been open about her beliefs on reincarnation, the extraterrestrials, and Karma. she shares many thoughts on this subject. some may be upsetting to the readers. she also had some fun in her book talking about when she received her Lifetime achievement award or her dog Terry.. I liked this book for the most part. I may not agree with everything she says or believes. but this her opinion. I would warn a couple of her "what ifs" may upset some who read this. I enjoyed most of her book.

Kathy says

What If...A Lifetime of Questions, Speculations, Reasonable Guesses, and a Few Things I Know for Sure - Shirley MacLaine

I know most people often wonder of the "What If's." What they should have said, or thought. Would it have resulted in a different action or thought than what was said. In the Novel the author Shirley MacLaine ask all

the What If's pertaining to her life as an Actress and also as a person of Spiritual means. She asks those What If questions and comes up with her own answers to most of them. For example: She quotes Shakespeare that "All the world is a stage." She believes that we act out our own lives as we perceive it to be. I look at our life as a game of Chess. Each move that we make is either calculated or planned which many either result in a positive consequence or a negative with nothing planned or just something that happens on impulse.

The author also mentioned "What If the Pharma or Drug System is designed to keep people sick than seek for a cure. The author is right on the money with that comment. There are cures out there but the drug companies squelches them since they enjoy reaping profits from the sick. They give out their poisons to mask the pain from the illnesses and diseases that people are looking to relieve them from their tortured sicknesses.

What if Religion was actually created to explain the UFO's in the sky, What If we lived past one hundred years.

This book was an easy read and also gave the reader something to think about in how we see ourselves on this earth plane. What are your What IF questions and would you be able to answer them as in-depth as the author has.