

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark purple color, framing the title.

A Little Princess

Adapted by Vera Morris
from Frances Hodgson Burnett's "Sara Crewe"



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By Vera Morris

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For Preview Only

A LITTLE PRINCESS
Adapted from Frances Hodgson Burnett's "Sara Crewe"

By VERA MORRIS

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

	<u># of lines</u>
ERMENGARDE ST. JOHNpupil	34
LOTTIE.....another	14
ALICEanother	16
JESSIEanother	22
LAVINIAanother pupil, dislikes Sara	35
MISS AMELIAteacher, Miss Minchin's sister	40
MISS MINCHIN.....school owner and principal	173
BECKY.....servant, an orphan	74
MR. BARROW.....attorney	51
SARA CREWEa little princess, intelligent and imaginative	117
MRS. CARMICHAELa neighbor	38
COOK.....school employee	27
RAM DASS.....servant to Mr. Carrisford	25
PERKINS.....housemaid to Mr. Carrisford	16
MR. CARRISFORD.....another neighbor	26
MR. CARMICHAELworks for Mr. Carrisford	20

Additional PUPILS at Miss Minchin's school can be added, if desired.

SYNOPSIS

The action takes place mostly at Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies, located in the city of London.

The time is Victorian England.

ACT ONE: A classroom.

ACT TWO: An attic room, followed by a visit to Mr. Carrisford's home.

A LITTLE PRINCESS

ACT ONE Scene One

SETTING: A classroom. Originally, this room was one of several parlors in a large house, before it was converted into a school. It's rather severe looking, sparsely furnished. LEFT are at least six chairs for pupils [more chairs if EXTRAS are being utilized]. RIGHT is a table with a world globe on top and a small stack of books. There's a rather handsome chair to the LEFT of the table, another chair or upholstered stool behind the table. There's a blackboard UPSTAGE CENTER. OPTIONAL stage dressing as desired: fireplace (RIGHT), fire screen, house plants, etc. [NOTE: Only the basic stage props needed for blocking the play are mentioned. For more elaborate possibilities, consult production notes.] Entrance into classroom from outside hallway is UP LEFT. Another parlor is reached via DOWN RIGHT. FORESTAGE represents sidewalk. A few seconds prior to LIGHTS UP we hear SCHOOLGIRL LAUGHTER.

LIGHTS UP: The following pupils are seated LEFT. In terms of age, they're about 11 or 12. LAVINIA, JESSIE, LOTTIE and ALICE. ERMENGARDE ST. JOHN is at the blackboard holding a piece of chalk. She has just written: "A YOUNG LADY IS ALWAYS POLIGHT." ERMENGARDE'S misspelling of "polite" is causing the laughter.

ERMENGARDE: I don't know why you're laughing at me. Miss Minchin told me to write it on the blackboard. She said I was to write it five times. She was annoyed with me when I bumped into her on the stairs and didn't say, "Excuse me, Miss Minchin."

PUPILS: (*Reciting.*) "A young lady is always polite."

ERMENGARDE: Writing that on the blackboard is an easy punishment, but it's nothing to laugh at. Or make fun of.

LOTTIE: That's not what we're laughing at, Ermengarde.

ERMENGARDE: It isn't?

ALICE: Certainly not.

JESSIE: It's the way you've spelled "polite."

ERMENGARDE: (*Stares at blackboard.*) What's wrong with the way I spelled "polite"?

LAVINIA: (*Stands.*) Everyone knows you spell "polite" --
P-O-L-L-I-T-T-E.

ERMENGARDE: Really?

LAVINIA: But of course. If I were you, I'd change it at once.

(LAVINIA smirks to the OTHERS. They turn their heads aside and cover mouths. They don't want ERMENGARDE catching them laughing at LAVINIA'S unkind joke.)

ERMENGARDE: Thank you, Lavinia. Miss Minchin gets so angry when I misspell words. And there are so many words to misspell. I dislike reading, but I dislike spelling even more. *(ERMENGARDE picks up a blackboard eraser and wipes out "POLIGHT." Unnoticed by ERMENGARDE, PUPILS start to giggle. ERMENGARDE puts down the eraser and spells aloud as she writes.)* Polite. P-O-L-L-I-T-T-E. Polite. *(This is too much for the OTHER GIRLS. They break out into raucous laughter.)*

ERMENGARDE: *(Bewildered.)* What's so funny this time? Didn't I do it right? *(Louder laughter.)* Stop laughing, I say. *(Stamps her foot.)* Stop it! Stop it! *(The uproar causes MISS AMELIA, MISS MINCHIN'S rather timid sister and a teacher, to ENTER from DOWN RIGHT.)*

AMELIA: Young ladies, young ladies. What is the meaning of this uproar?

