

CHARACTERS

Adults	Age
Bob Bradley	35-38
Grace Bradley	35
Mrs. Armstrong	50
Mrs. Slocum	35-60
Mrs. Clark	35-60
Mrs. Clausing	35-60
Mrs. McCarthy	40's
Fireman	25-30
Reverend Hopkins	40's

Children	Age
Beth Bradley	10-14
Charlie Bradley	8-9
Alice Wendleken	10-14
Maxine	10-14
Elmer Hopkins	12-13
Hobie	9-11
David	8-9
Beverly	7-9
Shirley	5-7
Juanita	5-7
Doris	9-10

Herdman Children	Age
Ralph Herdman	12-15
Imogene Herdman	11-14
Leroy Herdman	10-13
Claude Herdman	9-12
Ollie Herdman	8-10
Gladys Herdman	7-8

Ensemble:	
4 M; 6 F	School age

MONOLOGUE OPTIONS FOR AUDITIONS

Feel free to use the selections below or bring your own 30-second reading, poem, or monologue. If your target character is not listed, choose any option that fits. We will also do scene readings during auditions. The director is looking for strong characterization and stage presence!

BETH. The Herdmans were the worst kids in the whole history of the world. They lied and stole and smoked cigars, even the girls, and talked dirty and cussed their teachers and took the name of the Lord in vain and set fire to Fred Shoemaker's old broken-down tool house.

(Spotlight up on set piece, stage left. During BETH's speech the HERDMANS come on from the wings left and position themselves on and around the set piece, with GLADYS at the top level, in a pose reminiscent of the first illustration in the book, The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.)

There were six of them—Ralph, Imogene, Leroy, Claude, Ollie and Gladys—and they went through the Woodrow Wilson school like those South American fish that strip your bones clean. They went around town the same way—stealing things and tearing things up and whamming kids...so it was hard to get away from them. There was only one safe place.

FATHER. Well, maybe she'll try to manage the hospital, because that's where she is. I saw George at the drug store and he told me his wife broke her leg this morning... She'll be in traction for two weeks and laid up till the first of the year. She's in charge of Christmas?

MOTHER. Helen Armstrong is not the only woman alive who can run a Christmas pageant! I made up my mind just to do the best I could under the circumstances, but now I'm going to make this the best Christmas pageant ever, and I'm going to do it with the Herdmans! After all, they raised their hands and nobody else did, and I don't care...

ALICE. I didn't dare raise my hand. Imogene would have killed me! She said, "I'm going to be Mary in this play, and if you open your mouth or raise your hand you'll wish you didn't." And I said, "I'm always Mary in the Christmas pageant." And she said, "go ahead then, and next spring when the pussywillows come out I'll stick a pussywillow so far down your ear that nobody can reach it...and it'll sprout there and grow and grow, and you'll spend the rest of your life with a pussywillow bush growing out of your ear!"

MAXINE. In the days of Caesar Augustus a decree went out that all the world should be taxed, and Joseph went into Bethlehem with Mary his wife, who was great with child. And while they were there she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

BETH. Revenge at Bethlehem! The Herdmans thought the Christmas story came right out of the F.B.I. files! At least they picked out the right villain—it was Herod they wanted to gang up on and not the baby Jesus. But the baby Jesus quit the pageant anyway. It was supposed to be Eugene Slocum, but Mrs. Slocum said she wasn't going to let Imogene Herdman get her hands on him. So we didn't have a baby Jesus, and that bothered my mother. She kept trying to scratch up a baby...even at the last rehearsal.

MRS. ARMSTRONG. ...But I do explain about the Wise Men and the shepherds and how important they are. And I tell them, there are no small parts, only small actors. Remind the angel choir not to stare at the audience, and don't let them wear earrings and things like that. And don't let them wear clunky shoes or high heels. I just hope you don't have too many baby angels, Grace, because they'll be your biggest problem...

CHARLIE. Hey, Leroy! You think it's so great to steal my dessert every day and you know what? I don't care if you steal my dessert. I'll even give you my dessert. I get all the dessert I want in Sunday school.

All kinds. Chocolate cake and candy bars and cookies...and Twinkies and Big Wheels. We get refreshments all the time, all ~~we want~~.

IMOGENE. Shut up, Ollie! Everybody shut up! I want to hear *her*. (to MOTHER) Begin at the beginning.

The beginning of the play. What happens first?

(MOTHER continues reading)

IMOGENE. My God! They didn't have room for Jesus?

Didn't Mary know? (points to RALPH) Didn't he know? What was the matter with Joseph, that he didn't tell them? Her pregnant and everything..

Well, I wouldn't just hang around out in the barn. I'd go get a room.

I'd throw somebody out. I'd tell them I've got this baby and it's the middle of winter...so either get out or move over.

IRMA. Vera? ...Irma Slocum. I just heard that Imogene Herdman is going to be Mary in the Christmas pageant, and I... Is that a fact? All six of them? Vera, I live next door to that outfit and I'd rather live next door to a zoo. Has Grace gone crazy?

...Better nail down the church and lock up the silver service and hide the collection plates before they clean them out...