

# ANXIETY IS ORANGE

A VIGNETTE PLAY IN ONE ACT BY  
*Lindsay Price*



**CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE**

## Introduction

Join the characters in this vignette play as they navigate the world, each other, and the greens, greys, blues, reds, pinks, yellows, and oranges around them.

## Playwright Bio

Lindsay Price is the Vice President of Theatrefolk Inc. and the co-creator of the Drama Teacher Academy. She has been involved with theatre education for over 25 years as a playwright, adjudicator, workshop instructor, resource writer, curriculum supervisor, professional development creator and keynote speaker. Her plays have been performed in schools all over the world with over 1000 productions a year.

## Synopsis

*Anxiety is Orange* is a vignette play made up of short scenes on a theme. Each scene explores a different aspect of colour symbolism. Red is fiery. Purple is royal. Blue is calming. Sometimes, colours can take on too much meaning. *I can't date you — you wear wenge! He sent yellow flowers! Orange gives my brother anxiety!*

## Characters

As this is a vignette play, actors play multiple roles in a variety of scenes. Generally, each scene contains a set of characters that only appear in that one scene. In this play, some of the characters are named (Milan, Brittany, Tyler). These characters react to a particular aspect of colour symbolism. For example:

- ★ Belle, Nada, and Wynn try to decipher the meaning behind Nada's boyfriend giving her yellow roses.
- ★ Chole refuses to go out on her blind date with Tyler because he's wearing a specific colour.

In other scenes, the characters are named for a specific colour and either take on the personality characteristics a certain colour evokes, or defy the characteristics a certain colour evokes. For example:

- ★ Black and Pink defend their colour choices and defy the stereotypes that are usually associated with people who wear their chosen colours.

## Themes

Self-image, identity, individuality, jealousy, peer pressure, relationships, depression

## Pre-Read Questions

- ★ What's your favourite colour? Why is it your favourite colour?
- ★ What's your least favourite colour? What do you have against this colour?
- ★ Do you ever judge people for wearing a certain colour?
- ★ Has anyone ever judged you for wearing a certain colour?
- ★ Do you know anything about colour symbolism? What comes to mind when you think of black, pink, blue, gold, grey, orange, purple, and yellow?

## Pre-Read Activities

### Research Project

- ★ In small groups students will research the history, meaning and symbolism of a colour.
  - » Decide whether groups will choose their own colour or you will assign them.

- ★ After completing their research, students will create a presentation in which everyone in the group must take part. It can be:
  - » A live oral presentation with a visual component such as a slide deck
  - » An original scene theatricalizing their findings
  - » A recorded presentation (filmed scene, or oral presentation with visual component)

## **Colour Collage**

- ★ Create a collage that visualizes your connection to a specific colour. What is your favourite colour and why? Visualize how this colour makes you feel and what it means to you to wear a specific colour.
  - » Brainstorm images, symbols, and words you can use to visualize your connection to this colour.
  - » After you create your collage, write a one-paragraph description of the choices you made and why.

## **Colour Moment**

- ★ Discuss with the class the connections they have to the colour green. What does it mean? How do they feel about the colour? How is green represented in the media? Is green a positive or negative colour? (One could argue that it's both — green is evidence of life in nature as well as the colour of jealousy.)
- ★ Divide students into groups. Based on the discussion they will create a one-minute theatrical moment that visualizes the colour green in either a positive or negative light. (The group should choose.)
- ★ Groups will choose a form for their moment: tableaux, spoken word, movement piece, original scene, song, or film.
- ★ Groups will discuss, rehearse and present.
- ★ Discuss the moments afterward. What were the similarities and the differences?

## Colour Original Pair Scene

- ★ Divide students into pairs and have them create an original scene. Friend A in the pair has started dating someone who only wears yellow. Friend B responds to this. Decide if the response is positive or negative.
- ★ Pairs will discuss and rehearse. Group the pairs together so they can perform for each other.
- ★ Discuss the scenes. How many pairs gave Friend B a positive response? How many gave a negative response?

## The Colour Black: Character Profile

- ★ Divide students into groups. Each group will create a character profile for someone who primarily wears black. Create the following details for the character:
  - » Name
  - » Three physical traits
  - » Three personality traits
  - » A favourite outfit
  - » Favourite/least favourite food, movie, music
  - » Pet peeve
  - » Secret
  - » Motto
  - » Living environment
  - » Significant relationship or object
- ★ Bring the class together so the groups can share their profiles. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Ask students: Why do we assume certain personality traits based on colour choices?

## The Colour Pink: Character Profile

- ★ Divide students into groups. Each group will create a character profile for someone who primarily wears pink. Create the following details for the character:
  - » Name
  - » Three physical traits
  - » Three personality traits
  - » A favourite outfit
  - » Favourite/least favourite food, movie, music
  - » Pet peeve
  - » Secret
  - » Motto
  - » Living environment
  - » Significant relationship or object
- ★ Bring the class together so the groups can share their profiles. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Ask students: Why do we assume certain personality traits based on colour choices?

## Close Reading Analysis Questions

Close reading is an analysis tool. Students read a text multiple times for in-depth comprehension, striving to understand not only **what** is being said but **how** it's being said and **why**. Close reading takes a student from story and character to drawing conclusions on author intention. Close reading prompts students to flex their thinking skills by:

- ★ Teaching students to engage with a text.
- ★ Teaching students to be selective. We can't highlight everything in the text, only the most important elements.
- ★ Teaching students to make educated decisions. All conclusions and opinions must be backed up with a text example.