ERMENGARDE: They're laughing at me, Miss Amelia. They're always laughing at me because of something I've done or said.

AMELIA: Stop it, young ladies. *(Claps her hands together for attention.)* Stop it, I say. Otherwise, I shall inform my sister of your unseemly behavior. *(On mention of "my sister" the PUPILS settle down. ERMENGARDE crosses LEFT and takes a seat.)* That's better. *(Looks about, checks watch pinned to her blouse.)* Why, it's after ten o'clock. Isn't this the time for your class in department?

PUPILS: Yes, Miss Amelia.

AMELIA: I wonder where my sister can be? *(On cue, MISS MINCHIN ENTERS from UP LEFT. A tall woman with a cold personality, dressed in respectable black. All the PUPILS and SERVANTS, even AMELIA, are in awe of her. She absentmindedly reads some letter as she ENTERS.)* Ah, here she is. *(PUPILS stand.)*

PUPILS: Good morning, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN: Good morning. *(Coolly.)* You may be seated, young ladies.

PUPILS: Yes, Miss Minchin. Thank you, Miss Minchin. *(They sit. MISS MINCHIN folds the letter and moves to the table. Puts letter down.)*

MISS MINCHIN: Amelia.

AMELIA: Yes, sister?

MISS MINCHIN: I'm expecting a Mr. Barrow. He's a solicitor from the law firm of Barrow and Skipworth. I'll see him in here. You may have my young ladies join your sewing class. (*PUPILS groan.*) A young lady never expresses her feelings with a groan. Repeat that.

PUPILS: "A young lady never expresses her feelings with a groan."

MISS MINCHIN: I should have liked a bit more enthusiasm. You will join Miss Amelia's class in the sewing parlor.

PUPILS: Yes, Miss Minchin.

AMELIA: (*Gestures DOWN RIGHT.*) Hurry along, girls.

PUPILS: Yes, Miss Amelia. (*They stand and cross for DOWN RIGHT. MISS MINCHIN looks to the blackboard.*)

MISS MINCHIN: One moment. (*PUPILS stop. MISS MINCHIN moves to the blackboard.*) What's this, what's this? "A young lady is always -- (*Spells it out.*) P-O-L-L-I-T-E?" Ermengarde St. John, did you write this?

ERMENGARDE: Yes, Miss Minchin. You told me to.

MISS MINCHIN: Wretched spelling. Deplorable. You really are a dull pupil. I shall have to write to your father.

ERMENGARDE: Oh, please, Miss Minchin, don't write to my father.

MISS MINCHIN: We'll discuss it later. Go along, all of you.

PUPILS: Yes, Miss Minchin.

ERMENGARDE: It's all your fault, Lavinia. (*Dutifully, PUPILS EXIT DOWN RIGHT. Annoyed, MISS MINCHIN picks up the blackboard eraser and wipes out the sentence.*)

MISS MINCHIN: That St. John girl is quite hopeless.

AMELIA: I'd be careful what you write to Ermengarde's father. You don't want him to take her out of school. He always pays Ermengarde's expenses on time. That's more than you can say for some.

MISS MINCHIN: You have a point. (*She walks back to the table and picks up the letter. Scans it.*) Seems we're to have a new pupil. A Miss Sara Crewe. Odd that a solicitor should be arranging for her admittance. The girl's from India.

AMELIA: (*Impressed.*) All the way from India?

MISS MINCHIN: She'll be spoiled. They usually are when they come from India. No doubt she'll pretend she's the daughter of a Rajah.

AMELIA: Will you accept her?

MISS MINCHIN: If the financial arrangements are satisfactory. I have no reason to suspect they won't be. I wonder how this

Mr. Barrow came to select this school? (*BECKY, a pitiful young slavey, ENTERS from UP LEFT. She wears a ragged dark dress and stockings. Soiled apron and dust cap. In one hand she holds a broom and in the other a dustpan. Soot on her face. Trace of cockney accent. She gives an awkward curtsy.*)

BECKY: Beggin' yer pardon, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN: (*Sharply.*) What are you doing in here, Becky? I told you to clean out the upstairs fireplaces.

BECKY: All done, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN: I'm sure Cook will find work for you.

BECKY: She already has, Miss Minchin. I'm to scrub all the pots and kettles. When I'm done with them pots and kettles, I'm to scrub the kitchen floor and mop it dry.

MISS MINCHIN: In that case, what are you waiting for?

BECKY: There's a gentleman what wants to see you. He's got a young lady with him. She's dressed ever so lovely. I expects she's a new pupil.

