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Winner of the Aurand Harris Memorial Playwriting Award  
from the New England Theatre Conference.

# Cully's Gold



Drama by  
Carol Korty and Susa Wuorinen

# Cully's Gold

**Drama.** By Carol Korty and Susa Wuorinen. Cast: 5m., 4w. or 4m., 4w. Extras as desired. Rural seacoast Maine, 1873: 14-year-old Sadie Coggins, upon completing her studies at the local one-room school, finds her ambitions for attending high school and getting out to see the wider world thwarted by her family's sudden loss of funds in the Panic of 1873. There is now no money for tuition and board. Her parents' solution is to submit her name to fill the vacant teacher's position in town. Sadie feels neither ready nor qualified to teach her former classmates, especially since one of these is the school bully, Frank, who taunts not only her but also the town's simple character, Cully. A piece of fool's gold sent to her by her uncle surprisingly presents a means for financing her schooling. Its shine attracts the attention of Cully, who urges Sadie to trade it for his bars of locally mined silver, which hold no interest for him. Though she knows the trade would be unfair, her desire for continuing her studies overcomes her hesitancy, and she gives Cully the pyrite in return for his silver. In the meantime, Frank and his cohorts escalate their harassment of Cully, resulting in a fire that destroys Cully's house. A new house must be built, but there is no money for supplies. Sadie now faces an ethical dilemma: keep the silver to pay for her way out of town, as strongly urged by her best friend, or return it to Cully to pay for lumber? *Simple setting. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: CG6.*

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# CULLY'S GOLD

By  
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and  
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(CULLY'S GOLD)

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For  
the residents of Lamoine, Maine—  
past and present.

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Lamoine Community Arts presented *Cully's Gold* as a Readers' Theater production on June 28, 2008 at the Lamoine Grange, Lamoine, Maine. The director was Carol Korty, pianist was Raymonde Dumont and lighting was by Amy and Tom Duym. It included the following cast:

Sadie Coggins . . . . . Amelia Gillett  
Tunie Coggins . . . . . Kelly Henry  
Rosa May Young . . . . . Sara Willis  
Frank Smith . . . . . Richard Veysey  
George Higgins . . . . . Mike Arsenault  
Eben Salisbury . . . . . Austin Treadwell  
Cully Ocker . . . . . Brent Hutchins  
Henry Coggins . . . . . Gordon Donaldson  
Alma Coggins . . . . . Melody Havey  
Reader of Stage Directions . . . . . Kathy McGlinchey

CHILDREN'S ENSEMBLE

Geni Goebel, Jackie Goebel, Robyn Henry,  
Elizabeth Dalton, Sam TeHennepe,  
Ceileigh Weaver, Isaac Weaver



# CULLY'S GOLD

## CHARACTERS:

SADIE COGGINS . . . . . a 14-year-old schoolgirl  
TUNIE COGGINS . . . . . Sadie's 8-year-old sister  
ROSA MAY YOUNG . . . . a 14-year-old friend of Sadie's  
FRANK SMITH. . . . . a 14-year-old fellow student  
GEORGE HIGGINS . . . . . a 13-year-old student  
EBEN SALISBURY . . . . . a 12-year-old student  
CULLY OKER . . . . . a town character  
FATHER (HENRY COGGINS). . . . . Sadie's father,  
a ship's carpenter, Civil War veteran  
MOTHER (ALMA COGGINS) . . . . . Sadie's mother,  
former teacher

PLACE: Downeast Maine.

TIME: Summer 1873.

## CASTING:

If a larger cast is desired, any number of children may be added at the beginning of Scene 1 and end of Scene 4 and in between each scene creating little interludes with games, songs and/or recitations they might perform to indicate passage of time.

If a smaller cast is desired, the children may be eliminated at the opening of Scene 1 and closing of Scene 4 with their lines and activities given to Tunie.

George and Eben might be combined into one character to reduce the cast to eight, should a smaller cast be necessary. See Appendix 2 for alternate dialogue that would then be needed for Scene 2. Adjustments in other scenes can be made with common sense, if this option is taken.

