



Johnny Appleseed

Characters

Narrator	Thomas
Johnny Appleseed	Jane
Elizabeth	Little Thundercloud

Setting

This reader's theater begins in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, in 1786, at the home of Nathaniel and Lucy Chapman and their family of 12 children. Down a dirt trail from the house is an apple orchard planted by 12-year-old Johnny. The trees are full of big, red apples.



Act I

Narrator: As the sun rises over the Chapman house, Johnny is sitting on the front steps. With 11 siblings, this is the only time it is quiet and he can think. Johnny is thinking about what he wants to do with his life. His older sister, Elizabeth, comes out to join him.

Elizabeth: What are you doin' out here all by yourself, Johnny? The sun's only barely comin' up. You'll catch your death of cold!

Johnny: I'm just thinkin', Elizabeth. Don't you ever just like to sit and think about life?

Elizabeth: With all the commotion from our little brothers and sisters, it's hard even to hear yourself think around here!

Johnny: I know what you mean. I'm lookin' forward to the day when I can be out on my own. Seems more and more people are movin' from New England and headin' west to settle. It makes you wonder what life is like out there, and what it would be like to be a true pioneer.



Elizabeth: That's crazy, Johnny. How would you take care of yourself out there alone? Where would you live? Wouldn't you be scared to be on your own?

Johnny: I don't think so. I think I'd do just fine. I'm comfortable when I go out into the wilderness. I enjoy being around animals and nature. In fact, that's where I am most at home.

Elizabeth: Really?

Johnny: Yes. Nature is just about perfect. Look at this here apple, would you? What could be more perfect than that?

Narrator: Johnny really does love nature. In the years to come, he learns everything he can about plants. He studies how trees grow. And, just for fun, he plants apple orchards all over his hometown. Everyone tells Johnny that his trees grow the best apples they had ever tasted. Johnny realizes what he has to do.

Johnny: Elizabeth, I've finally decided to leave home. I'm ready to explore the Western frontier.

Elizabeth: Oh, Johnny, you've been talkin' about bein' a pioneer on the Western frontier for years



now. But all you ever do is wander around here barefoot, talkin' to critters and tending to those apple trees of yours. If you leave home, what ever will you do?

Johnny: I'm not sure yet, Elizabeth, but I know I'll make something of my life.

Act 2

Narrator: The next morning, Johnny sets out on his own. He travels by canoe sometimes. Other times, he travels by foot—always barefoot! His clothes are made from flour sacks and he owns no shoes. For a hat, he wears a tin pot that he uses to cook his meals. He carries no weapons. All he takes with him is a bag filled with apple seeds that he had gotten from the cider mill. They were the same seeds that grew those great apple trees back home. When he gets to Ohio, he decides to scatter some seeds in a clearing. He is so happy that, while he plants the seeds, he sings out loud a joyful song.

**Song: John Jacob
Jingleheimer Schmidt**