MISS MINCHIN: (*Aghast.*) No -- don't tell me. You didn't --

BECKY: Maid was nowhere to be found, Miss Minchin. So when I hears the front doorbell, I opens the door. Wouldn't be polite to have the gentleman and young lady wait too long on the welcome mat. (*Clutching hand over heart, MISS MINCHIN collapses into the fine chair.*)

MISS MINCHIN: You stupid girl. I should have thrown you out long ago. You're useless. Imagine, Amelia, the door to my school opened by this dirty little wretch. What must Mr. Barrow think? Oh, oh! Go to him, Amelia.

AMELIA: Yes, sister. At once, sister. (*AMELIA hurries OFF, UP LEFT.*)

BECKY: I was only trying to be of service, Miss Minchin. I was trying to make myself useful, I was.

MISS MINCHIN: Get out of my sight. You horrid girl.

BECKY: Yes, ma'am. (*She gives a frightened curtsy, starts to exit UP LEFT.*)

MISS MINCHIN: Not that way! I don't want Mr. Barrow to see you again. You've done quite enough harm for one day. Appearances matter, but that's something I wouldn't expect you to understand. (*A sweeping gesture DOWN RIGHT.*) Out! (*BECKY is on the verge of tears.*)

BECKY: Yes, ma'am, Miss Minchin. Sorry for any inconvenience I've caused.

MISS MINCHIN: Out! Out! (*BECKY flees DOWN RIGHT, OUT.*)

AMELIA'S VOICE: *(From hallway.)* My sister is expecting you, Mr. Barrow. She's in her classroom.

MR. BARROW'S VOICE: Thank you. *(MISS MINCHIN quickly recovers from her scene with BECKY. She stands, faces UP LEFT. Forces a professional smile. AMELIA ENTERS.)*

AMELIA: Mr. Barrow, sister. *(AMELIA steps back and MR. BARROW ENTERS. A matter-of-fact gentleman. All business.)*

MISS MINCHIN: Ah, Mr. Barrow. A pleasure.

MR. BARROW: Miss Minchin. *(A nod of his head.)*

MISS MINCHIN: How prompt you are, sir. *(Picks up letter.)* I barely had time to read your communication and here you are. *(Indicates fine chair.)* Pray be seated.

MR. BARROW: I prefer to stand. The exercise will do me good. A solicitor needs all the exercise he can manage. The law is a sedentary profession.

MISS MINCHIN: I quite understand. *(She sits, scans the letter again.)* The girl is with you?

MR. BARROW: She is.

AMELIA: She's in the hallway, sister. She's watching the lorrymen bring in her luggage. Trunk after trunk. I never saw so many trunks. Such fine leather! The brass locks are so brightly polished!

MISS MINCHIN: Don't babble, Amelia. It suggests frivolity. See that -- *(Checks name in letter.)* "Miss Crewe" doesn't wander off.

AMELIA: But my sewing class --

MISS MINCHIN: It can wait.

AMELIA: Yes, sister. *(AMELIA knows better than to argue. EXITS UP LEFT. MR. BARROW looks about, taking in the classroom.)*

MR. BARROW: This is a large house, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN: It has to be. We accept boarding young ladies from an early age until they finish school. Then there are the day students. My seminary is actually two houses joined together by an enclosed walkway.

MR. BARROW: Ingenious.

MISS MINCHIN: May I ask how you came to select my school for this Miss, uh -- *(Checks letter again.)* Crewe.

MR. BARROW: Certainly. Sara's father, Captain Crewe, is a close friend of Lord and Lady Meredith. India, you know.

MISS MINCHIN: Lady Meredith's two daughters were students here.

MR. BARROW: It was Lady Meredith's recommendation that

persuaded Captain Crewe your school was the place for his daughter.

MISS MINCHIN: How flattering. What of the girl's mother?

MR. BARROW: She died in India some years ago. Cholera.

MISS MINCHIN: How tragic.

MR. BARROW: As you know, the climate in India is troublesome for English children.

MISS MINCHIN: That is true. Is she a sickly child?

MR. BARROW: From what I can tell, she's in robust health.

MISS MINCHIN: Excellent. I don't approve of weak constitutions.

MR. BARROW: Captain Crewe accompanied his daughter to England, but business matters required him to return to India as soon as he landed.

MISS MINCHIN: Business matters?

MR. BARROW: Captain Crewe is retired from the military.

MISS MINCHIN: I see. Before a new pupil can be admitted, there are certain formalities --

MR. BARROW: Ah, yes. Formalities. Troublesome, but necessary. If you're worried about money, you needn't be. Captain Crewe has diamond mines.

MISS MINCHIN: (*Impressed.*) Diamond mines!

MR. BARROW: The mines are worth millions. One day the little princess will be an extremely wealthy young woman. She is, after all, an heiress.

MISS MINCHIN: You called her "the little princess."

