

Mary Poppins

Production Preview Guide

Many people have different ideas about what material is appropriate, both for themselves and their families. This parental guideline is provided to give you the necessary information to determine if the content of our production suitable for you and your loved ones. Please be aware that this document is provided with the intent of full-disclosure, and therefore contains plot spoilers. Also, because all of our productions are locally produced, there may be cases where minor changes occur as the director prepares the show for the stage. In such cases, this guide will be updated accordingly. Once the show is open and on stage, there will be no further changes.

VERSIONS AVAILABLE TO PREVIEW:

There are several versions of *Mary Poppins* to read and view. The book series (eight children's books total) was written by P.L. Travers and published over the period of 1934-1988. Walt Disney then adapted these books into a movie (of the same title) in 1964, starring Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke. The 2013 movie *Saving Mr. Banks*, depicts the making of the 1964 *Mary Poppins* movie, starring Tom Hanks and Emma Thompson. The musical's script is also available through the Box Office should you wish to read it.

SCRIPT CONTENT DETAILS

Please note: the following information contains plot spoilers.

Mary Poppins has many magical stage effects within it, including flying and statues coming to life. In one scene Mary Poppins brings scary toys to life, and the toys express anger that the children have mistreated them. This scene may be startling and/or frightening for younger children. Aside from this instance, the show is completely free of any language, violence, or sexual content, making it family-friendly. Mary teaches many useful lessons to the children about kindness and good manners. The show is a feel-good musical, with a happy ending where all troubles are resolved.

SHOW SYNOPSIS:

The following synopsis is provided to give you a full account of the story of *Mary Poppins* without ornamentation and with as much information as possible. *This synopsis contains many plot spoilers.*

Act I

The show opens with Bert, a chimney sweep (though the audience comes to find out he's a man of many professions), introduces Cherry Tree Lane ("Chim Chim Cher-ee"). Number 17 is where the Banks family lives: George and Winifred Banks, their two naughty children Jane and Michael, their cook Mrs. Brill, their nanny Katie Nanna, and their odd-job man, Robertson Ay. It's a blustery day and the children are flying a kite with Katie Nanna. They successfully escape from Katie Nanna when she insists they do their lessons, but end up running into the local policeman who drags them home. Katie Nanna arrives at the house later, declaring that she quits her job because Jane and Michael are out of control. As it turns out, Katie Nanna is the sixth nanny to quit in the last four months. While Winifred worries about what she'll tell her husband, Mrs. Brill and Robertson Ay complain about living in a complete madhouse. George suddenly interrupts, saying what they really need is a firm nanny, one who "should govern" and "should rule"—a nanny who is like his own nanny when he was young, Miss Andrews. He suggests Winifred place an ad in *The Times* "stating that Jane and Michael Banks require the best possible nanny at the lowest possible wage." Michael and Jane, eavesdropping, decide to write their own advertisement for a nanny. They bring it to George ("The Perfect Nanny") and, as he reads it, he thinks the description is ridiculous. Jane and George are requesting a nice looking, smelling, good-tempered nanny, among other things (like giving them treats). George tears the advertisement up, throws it in the fireplace, and the wind carries it up the chimney. George briskly prepares to leave the house for work.

The scene transitions to the parlor where, with a sudden thud, Mary Poppins appears among them. She says she's answering to an advertisement for a nanny and George, feeling slightly uneasy, listens to her read the now mended piece of paper that Jane and Michael wrote as their own advertisement. George hastily insists that she take up the advertisement with Winifred and then makes his way out of the house. Winifred and Mary talk, coming to terms with timing for the nanny position. Mary has a way of looking at Winifred (and the children) that seems "as if she were reading their souls," and right away she takes charge; following the children upstairs to the nursery.

The children soon get to know Mary Poppins' qualities ("Practically Perfect") and that she very much has confidence in her qualifications and merits as a nanny.

