

Podcast: What If World

[Episode: 152: What if Fred went into a portal to Zombie Land?](#)

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Transcription by Keffy

[Rising harp scales followed by the What If World theme song.]

Lyrics: What if kittens played the glockenspiel? And what if unicorns were real? What if you could fly or travel back in time, we welcome you to What If World. What If World. This is What If World.

[Gentle bell music.]

Mr. Eric: Hey there, folks, and welcome back to What If World, the show where your questions and ideas inspire off-the-cuff stories. I'm Mr. Eric, your host and today we've got two international questions. The first is from a patron named Noah in Australia.

Noah: Hello Mr. Eric. My name's Noah. I'm seven. I'm from Sydney, Australia. My question is, what if Fred the Dog went into a portal to Zombie Land.

Mr. Eric: Oh, Fred is going to fit right in, I have a feeling. Thank you, Noah. And our second question is from Shauna.

Shauna: Hi, my name is Shauna and I'm from Turkey. I'm six and a half years old. And I like you and my what if question is what if kids never had fun? Bye.

Mr. Eric: Oh, I always love a good challenge. Let's see if we can make not fun fun.

Fred the Dog: And let's see if me, Fred the Dog, can give a shout out to Sebastian.

Mr. Eric: Hey, Fred, yeah. Hey, thanks, Sebastian. Okay, now let's get to our st-

Fred the Dog: Hold your horses. I also got a shout out for Samuel. He's from Tennessee, and he loves basketball.

Mr. Eric: Oh, thank you, Samuel, as well.

Candy the Kid: And I've got a shout out for Gracie.

Mr. Eric: Candy the Kid?

Candy & Boots: Oh, you better believe it. [Gracie] loves Disney's Descendants and Santa.

Candy the Kid: Pipe down, you butterscotch boots! This is my shout out!

Mr. Eric: Okay... I'm sure Gracie wanted to hear from you and your butterscotch boots.

Cthunkle: And last and most evil of all, I have a shout out for Elly.

Mr. Eric: Okay. Um, Cthunkle, let's not assume that she's evil.

Cthunkle: Elly loves to draw and loves Harry Potter.

Mr. Eric: I think Elly just wanted a shout out from you because you're a fun and silly character.

Cthunkle: Fun and silly. Oh, that really hurts.

Mr. Eric: Well, thank you Elly, Gracie, Samuel, and Sebastian. Now, let's find out what if kids never had fun? And what if Fred the Dog went into a portal to Zombie Land?

[Rising harp scale.]

Fred the Frog and Alabaster Zeribbit were still frogs, as you may have gathered, and they were still stuck in the swamp trying to figure out how they might get turned back.

If you want the full story, you're going to have to go all the way back to episode 149, "What if magic didn't exist?" But, needless to say, magic doesn't exist.

Fred the Dog: And I'm telling you, Alabaster, we're never gonna get turned back to normal and we're never gonna find magic again unless we find the Queen of Frogs.

Mr. Eric: Said Fred the Dog, who was recently made Fred the Frog and still had his trademark extra long tongue. That made it a little difficult for him to talk sometimes.

Alabaster Zero: I don't know, Fred.

Mr. Eric: Responded Alabaster Zeribbit, what if world's quote-unquote "greatest detective."

Alabaster Zero: Every lead has gone cold. We've just got to wait it out here in the swamp until opportunity knocks.

Fred the Dog: But opportunity doesn't just knock, Alabaster. Sometimes it sniffs... or licks, or looks, or kicks. But you'll miss it if you never leave your home for a little adventure.

Alabaster Zero: Okay, fine. You go have a little adventure and I'll wait here to rescue you when you get lost.

Fred the Dog: I'm not gonna get lost, Alabaster. I'm gonna find my way to the frog dimension, just you wait.

Mr. Eric: And so Fred sniffed and hopped and listened, ready to search all of What If World for a way to get to the frog dimension.

Fred the Dog: It's only a matter of time.

[Time skip noise.]

Mr. Eric: Three weeks had gone by and Fred finally looked up from his licking.

Fred the Dog: Whoa... where am I?

Alabaster Zero: You're still in the swamp, Fred. You've searched every stump and stone and vine. I think it's time to give up the ghost.

Fred the Dog: Oh wait! I missed that lump of gray goo the first time around.