MR. BARROW: That's what Captain Crewe calls his daughter. Sara quite likes the title.

MISS MINCHIN: Any young girl would. I hope she won't kick and scream. Sometimes new pupils carry on dreadfully when they first arrive.

MR. BARROW: Sara isn't that sort. She's a sensible little thing. A bit old-fashioned, perhaps.

MISS MINCHIN: That's in her favor.

MR. BARROW: Captain Crewe wishes her to have a pretty bedroom and a sitting room of her own.

MISS MINCHIN: Naturally. Only fitting, considering her financial status. If Captain Crewe wants her to have a pretty bedroom and sitting room of her own, she shall have them.

MR. BARROW: She is to have a pony and carriage, as well.

MISS MINCHIN: That can be arranged.

MR. BARROW: A personal maid.

MISS MINCHIN: If you say so.

MR. BARROW: I am merely relaying Captain Crewe's wishes.

MISS MINCHIN: Of course. Please write Captain Crewe that his daughter, uh -- (*Checks letter again.*) "Sara," will receive a suitable education.

MR. BARROW: The Captain tells me he's not worried about her education. The difficulty will be to keep Sara from learning too fast.

MISS MINCHIN: How extraordinary.

MR. BARROW: He says she is always sitting with her nose buried in books. Says she doesn't read them, she devours them. She speaks both French and German.

MISS MINCHIN: How charming.

MR. BARROW: He wants you to drag her away from her books when she reads too much. Wants her to ride her pony and go out and buy things.

MISS MINCHIN: It does sound as if he's intent on spoiling the girl.

MR. BARROW: I am merely the messenger, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN: I trust money due for Sara's expenditures will not be forwarded from India. It takes a long time and it is confusing.

MR. BARROW: You needn't concern yourself. Barrow and Skipworth have charge of all Captain Crewe's affairs in England. I'll give you any advice you want and all bills you submit will be paid promptly. You have my word.

MISS MINCHIN: In that case, the tiresome details of business have been concluded. (*Stands.*) And now, Mr. Barrow, I should like to meet this little princess.

MR. BARROW: The sooner she's settled in, the happier I'll be. I'm a busy man. Children are a bit out of my line. (*MISS MINCHIN moves behind the table. MR. BARROW moves UP LEFT and calls into hallway.*) Sara, would you step in here, please?

SARA'S VOICE: (*From hallway.*) Yes, Mr. Barrow. (*Pause for dramatic impact. SARA ENTERS. She's about 10 or 11. She wears a handsome traveling cape [OPTIONAL] over a beautiful frock. Charming hat. Holds a large doll.*)

MR. BARROW: (*Indicates.*) Sara, this is the lady I spoke to you about. Miss Minchin. (*MISS MINCHIN forces another of her professional smiles.*)

MISS MINCHIN: Welcome to my school, dear. (*SARA moves CENTER, curtsies.*) I hope you'll be happy here.

SARA: Father wants me to be happy. So does Emily.

MISS MINCHIN: Emily? Who's Emily?

SARA: (*Holds up doll.*) This is Emily. Papa bought her for me. Just

before he sailed away. She is going to be my friend now that Papa is gone. I'll always be able to talk to Emily about Papa. (*MISS MINCHIN studies SARA for a moment, wondering if she's going to be profit or pest. Then --*)

MISS MINCHIN: What an original child! What a darling little creature!

SARA: The trouble with dolls is that they never seem to hear.

MISS MINCHIN: (*Flat.*) Is that a fact.

SARA: Papa bought a wonderful wardrobe for Emily.

MISS MINCHIN: Emily is a most fortunate doll. (*MISS MINCHIN steps DOWN RIGHT, calls OFF.*) Lavinia!

MR. BARROW: Miss Minchin will take good care of you, Sara.

SARA: I'm sure she will, Mr. Barrow.

MR. BARROW: Your father expects you to write him twice a week without fail.

SARA: I promised Papa I would and I won't break my word for anything. (*SARA wipes away a tear.*)

MR. BARROW: Now, now, Sara. You're not going to cry, are you?

SARA: It's just that I shall miss Papa so.

MR. BARROW: I understand and so does Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN: You won't be lonely, Sara. You'll make friends soon enough. (*LAVINIA ENTERS from DOWN RIGHT.*)

LAVINIA: You called, Miss Minchin?

MISS MINCHIN: Lavinia, this is a new boarder, Sara. She's the daughter of an Indian officer, Captain Crewe. She's going to have the two pretty rooms overlooking the garden.

LAVINIA: Those are the finest ones in the house!

MISS MINCHIN: That needn't concern you. I think it would be quite nice if you showed Sara her rooms.

