

Story Study: *The Colour Monster*

Key themes and ideas:

The Colour Monster by Anna Llenas is a story about emotions and friendship. At the beginning, the Colour Monster is all mixed up with different colours. He is confused, and doesn't know why he is so mixed up, until his friend comes along to help. She tells him that his colours are mixed up because his feelings are mixed up. She helps the Colour Monster go through each of his emotions, giving it a name and a colour, and putting it aside in a jar. This helps the Colour Monster get control over his emotions. And yet, when they are all done, a totally new colour appears in the Colour Monster, leaving us to wonder... *what is he feeling now?* The story involves dealing with your emotions, using imagination to help understand the real world, staying open to new possibilities, and the important power of friendship.

Contents:

- 1) Read the Story
- 2) Reading and Discussion
- 3) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:** Colour Acting (Warm Up)
- 4) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:** Colour Wheels
- 5) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:** Advanced Colour Wheels
- 6) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 4:** Colour Mixing Jars
- 7) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 5:** Colour Monster Book Pages
- 8) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 6:** Colours in other Languages (for older learners)
- 9) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 7:** Bowling
- 10) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 8:** Blowout Monster
- 11) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 9:** Stoked Colour Monster
- 12) **LEARNING ACTIVITY 10:** Crayon Resist Colour Monster
- 13) **ADDITIONAL ONLINE ACTIVITIES**

Read the Story

Before session: On your own time, read *The Colour Monster*. Study the story, the art on the pages, and the message of the story. For art, look not only at the colour, but at the textures and shapes involved on each page, and think about how they relate to the emotion each page represents. For each of the emotions listed in the book, make sure you understand what it means and that you can explain it to your child/children.

To do this best, take a moment to think of times *you* have felt that emotion, think about the things that made you feel that way, and how you dealt with them. You can use this personal example, as well as the book, to help your child/children understand the story (and how it applies to real people, not just made-up monsters!)

Now, practice reading each of the emotion pages **in the emotions they represent**: talk and act very happy on the yellow page, talk sad and act mopey on the blue page, get wild and angry on the red page, etc. This will help your child/children engage with and understand the story.

In session: Hold up the cover of the book for your child/children to see and read the title aloud. Ask your child/children, *what do you think this story is about?* Let them guess. Read the synopsis on the back of the book to help them. Then, read the story aloud. Go slowly and read clearly. Hold up each page so your child/children can study the pictures carefully.

For the colour pages, make sure you read them in a way that mimics the emotions they represent, as explained above. If they struggle to understand what you are saying, have your child/children act the emotions back to you: smile for happy, cry for sad, growling for angry, etc. If they do this, though, make sure they calm down (green page!) before you continue, so they can understand the whole story.

Discussion Questions & Topics

Think about the answers to these questions before the session:

- Who is the girl? Is she just a good friend of the Colour Monster or could she be the main character/protagonist?
- Who is the monster? Is he just a monster or could he be part of the girl's imagination?
- Could the girl have created the Colour Monster to help sort out her own feelings? The character's friendship encourages us to use kindness when working through our feelings.
- The friendship also depicts the different ways males and females experience our emotions. In many cultures girls and boys are expected to express their emotions in very different and sometimes unhealthy ways. Why do you think Anna Llenas chose to make the Colour Monster's friend a girl instead of a boy?
- In your culture is it acceptable to show fear, love, anger, sadness?
 - How are these expectations different for boys versus girls?
- Are there emotions that we don't have words for? [E.g. The combination of pride and sadness parents feel when their children grow up and move out.]
 - Does this mean we are all like the Colour Monster in some ways?
- What might be the consequences of not being able to define these emotions? Why is it valuable to be able to describe things with words?
- Why is it important that we think about and talk about our emotions?

For Discussion with Your child/children:

1. What is the story about? What happened in the beginning, what happened in the middle and what happened in the end?
2. Who is the Colour Monster?
3. Who is the girl?
4. What is their relationship?
5. What does the book teach us about friendship? About kindness?
6. Why was the Colour Monster such a mess?
7. Is it okay to feel anger, fear, etc.?
8. What can we do with our emotions when we feel them?
9. What does each emotion look like? (have your child/children makes facial expressions)
10. Are there differences in the way we teach boys and girls to deal with their emotions?
 - a. How are boys taught to handle emotions?
 - b. How are girls taught to handle emotions?
11. What experiences make you feel blue, green, yellow, black, red and pink?