Alabaster Zero: Oh... oh, please don't lick that.

Fred the Dog: I don't know what they taught you in detective school, Alabaster, but the motto of the Fur Force is leave no lump unlicked.

Alabaster Zero: Did you write the motto.

Fred the Dog: I wrote the motto. Yes. I wrote it.

Mr. Eric: So Fred licked the random lump of gray goo that he found in the swamp. Should I stop right here and tell you folks that you shouldn't lick gray lumps that you find in the swamp?

Fred the Dog: Oh, hush, Mr. Eric. They know that.

Mr. Eric: Okay, sorry. But don't do that.

Fred the Dog: I don't know, maybe do it if you've been turned into a frog!

Mr. Eric: Um, okay.

Fred the Dog: I'm licking, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: Yes, ah, so as Fred the Frog licked the lump of gray goo, a portal tore its way through space-time.

Fred the Dog: See, Alabaster? This portal must be older than magic itself.

Alabaster Zero: But aren't all portals magic?

Fred the Dog: I don't know, maybe it's a science portal. Don't poke holes in this.

Alabaster Zero: Fine.

Mr. Eric: And Fred jumped through the portal which quickly closed behind him.

Fred the Frog found himself in a gray schoolyard, dunes of dust slowly drifted across the landscape and tumblewebs rolled past rusted-out swing sets, getting caught on patches of cracked cement.

Fred the Dog: What a nice dimension.

[Record scratch.]

Mr. Eric: Said Fred, hopping through the abandoned schoolyard to the first building he could find to see a room full of gray-skinned children in tattered clothes looking down at strange devices held in their hands.

Fred the Dog: If I didn't know any better, I'd say these were zombies.

Mr. Eric: Thought Fred the Dog, because why would he say that out loud when he's all by himself.

Fred the Dog: No, I said it out loud, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: Okay, so I guess Fred said that out loud.

Fred the Dog: Now it's time to take a closer look.

Mr. Eric: And Fred silently hopped around the classroom door and nudged his way in.

Mr. Eric: The teacher looked like a kind of ghost and she floated up, down, and through the rows of desks.

Ghost: All right, class. Take out your tablets and follow along closely. Brains, brains. Brains, brains.

Fred the Dog: Oh, now I'm sure they're zombies. I better be careful not to mention that I have a brain.

Mr. Eric: Said Fred, out loud, rather than thinking it to himself like he should have.

Fred the Dog: No, I meant to think that part. Oh, man...

Ghost: Excuse me? Did you say brains?

Mr. Eric: And the ghostly teacher floated up to Fred the Frog as all the zombie students slowly looked up from their devices, and creakingly turned their heads toward Fred the Frog.

Fred the Dog: Oh, no... no... I said brain, singular. But what I meant to say is, "Hi, I'm Fred and I need your help finding--"

Ghost: Your brains?

Fred the Dog: No, the Queen of Frogs. I mean, maybe this isn't the frog dimension, but if you have magic, it could be easy.

Ghost: What a coincidence. You know we were just looking for brains.

Mr. Eric: Said the ghostly teacher, floating a little bit closer.

Fred the Dog: Huh? No you're not looking for anything. You're just staring at those things... those weird...

Mr. Eric: And Fred finally saw the devices in each child's hand.

Fred the Dog: Those tablets are literally just slabs of stone with pictures of brains on them.

Children: Brains.
Brains.
Brains.

Mr. Eric: Agreed the class.

Fred the Dog: But you can't possibly have fun studying one picture forever.

Zombie Zack: We never have fun.

Mr. Eric: Said Zombie Zack.

Zombie Lola: We don't have brains.

Mr. Eric: Said Zombie Lola Rabbit.

Fred the Dog: What? That's crazy. Everybody has brains.

Ghost: Not in Zombie Land.

Mr. Eric: Said the ghostly teacher, floating within arm's reach of Fred the Frog.

Ghost: We all ate each other's brains ages ago. See?

Mr. Eric: The teacher turned her head to the side and stretched open her misty ear. Fred could see clean through to the other side.

Fred the Dog: Ew. Seeing no brain is somehow even grosser than seeing a brain.

Ghost: You've seen brains?

Fred the Dog: No, no, no. Thank goodness. My brain's still in my head where it belongs. I thought to myself... oh no!

