

Color ED
A Ten-Minute Play

by Philana Omorotionmwan

CHARACTERS

MISS SNOW a twenty-something woman who appears to be
 white

JADE a girl of color

CAMEL a boy or girl of color

CLASS boy(s) and/or girl(s) of color

PLACE

We might be in a kindergarten classroom. Or a high school one. In the American educational system of the future, anything is possible.

PRODUCTION NOTES

One actress might play CAMEL and CLASS. However, the ideal visual places at least two actors onstage with MISS SNOW at the beginning of Scene 1.

Pencil shading should be a pre-recorded sound cue of pencils moving back and forth in a military cadence.

Scene 1

(CAMEL and the CLASS stand marching in a military step. CLASS consists of students named Beige, Cream, Eggshell, Khaki and Sand. A class change tone/bell sounds. MISS SNOW enters. She loves rules and procedures and is extremely enthusiastic and upbeat about them.)

MISS SNOW

(in a military cadence)

The bell has rung, I must take roll

CLASS

The bell has rung, she must take roll

MISS SNOW

One hundred percent is our goal

CLASS

One hundred percent is our goal

(The CLASS and MISS SNOW become increasingly pleased as everyone answers "Here," moving them closer and closer to 100%. each student steps forward when responding "Here," then steps back into the line and continues to march in place.)

MISS SNOW

Beige?

BEIGE

(stepping forward)

Here, Miss Snow.

MISS SNOW

Camel?

CAMEL

(stepping forward)

Here, Miss Snow.

MISS SNOW

Cream?

CREAM
(stepping forward)

Here, Miss Snow.

MISS SNOW
 Eggshell?

EGGSHELL
(stepping forward)

Here, Miss Snow.

MISS SNOW
 Jah-dee? Jah-dee? Uh oh! It looks like we're not going to be at one hundred percent. Has anyone seen Jah-dee today?
(CAMEL shoots her hand up into the air.)
 Yes, Camel?

CAMEL
 I did, Miss Snow. Jah-dee was at breakfast.

(CLASS continues to march in place throughout CAMEL and MISS SNOW's exchange.)

MISS SNOW
 Camel, you know that in Miss Snow's classroom we say thank you when Miss Snow acknowledges our presence and validates our existence by calling on us. Because Miss Snow doesn't have to do that. You have a verbal warning. Let's try again. Has anyone seen Jah-dee today?
(CAMEL shoots her hand up into the air.)
 Yes, Camel?

CAMEL
 Thank you, Miss Snow. I saw Jah-dee this morning at breakfast. But she's always on Color ED time.

MISS SNOW
 Those Color ED students are always late. And then they come in here and are loud and expressive with their eyes and their necks and their hands and their hair. And they completely disrupt the peaceful learning environment I've worked so hard to create.
(CAMEL shoots her hand up into the air.)
 Yes, Camel?

CAMEL

Thank you, Miss Snow. Everything will be okay. As long as you don't start acting like Jah-dee.

MISS SNOW

You're right, Camel. You always do know just what to say when I start to let my colors show. Khaki?

KHAKI

(stepping forward)

Here, Miss Snow.

MISS SNOW

Sand?

SAND

(stepping forward)

Here, Miss Snow.

MISS SNOW

That's eighty-five percent present

CLASS

That's eighty-five percent present

MISS SNOW

I hope that grows before you're done

CLASS

We hope that grows before we're done

MISS SNOW

Form a line now, nice and neat

CLASS

Form a line now, nice and neat

MISS SNOW

Now it's time to take a seat

CLASS

Now it's time to take a seat

(They sit. A moment.)

MISS SNOW

Pick up your pencils,
one, two, three

CLASS

Pick up our pencils,
one, two, three

MISS SNOW

Monkey do and monkey see

CLASS

Monkey do and monkey see

MISS SNOW

Shade your circles
til they're greige

CLASS

Shade our circles
til they're greige

MISS SNOW

Someday you'll earn minimum wage

CLASS

Someday we'll earn minimum wage

MISS SNOW

A or B or C or D

CLASS

A or B or C or D

MISS SNOW

Just bubble in a letter
for the data fairy

CLASS

Just bubble in a letter
for the data fairy

(CLASS starts moving their arms in sync with the sound of pencils shading in the military cadence. There are at least 4 repetitions before JADE enters. CLASS continues to shade until the end of the scene. JADE is full of energy that she needs to get out. She has presence. If her circumstances were

different, she would probably be put into theatre instead of Color ED classes.)

JADE

Good morning, Miss Snow!

MISS SNOW

You're late.

JADE

Ask me if it's a good day? Ask me, ask me, ask me! Ask me.

MISS SNOW

Is it a good day?

JADE

Yes, it's a good day because Jesus woke us up! I love him! Do you?

MISS SNOW

This is the third time you've been late this week. Once more and you won't be able to pass to the eleventh grade, Jah-dee.

JADE

My name is Jade.

MISS SNOW

Everyone's name is supposed to have two syllables. I'm Miss Snow. She's Camel. And there's Eggshell.

JADE

Cream isn't two syllables. Sand isn't two syllables.

