

SCENE 3: TOPEKA, KANSAS, 1937

Newspaper Masthead of the Time  
Period Costumes and Music

Characters: Mrs. Sloane, an African American Teacher  
Willy, African American junior high student  
Thomas, African American junior high student

Setting: A Schoolroom

(As lights rise, Mrs. Sloane and Thomas are in classroom. Thomas is seated at his desk, head down. Mrs. Sloane is grading papers.)

(Thomas starts to raise head.)

MRS. SLOANE

Your punishment is not yet complete, Thomas. You have five minutes more.

THOMAS

Can't I even have a chance to explain?

MRS. SLOANE

There's nothing to explain. We have a new boy. You treated him rudely. You have behaved childishly, you are being punished like a child. It's a pretty sorry situation for a student who's supposed to be a young man.

THOMAS

How about if I apologize to him?

MRS. SLOANE

That would be a good beginning.

THOMAS

What else, Mrs. Sloane?

MRS. SLOANE

Perhaps apologize to him in the company of all the students who were present when you teased him about his "country" ways.

THOMAS

Apologize in front of everyone? (he starts to bring his head up)

MRS. SLOANE

Head back down, I haven't ended your punishment yet.

THOMAS

Yes, Mrs. Sloane. I'm very sorry for my behavior.