



The Hula Hoopin' Queen Scene by Scene Summary

SHOW SUMMARY

Three Harlem girls vie for the crown of Hula Hoopin' Queen, encouraged and mentored by the community elders in master playwright Gloria Bond Cunie's spirited adaptation. A sweet, funny and energetic slice of life reminder of the essential loops that bind our communities.

SHOW SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE – THE HULA HOOP GIRLS

It is present day on 139th Street in Harlem, New York City. Streetlights glow dimly, and city sounds build into a fast, funky hip-hop hula-hoop beat. Colorful and iridescent hula hoops begin to glow on stage and shimmer. Night fades into day, and Mama, Miz Adeline, and Miss Evelyn move about their day, tapping out beats on various items. A chant is heard as the Hula Hoop Girls, made up of Portia, Jamara, and Kameeka, rush onto stage and begin to hula hoop. The Hula Hoop Girls dance, hoop, and chant, with Miz Adeline, Miss Evelyn, and Mama providing the underscoring beat.

The chanting dims, and Kameeka steps out and addresses the audience. She asks a simple question: "How did I get here"? With that, she does a fancy hoop twirl and transitions into the next scene

SCENE I – THE CHALLENGE

Outside Jamara's apartment on a Saturday morning, Portia, Jamara, and Kameeka are engaged in a fast-paced competition. Hula hoops are scattered about as they count how many rotations their hoops have gone around their waists. Hooping music amps up the energy, but soon Portia collapses, tapping out of the competition. Although out of the competition, Portia grabs her flute and begins to play her friends home. It's a tough challenge. Who will win? It's looking close! Jamara begins to hoop towards Kameeka, who steps back. Sadly, for Kameeka, she trips and falls. Jamara has won this round, and she is going to let everyone on the street know about it. She is not bragging... but she is bragging; which is fair, considering Jamara has beat everyone on 139th Street, from 7th Ave West all the way over to 9th Avenue! Jamara truly may be the Hula-Hoopin' Queen.

Their conversation shifts into a discussion of greatness and what that means. For Jamara, it is being great at hula-hoopin'; for Portia, it is her flute playing; and for Kameeka, well, she is not quite sure what greatness means to her. People repeatedly ask Kameeka what she wants to be when she grows up, but she can never find her answer. Could she be a cloud, just floating on by for the rest of her life? No, because Kameeka wants to be **somethin'**, something grand!

Kameeka knows she can be something and wants to be something too, but what is it that she can do? She could be the Hula-Hoopin' Queen, although Jamara thinks otherwise. The girls decide to put Kameeka to the test and settle who is the Queen once and for all.

There is Time – who can hoop the longest. Rappin' Rhyme – Hoopin' with a sick flow. And with ease, Kameeka proves to her friends she can keep up. They move on to Tricks– fancy tricks with one hoop or killer steps or both! All Kameeka must do is decide which area she wants to challenge Jamara in. Kameeka chooses Rappin' Rhymes, but Jamara wants to do Tricks. They argue until Portia proposes a coin toss. Kameeka and Jamara agree, but before the dime can even leave Portia's hand, Jamara's mother yells for her to come back home. Jamara has dishes to do, and her mother will take away her hoops if she needs to, just to have Jamara finish her chores. The girls decide to hold the competition until next **Saturday**, and whoever wins must do the others' chores for a whole month. The winner will also receive the crown. With an elaborate hula-hoop ritual, the deal is done.

In the absence of Jamara, Portia and Kameeka begin to discuss how Kameeka can usurp Jamara as Queen. Though the two girls do not make it far because, after a quick look at her phone, Kameeka realizes she is late to help her mother shop for Miz Adeline's birthday present; and to her horror, realizes Miz Adeline's birthday party is also on **Saturday**, the same day as her competition with Jamara! This shouldn't be too much of a problem, Kameeka hopes; she simply must beat Jamara in the morning to be in time for the party in the afternoon. But Kameeka is already late to meet her mother, and races down the street.