Have students analyze *Anxiety is Orange* individually or in groups, using the following text-dependent questions:

### Read One: What is happening?

1. Why won't Chloe date Tyler?
2. Finish this sentence: "Wearing black does not mean I'm \_\_\_\_\_."
3. What does Milan want to do to stop signs?
4. What colour roses did Bella get from her boyfriend?
5. Is she happy about this? Why or why not?
6. Finish this sentence: "I wear red because I want everyone to know I am a \_\_\_\_\_."
7. What is wrong with Harper's brother?
8. Who says, "It's just a colour. It's not your life"?
9. What is the key idea of the play?

## Read Two: How does it happen?

1. In your opinion, why did the playwright choose to explore the topic of colour symbolism using vignettes rather than tell one story from beginning to end?
2. Based on Chloe's language, what can you infer about her personality? Cite the text to support your answer.
3. Based on Milan's language, behaviour, and personality, how would you costume this character?
4. In the Ethan, Scout, Rory, and Milan scene, who is high status? Who is low status? How can you tell this through language and action?
5. Based on Jealousy's language, behaviour, and personality, how would you costume this character?
6. Look up the different meanings of roses. In your opinion, is Bella's boyfriend trying to say something or just trying to do something nice?
7. What is the subtext of Dee's anger at Blue?
8. In the "Brittany" monologue:
  - a. Why has the author called the character "Brittany"? What would you usually infer about a character with this name? Does this character fit that description?
  - b. What is the significance of red and pink in the monologue?
  - c. Based on Brittany's language and word choice, what can you infer about her physical stance? How does she stand and move? Cite the text to support your answer.
9. Is there such a thing as being allergic to a colour? Why do you think the playwright used this in a play about colour symbolism?
10. What is the significance of the line, "It's just a colour. It's not your life"?



## Read Three: Why does it happen?

1. In your opinion, why is the play called *Anxiety is Orange*?
2. What is the playwright trying to say about symbolism? Cite the text to support your answer.
3. How does the playwright want you to respond to this play?

## **Post-Read Questions**

- ★ What is one question that you still have about the play?
- ★ Which character resonated with you the most and why?
- ★ Do you recognize yourself in any of the characters?
- ★ Did any scene make you think about how you present yourself?
- ★ What symbol, other than a colour, would you use to define yourself?
- ★ Do you believe in colour symbolism? Why or why not?

## **Post-Read Activities**

### Character Costume Design

- ★ Choose a character and design their costume.
- ★ Based on their personality, what would they wear? What pieces of clothing define them? What colours and textures would they choose?
- ★ Draw a colour costume rendering.

## Set Design

- ★ Students, individually or in groups, will discuss and decide how they would design the set for this play. Based on the themes in the play, what colours and textures would they choose?
- ★ Draw a colour set rendering or write a two-paragraph description of the set.

## Poster Design

Based on what you've read, design a poster for the play. How would you visualize the play in a single image that would attract an audience? How would you use colour? What font would you use for the title? What information other than the title would you include?

## Staged Scenes

- ★ Divide students into small groups and assign each group a scene from the play, or a short moment within a scene.
- ★ Give students time to rehearse.
- ★ Each group will present their moment.
- ★ Discuss the scenes afterward:
  - » How did seeing the scenes acted out differ from reading them?
  - » Why is it important to act a scene as well as read it?
  - » Did any of the presentations offer a different interpretation of the characters than yours?

## Playwright Process

*Playwright Lindsay Price talks about her process writing Anxiety is Orange. Have students read and then discuss/reflect on how their perception of the writing process compares to the playwright's.*

1. What was the originating idea for the play? Where did you start?

I love “What if” scenarios, like, what if I wrote a play where every scene was about colour. I also love defining and defying the stereotype in characters, and colour choices often have strong preconceived notions attached to them. We see someone wearing pink and we assume something about their personality. And then as soon as I started doing the research I found out so many interesting colour connections; I couldn't fit them all in the play.

2. What challenges did you encounter during the writing process?

I was working with limitations: I was writing for a specific group of people, who had a specific number of actors, it had to be essentially “set free” as they were traveling, and the play had to be a certain length. I love format limitations like this, because it encourages creativity in other areas, like costume, music and light. All of which are great explorations for colour. Another challenge was that there was just too much to write about! I wrote way more than my time limit allowed and had to cut like crazy. But that's a much better problem to have than having nothing to write about or being stuck.

3. As a playwright, what is your favourite moment/character in the play?

My favourite moment/character is Brittany. I love seeing characters in the middle of a change or a personal fight and Brittany is dealing with a lot. Her strength just leaps off the page for me.

#### 4. What is harder: coming up with ideas or rewrites?

Rewrites always! Ideas are fun because it's the brainstorming phase where everything can change. I don't feel that ideas are precious; they are just a starting point. Rewrites are specific and need to relate directly to moving the play forward. Sometimes, I can rewrite all day and hardly have anything to show for it because I'm trying to work on a moment or a character. But, while the idea stage is more fun, rewrites are more rewarding. Plays become the best they can be in the rewrites; they are never fully written or realized in a first draft.