12. Think of other colours:
 - a. What emotions/feeling would you give to orange, purple and brown?
 - b. What other emotions are there? What colour would they be?

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1: Colour Acting (Warm Up)

Instructions:

This activity is designed as a physical warm-up for your child/children. It can be repeated any number of times, for any number of sessions if your child/children enjoy it.

1. After reading & discussing the book, review the emotions in the book, and the colours they match. As you review the various emotions, come up with physical actions or facial expressions to represent each one (smiling for happy, crying for sad, stomping feet for mad, etc.). Show them to your child/children, and ask them to come up with their own action/expression in response.
2. Now, have your child/children stand up and spread out. There should be enough room for everyone to walk around comfortably, so you may need to move the children to an outdoor space, if necessary.
3. Call out an emotion. The child/children should then act out that emotion in whatever way they wish, wherever they are. Encourage them to move around and interact with other children if they wish. Ex. If the emotion is happy, they can hold hands with other children (be sure to ask first), or for sad, they can cry on one another's shoulders.
4. After some time, call out a new emotion. Children should immediately start acting out this emotion. Continue calling out emotions, using both the ones in the book and any others you think would be good for this sort of activity.
5. As the game goes on, or as you repeat the warm-up in later session, consider the following additions or expansions:
 - a. **Call out colours.** Instead of saying a specific emotion, call out a colour and let your child/children act how they think that colour makes them feel. Use the set of colours in the book and any others you can think of.
 - b. **Add intensity.** Explain to learners that each emotion sits on an intensity scale of 1 to 5. 1 is the least intense form of that emotion and 5 is the most intense, with 2, 3, and 4 representing steps in between (ex: Mad. 1= crossing arms, 2=growling with crossed arms... 5= stamping around growling and pulling at your hair). To perform this, call out an emotion followed by "one." Your child/children should act the level 1 of that emotion. After a few moments, say "two," then "three," etc. until you reach "five." At that point, your child/children should be totally immersed in their emotion. Then, pick a new emotion, and start again at 1.

- c. **Mix emotions.** Sometimes, emotions come more than one at a time. Call out two emotions, and challenge your child/children to act as if both emotions hit them at the same time.
- d. **Colour Dice.** Create a cardboard dice and paint each side a colour from the story. Then use the dice to play a variation of the colour acting game.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 2: Colour Wheels

Supplies:

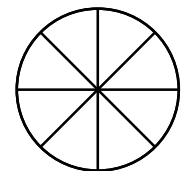
- Paper
- Yogurt container / lid (circular top, traceable)
- Scissors
- Colouring in supplies (Crayons, pencils, etc.)
- Split pin / brad (to hold paper together - pictured)



Instructions:

In this activity, your child/children will create their own Colour Wheel, which will help them understand and deal with the emotions in *The Colour Monster* book.

1. Distribute paper, pencils, and yoghurt containers/lids to your child/children. Give your child/children a demonstration of how to **trace the container onto the paper**, leaving behind a circle. Go around to help your child/children do the same, twice each (either on one piece of paper, or two separate pieces). **Each child will now have two circles of the same size on paper.**
2. Distribute scissors. Instruct your child/children to cut out their two circles, along their traced lines. When they have done this, **they should hold up the two circles to make sure they are the same size.** If they are not, use scissors to cut them into the same size. Then, they can set one of the circles aside for later.
3. Instruct your child/children to take their remaining circle and **divide it into eight equal parts** using four lines through the middle, like a pie (see picture, right).
4. Distribute colouring in materials. Instruct your child/children that each section of their circle will have its own colour, representing an emotion. Have them start with the six colours from the book: **yellow, blue, red, black, green, and pink.** Once coloured, write the name of the emotion over top in a darker colour.