LAVINIA: (*Coolly.*) If you say so, Miss Minchin. (*It's obvious that LAVINIA dislikes SARA on sight.*)

MISS MINCHIN: Introduce her to some of the girls. Help her to get settled in.

LAVINIA: (*To SARA.*) If you'll follow me.

MR. BARROW: Goodbye, Sara. I'll keep in touch.

SARA: Thank you, Mr. Barrow. When you write to Papa, don't forget to tell him I love him very much. (*Holds out the doll.*) So does Emily.

MISS MINCHIN: Go along with Lavinia, Sara.

SARA: Yes, Miss Minchin. (*LAVINIA EXITS. SARA follows.*) I hope we'll become friends, Lavinia. Emily and I don't know anyone in London. (*She's OUT.*)

MR. BARROW: If you require me for any reason, you know where

to find me.

MISS MINCHIN: (*Moves CENTER.*) Have no fear, Mr. Barrow. Sara is in good hands. Please inform Captain Crewe of that fact.

MR. BARROW: I shall. (*He starts to exit as AMELIA gushes IN.*)

AMELIA: Oh, sister. One of the trunks fell open. Such clothes! There's sable and ermine on Sara's coats! Her undergarments are trimmed in Irish lace. Her shoes have such pretty little buckles. Hats and gloves and handkerchiefs.

MISS MINCHIN: (*Sternly.*) Amelia, you're babbling again.

AMELIA: (*Calms down.*) Forgive me.

MISS MINCHIN: Show Mr. Barrow out.

MR. BARROW: That won't be necessary. Ladies, I bid you both good day. (*He gives a little nod of the head, EXITS.*)

AMELIA: (*Moves CENTER.*) Sara seems a sweet child.

MISS MINCHIN: Sweet? Perhaps. Spoiled? Most assuredly. She has been given her own way in everything.

AMELIA: Those clothes in the trunk that fell open. What do you think of them?

MISS MINCHIN: They sound perfectly ridiculous. However, they will look very well at the head of the line when we take the children out for walks. Mr. Barrow spoke the truth. Sara Crewe has been provided for as if she were a little princess. Tend to your sewing class, Amelia.

AMELIA: Yes, yes. (*She hurries across the room to DOWN RIGHT.*) Imagine. A little princess. (*She EXITS.*)

MISS MINCHIN: (*Scoffs.*) A little princess, indeed. (*She EXITS UP LEFT.*)

END OF SCENE ONE

ACT ONE Scene Two

The classroom. One year later.

Prior to LIGHTS UP, we hear PUPILS SINGING from OFFSTAGE, DOWN RIGHT.

PUPILS: Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday to you.
Happy Birthday, dear Sara.
Happy Birthday, to you.

LIGHTS UP: Angrily, LAVINIA stomps IN from DOWN RIGHT.
JESSIE is behind her.

LAVINIA: It's all nonsense. This fuss.

JESSIE: You're so jealous of Princess Sara. It wouldn't hurt you to join in while everyone practices "Happy Birthday."

LAVINIA: Mind your own business, Jessie.

JESSIE: I know what the trouble is. You used to be the princess here. Sara took away your crown and you'll never forgive her for it.

LAVINIA: Don't be silly.

JESSIE: I'm not being silly. I'm telling you what you already know. Only you won't admit it. (*LAVINIA moves LEFT.*)

LAVINIA: Just because Princess Sara has the prettiest rooms and such fine clothes, is no reason for everyone to treat her as if she were special. (*Defiantly, she folds her arms. JESSIE enjoys needling her.*)

JESSIE: She is special. I think Sara's nice. So do the other girls. The day boarders, especially the little ones, think she's quite wonderful.

LAVINIA: I don't think Sara's wonderful at all. She only pretends to be. I think she's shallow and pretentious.

JESSIE: See. I told you. You're jealous.

LAVINIA: Am not. (*JESSIE steps to LAVINIA and gives her a little shove.*)

JESSIE: Are too.

LAVINIA: (*Gives JESSIE a shove back.*) I am not!

JESSIE: Jealous! Jealous! Jealous!

LAVINIA: I'll fix you! (*With that, LAVINIA gives JESSIE a hard shove that sends her toppling to the floor.*)

JESSIE: You're wicked!

LAVINIA: If you ever call me jealous again, you'll be sorry. I'll give you more than a push.

JESSIE: We'll see about that. (*JESSIE gets to her feet, preparing to administer another shove.*)

MISS MINCHIN'S VOICE: (*From hallway.*) How delightful you've come for a visit, Mrs. Carmichael. You couldn't have picked a better day.

JESSIE/LAVINIA: (*Alarmed.*) Miss Minchin! (*They dash OUT DOWN RIGHT as MISS MINCHIN ENTERS. With her is a neighbor, MRS. CARMICHAEL. She's dressed fashionably.*)

MRS. CARMICHAEL: I've been meaning to visit for quite some time. But I've been so busy settling in.

