

Bleak House – Audition Piece**Mrs Jellyby (1) / Ada / Esther /Jarndyce**

- ESTHER: How do you do, Mrs Jellyby
- MRS JELLYBY: Busy, my dears, busy. The African project at present employs my whole time, but I'm happy to say it is advancing. We now have two hundred healthy families cultivating coffee and educating the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, on the left bank of the Niger.
- JARNDYCE: Mrs Jellyby's children are also models of charity and human kindness.
- MRS JELLYBY: Egbert, my eldest, sends all his pocket-money to the project. Francis, the middle one, sent one and eightpence-halfpenny to the Superannuated Missionary Widows, while Alfred, my youngest, has voluntarily enrolled himself in the Band of Hope, and vowed never to let his lips be soiled by alcohol.
- ADA: Model children indeed, Mrs Jellyby, you must be very proud of them.
- MRS JELLYBY: Pride, Miss Clare, is not an emotion appropriate to one in my calling Good day, Mr Jarndyce. Good day to you all.

Mrs Jellyby (2) / Ada / Esther

- MRS JELLYBY: Mr Carstone is not here, Miss Clare.
- ADA: But he was supposed to meet us after his fencing lesson. Where can he be?
- MRS JELLYBY: Unfortunately I did not see him return, as I was at a meeting to discuss the religious elevation of the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, but my eldest son Egbert, who spent the morning writing out sacred texts in illuminated script for the edification of the lower orders, reports that he came in a little over an hour ago, in a state of excitement, and went out again soon after.
- ESTHER: How strange, to go out and leave no message. He really is thoughtless sometimes.
- ADA: Oh Esther, don't be hard on him. I'm sure he had a good reason which we shall discover in due course.

MRS JELLYBY: Anyway, since you are here, there is a little problem you may be able to help me with. There is a boy in my house.

ESTHER: A boy?

MRS JELLYBY: A ragamuffin, off the streets. We were just returning from a prayer meeting, when we discovered this boy collapsed in the street. For myself, I do not normally extend my charitable works to the poor of this land, but Francis, my middle child, pleaded that we should help the boy, so I sent a man to bring him in, and fetched the doctor.