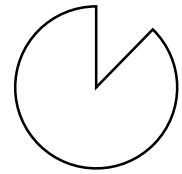


When they have finished the first six, your child/children get to fill the last two sections of their circle on their own, creating their own colour/emotion pairs. Encourage them to think of the emotions first—*what are other emotions you feel, outside of the book?* Pick two, and then ask yourself—*what colour are these emotions?* Once your child/children have arrived at the answer, have them colour in the sections as they see fit. See examples below for suggestions.

Examples: purple /pride, orange/embarrassed, white/lonely, polka dots/silly, etc.

When all your child/children are finished colouring their first circle, have them set these circles aside.

5. Now, have your child/children pick up their second paper circle (it should still be blank). Using a pencil, trace just **ONE of the pie slices** onto this circle. Then, use scissors to cut the single slice out (see picture, right). **IMPORTANT:** Don't cut all the way to the middle of the circle, but stop just short.



6. Finally, distribute pins/tacks to finish the colour wheels. Give an example of this before asking your child/children to do so:

Place the second, blank circle (with section missing), directly on top of the first, coloured circle. Make sure all of their edges line up, then push the pin/tack through their centres. Fold the back of the pin down so that it does not slide back through. Now, the two circles should be able to **spin independently of each other**, so that at any point, only one of the colour/emotion slices is showing (see pictures, below).



Go around helping your child/children secure their colour wheels and practice spinning them without ripping the paper.

7. Once all your child/children have their colour wheels in order, have them go around the room, using their colour wheels to show what emotion they are feeling. Remind them that this helped the colour monster to sort out his emotions and feel better. They can then take the colour wheels home, and use them there when they start to feel confused or overwhelmed. Encourage them to add to their wheels whenever they experience a new emotion.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 3: Advanced Colour Wheels

This activity is a more advanced version of LEARNING ACTIVITY 2. Make sure you are familiar with the instructions above before proceeding.

(There is a variation of this activity at the end of this description)

Supplies (In addition to Activity 1 supplies):

- Cardboard

- Old magazines
- Glue

Instructions:

1. Have a discussion with your child/children about the first set of colour wheels. What emotions did they represent on their wheel (there were 8)? What emotions were missing from their wheel (List some)? What colours might match those emotions? When you feel an emotion, do you always feel it by itself (just one colour), or do emotions sometimes combine (two or more colours)? What sort of emotions tend to combine (sadness and anger, maybe)? Do some emotions almost never mix (calm and anger are always almost separate)? How would you design a colour wheel to represent these complicated, mixed emotions as well as simple ones?
2. Challenge your child/children to think of completely different emotions that might not have names yet. This could be a combination of things (like nervous and excited before playing a big soccer match) or something completely new like how you feel when your favourite song is stuck in your head.
3. Have your child/children think of names and colours that might represent these completely new emotions.
4. Re-create the circle tracing and cutting-out from Activity 2, but now with just one circle per child and using cardboard instead of paper. Encourage your child/children to break their circle into however many sections they wish. Each section should represent a different emotion/colour pair. Before proceeding, have your child/children pick which emotion goes in which slot, paying attention to which emotions sit next to each other, and which are on opposite sides from one another.
5. Now, instead of colouring in, have your child/children page through old magazines and newspapers looking for their different colours. Have them cut or rip out little bits of pictures that fit their colour wheel, including the places where two different emotions/colours touch. They can then glue these on to their cardboard circle to fill it with colour.
6. Once they are finished filling in their colour wheels, have each child take another piece of cardboard and cut out a small arrow. They can colour these any way they like. For a more durable arrow cut one out of the plastic lid of a yoghurt container (or any piece of thin but stiff coloured plastic)
7. Pin the arrow(s) onto the centre of the finished colour wheels so they can spin freely. (See picture below for finished project)



8. Have the children go around again, using their new colour wheels to discuss emotions. They can discuss things like why they put the emotions in the order they did, what sort of emotions they tend to feel at the same time, and how they were able to express all of that on their wheel. Give your child/children plenty of time to share and discuss, perhaps even extending the conversation into another session.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 4: Colour Mixing Jars

Supplies:

- 3 Large plastic jars
 - 1 with blue dye
 - 1 with red dye
 - 1 with yellow dye
- Droppers
- Set of 6 Small jars

Instructions:

1. Explain that, just like in the Colour Monster, today you will be dealing with colours in jars. Put your three big jars out in front of the children. Ask them what colour each jar is, then ask why they think you started with these three. Are there anything special about them?