MISS MINCHIN: I understand. Quite. My sister speaks of you often.
MRS. CARMICHAEL: Amelia is pleasant.
MISS MINCHIN: She tells me you have three young daughters.
MRS. CARMICHAEL: And two little boys.
MISS MINCHIN: It's always nice to meet new neighbors.
Especially when they live right across the street. What am I thinking of? Where are my manners? (*Indicates fine chair.*)
Please sit down, Mrs. Carmichael.
MRS. CARMICHAEL: Too kind. (*She sits. COOK ENTERS from DOWN RIGHT. Apron and cap. Gruff sort.*)
COOK: When do you want me to bring in the cake, Miss Minchin? Before presents or after? (*Notices MRS. CARMICHAEL.*)
Oops. Sorry. Didn't know you had company, ma'am.
MISS MINCHIN: This is Mrs. Carmichael. Our new neighbor.
COOK: (*Curtsies.*) Ma'am.
MISS MINCHIN: One of my pupils is having a birthday party. I hope you'll stay for it, Mrs. Carmichael. This pupil came to me over a year ago and she's made splendid progress under my tutelage. I've even taught her to speak French and German.
COOK: If I do say so myself, Miss Minchin, the refreshments are fit for a princess.
MISS MINCHIN: I'll tell you when to bring in the cake.
COOK: Yes, ma'am. Whenever you say, ma'am. (*Another curtsy. She EXITS.*)
MISS MINCHIN: Perhaps you'd like some tea, Mrs. Carmichael?
MRS. CARMICHAEL: No, thank you.
MISS MINCHIN: This room is where I teach. A bit severe, but it helps the pupils to concentrate on their work. The less distraction the better.
MRS. CARMICHAEL: I see.
MISS MINCHIN: My school would be so convenient for your daughters.
MRS. CARMICHAEL: They're a bit young for school.
MISS MINCHIN: One is never too young for an education. I hope you're enjoying your new house. (*She sits at the table.*)
MRS. CARMICHAEL: It's quite satisfactory.
MISS MINCHIN: I'm sorry your husband isn't with you. I'm sure he'd find my school of considerable interest.
MRS. CARMICHAEL: Mr. Carmichael travels a great deal. He's been gone for over a month.
MISS MINCHIN: Have you noticed the house next door? It will soon be up for sale. I'm most curious to see who buys the place. It won't come cheap.

MRS. CARMICHAEL: I must tell my husband about it. He's looking for a house in this neighborhood. For a client. The poor man is in a sad state of health.

MISS MINCHIN: Your husband, I believe, is an attorney?

MRS. CARMICHAEL: He manages the business affairs of clients.

MISS MINCHIN: I see. (*Her professional smile.*) When would you like to enroll your daughters?

MRS. CARMICHAEL: That's a bit premature, Miss Minchin. However, I would like to look about.

MISS MINCHIN: But, of course, Mrs. Carmichael. I shall give you a guided tour. (*AMELIA ENTERS UP LEFT.*)

AMELIA: Oh, sister, you should see the packages she's come back with! (*Notices MRS. CARMICHAEL.*)

MISS MINCHIN: (*Stands.*) We have a visitor, Amelia.

AMELIA: Yes. I know. (*To MRS. CARMICHAEL.*) Your daughter came to the door a moment ago. Said your husband will arrive at Victoria Station within the hour.

MRS. CARMICHAEL: He must have sent a message on ahead. How inconvenient. I apologize, Miss Minchin. But I must leave.

MISS MINCHIN: What a shame. You'll miss the party.

MRS. CARMICHAEL: (*Stands.*) I know the way out. Do forgive my hasty departure. You do understand, I'm sure. Husbands can be so trying.

MISS MINCHIN: There's a guided tour waiting whenever you wish to return.

MRS. CARMICHAEL: (*EXITS UP LEFT.*) Too kind.

AMELIA: Did you have a nice visit with Mrs. Carmichael, sister?

MISS MINCHIN: It would have been nice if she enrolled her daughters.

AMELIA: Sara has bought presents for all her friends.

MISS MINCHIN: What an indulgence. However, Captain Crewe will pay, so it's none of my concern. The sewing parlor is overflowing with presents. I assume it's what the Captain would want.

AMELIA: Sara is so happy.

MISS MINCHIN: Small wonder.

SARA'S VOICE: (*From hallway.*) Don't drop anything, Becky.