SCENE II – WANNA BE THE BEST!

Moments later, Kameeka arrives at Miz Adeline's stoop on 139th Street and finds her shelling peas, and listening to her transistor radio; but fast as she may be, Kameeka was late, and her mother left for the mall without her. Not to worry, Miz Adeline welcomes Kameeka and offers her some double-fudge chocolate. Together, they sit and discuss why Kameeka was late in the first place. Miz Adeline listens as Kameeka talks about her hoopin', and her desire to beat Jamara; but the older woman reminds Kameeka that sometimes being the best at **somethin'** is not as important as being the best **you** that you can be. Kameeka knows this, but it still does not remove how much she wants to beat Jamara. They are friends, and that means a lot to Kameeka, but Jamara's bragging needs to be stopped!

Miz Adeline assures Kameeka this all comes with practice; a lesson she teaches Kameeka as they shell some peas. "Snap! Pull! Squeeze! Peas!", they rhyme, and boom; Kameeka is struck with inspiration! The scene moves into a rap centering Kameeka, who now knows what she must do next: **Practice!**

SCENE III – DIDN'T I TELL YOU...!

The play transforms to the front of Kameeka's home, 3 hours later, where hoops are scattered around as she practices. Now finished with her shopping, Kameeka's mama arrives home,

frustrated by what she sees. Kameeka is the one who wanted to have this big celebration for Miz Adeline's birthday, and she has done nothing to help make it happen! She tells her mama that time just got away from her while she was hoopin' with Portia and Jamara; but that is no excuse, her mama feels. Time always moves forward, and if you don't pay attention, it will leave you behind. Nevertheless, Mama purchased the gift Kameeka wanted to get for Miz Adeline, a beautiful piece of jewelry, and the two hug.

From down the road, Miz Adeline enters carrying a dish of fresh peas. The peas look delicious, and the three all recite the fun rhyme: "Snap! Pull! Squeeze! Peas!". Through this conversation, Kameeka learns her mama used to be a hooper too, and not just any ole' hooper, a good one too! Kameeka and Miz Adeline try to get Mama to hoop, but alas, she insists on heading straight to cooking dinner. Miz Adeline's party is going to be epic, but that also means it will take a lot of work to make it happen on **Saturday**. Is Kameeka up for the challenge? Only time will tell.

SCENE IV – PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!

It is now **Wednesday**, and The Hula Hoopin' Girls meet in front of Kameeka's place to practice. While a little late, Kameeka arrives and promptly starts her Rappin' Rhymes. In a spectacular rap, Kameeka details all the amazing historical people who have come out of Harlem, from Adam Clayton Powell to Malcolm X.

Miss Evelyn enters, reading a book intensely. She settles on Miz Adeline's stoop and encourages Kameeka to practice, practice, practice. Kameeka obliges, and Portia puts her friend to the test, making Kameeka hoop as fast as she can while answering rapid-fire questions. Portia joins her friend in this challenge, not wanting to miss out on some practice herself. In a battle of who can name the state capitals, Kameeka defeats Portia. Round 1 goes to Kameeka!

The girls take a well-deserved rest and begin to talk about Jamara with Miss Evelyn. It turns out that Jamara has been running around boasting to everyone about how she is going to smoke Kameeka come **Saturday**. Portia, Kameeka, and even Miss Evelyn are done with Jamara's bragging and are ready to see it come to an end. However, Miss Evelyn makes sure to tell Kameeka that, **while winning is great, doing the best you can is good enough**. With that message, Miss Evelyn walks off to go to Book Club. Now alone, Portia and Kameeka begin to talk about Miz Adeline's party on **Saturday**. While the party is in the afternoon, Kameeka's mama needs her all day to prepare, leaving Kameeka no time for the competition on **Saturday Morning**. Naturally, Portia is frustrated with Kameeka, believing **Saturday** will be an absolute disaster if Kameeka does not tell her mama about the hoopin' smackdown. Disaster looms, but can Kameeka prevent it? For the sake of everyone, Kameeka hopes she can.