*NOTE: See end of script for APPENDIX 1 (Lyrics to Suggested Songs), APPENDIX 2 (Alternate Dialogue) and DOWNEAST LANGUAGE USAGE.*

### SETTINGS:

SCENE 1 - Schoolyard outside Head of the River School.  
End of school day, late May 1873.

SCENE 2 - The Coggins' porch and dooryard.  
Early July morning 1873.

SCENE 3 - The Coggins' stove kitchen, porch and  
dooryard. Evening of the same day.

SCENE 4 - Schoolyard outside Head of the River School.  
Mid-morning, late August 1873.

The director and designer are free to use realistic sets for the three locations, to work on a bare stage with minimal set pieces such as stools or blocks for sitting, or to create a design concept in between these two extremes.

## DOWNEAST LANGUAGE USAGE

Downeast speech pattern was much more pronounced in the 19th century than it is in the 21st century. It would be nice to have the characters speak with a taste of this. However, it is most certainly not necessary if it causes difficulty—rather than being fun—or if it causes the characters to seem artificial. Please avoid the common tendency to slip into a Southern or Appalachian accent.

### Pronunciation Guide

We have deliberately converted the “ing” ending on many verbs and nouns to “in” to give a feeling for the local speech. We have scripted most of the text with standard spelling because it is easier to read this way than with simulated dialect. Once actors are familiar with the script, however, the director might elect to have them work with the phonetic pronunciations described below.

One rule of thumb is that words ending in “er” would usually be pronounced as if ending in “a.” For example, “sister” becomes “sista.”

A number of words were commonly pronounced with two syllables rather than with the one of Standard English. These words are:

dear	becomes	de-ah
drown	becomes	drown-ed
heard	becomes	he-ard
here	becomes	he-ah
sure	becomes	sho-ah

The commonly used affirmative for “yes” is a two-syllable word which we spell as “ay-uh.” It is said with two pitches, the second syllable being higher than the first. The “a” is a long vowel. For real authenticity, say ”ay-uh” as you inhale!

If actors have difficulty in making this expression sound natural, it would be better to eliminate it in these instances, rather than having characters say “yes,” which would not ring true for 19-century Downeast speech.

#### Other Common Downeast Usages

critters	becomes	crittahs
harm	becomes	hahm
hers	becomes	hern
smart	becomes	smaht
Southwest	becomes	Sow-west
threw	becomes	throwed
weren't	becomes	warn't

#### Definitions of Words Common to Downeast Speech in the Late 1800s

ascertain	to know as certain
assayer	a person who analyzes a metal or alloy to determine its quality and value
awful	very
bugs	lobsters (used interchangeably with lobsters or spiders)
contrive	to devise
disoblige	to dislike
dreadful	very
fool's gold	the nickname for pyrite because of its resemblance to gold

forenoon	late morning
jigger	rough, flat four-wheeled wagon
master	extremely
oakum	a jute or hemp fiber, often soaked with tar or creosote, used for caulking
pogy	a fish, a kind of perch, used mainly for oil
pogy camp	a temporary setup for extracting fish oil, with housing for workers nearby
pogy net	long nets, rough and narrow, used as fish traps
rusticators	paying summer visitors from urban areas
scholars	students, officially children between 4-21 years
Shoshone	(sho-SHONE-ee) a Western tribe of Native Americans
some	very
spiders	lobsters (used interchangeably with lobsters or spiders)
sink kitchen	old Maine houses had two kitchens. The sink kitchen was usually a smaller, messier kitchen used for preparing foods for cooking or baking and used for washing up.
stove kitchen	the stove kitchen was used for cooking. It was a warm, pleasant place used for congregating and eating casual meals as well.
ways	in ship launching, wooden ramps used to slide a ship into the water

## SCENE 3

Rural coastal Maine, 1873: 14 year old Sadie Coggins, upon completing her studies at the local one room school, finds her ambitions for attending high school and getting out to see the wider world thwarted by her family's sudden loss of funds. Compelled to change her plans to fit the new reality, she faces an ethical dilemma which involves challenging her best friend Rosa May, confronting her tormentor Frank and facing her father's anger for having made an unfair trade of Fool's Gold for silver with Cully, the town's simple character.

