Spinning Science: Disappearing Color!

Did you ever think you could make colors disappear right before your eyes? Light plays a big factor in how we view objects, especially color. When you look at a moving object, the color you see distorts itself because of how your brain registers what it is seeing. This science experiment is just like a magic trick: now you see it, now you don't! Your first grader can can watch the colors vanish as they overlap and turn to white in this spinning science activity.

What You Need:

- Paper plate
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Markers, crayons, or tempera paint (purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, red)
- String or yarn

What to Do:

1. Have your child divide the plate into six equal sections using the pencil and ruler. As an added bonus, this step is a useful way to reinforce early fraction skills—in 1st grade math, kids are learning about halves, quarters, and thirds.
2. Next, have him color each section of the plate a different color of the rainbow. Make sure he leaves no white showing!
3. Punch two small holes in the center of the plate, about 1 cm apart. Thread the string or yarn through the holes.
4. Hold one end of the string in each hand so that the color disk is in the middle. Wind up your disk by turning while you hold the string. One person holding each end of the string works best to keep the disk tight and spinning fast. When the string is wound up tight pull both hands away from each other so that your colored disk spins quickly.
5. When observing the plate, the color will begin to blur together and eventually appear to disappear or turn white!
6. You can try this activity a second time, dividing the plate in half, and using only two primary colors on your disk. Will the colors disappear again? Find out!

What's Going On?

When you've got the plate spinning, your eye can't separate each color and identify it. In the whirl, all your eyes can tell you is that they see white! If your child is interested in learning more about "optics," or the study of how we perceive light and color, encourage your child to do some library investigation to find out about color and light!

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