MISS SNOW

Yes, well Sand and Cream's parents did their best to conceal their Color ED backgrounds. They didn't know any better. But at least they named their children after neutral tones. Yours, on the other hand...

JADE

My parents are Color ED and proud! And so am I.

MISS SNOW

If you're late one more time this week, you won't be able to pass to the next grade. Jade. Please put your things away. We just started our shading activity for today.

(During the chanting that follows, JADE takes out a crumpled sheet of white paper and crayons.)

MISS SNOW
A or B or C or D

CLASS
A or B or C or D

MISS SNOW
Just bubble in a letter
for the data fairy

CLASS
Just bubble in a letter
for the data fairy

MISS SNOW
A or B or C or D

CLASS
A or B or C or D

MISS SNOW
Just bubble in a letter
for the data fairy

CLASS
Just bubble in a letter
for the data fairy

CAMEL
Ooooo, I'm telling. You're keeping us from being be at 100 percent.

(CAMEL raises her hand.)

MISS SNOW
Yes, Camel?

CAMEL
Thank you, Miss Snow. Ja-de is not shading her circles. She is coloring ... with colors.

MISS SNOW
Jah-d- Jade, you have a verbal warning. I simply don't understand why you insist on using crumpled paper when I give you such nice, crisp scantrons to shade.

JADE

They're covered with circles and letters. There's no blank space for my colors.

MISS SNOW

The circles are there so that you stay inside of them. And I've told before you not to bring colors into my classroom.

JADE

My mommy says that I can use my colors whenever I want.

MISS SNOW

Is this your "mommy's" classroom?

JADE

She said colors let me make pictures that show why I matter.

MISS SNOW

You *what*? Did you just say that you matter?

CAMEL

Ooooo.

MISS SNOW

This is your second verbal warning, Jade.

JADE

I do matter.

MISS SNOW

A warning is a reminder to correct your behavior. Not to repeat it. Bring the colors up here to me. You can get them back when it's time for you to return to the Color ED room.

JADE

I matter! And I don't wanna shade.

MISS SNOW

I didn't ask you what you want to do. I told you what you have to do. You have to shade.

JADE

I don't have to do nothing but stay Color ED and die!

(MISS SNOW takes the crayons.)

MISS SNOW

And I do not
 want to see
 you with colors
 in my classroom
 ever
 again.
 Do you understand?

(She breaks a crayon in half.)
(She breaks a crayon in half.)
(She breaks a crayon in half.)
(She breaks a crayon in half.)
(She breaks a crayon in half.)
(She breaks a crayon in half.)

JADE

Yeah.

MISS SNOW

Let's try that again. I do not want to see you with colors in my classroom ever again. Do you understand?

JADE

Yes, Miss Snow.

MISS SNOW

We speak in complete sentences in this classroom. Yes, Miss Snow what?

JADE

Yes, Miss Snow. I understand that you don't want to see me with colors in your classroom ever again.

MISS SNOW

Good. And since you failed to comply the first time, you've earned yourself forty minutes of silent reflection. Topic: Why My Colors Are Better Off Muted.

WHY THE SHIFT FROM YES MISS SNOW TO DOING WHAT SHE WANTS

JADE

(pulling out a hidden violet crayon)
 I'm not gonna. I'm. Gonna. Colooooor!
(JADE colors furiously.)

MISS SNOW

This is Miss Snow. I need a school resource officer in L207. With mace and restraints.

Scene 2

(Lights rise. JADE sits with her hands tied together. CLASS is moving their arms in sync with the sound of pencils shading in the military cadence. There are at least 4 repetitions before an alarm sounds.)

MISS SNOW

It sounds like your reflection time is over, Jade. I hope you learned something.

(MISS SNOW unties JADE's hands. MISS SNOW picks up the violet crayon and inspects it.)

Violet. That was my mother's name. Violet. That's right, Jade. I was in Color ED in school. And that meant I walked through the world differently. But that didn't mean everyone else had to know the depth and shape of my footprints. I made sure the wind blew dust over my tracks. Life is easier that way. Life would be so much easier for you my way. There's no use forcing people to see what they would rather pretend doesn't exist. And, in the end, you didn't recognize me. My own mother wouldn't even recognize me.

(MISS SNOW breaks the violet crayon in half.)

Sometimes you have to leave parts of yourself behind, Jade. Even the ones you love. Especially the ones you love.

MISS SNOW

Pick up your pencil,
one, two, three

(JADE doesn't respond.)

Pick up your pencil,
one, two, three

JADE

Pick up my pencil
one, two, three

MISS SNOW

Monkey do and monkey see

JADE

Monkey do and monkey see

MISS SNOW

Shade your circles
til they're greige

JADE

Shade my circles
til they're greige

MISS SNOW

Someday you'll earn minimum wage

JADE

Someday I'll earn minimum wage

MISS SNOW

A or B or C or D

JADE

A or B or C or D

MISS SNOW

Just bubble in a letter
for the data fairy

JADE

Just bubble in a letter
for the data fairy

*(The sound of pencils shading in the
military cadence for at least 4 repetitions.
The class is at one hundred percent.
Blackout. The sound of pencils shading
continues for a moment.)*

END OF PLAY