MOTHER. And there was nothin' left at all?

FATHER. Burnt right down to dirt. That house was old even before Cully was born. Timbers dry as dust.

MOTHER. 'Course he kept a heap of rags and such in there, too. Must have fed that fire like kindlin'.

SADIE. And Young's blueberry field to the north side is gone—all Rosa May's blueberries ruined.

MOTHER. Did our buckets come back? Thought I saw but two.

FATHER. Didn't see the third when we left. I'll go lookin' for it tomorrow.

TUNIE. What happened to the cats?

SADIE. It was awful. Cully had closed them all inside his house to keep them safe from the boys.

MOTHER. My land, had 'bout sixteen of 'em, didn't he?

FATHER. I don't think many made it out.

TUNIE. The poor kitties!

MOTHER. You don't suppose those cats might have started the fire—could have knocked over a lamp or somethin'...

SADIE. Not unless those cats were named Frank, George and Eben.

MOTHER. What?

SADIE. I heard them plottin' to smoke Cully's bees, they were that mad about gettin' stung.

FATHER. It don't surprise me one particle they'd do somethin' that foolish. And mean-spirited. Makes my blood boil to think of those young fools plannin' somethin' like that for sport. Takin' advantage of a man 'cause he's gentle and a bit...simple.

SADIE. They're some mean. But I expect they only intended to smoke the bees. The fire just got out of hand.

FATHER. No one goes about settin' any kind of fire to someone's place!

MOTHER. Sadie, I'm surprised you'd even put in a word for them. Where's your sense of right and wrong? Poor Cully. What's to become of him now? Not a stick over his head.

FATHER. Well, Mother, I said he could put up with us for a spell. The town's got to raise a house for him—

MOTHER. You what?

FATHER. For a spell. We'll get a crew together real quick...

MOTHER. Now, how to do that, this time of year? Everyone busy from dawn to dark with gardens, cannin', fishin'—

FATHER. It seems to me that three young fellows with nothin' else to occupy their time than makin' trouble could be set to work puttin' things right. If they was mine, I'd give them a thrashin'. But it's not my call.

MOTHER. They deserve it well enough.

FATHER. I'll call a meeting with their fathers. Have 'em make their boys face Cully and Mr. Young and work out a way to pay back for damages out of court.

MOTHER. I expect they'll go 'long with you on that, sure enough.

FATHER. What's facin' us now is the cost of lumber. I don't know anyone with cash or wood to spare this season. I'd pitch in some, if I had it.

MOTHER. Henry, what about those bars of silver Cully had from his parents?

FATHER. Who knows if he still had them. I didn't see anythin' in the mess left there that looked like silver. And we was pokin' and rakin' to put out them coals.

SADIE. Father, how much do you think it was worth?

FATHER. The house?

SADIE. The silver.

MOTHER. He showed me the box of it once. I'd say it was worth about a hundred dollars. (*SADIE and TUNIE exchange a look of surprise.*) I don't think he ever took it to the assayer in Ellsworth. We tried to tell him to cash it in and put the money in a bank.

FATHER. Cully wouldn't do somethin' sensible as that.

MOTHER. You girls go outside and look out for Cully comin'. I'll get the little room ready for him.

(*SADIE and TUNIE exit to front porch.*)

FATHER (*rises and starts to leave*). I'm goin' out to the barn. Still gotta milk before we turn in tonight.

MOTHER. Henry, I won't have Cully livin' here forever.

FATHER. Calm yourself. We'll have a little place raised in no time if everyone lends a hand.



*(Exits to outdoors, passing girls, and goes to barn. MOTHER disappears into house. Focus shifts to SADIE and TUNIE on porch.)*

TUNIE. That fool's gold don't work, Sadie. Didn't bring Cully good luck.

SADIE. A hundred dollars! I didn't know the silver was worth all that.

TUNIE. Well, the fool's gold must be worth a lot, too.

SADIE. I have to think.

*(ROSA MAY enters in distress.)*

ROSA MAY. Sadie, I need your help.

SADIE. Tunie, give Mother a hand inside.

*(TUNIE gives a look of protest but obeys. Exits into house.)*

ROSA MAY. Our blueberry field's gone. The whole crop's destroyed. That was to be my new clothes money.