NOTE: Depending on age and level, some your child/children may already know the information below. However, it is useful to review, as it is central to the activity.

2. Explain the following:

Red, Blue, and Yellow are known as the PRIMARY colours. Just like in schools, “primary” means these colours come first. All of the other colours, known as secondary (or even tertiary) colours, can be made by combining different amounts of the three primaries.

3. Give an example of colour mixing. Before doing anything, ask learners to predict what colours result from what mixes. Then, start the experiment. Using droppers, take some of the red and some of the yellow, and combine them in a smaller jar. Ask your child/children to name the colour created [orange].
4. Challenge your child/children to test and name all of the possible two-colour mixes [orange, green, purple]. Then, fill each of the small jars with a different colour, and challenge your child/children to set the jars in order. Ask: have any of them seen a rainbow in the sky, or in a puddle? What order were the colours in? The proper order is: **Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Purple** (see picture below). Make sure your child/children understand that secondary colours sit in between the colours that combine to create them (orange between red and yellow, etc.).



5. Open a discussion with your child/children. What have they learned? Did anything in the activity surprise them? Why or why not? What were some of the challenges of the activity? What was easy? What could have made it easier/harder? What other sort of activities, other than mixing water in jars, might this knowledge be useful for?
6. If there is **extra time**, allow your child/children to mix primary and secondary colours to find new colours or shades of their own. Can they make pink? Brown? Grey? A new colour no one has ever found before? If they find one, **make sure to give it a name!**

ACTIVITY VARIATION:

The same activity above can be done using playdough instead of jars of food colouring and water. It is a more tactile way to show the mixing of colours and can be a bit more user friendly and less messy. Depending on the age / personality of the children in your session, using play dough might be the preferable option, or you can do both activities to reinforce the learning from different angles.

For this variation, instead of using jars of coloured water, use hunks of play dough and, in order to mix a new colour, have the child/children use their hands to squish and squash the two dough colours together to make the new colour.

(Note: If you do not have play dough on hand, there are many recipes for home-made play dough that can easily be sourced online. These can be made with a few pantry staples that you might already have at home, like flour, salt, water and food colouring).

LEARNING ACTIVITY 5: Colour Monster Book Pages

Supplies:

- Paper (white & coloured)
- Colouring in materials (crayons, pencils, markers, etc.)
- Recycled cardboard, old magazines, newspapers
- Scissors
- Glue

Instructions:

1. Go back to the book *The Colour Monster*. Study the various colourful pages. Look closely at them, studying not just their colour, but their texture, their shapes, and the other things that contribute to their overall appearance. Ask your child/children what sort of materials they think were used, and what sort of techniques.

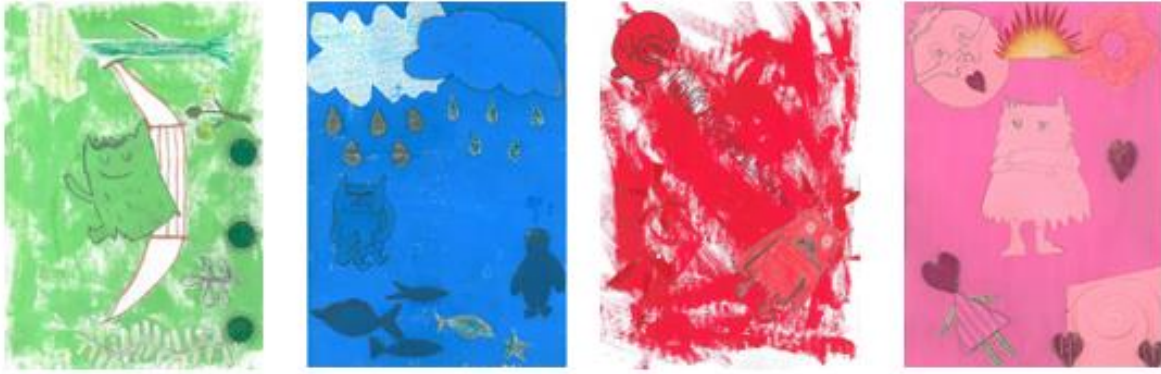
Explain that, for the book, Anna Llenas used simple materials like the ones your child/children use in their art activities. She cut out pictures, ripped cardboard, coloured in paper, painted, crumpled paper, etc. Look closely at the book for examples of each. Now, explain that your child/children will get a chance to create their own pages, like the ones in the book!