BECKY'S VOICE: I won't, miss. I'll be careful, I will. (*MISS MINCHIN and AMELIA turn toward the hallway at the SOUND of the GIRL'S VOICES. In a moment SARA ENTERS. She's dressed beautifully and carries several packages, each one wrapped with pretty paper and ribbon. Behind SARA walks BECKY. She, too, carries prettily wrapped presents. [NOTE: If*

you wish, another character might be added here. A MAID or FOOTMAN. This character also has an armful of wrapped gifts.))

SARA: I visited at least ten shops. I got something for everyone.

AMELIA: There's never been a birthday party like this in the school. Sara, wait until you see the decorations in the sewing parlor. (*LOTTIE sticks her head IN from DOWN RIGHT, sees SARA.*)

LOTTIE: Sara! (*Calls into sewing parlor.*) It's Sara. She's back!

PUPILS: (*From OFFSTAGE.*) Sara! (*LOTTIE moves IN. PUPILS ENTER -- ERMENGARDE, ALICE, JESSIE, LAVINIA. EXTRAS. SARA puts her presents on the table.*)

ALICE: We've been waiting for you.

LOTTIE: You have so many presents in the sewing parlor.

ERMENGARDE: I can't wait to see you open them.

LOTTIE: What are you wishing for, Sara? Anything special?

SARA: (*Thinks.*) I wish my papa were here. That would be the nicest present of all.

ALICE: Yes, it would.

MISS MINCHIN: Charming sentiment, Sara. Charming.

SARA: I've bought presents for all of you.

PUPILS: What?

For us?

Sara!

SARA: I thought it would be a nice idea. This way we can all have a birthday at the same time. (*PUPILS laugh. They think this is splendid.*)

ALICE: How clever!

LOTTIE: It's a wonderful idea, Sara.

JESSIE: So generous!

ERMENGARDE: So kind!

ALICE: Why can't I think of something like that?

LOTTIE: Because you're not Princess Sara. (*Laughter.*)

LAVINIA: I think it's vulgar.

MISS MINCHIN: That will be enough, Lavinia. Please be seated, young ladies. (*To BECKY [FOOTMAN or MAID].*) Take those packages into the sewing parlor. (*PUPILS take chairs. BECKY EXITS.*)

AMELIA: There are a few more packages in the hallway. I'll get them. (*She EXITS UP LEFT.*)

MISS MINCHIN: You sit here, Sara. (*Indicates fine chair. LAVINIA pouts. SARA sits.*) Now, young ladies, I have a few words to say to you.

PRODUCTION NOTES

STAGE PROPERTIES

FOR CLASSROOM: Six (*or more*) chairs for pupils, table with world globe, books. Blackboard with eraser.

FOR ATTIC ROOM: Cot with torn blanket and pillow. Trunk with flat top. Small table with candle. Toy mouse behind trunk.

FOR CARRISFORD PARLOR: Armchair, additional chairs (2). Small side table with medicine bottle, glass of water, spoon.

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene One: Chalk (*ERMENGARDE*); watch (*AMELIA*); letter (*MISS MINCHIN*); broom and dustpan (*BECKY*); large doll (*SARA*).

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene Two: Brightly-wrapped gifts (*SARA, BECKY, AMELIA*); the large doll from Scene One (*SARA*).

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene One [Sidewalk]: Pail with rags and scrub brush (*BECKY*); sweet roll (*SARA*); hat and gloves (*MISS MINCHIN, PUPILS, AMELIA*).

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene Two [Attic Room]: Handsome blanket (*RAM DASS*); food hamper containing jars and tins, chocolate bars, assorted delicacies, note (*PERKINS*); Ragged Shawl (*SARA*); books (*ERMENGARDE*).

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene Three [Sidewalk]: Pail, scrub brush, toy mouse (*SARA*); belongings wrapped in bandana (*BECKY*); coin (*LAVINIA*).

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene Four [Carrisford Parlor]: Lap robe (*CARRISFORD*); toy monkey wrapped in *SARA'S* ragged shawl (*SARA*).

SOUND: Flute music, wind.

COSTUMES: Victorian. PUPILS might wear school aprons over their costumes. For the birthday party, the aprons might be removed and colorful sashes worn. Special attention should

be paid to SARA'S Act One costumes. They should look both beautiful and expensive. RAM DASS wears a turban and high collar jacket. COOK an apron and cap.

If there is no intermission, SARA will have a quick change from her birthday party frock to her black dress. Have dresser(s) OFFSTAGE ready to assist.