SCENE V – BAWK!

The play flashes forward to **Friday Afternoon** of the same week. Jamara, carrying a huge round object wrapped in cloth, knocks on Kameeka's door. It turns out the mysterious object is a cake pan for the party the following day. With the cake pan in her hands, Kameeka swallows her pride and tells Jamara she will need to switch the day of the hoopin' competition. In classic Jamara fashion, she proclaims her victory over Kameeka, labeling Kameeka as a chicken, even mimicking a chicken for added emphasis. Jamara gave Kameeka not one, but two chances to

beat her, and Jamara is not willing to offer any more. Left with no choice, Kameeka agrees to uphold the challenge on **Saturday**, making it known it **must** be done early in the morning, to be finished before the party.

From the apartment, Miz Adeline enters, walking to her shift at the soup kitchen. Now with an audience of more than just Kameeka, Jamara starts to gloat about her superior hoopin' abilities and her upcoming victory over Kameeka on **Saturday**. Unfazed, Miz Adeline looks Jamara up and down and states plainly that she could smoke Jamara in a hoopin' smackdown right at this moment. Conveniently, Jamara has no hoops and cannot engage in such a challenge. However, Miz Adeline maintains her challenge stands, telling Jamara that this challenge is far from over. Alas, Jamara must hurry home, as her mother is expecting her back quickly.

Alone, Miz Adeline and Kameeka talk. Friendship can come in many forms, explains Miz Adeline, reminding Kameeka that while Jamara can be frustrating, that quality is exactly what makes Jamara an important friend to have. Jamara challenges Kameeka to be better, and after all, if it were not for Jamara, would Kameeka be pushing herself so hard to be better at hoopin'? Miz Adeline continues, reminiscing about her youth, her friendship with Miss Evelyn, meeting her late husband Theodore, and the history of hoops, all the way from Ancient Egypt to the advent of the plastic hula hoop.

In a beautiful exploration of one of the show's main themes, Miz Adeline takes Kameeka on a journey to understand what friendship can mean. Friendship is much more than having a person who supports you; it can also be someone who challenges you to be a **better** version of yourself, even if it is frustrating. In a fitting analogy, Miz Adeline explains that friendship is like a hoop; it's better to keep folks inside your circle than to push them outside it. There is nothing wrong with **friendly** competition, as long as it **remains** friendly.

Kameeka watches Miz Adeline leave and reflects upon her words. To win, or to have friends? At the end of the day, it's not that hard, and Kameeka raps, telling herself that she can win and stay good friends with Jamara till the very end!

SCENE VI – TODAY IS THE DAY! PARTY PREP

Today is the day! **Saturday** is here, and Kameeka is looking to sneak out to her showdown with Jamara before her mama can catch her. However, Mama is not so oblivious, catches Kameeka easily, and tells her daughter she has been aware of Kameeka's showdown with Jamara for quite some time. Mama is also unbothered by this competition and demands Kameeka remain in the house to help her prepare for the party. Kameeka had all week to clean appropriately, but she did not— a fact highlighted by an unseen \$10 bill left under a vase; a vase Mama knew Kameeka would not move to dust underneath.

The doorbell rings, and Portia stands at the door holding donuts for Miz Adeline's party. She hands these donuts to Mama and, in a sneaky move, pulls Kameeka outside, hoping to get Kameeka to the hoopin' challenge. Despite this, Kameeka will not sneak away from her mama. Instead, she hands her hoops to Portia and tells Portia she will be coming—somehow.

Kameeka returns inside her home and confronts her mama. Mama does not understand how important this showdown means to Kameeka, or at least that is what Kameeka thinks. In actuality, Mama knows exactly how Kameeka feels. Mama was a hooper herself, a member of the 139th Street Hoopers formed by Miz Adeline. They competed all over the city, satisfying that

hoopin' itch and having fun. But soon, the hoopin' turned mean, and all the members began to fight over who was Queen. As a result, Miz Adeline stopped the group and started the 139th Street Cooking with Love Club. "Snap! Pull! Squeeze! Peas!". Miz Adeline wanted to teach those kids a lesson; it was **never** about winning, but about having something fun to do **together**.