They are amazed and confused when she pulls a hat stand out of her bag (which, when the children peer inside, is completely empty), along with other items. At one point, when she takes her telescope back from Michael, he complains that it isn't fair, and she responds, "I didn't say I was fair. I said I was practically perfect, and here's my aim, by the time I leave here you both will be the same."

On their first outing (to the park) Mary Poppins and the children meet Bert, who recognizes Mary. She invites Bert to walk with them, but Michael and Jane protest, saying that Bert is very dirty and that their father would never approve. Plus, they don't even want to be at the park. Bert tells them they shouldn't jump to conclusions so fast—the park can be a lively and fun place, especially with Mary Poppins around ("Jolly Holiday"). Suddenly, Mary has brought the park statues to life, including a statue of a boy named Neleus. The park also brightens, the trees becoming greener and the sky becoming a rich blue. Even Mary and Bert's clothes change to sunny, summer outfits. Mary and Bert dance, the park's constable is cheerful, and the statues leap around the park. The cheerful transformation soon ends, and the children are stunned, wondering if what they just saw really happened. As a rainstorm starts to come through, the children begin to head back to the house with Mary. They ask how long she will stay and when she responds, "We'll see," they plead for her to never leave. She bids them goodnight.

As the children return home, they tell their father what a marvelous day they had. Michael asks George if he can have a proper kite. When George asks if Michael would be able to fly it, Michael suggests that his father could teach him. George responds with: "When would I have the time to do that?" And Michael accepts this with a sad nod; used to the lack of attention from his father. George tells the children to let him finish his work and they exit while Winifred comes to speak to her husband. Winifred is aware that she is somehow disappointing both her children and her husband, though George tells her all she needs to do is "be Mrs. Banks." George, on the other hand, can't understand why she finds the role of wife and mother so difficult.

Time passes. Winifred and Mrs. Brill are putting preparations together for a tea party. Winifred is clearly anxious about the whole thing, but Mrs. Brill has things handled. When both leave to go to the drawing room, Robertson Ay is left in charge of gathering the icing tools for Mrs. Brill to put together the icing. Jane and

Michael decide to try and make icing. Jane snaps at Robertson Ay when he tells them that Mrs. Brill probably wouldn't appreciate their help, and Robertson Ay then goes to fill up a bowl of water for the icing tools. He burns his hand on the faucet and is thrown back by force, ricocheting across the room and destroying the entire kitchen. Winifred returns, horrified at what the children have done, and Mary Poppins suddenly appears. Winifred suggests the children need some very nasty medicine, and Mary Poppins agrees. She instructs Michael to open his mouth and to his surprise, the 'medicine' is strawberry ice. Jane does the same and finds her 'medicine' is lime cordial. Mary ushers them help clean up the kitchen, turning the mess into a lesson ("Spoonful of Sugar") that with any "job that must be done, there is an element of fun." After the kitchen is cleaned up, it is revealed that none of the invitees to the tea party are coming after all.

Later that day, Mary takes the children to visit their father at the bank where he works. At the bank, George is busy dealing with possible investment clients: first an ambitious man named Von Hussler, who has an elaborate money-making scheme, and then a middle-class man named Northbrook who has a simple factory project. When Mary and the children enter, George is furious, though his current client (Northbrook) doesn't mind the children at all, even giving Michael and Jane a sixpence apiece. The children become aghast when their innocent questions turn into a revelation of George's childhood nanny raised him up with an iron-fist (never kissing him goodnight, keeping him out of his parents' way to the point where they only saw him once a week). At another innocent question from Jane ("When you invest the bank's money, what are you looking for, Daddy? A good man or a good idea?") George realizes his values have changed over the years; he is no longer an idealistic young man. He then decides to accept Northbrook's project and rejects Von Hussler's (Von Hussler asks, "So you don't recognize a good idea?" To which George responds, "Perhaps not, but I recognize a good man when I see one").

