

Pollyanna's Game

by Eleanor Porter *from Pollyanna*

Pollyanna is the story of a girl named Pollyanna whose parents died. She has gone to live with her Aunt Polly, who she has never met. Aunt Polly is wealthy and does not really want Pollyanna to live with her. Aunt Polly gave her niece a bare and ugly room in the attic. In the passage below, Pollyanna is talking to Nancy, Aunt Polly's maid.

“Why, it’s a game. Father told it to me, and it’s lovely,” rejoined Pollyanna. “We’ve played it always, ever since I was a little, little girl. I told the Ladies’ Aid, and they played it—some of them.”

“What is it? I ain’t much on games, though.”

Pollyanna laughed again, but she sighed, too; and in the gathering twilight her face looked thin and wistful.

“Why, we began it on some crutches that came in a missionary barrel.”

“CRUTCHES!”

“Yes. You see I’d wanted a doll, and father had written them so; but when the barrel came the lady wrote that there hadn’t any dolls come in, but the little crutches had. So she sent ‘em along as they might come in handy for some child, sometime. And that’s when we began it.”

“Well, I must say I can’t see any game about that, about that,” declared Nancy, almost irritably.

“Oh, yes; the game was to just find something about everything to be glad about—no matter what ‘twas,” rejoined Pollyanna, earnestly. “And we began right then—on the crutches.”

“Well, goodness me! I can’t see anythin’ ter be glad about—gettin’ a pair of crutches when you wanted a doll!”

Pollyanna clapped her hands.

“There is—there is,” she crowed. “But I couldn’t see it, either, Nancy, at first,” she added, with quick honesty. “Father had to tell it to me.”

“Well, then, suppose YOU tell ME,” almost snapped Nancy.

“Goosey! Why, just be glad because you don’t—NEED—’EM!” exulted Pollyanna, triumphantly. “You see

it's just as easy—when you know how!”

“Well, of all the queer doin’s!” breathed Nancy, regarding Pollyanna with almost fearful eyes.

“Oh, but it isn’t queer—it’s lovely,” maintained Pollyanna enthusiastically. “And we’ve played it ever since. And the harder ‘tis, the more fun ‘tis to get ‘em out; only—only sometimes it’s almost too hard—like when your father goes to Heaven, and there isn’t anybody but a Ladies’ Aid left.”

“Yes, or when you’re put in a snippy little room ‘way at the top of the house with nothin’ in it,” growled Nancy.

Pollyanna sighed.

“That was a hard one, at first,” she admitted, “specially when I was so kind of lonesome. I just didn’t feel like playing the game, anyway, and I HAD been wanting pretty things, so! Then I happened to think how I hated to see my freckles in the looking-glass, and I saw that lovely picture out the window, too; so then I knew I’d found the things to be glad about. You see, when you’re hunting for the glad things, you sort of forget the other kind—like the doll you wanted, you know.”

Questions

1. What had Pollyanna wanted when she got the crutches instead?
2. Why was Pollyanna glad about the crutches?
3. What did Pollyanna say happened when she went hunting for glad things?
4. Why was Pollyanna glad she didn't have a looking-glass?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. wistful
2. handy
3. exulted
4. maintained
5. looking-glass

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "her face looked thin and **wistful**"

a. pale; sickly b. thoughtful or sad c. rosy; pink d. freckled

2) "they might come in **handy** for some child"

a. helpful; useful b. quickly; fast c. soon; in the near future d. a wood barrel

3) "because you don't—NEED—'EM!" **exulted** Pollyanna"

a. whispered b. stormed; growled c. wept; sobbed d. cried joyfully; crowed

4) "it's lovely," **maintained** Pollyanna enthusiastically"

a. muttered softly b. asked; questioned c. declared or insisted d. thought

5) "I hated to see my freckles in the **looking-glass**"

a. mirror b. picture c. attic window d. pond or lake