

THE HOUSE of the SEVEN GABLES

Adapted By Craig Sodaro
From the novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Hawthorne's masterpiece comes vividly alive in this stage adaptation which begins at the gallows as Colonel Pyncheon demands Matthew Maule sell his land so Pyncheon can build a mansion. Maule refuses and his last words, "God will give you blood to drink," manifest themselves on generations of Pyncheons.

Some 150 years later, Hepzibah Pyncheon, an aging old maid, and her brother Clifford, now child-like in his mind, are the sole family members inhabiting the brooding, dreary house. Hepzibah is forced to take in a boarder, Thomas Holgrave, and even open a cent shop to keep them from starving. The shop is a difficult task for the proud woman who has isolated herself and her brother from the townspeople. But that's precisely when pretty and lively Phoebe Pyncheon, a young cousin from the country, arrives to breathe life and love into the House of the Seven Gables.

But will it be enough to end the curse that has lasted through the generations and allow Matthew Maule to rest at last? Sin and suffering, guilt and redemption, love, and even moments of gothic terror combine to create a powerful story.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(7 m, 11 w, doubling possible)

MATTHEW MAULE: The elder, dies trying to keep his land.
DEBORAH MAULE: His wife.
COLONEL PYNCHION: A ruthless, land-hungry settler.
REBECCA HIGGINS: A new resident of Salem.
DIXEY GRUBBINS: Longtime resident, her friend.
MATTHEW MAULE: The younger.
ALICE PYNCHION: Daughter of the Colonel.
NETTIE: A young girl.
MARY: Her older sister.
HEPZIBAH PYNCHION: Current owner of the House of the Seven Gables.
THOMAS HOLGRAVE: Her young renter.
JUDGE JAFFREY PYNCHION: Her cousin.
PHOEBE PYNCHION: A cousin from the country, full of life.
WOMAN: A shop customer.
CLIFFORD PYNCHION: Hepzibah's brother.
SARAH: A waitress at an inn.
JAFFREY PYNCHION: The elder, the judge's uncle.
SERVANT GIRL: Assumes Clifford is a murder.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: 1690, Salem, a cell in the local jail.
Scene 2: 1720, Parlor of the House of the Seven Gables.
Scene 3: 1850, House of the Seven Gables.
Scene 4: A week later.
Scene 5: The following day.

ACT II

Scene 1: Several days later, in the garden and house.
Scene 2: A week later.
Scene 3: Immediately after.
Scene 4: A distant inn, two days later.
Scene 5: The following day, House of the Seven Gables.

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SETTING

Action takes place at the House of the Seven Gables on Pyncheon Street in Salem, Massachusetts. Also, a cell at the Salem jail and an inn, both played DS with furniture only.

The house is a series of platforms USC and SR. The main room, the parlor, sits on an angle from the curtain line DSR to USC. A partial wall on the UPS side of the parlor shows a fireplace with a portrait of Colonel Pyncheon hanging above it. On either side of the fireplace are decorative wooden panels. The one on the right side opens into a secret passageway which leads up a step or two to Clifford's room, a small platform a foot or so higher than the parlor. This platform is located USR. Clifford's room is furnished with a bed, tiny desk and stool. The parlor is furnished with two chairs, one on either side of the fireplace, and a desk, DSR. A stool or chair sits behind the desk. The garden area is DS of the parlor SR to CS. There may be some flowers laid about, and perhaps a bench or two. To the left of the house, connected to the left side of the parlor, is the shop. This platform need be only a few inches from the stage. The shop can be entered from the parlor through a mere door frame or from the outside (at left), again, through a door frame. The shop holds a small counter, UPS, and perhaps a small table or two of various items for sale. Windows can be suspended here and there, and, if the budget allows, wooden peaks can be suspended above the house to indicate gables.

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ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: 1690, Salem, Massachusetts. A LIGHT from directly overhead discovers MATTHEW MAULE, the elder, seated on a crude bench CS. Around him is darkness.)

MAULE: Our Father...

(DEBORAH MAULE, his wife, steps into the tiny circle of light around MAULE.)

DEBORAH: Matthew, please listen to me.

MAULE: Which art in heaven...

DEBORAH: I won't be able to live without you.

MAULE: Hallowed be thy name.

DEBORAH: I know 'tis wrong to speak of such things, but my love -

MAULE: Thy kingdom come.

DEBORAH: Even if you feel so little affection for me -

MAULE: Thy will be done!

DEBORAH: At least hear me out!

MAULE: His will be done, Deborah!

DEBORAH: 'Tis not his will! 'Tis the will of Colonel Pyncheon.

MAULE: Do not bring the devil into my final thoughts.

DEBORAH: Please, Matthew! If for no other reason than my sake and the sake of our children--

MAULE: For your sake and the sake of our children, I must not relent!

DEBORAH: Matthew, 'tis land! Is land worth dying for?

MAULE: It is all that matters now.

DEBORAH: I fear we do not, then.

MAULE: The land will be yours. 'Twill always be Maule land. Why else would we have left all we knew and loved to come to this strange place? Why else but to dig deep and plant our roots so the children of our children could grow and prosper...prosper and flower like the lilies that my eyes will soon no longer see.

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(The is the sound of a KEY IN A LOCK, the CREAK of a cell door opening, then closing.)

MAULE: *(Cont'd.)* Who's there? Who's there?

COLONEL: 'Tis I.

MAULE: *(To DEBORAH.)* Has thou asked so vile a devil to share my last moments on earth?

DEBORAH: No, husband!

COLONEL: Goody Maule did not ask me to come. I am here of my own accord.

MAULE: For what purpose? To gloat?

COLONEL: To beg!

MAULE: Colonel Pyncheon a beggar? Thou hast never struck me as one who even asks, let alone begs.

COLONEL: Your wit stays with you to the end, I see. Knowing the gallows rope awaits them most men would be upon bended knee begging forgiveness in the full knowledge that by noon they shall be with their Maker!

MAULE: I have no need of forgiveness on your account.

COLONEL: No? You have bewitched me, Matthew Maule. *(Mockingly.)* The sight of you makes me froth at the mouth. The sound of your voice blinds me!

MAULE: My property has bewitched you, Colonel Pyncheon.

DEBORAH: Property rightly settled and claimed by my husband!

COLONEL: Not rightly claimed at all!

MAULE: The courts have seen my papers!

COLONEL: And they have seen my claim of prior ownership due to a grant by the legislature!

MAULE: The boundaries are not clearly defined!

COLONEL: Still, you settled on land belonging to ME!

DEBORAH: Why do you need our measly parcel of land when you have secured so much more in your name? What good will it bring you?

COLONEL: The spring! The clear, fresh water from Eden itself...not to mention the location where I intend to build my house.

End of Freeview

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