2. Distribute sheets of paper to your child/children. Have them decide on an emotion for their page. Encourage them to be original.

NOTE: For younger children, stick to the original 6 colours/emotions in the book. More advanced children can invent their own.

Once they have decided an emotion/colour combination, have them imagine the different shades, textures, and techniques they might use to express that feeling. Have them stare at the blank paper and imagine filling it with colour and feeling. Then, they can begin.

3. Give children a large chunk of time and access to all materials to create their book pages. Go around the room providing suggestions and support, especially to children with lots of blank on their pages. Guide them with questions about their specific chosen emotion to unlock more ideas! Be creative looking around your home for things that you can recycle into art to make your pages.



LEARNING ACTIVITY 6: Colours in other Languages

Supplies:

- Device on which to watch a short YouTube Video
- <https://youtu.be/gMqZR3pqMjg>

Instructions:

1. Watch the video with your child/children. Pause often to make sure the kids are following and to fill in any blanks. The video is targeted at an older more educated audience, so think about what information will be accessible to them, and what is simply too advanced. For very young learners this video may be too advanced.
2. Ask them:
 - a. Did you find anything about the video surprising? If so, what?
 - b. Which colours do YOU think are the most important?
 - c. Do you think everyone sees colours in the same way?
 - d. What does it mean to be colour blind?
 - e. Do you think it is important to have specific names for colours? Why?
 - f. What colours do you know that you think would be called 'dark' in other languages?
 - g. What colours do you know that you think would be called 'light' in other languages?
 - h. Is there a colour you can think of that doesn't have a specific name in English? What would you call that colour?
 - i. What would the twelfth Russian colour category be called in English?

LEARNING ACTIVITY 7: Bowling

Supplies:

- Cardboard toilet roll tubes
- Crumpled paper (used paper that is headed for the recycling bin is great)
- Paint other colouring materials

Instructions:

1. Have your child/children paint or colour toilet roll tubes different colours. Once they are dry, assign a number to each of them.
2. Ask your child to crumple a piece of scrap paper into a ball.

3. Set the toilet rolls up in any configuration that makes sense for the age of the child/children playing the game. It does not have to be a standard V shape and can be a straight, horizontal line instead, alternatively, the configurations can be changed up each round in order to keep things interesting.
4. Have the child stand behind a line and throw or roll the ball (depending on the terrain on which you are playing) to knock the 'pin' (toilet rolls) over.
5. The child then has to tally the numbers on the pins and give you the score (check their answer), which you note down for round one.
6. If there are multiple children in your session, re-set the pins in the same configuration and then have the next child stand behind the line and do the same thing. If there is only one child in your session you will take the next turn as the parent facilitator. You can give yourself a penalty if you are taller than your child by making your line a few steps further than the line the child is bowling from.
7. For the next round, set up the pins in the same or a new configuration and repeat.
8. At the end of 5 or 10 rounds (depending on how engaged your child/children are in the game) have them each tally up their total score (check their answers).
9. The winner is the person with the highest score at the end of all of the rounds.

ACTIVITY VARIATION:

For older children, who have more advanced math skills, this activity could be amended according to their skill levels. For example, negative numbers could be included on some of the pins and on others, simple or complex sums that the child will need to work out before adding that pins value to their score for the round.

