



How Come A School Bus is Yellow?



Once upon a school time long long ago, schools were without color. Classrooms, playgrounds, teachers, and students appeared in black, white, and shades of gray.

A first-grade boy named Red found the first color on a class field trip. His class rode to the light gray countryside in an ash gray school bus. While hiking along a dark gray creek looking for white crayfish, Red lifted a black rock and spotted the patch of color.

“Teacher, look what I found,” he yelled. “Isn’t it beautiful?”

The first-grade teacher was a wise and wonderful woman. She inspected the color and said, “Excellent, Red. I’ve never seen anything like it before. Let’s name it *red*”

after you. We'll take a bit of it back to our classroom to put in the science corner."

The teacher scooped up an ounce of *red* and placed it in a jar.

Moments later, a girl named Blue found a second spot of color inside a hollow tree.

"Look teacher! What is it?" Blue shouted.

"I don't know, Blue, but let's name it *blue* after you."

The wise and wonderful teacher scooped up an ounce of *blue* and placed it in a jar. "And we'll take it back to our classroom and put it in the science corner."

No sooner had this happen than a boy named Yellow called out, "Over here, Teacher. Look what I found inside a bird's nest."

The teacher named this third color *yellow* and collected a sample of it as well. "This has been a rewarding field trip, class," she said. "Red, Blue, and Yellow have found three exciting items for our science corner."

Back in the black and white classroom, the wise and wonderful teacher passed a piece of white paper to each student. She opened the three jars and dropped a dab of red, blue, and yellow on each sheet.

"Let's experiment," she said. "Use your fingers to spread the red, blue, and yellow around your paper. See what pictures you can make?"

The first graders went to work. With both hands, they pushed the three colors around their papers. Blue used her thumb to smear a blue strip at the top of her page for a sky. Yellow painted a yellow sun in the top corner of his paper with his pinkie.

“Look here!” a boy named Orange called out. “A bit of red mixed with a bit of yellow and a new color appeared.”

“Excellent, Orange” said the teacher. “What a bright, happy color that is. We’ll call it *orange*.”

“I mixed blue and yellow,” said a girl named Green.

“And Green made *green*,” said the teacher.

A boy named Purple held up ten purple fingers. “And red and blue makes this color that we can call *purple*.”

The wise and wonderful teacher smiled. “I have an idea,” she said. Taking a large piece of stiff white cardboard, she cut out a circle. With a black felt pen, she divided the circle into six equal parts like six slices of pizza.

“Now I’ll paint one section yellow, one blue, and one red,” she explained. “The section between red and yellow I’ll paint *orange*. Between yellow and blue I’ll paint *green* and between blue and red I’ll paint purple.

When the teacher was finished painting she held up the circle. “Now we have a colorful wheel,” she said. “Let’s call it a color wheel.”

Red snatched the color wheel and began rolling it around the classroom. To everyone's delight, wherever the wet colors touched they remained. The yellow part of the wheel touched two gray pencils and turned them yellow. The green part touched the black chalkboard and turned it green. The white chairs became orange, and a gray apple on the teacher's desk turned red.

Next Blue grabbed the color wheel and rolled it outside. She made the sky blue and the sun yellow. The wheel rolled over the gray soccer field and the grass turned green. The black walls of the school became red and the flag fluttering on the flagpole turned red, white, and blue.

All day long, the first graders took turns rolling the color wheel around the school grounds. Pink, Brown, Silver, and Magenta mixed more colors and added them to the wheel. The pencil erasers became pink and the desks turned brown. On the playground there was now red and yellow rubber balls, blue tetherball poles, and a silver swing set.

When the school bell rang at the end of the day the entire school scene inside and out was bright and colorful.

"This has been an excellent day," said the wise and wonderful teacher.

"Dibs on taking the color wheel home," said Pink.

"Look, I made my hair brown," said Brown.

At that moment, the ash gray school bus drove into the parking lot. It parked in front of the red school. Next to the colorful bicycles in the silver bicycle rack, the bus looked particularly drab.

Silver grabbed the color wheel. "Let's ride home in a silver bus," he said

"The bus should be red to match the school," said Red.

"No, pink is the best color for a bus," Pink insisted.

The first graders began to bicker. During the argument, no one noticed that the color wheel had fallen to the ground.

The wheel rolled into the street, turning the traffic light green, yellow, and red. It rolled through the neighborhood, coloring the houses blue and brown. It rolled by a farm turning the tomatoes red, the corn yellow, and the carrots orange, and it rolled through a forest, painting the pine trees forever green. The animals were thankful for their new coats of brown and red. The skunk, however, proud of his black fur with the white stripe, leaped out of the way just as the color wheel rolled by.

Finally, the color wheel reached the ocean. The dull gray sea became a hundred hues of blue and purple, while the sea creatures turned colors of a dazzling variety.

In the meantime, back at the school the first graders stared at the ash gray school bus.

“Our color wheel is gone,” said Blue.

“So are the colors in the science center jars,” said Red.

“We’ll have to ride home in a dingy gray bus,” said Pink.

Yellow, however, remained silent. He was staring at his fingernails. Although he had scrubbed his hands after finger painting, a speck of yellow remained behind his thumbnail.

Holding up his thumb, the boy stepped toward the school bus. He pressed it against the bus’s gray back door. At once, the entire vehicle turned a bright cheerful yellow.

The first graders cheered. Around and around, they circled the yellow school bus, admiring it from all sides.

“Yellow, you’ve done a good thing,” said Blue.

“Our bus is the same color I made the banana in my lunchbox,” said Red.

The wise and wonderful teacher nodded. “Now people can easily see the bus in the gray dawn when it brings children to school and in the gray twilight when it brings them home!” she said.

Fortunately, the colors from the first-grade color wheel were long lasting, and the world remains colorful

today. Since that long ago school time, many more schools were built and painted many different colors. The colors of books, chairs, and playgrounds have changed as well. But from that first colorful day to the present, students have enjoyed how Yellow colored the school bus so much, that it has never changed. School buses are still yellow.