

An illustration of Johnny Appleseed in a stylized autumn forest. He is a young man with brown hair, wearing a grey hat, a grey tunic, and a brown satchel. He is barefoot and holding a red apple in his right hand, with a bite taken out of it. He is walking on a green hill. In the background, there are large, stylized trees with orange and red leaves, and a squirrel is visible in the upper left. The sky is orange with a few clouds. The title "Johnny Appleseed's Gift" is written in a green, outlined font across the center of the image.

Johnny Appleseed's Gift

A Short Play Script by
Carolynn Rogers

CHARACTERS

PA	Father of the family of settlers, strong man used to the farming life, dressed in rough work clothes of the 1800's
MA	Mother of the family, quiet, watchful for her children's safety, dressed in long Pioneer style dress and bonnet
OLDER CHILD	Girl about 10 years old, confident with sense of humour, dressed in clothing similar to that of the parents
YOUNGER CHILD	Boy about 8 years old, inquisitive, dressed in clothing similar to that of the parents
JOHNNY APPLESEED	tall and thin, very kind and gentle demeanour, dressed oddly in raggedy clothes with a tin pan for a hat and bare feet, bag slung over his shoulder, speaks in rhyme
NARRATOR	Well spoken with strong voice

SETTING

A wilderness trail west of the settled areas of the Eastern United States.

TIME

Early 1800's



(A large painting of a wilderness scene is hung at the back of the stage. Near the centre of the scene is an obvious change with an orchard of trees in straight rows. To the left) is a river running through at an angle.)

(As the curtain opens, a settler family strolls onstage from the right pulling a large cart heaped with their belongings)

NARRATOR

Long ago when the nation was young, adventuresome men, women and children packed up their few belongings and headed out following the sun's daily path to the west. They trekked on through the wilderness searching for a new place with fertile ground where they could build a new home, grow crops and raise their farm animals.

PA

(Stepping toward the front and looking out over the audience)

I don't see anywhere here that's flat enough to build our cabin.

(Bends down and runs some soil through his fingers)

Soil's too sandy and dry to grow crops.

YOUNGER BOY

(Sounding tired and a bit whiny)

But isn't it good enough for now? We've walked so far my legs are wearin' down. I won't have any left and I'm already the shortest one!

OLDER GIRL

Yeah, Pa, look, he's half the size he was when we left!

(Everyone giggles)

MA

I think he'll grow back up by next year. Let's go. We can make it a little further before the sun goes down.

(Family slowly winds their way toward the centre back of the stage)

NARRATOR

Every once in a while some of these settlers would be greatly surprised to find a carefully planted orchard of apple trees that just seemed to pop up in the wilderness.



MA

(Stepping out and with her arm raised pointing toward the orchard exclaims)

That's strange!

PA

What's strange?

(Follows her gaze and outstretched arm)

Oh, I see! That's not natural.

OLDER GIRL

Why? It's just a bunch more trees.

PA

No they're not. Those are apple trees for one thing...

MA

And they're growing in straight rows. Somebody planted those trees!

YOUNGER BOY

(All excited and jumping up and down)

I know, I know! It's Johnny Appleseed. He's been here.

OLDER GIRL

(Remembering)

Oh yeah, you're right. Mr. Robinson told us about him.

MA AND PA

Who's Johnny Appleseed?

NARRATOR

At that time, there was one amazing man who travelled back and forth throughout out the new lands beyond the eastern settlements. People thought he was a bit odd because he gave away his better clothes to those in need. He preferred to walk around the countryside in in raggedy clothes and- of all things, barefoot! But, everyone who knew him loved him for his gentle nature and especially for the incredible gift he gave to the world- not just once, but over and over.

(Near the front of the stage Johnny Appleseed strolls in with his bag over one shoulder and his pot on his head. He bends down and starts planting seeds from his bag while chanting)



JOHNNY APPLESEED

I've got...

Seeds to plant that grow into trees

Trees that grow and make apples that please.

(Taking a mostly eaten apple from his bag and taking
a bite)

Apples to be eaten right down to the core

Cores to be nibbled leaving seeds to store

(Pulls out a seed and holds it up)

Seeds to be planted that grow into more...

TREES!

(Plants seed and stands ready to move on when the
settlers approach)

PA

Hello there and who might you be?

JOHNNY APPLESEED

Just call me Johnny, the apple seed guy

Every day I give thanks for the trees and the sky.

OLDER GIRL

(In awe)

You're the real Johnny Appleseed?

JOHNNY APPLESEED

That's me, Johnny, the travelling guy

Giving thanks for the critters and the birds that fly.

MA AND PA

Do you really enjoy running around like..

(Gesturing up and down indicating his attire)

Like this?

JOHNNY APPLESEED

I'm glad to be Johnny, the planting guy

Thankful for the rain and the clouds up high.

YOUNGER BOY

Wow, your feet must be cold! Is Johnny your real name?

JOHNNY APPLESEED

Yep, my name's Johnny, the barefoot guy

I'm so grateful for the sun that keeps me warm and dry!



MA

Nice to meet you Mr. Appleseed. You must have planted the orchard we passed back there.

(Johnny nods with a big smile)

PA

Well, we'd better move on. Johnny, have you seen any good land that's available for us to settle on and make a new home?

JOHNNY APPLESEED

(Pointing)

Just beyond the river there's a fertile strip of land
It'll give a fine harvest if you plant with a caring hand.

(Parents turn to scan beyond the river while Johnny goes to the children)

Here's a gift I must pass on
Seeds for you to plant after I'm gone.
Seeds are a future promise you can rely upon.

(Bends down to show the children how to plant)

You've got...
Seeds to plant that grow into trees
Trees that grow and make apples that please.

Apples to be eaten right down to the core
Cores to be nibbled leaving seeds to store

Seeds to be planted that grow into more...
TREES!

(Takes pot off his head pretending to dip it into a river)

I always have my pot to get refreshing water
I sprinkle it on the seeds and as the sun gets hotter.
(Pause) Soon... (Pause)
Little sprouts will rise out of their moist warm bed
And stretch their branches high full of luscious apples red!
(Ma and Pa turn around to see the children putting the seeds in pockets)

CHILDREN

Thank you Mr. Appleseed.



YOUNGER BOY

We'll plant them at our new home.

OLDER GIRL

Please come by and see them when they start growing!

JOHNNY APPLESEED

Just call me Johnny. I'll certainly wander by.
For now, I'm off to find a friend with some yummy apple pie!

(Waves and tips his "hat" as he leaves the stage)

MA AND PA

Come here children. Show us what Mr. Appleseed gave you.

CHILDREN

(Pulling seeds from pockets and chanting together)

We've got...
Seeds to plant that grow into trees
Trees that grow and make apples that please.

Apples to be eaten right down to the core
Cores to be nibbled leaving seeds to store

Seeds to be planted that grow into more...

TREES!

(Family turns in the direction that Johnny Appleseed
took to leave and wave after him calling)

Thank you Johnny Appleseed!

PA

Let's go find that spot across the river. It's time we found our new home.
(All exit toward river)

NARRATOR

For almost 50 years Johnny Appleseed roamed around planting and tending his orchards, leaving his gift of beauty and food available for all who called this land home. The settlers who cherished his apples and seeds always welcomed this gentle, raggedy, barefoot man into their homes. Johnny showed his appreciation for their kind offers of a warm bed by the fire, but he seldom stayed indoors, preferring to sleep on the ground under the stars- in his well-travelled bare feet!

CURTAIN