Mary, George and Jane go to St. Paul's Cathedral next and Mary introduces the children to the Bird Woman. Michael and Jane initially exclaim that she's a horrible old woman because she's just a bundle of rags, but Mary insists that they need to learn to look past what they see. Jane is still suspicious, but Michael buys a bag of seed from the woman and feeds the birds around them. On their way home, Mary takes the children to meet Mrs. Corry, a woman who, according to Bert, is "older than anyone in the world." To the children's confusion, they go to

the park to call at her shop, and her shop magically appears. As Mrs. Corry speaks to Jane, Michael, and Mary, she reveals that George used to sneak into her shop and loved her gingerbread. She gives Michael and Jane a bag to give to George. As it turns out, Mrs. Corry's shop sells magical candy and conversation. Nearly out of conversation to sell ("I've had a lot of chatterboxes in here today"), Mrs. Corry brings out a jar of letters upon Mary's request for "an ounce of conversation." The children pick out seven letters each, then try to figure out what words they can make out of these letters. They make up words ("Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious") and have a grand time at the shop.

The children return home in high spirits, but unbeknownst to them, things have gone terrible wrong for George. His refusal to loan Von Hussler money has cost the bank. Von Hussler went to the bank's rival and they gave him the money he was requesting "and now it's turned into a gold mine." He reveals to Winifred he has been suspended without salary until they decide what to do with him. In his frustration, George shouts at Jane and Michael, who were playfully hiding George's briefcase, and snatches the briefcase roughly away from the two. Reacting to George's outburst, Jane (already quick-tempered) gets upset and ends up in an argument with Michael over a doll. The doll's arm ends up torn off in the argument, and Mary warns the two to be careful of the things they wish for and to control her temper. While the children sleep, Mary talks with the doll, Valentine, who has now grown to be human sized. More toys come alive, growing to full size, and Mary sympathizes with them and the way the children have neglected them. She wakes the children and they learn a lesson on how to take better care of their belongings and toys ("Playing The Game").

Later, Mary has a conversation with Bert about how she can't help the children learn if they won't let her "and there's no one so hard to teach as the child who knows everything"). She departs, only leaving a short and vague note behind, and hopes that her absence will bring the children to their senses. When Jane and Michael wake and see the note they are distraught and perplexed. Her note implies that perhaps they will see her again.

Act II

In a misguided attempt to please her husband, Mrs. Banks arranges for his childhood nanny, Miss Andrew to take over for the suddenly departed Mary

Poppins. The children, who are fully expecting Mary to have returned, are terrified when they find out that Miss Andrews is their new nanny. Even George is terrified—he runs as soon as she enters, shouting, “The Holy Terror!” Out of the gate, Miss Andrew is a brutal and cruel tyrant, rejecting any notion of a ‘spoonful of sugar’ and instead using her own terrible elixir (“Brimstone and Treacle”).

Michael and Jane decide to run away to escape the awful Miss Andrew. They go to the park, and find Bert. They explain the situation and Bert tells them they need some good luck. He extracts a kite from his bag, much to Michael’s delight, and Bert fulfills Michael’s longtime wish to learn to fly a kite. (“Let’s Go Fly A Kite”). As he learns, he hopes that with this newfound skill, he’ll be able to fly the kite with his dad someday. The kite gets stuck in a tree and as Michael and the Park Keeper and pulling it free, Mary Poppins suddenly begins to descend from the sky alongside the kite. The children are overjoyed to see her, and rapidly fill her in on what has been going on at their home. Mary Poppins decides that she will go back and face Miss Andrews at once with the children.

As it turns out, George was also hiding in the park; depressed over his supposed lack of achievements. Winifred has been searching for him and the children, and she enters the park with a Policeman. Winifred finds George and at last understands her husband and the damage that was done to him by Miss Andrew.

