*The Color Purple*  **Summary**

Celie, the protagonist and narrator of *The Color Purple*, is a poor, uneducated, fourteen-year-old black girl living in rural Georgia. Celie starts writing letters to God because her father, Alphonso, beats and rapes her. Alphonso has already impregnated Celie once. Celie gave birth to a girl, whom her father stole and presumably killed in the woods. Celie has a second child, a boy, whom her father also steals. Celie’s mother becomes seriously ill and dies. Alphonso brings home a new wife but continues to abuse Celie.

Celie and her bright, pretty younger sister, Nettie, learn that a man known only as Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ wants to marry Nettie. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ has a lover named Shug Avery, a sultry lounge singer whose photograph fascinates Celie. Alphonso refuses to let Nettie marry, and instead offers Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ the “ugly” Celie as a bride. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ eventually accepts the offer, and takes Celie into a difficult and joyless married life. Nettie runs away from Alphonso and takes refuge at Celie’s house. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ still desires Nettie, and when he advances on her she flees for her own safety. Never hearing from Nettie again, Celie assumes she is dead.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_’s sister Kate feels sorry for Celie, and tells her to fight back against Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ rather than submit to his abuses. Harpo, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_’s son, falls in love with a large, spunky girl named Sofia. Shug Avery comes to town to sing at a local bar, but Celie is not allowed to go see her. Sofia becomes pregnant and marries Harpo. Celie is amazed by Sofia’s defiance in the face of Harpo’s and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_’s attempts to treat Sofia as an inferior. Harpo’s attempts to beat Sofia into submission consistently fail, as Sofia is by far the physically stronger of the two.

Shug falls ill and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ takes her into his house. Shug is initially rude to Celie, but the two women become friends as Celie takes charge of nursing Shug. Celie finds herself infatuated with Shug and attracted to her sexually. Frustrated with Harpo’s consistent attempts to subordinate her, Sofia moves out, taking her children. Several months later, Harpo opens a juke joint where Shug sings nightly. Celie grows confused over her feelings toward Shug.

Shug decides to stay when she learns that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ beats Celie when Shug is away. Shug and Celie’s relationship grows intimate, and Shug begins to ask Celie questions about sex. Sofia returns for a visit and promptly gets in a fight with Harpo’s new girlfriend, Squeak. In town one day, the mayor’s wife, Miss Millie, asks Sofia to work as her maid. Sofia answers with a sassy “Hell no.” When the mayor slaps Sofia for her insubordination, she returns the blow, knocking the mayor down. Sofia is sent to jail. Squeak’s attempts to get Sofia freed are futile. Sofia is sentenced to work for twelve years as the mayor’s maid.

Shug returns with a new husband, Grady. Despite her marriage, Shug instigates a sexual relationship with Celie, and the two frequently share the same bed. One night Shug asks Celie about her sister. Celie assumes Nettie is dead because she had promised to write to Celie but never did. Shug says she has seen Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ hide away numerous mysterious letters that have arrived in the mail. Shug manages to get her hands on one of these letters, and they find it is from Nettie. Searching through Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_’s trunk, Celie and Shug find dozens of letters that Nettie has sent to Celie over the years. Overcome with emotion, Celie reads the letters in order, wondering how to keep herself from killing Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_.

The letters indicate that Nettie befriended a missionary couple, Samuel and Corrine, and traveled with them to Africa to do ministry work. Samuel and Corrine have two adopted children, Olivia and Adam. Nettie and Corrine become close friends, but Corrine, noticing that her adopted children resemble Nettie, wonders if Nettie and Samuel have a secret past. Increasingly suspicious, Corrine tries to limit Nettie’s role within her family.

Nettie becomes disillusioned with her missionary experience, as she finds the Africans self-centered and obstinate. Corrine becomes ill with a fever. Nettie asks Samuel to tell her how he adopted Olivia and Adam. Based on Samuel’s story, Nettie realizes that the two children are actually Celie’s biological children, alive after all. Nettie also learns that Alphonso is really only Nettie and Celie’s step-father, not their real father. Their real father was a storeowner whom white men lynched because they resented his success. Alphonso told Celie and Nettie he was their real father because he wanted to inherit the house and property that was once their mother’s.

Nettie confesses to Samuel and Corrine that she is in fact their children’s biological aunt. The gravely ill Corrine refuses to believe Nettie. Corrine dies, but accepts Nettie’s story and feels reconciled just before her death. Meanwhile, Celie visits Alphonso, who -confirms Nettie’s story, admitting that he is only the women’s stepfather. Celie begins to lose some of her faith in God, but Shug tries to get her to reimagine God in her own way, rather than in the traditional image of the old, bearded white man.

The mayor releases Sofia from her servitude six months early. At dinner one night, Celie finally releases her pent-up rage, angrily cursing Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ for his years of abuse. Shug announces that she and Celie are moving to Tennessee, and Squeak decides to go with them. In Tennessee, Celie spends her time designing and sewing individually tailored pairs of pants, eventually turning her hobby into a business. Celie returns to Georgia for a visit, and finds that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ has reformed his ways and that Alphonso has died. Alphonso’s house and land are now hers, so she moves there.

Meanwhile, Nettie and Samuel marry and prepare to return to America. Before they leave, Samuel’s son, Adam, marries Tashi, a native African girl. Following African tradition, Tashi undergoes the painful rituals of female circumcision and facial scarring. In solidarity, Adam undergoes the same facial scarring ritual.

Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_\_ reconcile and begin to genuinely enjoy each other’s company. Now independent financially, spiritually, and emotionally, Celie is no longer bothered by Shug’s passing flings with younger men. Sofia remarries Harpo and now works in Celie’s clothing store. Nettie finally returns to America with Samuel and the children. Emotionally drained but exhilarated by the reunion with her sister, Celie notes that though she and Nettie are now old, she has never in her life felt younger.