

POLLYANNA

Adapted by Craig Sodaro
from the book by Eleanor Porter

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STORY OF THE PLAY

It's the early 1900s and young, frightened Pollyanna Whittier arrives in Vermont, full of hope that a new life with her Aunt Polly will help ease the pain of her parents' deaths. But Polly Harrington doesn't welcome her niece with open arms. She takes the child out of her sense of duty, but soon regrets it.

The girl immediately begins making friends of the very people Polly Harrington has worked hard to either ignore, run out of town, or destroy. Pollyanna seems to find joy in everything and tries to help everyone, especially Jimmy, another orphan who needs a home, and Dr. Chilton who wants to build a free clinic in the town.

Pollyanna gradually brings the town to life, helping Mrs. Snow cope with her illness, bringing Mr. Pendleton out of his shell, and helping kids her own age forget their prejudices and make friends. But when Polly Harrington finds out Pollyanna is helping put on a show to raise money for Dr. Chilton's clinic, she forbids Pollyanna to continue and decides to send her to a boarding school.

Tragedy strikes the night of the show when Pollyanna runs from her aunt and is hit by a car. Following the accident, Pollyanna is paralyzed—and the only way she may have a chance to walk again is if Polly Harrington can find it in her long-locked heart to forgive and forget.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(6 m, 18 w, doubling possible.)

NANCY: Polly Harrington's cook.
CHLOE: Polly Harrington's maid.
POLLY HARRINGTON: Richest woman in town, 40ish.
POLLYANNA: Polly's 11-year-old niece.
MRS. FORD: A member of Ladies' Aid Society.
MRS. TARBELL: Another.
WIDOW BENTON: Another.
MRS. MCBEE: Another.
MRS. PAYSON: From the wrong side of the tracks.
MINNIE PAYSON: Her daughter.
MR. PENDLETON: A mysterious old man.
MILLY SNOW: Mrs. Snow's daughter.
CORDELIA: Girl in town, about Pollyanna's age.
MARY LOUISE: Cordelia's friend.
CHICKEE: Another friend.
JIMMY BEAN: An 11-year-old runaway.
GROCER: Looking for the boy who stole fruit.
CONSTABLE: The local policeman.
DR. CHILTON: The local doctor.
MRS. SNOW: An old invalid.
MRS. RAWSON: Mr. Pendleton's housekeeper.
MISS HAWKINS: Principal of a girls' school.
DR. MEAD: A specialist.
NURSE HUNT: His nurse.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

ACT I

- Scene 1: Aunt Polly's kitchen, June, 1911.
- Scene 2: Train station.
- Scene 3: Aunt Polly's parlor.
- Scene 4: Outside.
- Scene 5: Aunt Polly's parlor.
- Scene 6: Aunt Polly's parlor - two weeks later.

ACT II

- Scene 1: Aunt Polly's kitchen - a week later.
- Scene 2: Town area.
- Scene 3: Pollyanna's room - several days later.
- Scene 4: Pollyanna's room - 3 days later.
- Scene 5: Pendleton's house - several days later.

SETTING

The play takes place in Beldingsville, Vermont, 1911. Because there are a number of scenes, a representational set is best. At SR on two levels, we see the Harrington's house. The larger, lower platform CSR is the Harrington parlor. It may contain permanent furniture, such as chairs and a small couch, lamps, and so on. On a higher platform, far SR, we see Pollyanna's room. A small bed and a nightstand are all that's necessary, though a stool may also be added. The frame of a window hangs above the bed. DSR is the Harrington kitchen. A table is needed and should be wheeled on and off. A stove or representation of one can also be used to add to the scene.

CS serves as a general town area. A permanent lamp post may decorate the center.

At SL we again find two levels. The lower level serves as the Pendleton and Snow houses, so the furniture should vary slightly. The upper level is Mrs. Snow's bedroom. A small bed, window with curtains, and a nightstand are necessary.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: June, 1911. Polly Harrington's kitchen. NANCY stirs cake batter singing, "Bicycle Built for Two.")

NANCY: *(Singing.)* "Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer, do!
I'm half crazy, all for the love of you!"

(CHLOE enters SR carrying laundry basket full of kitchen towels.)

CHLOE: Oh, so THAT'S what it is! Here, Nancy, help an old lady down with this dad-burned thing! *(NANCY takes CHLOE'S basket and sets it down on table.)*

NANCY: What do you mean, "That's what it is!"

CHLOE: *(Folding towels.)* I knew something scared Mrs. Ford's cat near out of his skin! You should have seen the hair on his back fly up when you hit that high note!