SADIE. But, your tuition's paid, isn't it?

ROSA MAY. Ay-uh, but I can't go to Bangor lookin' like this! *(Indicates her dress.)*

SADIE. I could help you make it over with a more stylish waist.

ROSA MAY. Even this fabric's old, Sadie. I've got to have somethin' new. Please, couldn't you help me with some of that money you found?

SADIE. I don't have it yet, Rosa May.

ROSA MAY. Where's it comin' from?

SADIE. I traded that box of fool's gold for Cully's silver.

ROSA MAY. That must be valuable! Get it assayed right away and sell it. You can send in your tuition—and I'm certain there'll be some left over.

SADIE. Rosa May, I'm not sure I'm gonna sell it. I think it really belongs to Cully.

ROSA MAY. You said he traded it with you.

SADIE. Yes, but he didn't know how much it was worth.

ROSA MAY. What does that matter?

SADIE. I didn't think it mattered when I did it. He didn't seem to care about money. He didn't seem to need any.

It looked like a perfect way to get my tuition money.

ROSA MAY. It still is! Don't you want to go away from here and have a chance to study at the academy?

SADIE. Yes, but...

ROSA MAY. Don't back out now, Sadie. You can get us both out of here come fall. You've got to do it. Cully doesn't need that money.

SADIE. But, Rosa May—Cully's house is gone.

ROSA MAY. That's not your fault!

SADIE. It's not my father's fault either, but he's gonna get a work crew together to raise a new house for him.

ROSA MAY. Well, good. Let him do it.

SADIE. But there's no money for lumber and roofing and windows. Mother and Father said so. Do your parents have money to give?

ROSA MAY. I wouldn't be askin' you for money if they had any extra.

SADIE. That's what I mean. No one seems to have any extra this year.

ROSA MAY. Sadie, stick to what you and I can do. Forget about payin' for Cully's lumber. You and I need to get

out of this little town, go to school, and prepare ourselves for good-payin' jobs in a city.

SADIE. I think I have to give the silver back to Cully.

ROSA MAY. He wouldn't know what to do with it now any more than he did before.

SADIE. But Father would. He'd get Cully to sell it to pay for the lumber and things.

ROSA MAY. And what about me—I mean, us?

SADIE. You could rake bugs and seaweed with me this summer. They're paying thirty cents a jigger load. Knit pogy nets with me at night. Oh—when the pogies run, we could both work at my uncle Ansel's pogy camp over to Point Harbor. He's payin' two dollars a week.

ROSA MAY. I'm talkin' about a new way of life, Sadie. Bein' a secretary or an accountant or...

SADIE. But we've got to earn enough money first to—

ROSA MAY. Pogy camp! Pogy oil smells worse than oakum, Sadie! And knittin' those long nets tears your fingers.

SADIE. Then rake lobsters with me. You could earn enough for at least two dresses, cotton bein' twenty cents a yard. (*ROSA MAY makes a face.*) It's not as sweet as makin' blueberry preserves, but you get used to the smell. (*ROSA MAY looks annoyed.*) We'll do it together. It'll be fun.

ROSA MAY. It's not my idea of fun. Have you misplaced your wits? Draggin' through the muck at low tide? You're just spiteful!

*(CULLY enters with large bag over shoulder. It contains cats; a tail or paw sticks out. ROSA MAY backs away from CULLY and takes her leave.)*

ROSA MAY. If you're content with stayin' in this town, that's your choice. But I'm gonna do everythin' I can to leave, and leave in style. Good night! (*Turns to exit.*)

SADIE (*calling after ROSA MAY*). Rosa May—wait a minute!

ROSA MAY. I've got nothin' more to say to you! (*Storms off.*)

SADIE (*looks after ROSA MAY in frustration. Notices CULLY*). Hello, Cully. Are you all right?

CULLY. I'm fit enough, what's left of me. Want to check if that box of gold is still here.

SADIE. Ah-uh, it's settin' right there in your sack where you left it. Listen, Cully, I—

CULLY. I'll be needin' it tomorrow.

