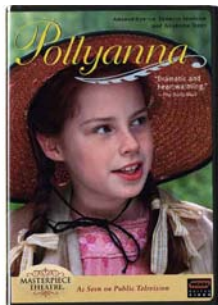


## Discussion Questions

- 1** In her first encounter with Pollyanna, Aunt Polly remarks, “I do not care to have you keep talking of your father to me.” It could be said that the whole novel illustrates the avoidance of difficult issues by Aunt Polly and the other adults. Do you agree or disagree? How do the adults—Aunt Polly, Mr. Pendleton, Mrs. Snow—change by the novel’s end, due to Pollyanna’s insistence on finding the good even in dire circumstances? What issues do adults find challenging to talk about with children today? Do you think avoidance of such issues healthy or unhealthy? Which provides a safer environment for children?
- 2** What is important to Pollyanna in a home? Her aunt lives in a wealthy home. How much does that change Pollyanna’s notions of what a “home” should be? What about Pollyanna’s nature seems to change the homes of the people she comes to know? In what ways do her own notions of “home” seem to stay the same or change by the novel’s end?
- 3** Eleanor Porter has Old Tom, Nancy, and Jimmy Bean speak in dialect. For instance, upon hearing of Pollyanna’s arrival, Old Tom says, “Ter think of my old eyes a-seein’ this!” Why do you think Porter made this choice? Does the use of dialect distance you from these characters or is it helpful in understanding them?
- 4** Eternal optimism may be Pollyanna’s greatest asset, one that allows her to thrive despite tragedy. What does she teach others? What are her flaws? How does her optimism affect your relationship to her throughout the story? Is she an empathetic character? Why or why not?
- 5** For much of *Pollyanna*, Miss Snow and Mr. Pendleton are invalids—she a physical one and he an emotional one. What strengths do they derive from their weaknesses? What powers would each gain or lose by abandoning their closed lives? At what point in the novel does each of these characters begin to see the appeal of a different kind of life? The reclusive Mr. Pendleton, for instance, asks Pollyanna to live with him and be his heir. What is he trying to fulfill? To what extent do they find new strengths by the end of the story?
- 6** Generate a list of differences you see between the novel and the film: How are the settings different? The characters? The plot? Which changes have the most impact? Does the novel give you more latitude in getting to know the characters? What does the film accomplish that the novel cannot? Which do you prefer? Why?

*Pollyanna*, by Eleanor H. Porter, was first published in 1913. For more about the MASTERPIECE film *Pollyanna* and related features, visit <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/pollyanna/forever.html>.



You can purchase the *Pollyanna* DVD on [shoppbs.org](http://shoppbs.org).  
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