Kameeka is struck by this, realizing that she does not have to do all this cleaning, prep, and hoopin' alone. She has her mama. Together, they agree to clean, prep, and cook for the party as a team. It is a fun moment with both Mama and Kameeka rapping, singing, and chatting as they finish their work. With theatrical flair, the work is done! Everything is in order except—oh no! Kameeka set the temperature too high on the oven, and the cake is burned.

Kameeka and her mama think fast and gather what ingredients they have left to bake another cake. Out of sugar, Kameeka rushes to the store to pick some up. There's one problem: Kameeka has forgotten her phone, and racing down the street, Kameeka bumps right into Miss Evelyn. Miss Evelyn tries to stop Kameeka and let her know that she has some sugar to loan, but Kameeka is in too much of a rush to hear and sprints right on by. Even worse, Jamara is looking for Kameeka. Everything seems to be falling apart, but Kameeka is determined not to let it happen.

SCENE VII – SHOWDOWN

On the stoop of Jamara's apartment, Jamara enters wearing a crown and acts with all the associated regalities. She gloats, declaring herself the undisputed Hula-Hoopin' Queen; queen-wave included. Kameeka appears, running with a grocery bag desperately trying to get back to her mama; however, Jamara steps right in her path. Jamara and Portia are expecting a showdown, and they're not letting Kameeka go until they get one. Kameeka pushes the hoops away, but no matter how hard she tries, the hoops call her name. That hula-hoopin' itch is just too strong! Kameeka succumbs and the showdown begins. Portia flips the dime, and it's Tales, which means the challenge is Time! Whoever hoops the longest wins.

Underscored by loud, energetic, hip-hoopin' music mixed with the sounds of Harlem and the roar of a sports crowd and announcer, Jamara and Kameeka battle. The neighborhood chants, "Swiggle! Swish! Switch!" as the two compete. One hoop rotation turns into 66,000 rotations and then goes to 200,000 rotations. The sun travels across the sky and the sidewalk cools, but Kameeka and Jamara are still going!

Portia, hoopin' with Jamara, and Kameeka stumbles when a screech blares from a microphone. Tripping over the bag of discarded sugar, Portia tumbles right into Kameeka and Jamara and the crowd goes silent. The three girls all lay on the ground, and it appears not one hoop is turning; but Jamara lifts her leg and shows that her hoop is still spinning.

It's a victory for Jamara, but Kameeka does not care. Remembering Miz Adeline's cake, Kameeka rushes up, grabs the sugar, and dashes to her home in a panic. How could she forget something so important to her! As Kameeka leaves, Jamara cements her claim as Queen. However, unlike before, Jamara gives Kameeka some respect, letting the crowd know that Kameeka put her to the test, challenged her, and made her even better than before. With a final trick, Jamara runs off to Miz Adeline's party.

SCENE VIII – THE PARTY!

Miz Adeline’s party at Kameeka’s is in full swing, with the whole block enjoying the celebration. Mama is playing the part of hostess well and speaks with one guest, even thanking them for bringing a pie that she is sure Miz Adeline will love. Kameeka barges in, going straight to her mama to apologize, but her mama is having none of it. Mama scolds her daughter and brings Kameeka straight to Miz Adeline so she can explain why they will not be having any cake. Kameeka approaches Miz Adeline, ashamed, and whispers in her ear that maybe they should skip the cake. Nope! Miz Adeline loves cake and is very excited to have some for her 80th birthday party. Miss Evelyn enters with a tray of snickerdoodle cookies and offers only one to Miz Adeline so as not to spoil her appetite for cake. Jamara and Portia enter soon after, hoops in tow, including Kameeka’s, but Mama will not let hoops spoil this party any more than they already have!