(*TUNIE and MOTHER appear at door.*)

TUNIE (*rushes out*). What happened to your cats, Cully?

CULLY. There's three that's left. Got 'em right here. (*Indicates his bag.*)

MOTHER. I got your room ready, Cully. You can take the cats out to the barn. Mr. Coggins is there milkin'.

CULLY. These cats are stayin' close to me. I'm not takin' any chances with what's left.

MOTHER. No cats in my house, Cully. Animals stay in the barn.

CULLY. If you don't mind, Miss Coggins, I'd like to stay there with them.

MOTHER. Well, all right then. I'll fetch a quilt for you.

CULLY. Thank you, ma'am.

MOTHER. It's the least I can do. You've had a piece of bad luck today.

CULLY. My luck's about to change. (*Picks up sack from porch and pulls out box of fool's gold.*) I'm gonna take this box of gold up to Ellsworth tomorrow. Have it assayed and buy me some lumber for a new place.

MOTHER (*to SADIE and TUNIE*). Isn't that the box your uncle sent? (*SADIE nods sheepishly.*) That's fool's gold, Cully.

CULLY. I'm no fool, Miss Coggins. Sadie give it to me, fair and square.

MOTHER. That's all right then, but I fear it won't fetch you much. I never meant to imply you were a fool, Cully Oker. You get your "gold" assayed tomorrow, and I'll get you a quilt for tonight.

*(Exits into house. TUNIE follows. FATHER enters from barn area with bucket of milk.)*

FATHER. Well there, Cully. I'll round up a crew in the mornin' to help raise you a place. I hope you sleep sound here tonight.

CULLY. Me and my cats are gonna bed down in comfort—right there in your barn.

FATHER. We've got a room in here, off the kitchen.

CULLY. Don't want to put you out none. Me and my cats are stickin't ogether.

*(MOTHER and TUNIE come onto porch.)*

TUNIE. Here's your quilt, Cully. I'll carry it and show you my favorite spot in the hayloft.

CULLY. Obligated. Good night to you now.

*(CULLY nods to MOTHER and FATHER. TUNIE trots off in the lead with CULLY following with bag of cats and box of "gold." MOTHER looks after them, shaking her head. SADIE stands quietly to one side.)*

FATHER. No room in the inn, Mis' Coggins?

MOTHER. Not for cats, Mr. Coggins, and he won't be separated.

FATHER. Just as well. He's used to roughin' it, sure enough. Come mornin', I'll round up those boys. Give 'em a tongue-lashin' and put 'em to work cleanin' up the mess. And I'll put out a call for hands. Those that was ready for a launching and picnic this morning can turn to with hammer and saw for a day or two.

MOTHER. How do we come by the lumber and roofin'?

FATHER. It's a question, for certain. Let's hope the Good Lord shows us a way. I don't see it this night. But I'm too tired to think on it now.

MOTHER. You'd have smiled to see Cully proudly proclaim he's going to get that box of fool's gold assayed tomorrow and sold to pay for the lumber.

FATHER. Where did he get that?

MOTHER. Sadie gave him the box Lowell sent. Some pleased with it, he was.

FATHER. In some things he's like a child. I can't bear to see anyone take advantage of him. Makes my blood boil, I tell you.

MOTHER. Henry, time to turn in. *(Turns to SADIE.)*  
Sadie, fetch Tunie. Your father needs his rest.

FATHER. Ay-uh, Mother, I'm weary and ready.

*(FATHER and MOTHER exit into house. SADIE hesitates, and TUNIE enters in good spirits.)*

TUNIE. Cully's all set. We gave the kitties some milk. He's happy now, and the fool's gold will bring him luck in the mornin'.

SADIE *(sits dejectedly on steps)*. No, it won't.

TUNIE. It won't?

SADIE. Why do you think it's called fool's gold? Why do you think Uncle Lowell sent it to us as a souvenir? He said plain as anythin' that he's still lookin' for the real thing.

TUNIE. Oh. So it won't fetch a price?

SADIE. Nope.

TUNIE. What'll Cully do for lumber?

SADIE. I've got to give the silver back to him so he can sell it. But I'm afraid to let Father know I traded for it in the first place. He'll be so angry.