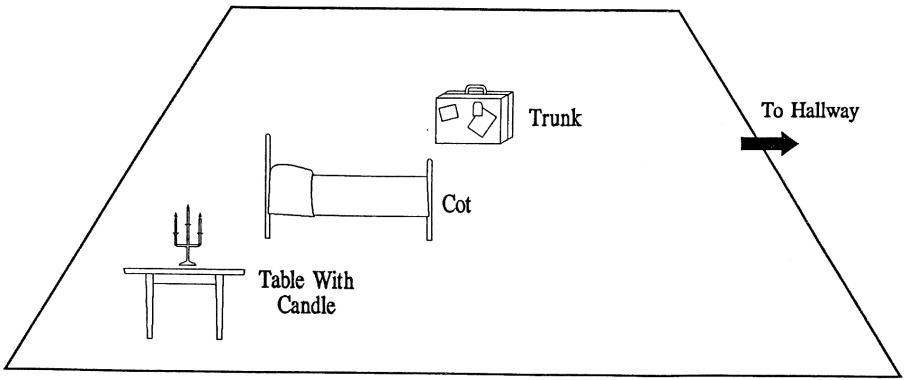
FLEXIBLE CASTING: For a larger cast, add more PUPILS. A SERVANT or two might be added for the birthday party scene when presents are carried in. One of the SERVANTS could be SARA'S personal maid. MR. BARROW, with a change in acting style and makeup, can easily double as MR. CARRISFORD. Even as RAM DASS.

MISCELLANEOUS: The required stage properties are very few. In this regard, the play is also suitable for arena staging. However, if you wish to elaborate, a fireplace and bench might be added to the classroom. Desks for PUPILS' instead of chairs. Some indoor plants, bric-a-brac. Maybe a window with drapes. Just remember, if there is no intermission, the properties will have to be changed swiftly, so don't add anything that will prove cumbersome to move.

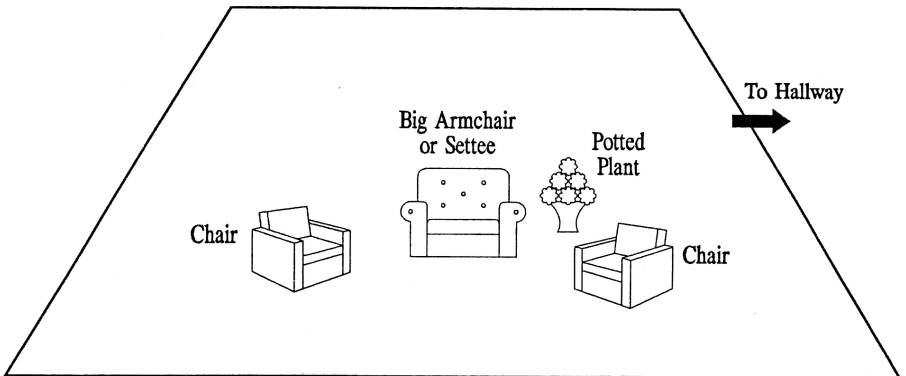
In the last scene of the play, MR. CARRISFORD might be seated in a wheelchair. Make sure it's not a modern wheelchair. It should be the old wooden kind. A dressing screen and a large potted plant might also be added.

The monkey, of course, is simply a stuffed toy. Most of it will be hidden by SARA's shawl. We need see only the head. SARA might move the head with her hand, which can be hidden by the shawl. A hand-operated "puppet" would look good, too. Don't overdo the monkey business. An audience is always fascinated by animals on stage. Naturally, a live monkey would be a special treat, but unless it can be controlled and is very tame, it's better to stick with the stuffed toy version.

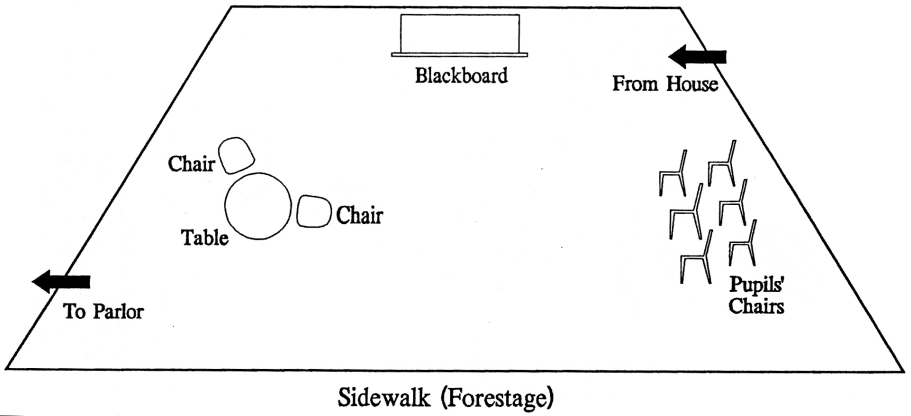
SET DESIGN:
ATTIC ROOM—ACT TWO, SCENE TWO



SET DESIGN:
CARRISFORD'S HOUSE—ACT TWO, SCENE TWO



SET DESIGN:
CLASSROOM—ACT ONE



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