

# The Sky Is Blue



a short satire

**STEPHEN MEASURE**

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**SILVER  
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**J**ohnny-boy never learned a color until he was five. That was when his mother drove him up the hill to the edge of the city. Then she took his small hand in her soft hand and led him up the mountain.

The air was crisp, the sun was warm, and the sky was beautiful. Johnny-boy didn't know what color the sky was—he hadn't been taught his colors yet—but whatever color it was, the sky was full of it, clear from the left to the right, from the top to the bottom, not a cloud in sight, only the bright sun floating high in the middle. Johnny-boy didn't know what color the sun was either, but he knew it must be something warm because of how toasty it felt on his cheeks, and his arms, and his stubby little legs below his shorts.

Johnny-boy and his mother walked, and they walked, and they walked, and they walked, until finally they came to the top of a hill. The hill was covered with grass, soft and wavy and moving in the breeze. And, looking down the other side of the hill, Johnny-boy could see a large lake that stretched on for what seemed like forever.

Then Johnny-boy's mother took his two small hands in her two soft hands and smiled down at him. "You're such a big boy, Johnny-boy," she told him. "You're such a big boy that now it's time for you to learn your colors. Are you ready to learn your colors, Johnny-boy?"

Johnny-boy smiled up at his mother. "Yes, Mommy," he said. "Please teach me my colors." He was so excited he wanted to skip around, but he stood patiently instead because Mommy liked it when he was patient and still.

She patted his head, the smile still on her face. Then she pointed at the ground. "Do you see the grass, Johnny-boy?" she asked.

"Yes, Mommy, it's all over the hill. It's so soft and so squishy; I just want to roll around in it!"

"That's good, Johnny-boy," she said. "Now look at the grass. The grass is green. Can you say that, Johnny-boy? What color is the grass?"

"It's green, Mommy!" he said, staring at the grass—the green grass—with delight.

"That's right!" his mother said. She clasped his two small hands and shook them up and down excitedly. Then she stood up again and pointed down the other side of the hill. "Now look at the lake, Johnny-boy. Do you see the water below?"

"Yes, Mommy!" Johnny-boy said. "It goes on forever and forever, and

it looks so cool. I wish I could jump in it right now!”

“That’s good, Johnny-boy,” she said. “Now look at the lake. The lake is blue. Can you say that, Johnny-boy? What color is the lake?”

“It’s blue, Mommy!”

“That’s right!” his mother said, once again bending over to shake his two small hands up and down. “Oh, Johnny-boy, my precious little Johnny-boy, you are so smart, and you are such a good, good boy.”

Then she straightened up and stared at him for a moment. “Now, I’m going to ask you one more question, Johnny-boy,” she told him, “and I’m sure such a smart, good boy like yourself will get that question right. Will you answer my question right, Johnny-boy?”

“Yes, Mommy!” he said, eager to please her, and he waited for her question.

But she didn’t ask it. She just stood there for a moment longer and stared at him, the smile frozen on her face. And suddenly Johnny-boy noticed movement all around him. The grass was standing up.

No, the grass wasn’t standing up—people were standing up from the grass. See-through people. He could see their outlines; he could see their shadows; but they were clear, completely see-through, like there was nothing there.

“Look at me, Johnny-boy,” his mother commanded. Her two soft hands yanked on his two small hands.

Johnny-boy’s head jerked back toward his mother. “But, Mommy,” he said, his voice shaking. “Who are these people? Why are they see-through?”

Then the see-through people began to move, their vague outlines twisting and contorting as they spun around Johnny-boy and his mother, the see-through people chanting together:

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

Once again, his mother’s soft hands yanked his attention back to her. “Look at me, Johnny-boy!” she commanded.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

“But, Mommy!” he wailed, watching the see-through people twist and turn as they spun around and chanted.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

“Look at me, Johnny-boy!” his mother commanded again.

And Johnny-boy obeyed. He stared up at her eyes, trying as hard as he

could not to notice the see-through people twisting all around them.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

“Johnny-boy,” his mother said, her voice almost menacing. “Look up at the sky, Johnny-boy. What color is the sky? What color is the sky, my smart, good, little Johnny-boy?”

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

All around him the see-through people twisted as they turned and they chanted.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

Johnny-boy looked up at the sky. His mother hadn't told him what color it was yet. He looked down at the grass. The grass was green. Then Johnny-boy looked out at the lake. The lake was blue. Johnny-boy looked up at the sky again.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

“Johnny-boy,” his mother said. Her grip was hurting his hands. “What color is the sky, Johnny-boy?”

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

Johnny-boy looked down at the grass. The grass was green. He looked out at the lake. The lake was blue. He looked up at the sky. It looked like the lake.

“It's blue, Mommy,” he said. “The sky is blue.”

She slapped him across the face.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

Johnny-boy started to cry. He could still feel her finger marks on his cheek. Mommy had never hit him before. What had he done wrong? He wanted to ask her, but she had turned her back on him.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

The see-through people twisted, and the see-through people chanted, and Johnny-boy's mother just stood there, her back toward him, looking away. Johnny-boy cried. His cheek stung.

Then, a moment later, his mother turned back to him. “Johnny-boy,” she said. “What color is the sky?”

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

The see-through people were all around him, but Johnny-boy tried not to look at them. Mommy didn't like it when he noticed the see-through people.

“What color is the sky, Johnny-boy?” she asked again.

Johnny-boy looked down at the grass. The grass was green. He looked out at the lake. The lake was blue. He looked up at the sky. The sky looked like the lake.

“It’s blue, Mommy,” he repeated.

She slapped him again, striking him so hard she knocked him off his stubby little legs.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

Johnny-boy lay there on the ground, sobbing into the green grass. He looked up at his mother, but she had her back turned to him again. The see-through people were still twisting, contorting, and chanting.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

What had he done wrong? Hadn’t he answered her question? She had taught him what color grass was, and she had taught him what color the lake was, and the sky looked like the lake. What had he done wrong?

Then his mother turned around again. Reaching down, she grabbed one of his small hands with one of her soft hands and lifted him back onto his stubby little legs. Then, looking down at him, she asked in a quiet voice: “Johnny-boy, what color is the sky?”

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

Johnny-boy looked down at the grass. The grass was green. He looked out at the lake. The lake was blue. The sky looked like the lake.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

“Johnny-boy,” his mother repeated, her voice so soft he could barely hear it. “What color is the sky, Johnny-boy?”

Johnny-boy stared up into his mother’s eyes. “Green?”

“Oh, Johnny-boy!” His mother bent down and embraced him. “My smart little Johnny-boy! You are such a good boy! I’m so proud of you!” She held him for a moment before letting go. “Now, tell me one more time, will you Johnny-boy? Tell me one more time so Mommy will know that her smart little Johnny-boy knows his colors. What color is the sky, Johnny-boy?”

Johnny-boy’s cheek still stung from her slaps. “It’s green, Mommy. The sky is green.”

“Oh, such a good boy,” she said, and she gave him another hug.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

His mother stood up and took his small hand in her soft hand. The see-through people kept moving, chanting, twisting; but they made way for Johnny-boy's mother to lead him back down the hill.

*The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green. The sky is green.*

"You're such a good little boy, Johnny-boy," his mother said, smiling at him as they walked down the hill. "Do you like being such a good little boy?"

"Yes, Mommy," Johnny-boy said. "I like being a good little boy." And he smiled back up at her. Except his smile was a lie. Inside, he was screaming: "It's blue, Mommy! It's blue! The sky is blue! Why won't you let me tell you the truth that it's blue?"



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