Mr. Eric: But Fred had already said it out loud.

Zombie Zack: You have a brain in your head?

Mr. Eric: Asked Zombie Zack.

Fred the Dog: Did I say my head? No. I meant some other zombie's tummy because they ate it.

Zombie Lola: Oh, of course! Common mistake.

Mr. Eric: Said Zombie Lola.

Fred the Dog: Phew! It's a good thing all these zombies don't have brains, or they'd have figured out that I have a brain a long time ago. Am I right, Mr. Eric?

Mr. Eric: And the whole class fixed Fred with a hard stare.

Fred the Dog: Oh, I really should learn how to have an inner monologue.

Mr. Eric: But then the ghostly teacher's eyes seemed to gloss over and all the students slowly, creakingly, turned back to their tablets.

Ghost: All right, class. Follow along, closely. Brains, brains, brains, brains.

Children: Brains, brains, brains, brains brains, brains.

Fred the Dog: Hey, whoa. I thought you all were gonna help me.

Mr. Eric: And the teacher paused for a moment.

Ghost: Yes. Just join our class and practice your brains. That way, if brains ever come into the class, we'll all have brains again.

Fred the Dog: How can you expect to get brains by just sitting here looking at pictures of brains?

Children: Brains!

Mr. Eric: The class agreed.

Fred the Dog: No, that's not how it works. Opportunity doesn't just knock. You gotta go out and find it. And it can be a lot more fun than staring at a tablet all day long.

Ghost: Fun? Oh no. We've just got to stick with our studies forever or until our brains come back. Then we'll help you find your Queen of Brains.

Fred the Dog: It's Queen of Frogs! Oh... you wouldn't know a brain if you were looking at a frog of a dog of a Fred with a big juicy brain right in front of you!

Ghost: That's why we need to study our brains. All right, class. Follow along, closely.

Fred the Dog: No! I just told you! I've got a brain, okay! Come get out of this classroom. Chase a frog with a juicy brain!

Mr. Eric: And Fred jumped up and down, trying to get the attention of all the zombie students and their ghost teacher.

Students: Brains?
Brains?
Brains?

Mr. Eric: Fred stopped at the doorway and all the students started turning back to their tablets.

Fred the Dog: Oh, forget it.

Zombie Zack: Forget it?

Mr. Eric: Said Zombie Zack.

Zombie Lola: To forget a short-term memory like this interaction, he'd need a prefrontal cortex.

Fred the Dog: Huh? A pre can of cojack?

Zombie Zack: A sloppy pun like that means he can recall facts and information using the amygdala, neocortex, and hippocampus.

Fred the Dog: I think it's pronounced, "hippopotamus."

Ghost: You've got a brain!

Fred the Dog: I mean, now I'm not so sure.

Ghost: Get that frog!

Fred the Dog: Now, you figure it out? I don't... oh, boy.

Mr. Eric: But the zombies were already chasing Fred out of the classroom.

Fred the Dog: Oh boy.

Mr. Eric: The rusty hinges of the classroom door fell away as the zombie children pushed through it.

Fred the Dog: Oh, I gotta put this jumping legs to the test.

Mr. Eric: As the zombie students ran through the courtyard, tumblewebs swirled away from them and dunes of dust burst apart and floated away on the wind.

Zombie Zack: [Excitedly] Braa-aaains!

Zombie Lola: Brains brainsbrainsbraaaaains!

Ghost: Brains indeed, class.

Mr. Eric: As they chased Fred across the schoolyard, more and more of this once happy place started to show beneath the dust and grime.

Fred the Dog: You can't catch me! And even if you do, I'm a slimy frog with an even slimier tongue.

Zombie Zack: Ew.

Mr. Eric: Said Zombie Zack as Fred slipped and slurped through his fingers. The zombies fell over each other trying to catch this little frog and he leapt

on top of the pile of zombies and then right over the chainlink fence of the schoolyard.

Students: Brains?

Brains?

Brains?

Mr. Eric: And the zombies pushed their way through the chainlink fence and followed Fred into an ancient swamp.

Fred the Dog: Aw, swamps again...

