**Тексты для чтения 10-11 кл**

**POLLYANNA**

**Eleanor H. Porter**

Miss Polly Harrington entered her kitchen a little hurriedly this June morning. Miss Polly did not usually make hurried movements; she specially prided herself on her repose of manner. But today she was hurrying. Nancy, washing dishes at the sink, looked up in surprise. Nancy had been working in Miss Polly's kitchen only two months, but already she knew that her mistress did not usually hurry.

"Nancy!"

"Yes, ma'am." Nancy answered cheerfully, but she still continued wiping the pitcher in her hand.

"Nancy,"--Miss Polly's voice was very stern now--"when I'm talking to you, I wish you to stop your work and listen to what I have to say."

Nancy flushed miserably. She set the pitcher down at once, with the cloth still about it, thereby nearly tipping it over which did not add to her composure.

"Yes, ma'am; I will, ma'am," she stammered, righting the pitcher, and turning hastily. "I was only keepin' on with my work 'cause you specially told me this mornin' ter hurry with my dishes, yeknow." Her mistress frowned.

"That will do, Nancy. I did not ask for explanations. I asked for your attention."

"Yes, ma'am." Nancy stifled a sigh. She was wondering if ever in any way she could please this woman.

Nancy had never "worked out" before; but a sick mother suddenly widowed and left with three younger children besides Nancy herself, had forced the girl into doing something toward their support, and she had been so pleased when she found a place in the kitchen of the great house on the hill. Nancy had come from "The Corners," six miles away, and she knew Miss Polly Harrington only as the mistress of the old Harrington homestead, and one of the wealthiest residents of the town. That was two months before. She knew Miss Polly now as a stern, severe-faced woman who frowned if a knife clattered to the floor, or if a door banged but who never thought to smile even when knives and doors were still.

"When you've finished your morning work, Nancy," Miss Polly was saying now, "you may clear the little room at the head of the stairs in the attic, and make up the cot bed. Sweep the room and clean it, of course, after you clear out the trunks and boxes."

"Yes, ma'am. And where shall I put the things, please, that I take out?"

"In the front attic." Miss Polly hesitated, then went on: "I suppose I may as well tell you now, Nancy. My niece, Miss Pollyanna Whittier, is coming to live with me. She is eleven years old, and will sleep in that room."

"A little girl coming here, Miss Harrington? Oh, won't that be nice!" cried Nancy, thinking of the sunshine her own little sisters made in the home at "The Corners."

"Nice? Well, that isn't exactly the word I should use," rejoined Miss Polly, stiffly. "However, I intend to make the best of it, of course. I am a good woman, I hope; and I know my duty." Nancy colored hotly.

"Of course, ma'am; it was only that I thought a little girl here might brighten things up for you," she faltered.

"Thank you," rejoined the lady, dryly. "I can't say, however, that I see any immediate need for that."

"But, of course, you'd want her, your sister's child," ventured Nancy, vaguely feeling that somehow she must prepare a welcome for this lonely little stranger. Miss Polly lifted her chin haughtily.

"Well, really, Nancy, just because I happened to have a sister who was silly enough to marry and bring unnecessary children into a world that was already quite full enough, I can't see how I should particularly WANT to have the care of them myself. However, as I said before, I hope I know my duty. See that you clean the corners, Nancy," she finished sharply, as she left the room.

"Yes, ma'am," sighed Nancy, picking up the half-dried pitcher now so cold it must be rinsed again.

In her own room, Miss Polly took out once more the letter which she had received two days before from the far-away Western town, and which had been so unpleasant a surprise to her. The letter was addressed to Miss Polly Harrington, Beldingsville, Vermont; and it read as follows:

"Dear Madam:I regret to inform you that the Rev. John Whittier died two weeks ago, leaving one child, a girl eleven years old. He left practically nothing else save a few books; for, as you doubtless know, he was the pastor of this small mission church, and had a very meagre salary.

"I believe he was your deceased sister's husband, but he gave me to understand the families were not on the best of terms. He thought, however, that for your sister's sake you might wish to take the child and bring her up among her own people in the East. Hence I am writing to you. The little girl will be all ready to start by the time you get this letter; and if you can take her, we would appreciate it very much if you would write that she might come at once, as there is a man and his wife here who are going East very soon, and they would take her with them to Boston, and put her on the Beldingsville train. Of course you would be notified what day and train to expect Pollyanna on. "

"Hoping to hear favorably from you soon, I remain, "Respectfully yours," Jeremiah O. White."