Feel free to get creative according to your child's skill level and the math concepts you'd like them to practice.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 8: Blowout Monster**Supplies:**

- Ink or a mixture of food colouring and water
- Scrap paper per child
- Sheet of paper per child
- Black pen, marker or googly eyes

Instructions:

1. Distribute paper to your child/children.
2. Ask your child/children to roll up the piece of scrap paper into a drinking straw shape.
3. Place a blob of ink on each child's sheet of paper and ask them to use their rolled straw to blow the ink in different directions on the piece of paper. This part could get messy so make sure surfaces are protected.
4. Once they have completed their ink blowing they should have an abstract shape on their page.
5. Let your child/children draw eyes somewhere on the shape to finish their monster. If you have googly eyes, your children could stick these on instead of drawing them. Encourage them to be creative with their eye placement as well as the number of eyes their monster might have.

6. If your child enjoyed this activity, grab another coloured ink or make another food colouring and water mixture with a different food colouring and create another monster. Every one of them will be different and your child might like to make an entire team of monster friends!

LEARNING ACTIVITY 9: Stoked Colour Monster

Supplies:

- Sheets of paper
- Colouring supplies (paints, crayons, pencils etc)

Instructions:

1. Distribute paper and colouring supplies to your child/children.
2. Have your child/children think of themselves when they are most happy. They might think about how they feel, the look they have on their face, the position of their body in space, their actions (maybe they whistle or snap their fingers, perhaps they grin or laugh a lot or talk really fast).
3. Once they have a clear picture in their heads of how they behave and what they do when they feel happy, ask them to represent this feeling by drawing a colour monster of their own, doing whatever they do when they are happy.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 10: Crayon Resist Colour Monster

Supplies:

- Crayons
- Sheets of paper
- Black paint (or black crayons)
- A nail if you are using black paint
- A hair clip or coin if you are using black crayons

Instructions:

1. Distribute paper and colouring supplies to your child/children.
2. Have them colour an entire sheet of paper with crayons. They can draw patterns or splotches or lines. Anything goes as long as their colours do not overlap.
3. Then ask your child/children to paint over their full sheet of coloured paper with black ink OR colour over their full sheet of colour paper with a black crayon so that the colour is no longer visible.
4. If you used black paint, allow it to dry and then give your child/children a nail
5. If you used crayon you can go ahead as soon as the sheet is covered with black crayon. Give your child a hair clip or coin.
6. Show them how to use the implement they have been given to scratch away at the black surface to reveal the colour below.
7. Encourage them to draw a colour monster or whatever they like.
(Side note: this Crayon Resist technique can be modified to create an art project for any books or stories you might have at home).

ADDITIONAL ONLINE ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Colour activities are wonderful for helping children to understand many aspects of the world around us. Take a look at some of these extra resources to expand your child's mind even further:

Colour Mixing Wheel

Combine art and physics for this fun experiment. Your child will witness colours mixing and blending before their eyes!

<https://www.stevespanglerscience.com/lab/experiments/color-mixing-wheel-sick-science/>

Disappearing Colour Wheel

Teach your children about the science of light using this Disappearing Colour Wheel project:

<https://www.stevespanglerscience.com/lab/experiments/disappearing-color-wheel/>

Water Refraction

Help your child understand the science behind the bending of light as it travels through air and water with an experiment that can seem like a magic trick at first!

<https://www.whatdowedoallday.com/water-refraction-science-experiment>

Rainbows

Dive deeper into light refraction with your child with this detailed explanation and experiment that explains how rainbows appear and offers several fun ways of creating a rainbow in your own home with materials you might already have at hand!

<https://www.rookieparenting.com/make-your-own-rainbow-science-experiment/>

Thanda is a non profit organisation based in rural Mtwalume, KwaZulu Natal South Africa. Our curriculum is made up of activities that we have developed over 12 years. The ideas and inspiration for our activities come from is a wonderful combination of educators, books, websites, YouTubers, and other places and people on the internet. We are very grateful for all of them. Where we use ideas or activities directly from a source, we always endeavour to give credit to the creator. We do not endeavour to profit from these story studies, we only wish to add value to the lives of people we may have the opportunity of crossing paths with.

Thanda is a non-profit Organisation based in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
www.thanda.org | info@thanda.org |