Mr. Eric: But Fred made good use of the wet swamp, making himself even slipperier and slimier and harder to catch, and the little zombie kids clamored and giggled and slipped and slid, tumbling their way through the trees and vines. Before they knew it, they'd forgotten why they ran their way into the swamp in the first place. They were just playing in the mud and the muck like the children they'd been some time long ago.

Fred the Dog: See, you kids? There's more to life than just studying your brains.

Mr. Eric: Thought Fred the Frog, so none of the children in the swamp heard him.

Fred the Dog: Oh, come on, Mr. Eric! I obviously meant to say that out loud!

Zombie Zack: Who's this Mr. Eric he keeps talking to?

Zombie Lola: I don't know. Maybe he's missing his brains.

Mr. Eric: Said the children before going back to their play.

Ghost: What are they doing?

Mr. Eric: Asked the ghostly teacher, floating up to Fred.

Fred the Dog: They're playing, Teacher. We can learn so much through—

Ghost: Braaaains...

Mr. Eric: And with that, the ghostly teacher's hands closed around Fred and turned completely solid and cold.

Fred the Dog: Oh, hey, listen. I thought we were past eating my brains. Besides, you're a ghost. Do ghosts even like brains?

Ghost: Braaaains.

Zombie Zack: Teacher, how can you eating a frog's brain give each of us our own brains, individually?

Ghost: I don't know.

Fred the Dog: Well, it can't, Teacher, but look what you did today. You let your class take what they learned out into the world and look at how happy they are.

Mr. Eric: And as the teacher looked over at her playful students, her grip loosened on Fred the Frog, who squirmed and squiggled his way out.

Ghost: Claaaasss...

Mr. Eric: Called out the teacher in her most authoritarian tone.

Ghost: Follow along, closely.

Mr. Eric: And the ghostly teacher picked up a handful of mud and flung it at Zombie Zack.

Zombie Zack: [Laughing]

Mr. Eric: And in an instant, the entire class was having a throwdown muck fight in the middle of this ancient swamp.

Ghost: I had thought I was teaching them everything they needed to know.

Mr. Eric: Said the teacher.

Fred the Dog: Well, you probably were before you all ate each other's brains. But clearly zombies don't need brains to think. You just needed to get out into the world and take some chances.

Ghost: I'm starting to remember things and we've got so much more to learn.

Fred the Dog: Well, I'm glad I could help. President Fred saves another world for all the good it does, sheesh.

Mr. Eric: Fred thought to himself.

Fred the Dog: Hey, you got it right that time, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: And as the muck and mud covered zombies seemed to finally tucker out, Lola Rabbit the Zombie bounced over to Fred.

Zombie Lola: Thanks for helping us remember what we used to be like.

Fred the Dog: Oh, you can still be like that every day. Just get outside and experience something new.

Zombie Lola: But what about something old from like a long time ago.

Fred the Dog: Oh, sure! I like playing the same old games sometimes, too.

Mr. Eric: But Lola Rabbit was bouncing away and waving for Fred the Frog to follow.

Fred the Dog: Oh, be careful, Lola Rabbit. I used to live in a swamp like this and it can be a big and dangerous pla—

Mr. Eric: They stopped at a massive clearing in the swamp where piles of rubble were strewn out in every direction and a giant zombie dragon slept on the rubble.

Zombie Lola: See, I remembered. My friend Dracomax and I used to play here.

Fred the Dog: Where he burst out of the volcano?

Zombie Lola: Yeah, that's what happened. I'd forgotten. It was so long ago.

Fred the Dog: Oh, for crying out loud? I'm stuck in the future!

Mr. Eric: Fred shouted.

Fred the Dog: You're darn right, I shouted, Mr. Eric! It's like things keep going from bad to worse.

Mr. Eric: The end.

Fred the Dog: Oh, don't you say the end!

[Falling harp scale.]

I can't believe you, Mr. Eric.

Mr. Eric: All right, Noah and Shauna, I hope you liked your story. I know things just keep getting crazier in What If World but keep lending us your ears and your imagination and I just know things are gonna turn out all right.

I'd like to thank Karen O'Keeffe, my co-creator, Craig Martinson for our theme song, all the great and kind teachers who have ever lived, and all

you kids at home who know that fun doesn't just knock at your door.
Sometimes you need to get out and find it.

Until we meet again, keep wondering.

[What If World theme plays.]

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