With a frown Miss Polly folded the letter and tucked it into its envelope. She had answered it the day before, and she had said she would take the child, of course. She HOPED she knew her duty well enough for that!--disagreeable as the task would be.

As she sat now, with the letter in her hands, her thoughts went back to her sister, Jennie, who had been this child's mother, and to the time when Jennie, as a girl of twenty, had insisted upon marrying the young minister, in spite of her family's remonstrances. There had been a man of wealth who had wanted her--and the family had much preferred him to the minister; but Jennie had not. The man of wealth had more years, as well as more money, to his credit, while the minister had only a young head full of youth's ideals and enthusiasm, and a heart full of love. Jennie had preferred these--quite naturally, perhaps; so she had married the minister, and had gone south with him as a home missionary's wife.

The break had come then. Miss Polly remembered it well, though she had been but a girl of fifteen, the youngest, at the time. The family had had little more to do with the missionary's wife. To be sure, Jennie herself had written, for a time, and had named her last baby "Pollyanna" for her two sisters, Polly and Anna--the other babies had all died. This had been the last time that Jennie had written; and in a few years there had come the news of her death, told in a short, but heart-broken little note from the minister himself, dated at a little town in the West.

Meanwhile, time had not stood still for the occupants of the great house on the hill. Miss Polly, looking out at the far-reaching valley below, thought of the changes those twenty-five years had brought to her. She was forty now, and quite alone in the world. Father, mother, sisters all were dead. For years, now, she had been sole mistress of the house and of the thousands left her by her father. There were people who had openly pitied her lonely life, and who had urged her to have some friend or companion to live with her; but she had not welcomed either their sympathy or their advice. She was not lonely, she said. She liked being by herself.

She preferred quiet. But now Miss Polly rose with frowning face and closely-shut lips. She was glad, of course, that she was a good woman, and that she not only knew her duty, but had sufficient strength of character to perform it. But--POLLYANNA!--what a ridiculous name!

**The Kitemaker**

**Ruskin Bond**

There was but one tree in the street known as Gali Ram Nathan ancient banyan that had grown through the cracks of an abandoned mosque—and little Ali’s kite had caught in its branches. The boy, barefoot and clad only in a torn shirt, ran along the cobbled stones of the narrow street to where his grandfather sat nodding dreamily in the sunshine of their back courtyard.

‘Grandfather shouted the boy. ‘My kite has gone!

The old man woke from his daydream with a start and, raising his head, displayed a beard that would have been white had it not been dyed red with mehendi leaves.

‘Did the twine break?’ he asked. To know that kite twine is not what it used to be.

‘No, Grandfather, the kite is stuck in the banyan tree.The old man chuckled. ‘You have yet to learn how to fly a kite properly, my child. And I am too old to teach you, that’s the pity of it. But you shall have another. He had just finished making a new kite from bamboo paper and thin silk, and it lay in the sun, firming up. It was a pale pink kite, with a small green tail. The old man handed it to Ali, and the boy raised himself on his toes and kissed his grandfather’s hollowed-out cheek.

It will not lose this one he said. ‘This kite will fly like a bird. And he turned on his heels and skipped out of the courtyard. The old man remained dreaming in the sun. His kite shop was gone, the premises long since sold to a junk dealer; but he still made kites, for his own amusement and for the benefit of his grandson, Ali. Not many people bought kites these days. Adults disdained them, and children preferred to spend their money at the cinema. Moreover, there were not many open spaces left for the flying of kites. The city had swallowed up the open grassland that had stretched from the old fort’s walls to the river bank.

But the old man remembered a time when grown men flew kites, and great battles were fought, the kites swerving and swooping in the sky, tangling with each other until the string of one was severed. Then the defeated but liberated kite would float away into the blue unknown. There was a good deal of betting, and money frequently changed hands.

Kite-flying was then the sport of kings, and the old man remembered how the Nawab himself would come down to the riverside with his retinue to participate in this noble pastime. There was time, then, to spend an idle hour with a gay, dancing strip of paper. Now everyone hurried, in a heat of hope, and delicate things like kites and daydreams were trampled underfoot. He, Mehmood the kitemaker, had in the prime of his life been well known throughout the city. Some of his more elaborate kites once sold for as much as three or four rupees each.