When Mary and the children arrive back at Number 17 Cherry Tree Lane, they find the house is empty. “Perhaps she’s killed everyone.” Michael suggests. Then comes a harsh shout from above: Miss Andrew reprimanding Robertson Ay. Mary Poppins finds Miss Andrew’s lark and, with a sudden flourish, she lets the bird (Caruso) free. Miss Andrew returns downstairs to fetch her lark and is livid when she finds not only Mary Poppins and the children in the hall, but that her beloved lark has been set loose. The two nannies have a confrontation—their methods for nannying clashing—and the confrontation ends with Miss Andrew getting a taste of her own medicine by Mary Poppins, then disappearing up the fireplace.

Winifred and George return to find the loathed Miss Andrew has disappeared and Mary has returned. Mary makes no promises to stay for any certain amount of time, instead saying that she will stay for as long as necessary. George has a word with her in his office and Mary beats him to the topic of money. “About my wages, sir. If you don’t mind, I won’t take any just now. I should prefer to let them

accrue.” George is relieved, if not a little apprehensive. He talks to Winifred, who comforts him, saying that no matter what happens, if George is to fully lose his job at the bank, they’ll still have what matters: their family.

On their next adventure, the children are whoosh-ed up the fireplace chimney with Mary where they find Bert. Bert introduced the children to his friends, The Chimney Sweeps. They learn that troubles aren’t so bad when “you look at them from a little higher up” and “there’s always plenty of folk ready to help you should need them.” This leads to the chimney sweep dance, as the Sweeps come and join Bert. The Sweeps end up in the house with Mary, Bert, and the children in tow. The dance ends when a messenger comes to the door with a special delivery for George, handing over a letter from the bank.

As it turns out, the bank is requesting to see George before the bank closes for the night. Figuring that this will seal his fate and that he is being sacked, he decides it’s time to sell the family heirloom: a beautiful vase that his mother left him. Unintentionally, Mrs. Brill runs into George as he is grabbing the vase and the vase falls and shatters. She is aghast and begins to cry, while George is stunned by the incident. Winifred takes her to the kitchen, where Mary compliments her cooking, and then the three exit. As George examines the shattered remains of the vase, he finds a collection of gingerbread stars from his childhood. He had been trying to hide them from Miss Andrew as a small boy, but had completely forgotten that he hid them in that particular vase. George briefly reminisces on his childhood, and his old fascination for astronomy, and then (after bidding the children goodnight) heads off to the bank to receive his fate.

At the children and Mary Poppins’ encouragement (“Anything Can Happen”), Winifred decides to follow her heart and go to the bank to be at George’s side when he receives the news. Unseen to anyone else, Mary takes Jane and Michael to follow, flying over the rooftops of London, where they watch the unfolding events.

At the bank, George is shocked to learn the truth about his choice: far from ruining the bank, he has made a fortune. As the Chairman tells him: “Von Hussler’s scheme has ruined our rivals! You’ve kept us out of the nastiest scandal since records began!” The Chairman also tells him that Northbrook is repaying the loan and opening two new factories, with the percentage George negotiated, the

bank is set to make a fortune. The Chairman asks for the words that made George so successful, which George declares to be Mary Poppins' own word: supercalifragilisticexpialidocious. Winifred, arrive to defend her husband, finds instead he is the hero of the hour. The bank offers him the job of senior manager with a salary of quadruple what he was making before. George agrees, but under one condition: that from now on, family must come first. George then apologizes to Winifred for underestimating her all these years, and together, they return to the house.

Mary realizes that with the family reunited and happy, her task is done. After arriving back at the park, the children express their love for Mary and then run off toward home. With regret, and a bit of sadness, she says goodbye to Bert, giving him a gentle kiss on the cheek, before making her way back to Number 17 Cherry Tree Lane. She enters the nursery, leaves her locket and a note, then departs. Michael and Jane find the locket and open it to find a picture of the three of them and Mary Poppins' signature. They accept that she has left, just as Winifred and George enter upstairs. George has a surprise for Michael: a magnificent and large kite, which he presents to him. Michael is elated, and George promises that they can fly it together. The two children then watch as their parents waltz happily together, and as Mary flies away on her journey.