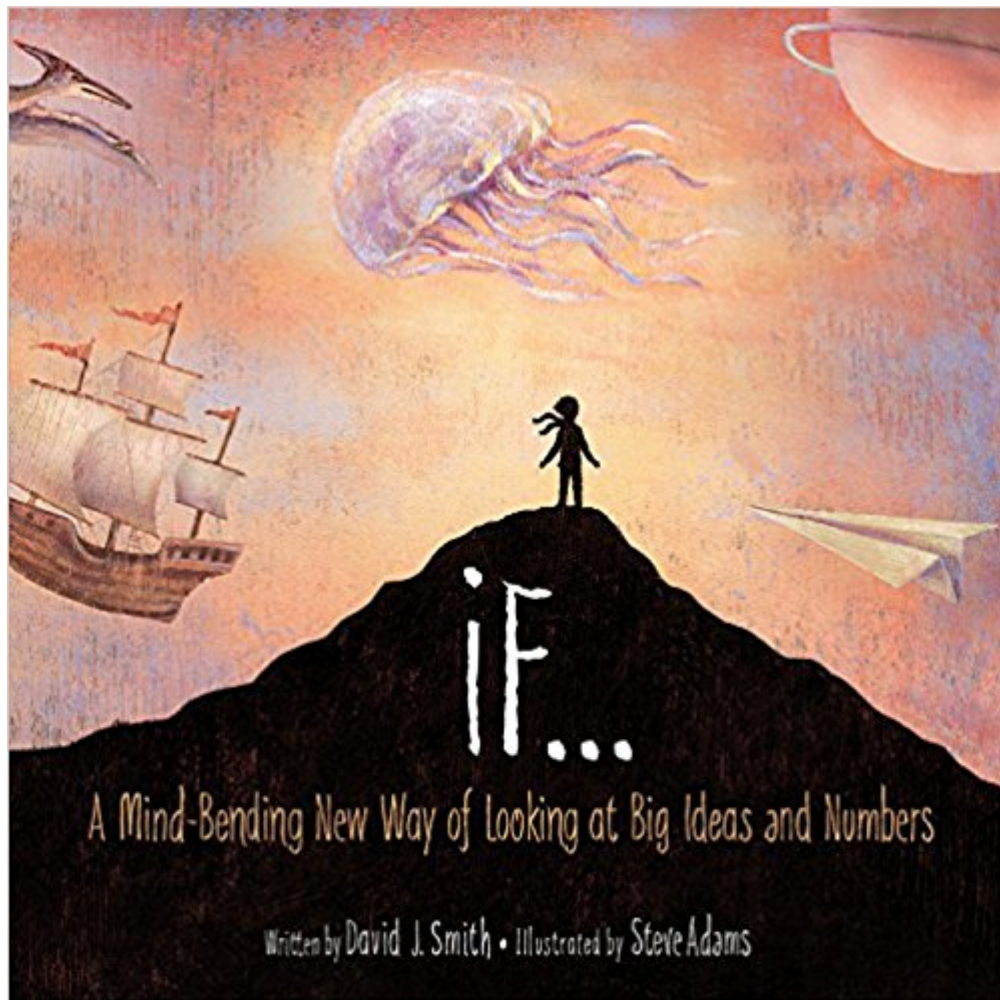




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# If: A Mind-Bending New Way Of Looking At Big Ideas And Numbers



## Synopsis

Some things are so huge or so old that it's hard to wrap your mind around them. But what if we took these big, hard-to-imagine objects and events and compared them to things we can see, feel and touch? Instantly, we'd see our world in a whole new way. So begins this endlessly intriguing guide to better understanding all those really big ideas and numbers children come across on a regular basis. Author David J. Smith has found clever devices to scale down everything from time lines (the history of Earth compressed into one year), to quantities (all the wealth in the world divided into one hundred coins), to size differences (the planets shown as different types of balls). Accompanying each description is a kid-friendly drawing by illustrator Steve Adams that visually reinforces the concept. By simply reducing everything to human scale, Smith has made the incomprehensible easier to grasp, and therefore more meaningful. The children who just love these kinds of fact-filled, knock-your-socks-off books will want to read this one from cover to cover. It will find the most use, however, as an excellent classroom reference that can be reached for again and again when studying scale and measurement in math, and also for any number of applications in social studies, science and language arts. For those who want to delve a little deeper, Smith has included six suggestions for classroom projects. There is also a full page of resource information at the back of the book.

## Customer Reviews

Gr 2-5 "Following in the footsteps of his *If America Were a Village* (2009) and *If the World Were a Village* (2011, both Kids Can), Smith again scales down large concepts and numbers for young readers with a focus on worldly concepts. Topics ranging from our galaxy, solar system, world history, inventions, world population, and energy and food production are related to familiar everyday objects, so children can easily grasp the relationship between these big ideas. For instance: if all of Earth's water was represented by 100 drinking glasses, 97 glasses would be filled with salt water, while only three would be filled with fresh water. Only one of the three is accessible, as the remaining two would be found in glaciers, frozen in the atmosphere, or deep underground. Adams's beautiful illustrations, reminiscent of folk art, vividly portray the concepts but may occasionally lead to some confusion. When presenting world life expectancy as footprints in the sand, the illustration makes it seem as though North Americans live the longest at 78 years (with 78 footprints), but only when reading the side panel is it stated that residents of some countries would have 83 footprints. Furthermore, Smith's time lines are brief and may overlook events some find most relevant (for instance, he doesn't include the automobile on the time line of Inventions of the

Last 1000 Years). An author's note provides suggestions for additional scale activities, and a list of useful books and websites can be found as well. Overall, the text serves as an excellent discussion starter and bridge to comprehending big concepts. A solid suggestion for fact-focused young readers.â "Meaghan Darling, Plainsboro Public Library, NJ

" ... this is one of those books school-age children can happily page through many times, and even adults may find themselves taking a second and third whirl.â •The New York TimesThis would be a fun book to book-talk to children in grades two to six.â •Resource Links

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