At the request of the Nawab he had once made a very special kind of kite, unlike any that had been seen in the district. It consisted of a series of small, very light paper disks trailing on a thin bamboo frame. To the end of each disk he fixed a sprig of grass, forming a balance on both sides. The surface of the foremost disk was slightly convex, and a fantastic face was painted on it, having two eyes made of small mirrors. The disks, decreasing in size from head to tail, assumed an undulatory form and gave the kite the appearance of a crawling serpent. It required great skill to raise this cumbersome device from the ground, and only Mehmood could manage it.

Everyone had heard of the ‘Dragon Kite’ that Mehmood had built, and word went round that it possessed supernatural powers. A large crowd assembled in the open to watch its first public launching in the presence of the Nawab.

At the first attempt it refused to leave the ground. The disks made a plaintive, protesting sound, and the sun was trapped in the little mirrors, making of the kite a living, complaining creature. Then the wind came from the right direction, and the Dragon Kite soared into the sky, wriggling its way higher and higher, the sun still glinting in its devil-eyes. And when it went very high, it pulled fiercely on the twine, and Mehmood’s young sons had to help him with the reel. Still the kite pulled, determined to be free, to break loose, to live a life of its own. And eventually it did so. The twine snapped, the kite leaped away toward the sun, sailing on heavenward until it was lost to view. It was never found again, and Mehmood wondered afterwards if he made too vivid, too living a thing of the great kite. He did not make another like it. Instead he presented to the Nawab a musical kite, one that made a sound like a violin when it rose in the air.

Those were more leisurely, more spacious days. But the Nawab had died years ago, and his descendants were almost as poor as Mehmood himself. Kitemakers, like poets, once had their patrons; but no one knew Mehmood, simply because there were too many people in the Gali, and they could not be bothered with their neighbours.

When Mehmood was younger and had fallen sick, everyone in the neighbourhood had come to ask after his health; but now, when his days were drawing to a close, no one visited him. Most of his old friends were dead and his sons had grown up: one was working in a local garage and the other, who was in Pakistan at the time of the Partition, had not been able to rejoin his relatives.

The children who had bought kites from him ten years ago were now grown men, struggling for a living; they did not have time for the old man and his memories. They had grown up in a swiftly changing and competitive world, and they looked at the old kitemaker and the banyan tree with the same indifference. Both were taken for granted—permanent fixtures that were of no concern to the raucous, sweating mass of humanity that surrounded them. No longer did people gather under the banyan tree to discuss their problems and their plans; only in the summer months did a few seek shelter from the fierce sun.

But there was the boy, his grandson. It was good that Mehmood’s son worked close by, for it gladdened the old man’s heart to watch the small boy at play in the winter sunshine, growing under his eyes like a young and well-nourished sapling putting forth new leaves each day. There is a great affinity between trees and men. We grow at much the same pace, if we are not hurt or starved or cut down. In our youth we are resplendent creatures, and in our declining years we stoop a little, we remember, we stretch our brittle limbs in the sun, and then, with a sigh, we shed our last leaves.

Mehmood was like the banyan, his hands gnarled and twisted like the roots of the ancient tree. Ali was like the young mimosa planted at the end of the courtyard. In two years both he and the tree would acquire the strength and confidence of their early youth.

The voices in the street grew fainter, and Mehmood wondered if he was going to fall asleep and dream, as he so often did, of a kite so beautiful and powerful that it would resemble the great white bird of the Hindus—Garuda, God Vishnu’s famous steed. He would like to make a wonderful new kite for little Ali. He had nothing else to leave the boy.

He heard Ali’s voice in the distance, but did not realize that the boy was calling him. The voice seemed to come from very far away. Ali was at the courtyard door, asking if his mother had as yet returned from the bazaar. When Mehmood did not answer, the boy came forward repeating his question. The sunlight was slanting across the old man’s head, and a small white butterfly rested on his flowing beard. Mehmood was silent; and when Ali put his small brown hand on the old man’s shoulder, he met with no response. The boy heard a faint sound, like the rubbing of marbles in his pocket.

Suddenly afraid, Ali turned and moved to the door, and then ran down the street shouting for his mother. The butterfly left the old man’s beard and flew to the mimosa tree, and a sudden gust of wind caught the torn kite and lifted it in the air, carrying it far above the struggling city into the blind blue sky.