The whole party shifts as Miz Adeline announces it’s time for cake. Kameeka steps forward nervously, not wanting to share the bad news. She even offers Miz Adeline the gift she got her as a distraction from the cake, but it is short-lived. The partygoers begin to chant for the cake until Kameeka can no longer take it. With the utmost shame, Kameeka tells the crowd and Miz Adeline that there is no cake, all thanks to her and her hoopin’. The partygoers are stunned, and Miz Adeline is devastated. Jamara steps forward twirling a donut on her finger to rub this bad day in Kameeka’s face infuriating Portia, who pulls Jamara to the side and begins to talk to her. This is not a joke, and it is not fun; Jamara is being mean. Just mean.

Looking at the donut, Kameeka has an idea. She races to the dessert table, grabs a plate, a huge chocolate donut, and begins piling on whipped cream and strawberries. With the help of Mama, Kameeka places a candle on the donut and presents it to Miz Adeline. A double-fudge chocolate donut with strawberries and real whipped cream! Kameeka has saved the day and even sparked a silly hula-hoopin’ showdown between Miz Adeline and Miss Evelyn. The two go head-to-head, arguing and hoopin’ until Kameeka breaks them apart, teasing about whatever happened to cookin’ with love. Miss Evelyn and Miz Adeline chuckle and joke how they have lost themselves to that dang hula-hoopin’ itch once again.

In this moment, Kameeka speaks to one of the play’s main themes, **love**. She addresses the party, proclaiming that hula-hoopin’ can also be something of love. Like love, the hoop goes round and round, bringing everyone together. In this togetherness, they all can see how precious, special, and beautiful they are. With joy, Miz Adeline, Miss Evelyn, Kameeka, Mama, Portia, and Jamara realize they are **all** Queens. This whole time, they were all The Hula-Hoopin’ Queens! With a final “Swiggle! Swish! Switch!”, the play ends.

THEMATIC BREAKDOWN

THEMES

| FRIENDSHIP

- Friendship looks different for everyone but is always important and worth holding on to. Friends can be kind, always cheering you on or someone who pushes you to be a better version of yourself. In **The Hula Hoopin' Queen** Kameeka is shown how Jamara's friendship makes her a stronger person. She also learns that true friendship comes when you bring everyone together and share your love and support. The play reminds us that good friends are there to make us strong and help us grow.

| LOVE

- We are all able to give and receive love. Who we love, and how we show our love is always our own choice. In **The Hula Hoopin' Queen** we see how love can be found in family, friends, and a community. Love brings us together and gives us the power to beat any challenge thrown our way. The play also reminds us that sometimes winning is not about competitions, but it's about the people we care about and share our hearts with. When we are surrounded by the people we love, then we are all winning!

| FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

- Families are super special for people. Whether they're the ones we are born into or the ones we choose, families are the people who care for us every step of the way. In **The Hula Hoopin' Queen** the audience sees how a community of people can be like a family too. When people come together to support, care, and love each other, a family-like bond can form and that is just as special.

| COMPETITION

- In **The Hula Hoopin' Queen** Kameeka works really hard to win a competition with her friend Jamara. Her determination to win shows how when we work hard, we can achieve great things. But sometimes the important competition is with ourselves. We can challenge ourselves to become better, and stronger, and when we put in the effort to improve and grow, that is when we really win.

| SCT'S ENCORE DISCUSSIONS

CAREGIVER QUESTIONS

1. In **The Hula Hoopin' Queen** we can see how something a family can be one you're born into, or one you choose. Who in your life do you feel like is a family to you?
2. Kameeka works really hard to beat Jamara in the hoopin' competition but finds that her biggest competition is with herself. In what ways have you challenged yourself? How do we grow, and learn from
3. Friends can be made in a lot of ways. For Kameeka she finds that bringing everyone together and sharing her love and support is where she finds friendship. What do you do to make friends? How has someone made you feel like you are their friend?