NANCY: So I'm no opera star! At least I'm happy, not like everybody around here.

CHLOE: Oh, you'll join the crowd soon enough.

NANCY: I've told you, Chloe, I've never been one to be down in the mouth. I've seen my share of bad times, but there's always a silver lining to every dark cloud.

CHLOE: Not in Polly Harrington's house!

(POLLY HARRINGTON, enters SL carrying a letter. She can barely contain her anger. CHLOE stops folding towels, but NANCY keeps on stirring the batter.)

POLLY: Chloe! Nancy! Something has come up.

CHLOE: Bad news, Miss Harrington?

POLLY: Nancy, when I am talking to the staff, I wish you to stop your work and listen to what I have to say!

NANCY: Yes, ma'am, I will ma'am...I was only keepin' on with my work 'cause you specially told me this mornin' not to waste time, ma'am.

POLLY: I do not need an explanation. I want your attention.

Pollyanna

- 6 -

NANCY: Yes, ma'am.

POLLY: When you have finished your work in here, you will go up to the attic and clear the trunks and boxes out of the little room at the head of the stairs. Make up a cot bed. Sweep and clean the room.

CHLOE: And where ought we put the boxes and trunks, Miss Harrington?

POLLY: (*Angrily.*) I don't care! In the front attic, I suppose.

NANCY: Is someone coming to stay here, ma'am?

POLLY: I suppose you'll find out sooner or later. My sister's child, Miss Pollyanna Whittier, is coming to stay here for a while. She is 11 and will stay in that room.

CHLOE: Your niece, Miss Harrington?

POLLY: That IS what I said!

NANCY: A little girl, coming here! Oh, won't that be nice?!

POLLY: Hardly the word I would have used. However, I intend to make the best of it. (*SHE crumples the letter.*) After all, it is my duty to see the child properly settled.

NANCY: I just thought a little girl might...brighten things up a bit for you.

POLLY: I can't say I see any need for that!

NANCY: But, of course, you'd want your sister's child.

POLLY: Ha! Just because I happened to have a sister who was silly enough to marry foolishly and bring unnecessary children into a world already full enough...I can't see how I should WANT to take care of them myself. But I do know my duty. And, Chloe, be sure to clean the corners! (*SHE places crumpled letter on table, exits SL.*)

NANCY: Well, ain't that somethin'! (*CHLOE picks up letter.*) What are you doin'?

CHLOE: If she didn't want us readin' this, she wouldn't have left it here! (*Reads:*) Dear Madam: I regret to inform you that the Reverend John Whittier died two weeks ago, leaving one child, a girl of 11 years old. He left practically nothing but a few books. As you know, he was the pastor of a small mission church and had a very small salary. I believe he was your deceased sister's husband, but he gave me to understand you were not on the best of terms.

Pollyanna

- 7 -

CHLOE: *(Cont'd.)* He thought, however, for the child's sake, that you might take the child.

NANCY: What's it mean, not on the best of terms?

CHLOE: Oh, dear, me, Nancy...I thought if I was lucky enough, I'd never have to relive those horrible days.

NANCY: Blimy! What happened?

CHLOE: Miss Polly's sister, Jennie, was such a beautiful young thing. And, my, but she was headstrong. When she made her mind up over a thing, there wasn't an army of elephants could move her. Especially in matters of the heart.

NANCY: Must have been a man, then!

CHLOE: Two of 'em. Beggins' for her hand, they were. One, a feller with all the money a body could want. The other, a poor young minister. You can imagine which the Harrington family wanted Miss Jennie to marry.

NANCY: Not the minister, that's for sure.

CHLOE: 'Course as Miss Jennie realized that, her heart conquered her common sense and she ran off with Rev. John Whittier, who took Miss Jennie south to help him in his missionary work.

NANCY: How romantic!

CHLOE: That ain't how Miss Polly saw it. Even at 15, and that's how old she was at the time, she realized the "folly of Miss Jennie's ways," as she put it. Miss Jennie wrote for a while, but nobody, not even Miss Polly ever returned. She never even wrote when Miss Jennie said that she'd named her little girl Pollyanna after her two sisters, Polly and Anna. The last time they heard from the Rev. John Whittier was when he wrote to say Miss Jennie'd died from fever years ago.

NANCY: Why, that almost breaks a heart in two.

CHLOE: First you gotta have a heart, Nancy. And I'm afraid Polly Harrington's heart shriveled up so long ago, there's nothin' left.

(A TRAIN WHISTLE is heard, along with the ENGINE GRINDING to a halt. NANCY and CHLOE toss capes on. LIGHTS dim on kitchen area.)

End of Freeview

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