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The Secret Garden

By April-Dawn Gladu • Based on the book by Frances Hodgson Burnett



The Secret Garden

Adapted by April-Dawn Gladu
Book by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Study Guide

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About the Show

Experience a world of wonder as a sad orphaned girl discovers a secret garden. As she tends it, she experiences a wonderful transformation and learns to help others love the garden so its magic will work on them too!

About the Theater and Our New Name

We've got a new name and a new logo! We are proud to announce that, thanks to you, our patrons and donors, we have grown from an initial one-month "festival" 19 years ago, to a regional "theater" that features a year-round schedule of nine main-stage productions, three workshops, twelve staged readings, special events and fundraisers, a thriving partnership with UCF and robust educational programming with classes and seminars for pre-K through seniors. Also, thanks to you, three of this past season's productions broke all attendance records at the Lowndes Shakespeare Center.

We are a non-profit, professional theater that presents productions of Shakespeare, classic and contemporary plays, as well as the Darden Theater for Young Audiences Series. The Festival also cultivates new scripts and playwrights through the annual Harriet Lake Festival of New Plays and fosters innovative educational programs to serve the community.

Scholarships

Through the generosity of a few Central Florida businesses and foundations, the Festival is able to visit a number of schools every year to present our unique workshops FOR FREE! To find out if you qualify for a scholarship, please call the Education Director at 407-447-1700 x 208.

Background Information

***The Secret Garden* takes place in a 600-year old manor house and its surrounding gardens in Yorkshire, England in the Early 1900's.**

Yorkshire, England

Yorkshire is an historic county of Great Britain, and is the largest. Even though it is a historic region and name, it is still commonly used today to describe the particular region of northern England

The Moor

The Moor is located in northern England, in Yorkshire. In *The Secret Garden*, Mrs. Medlock describes the Moor as “a wild, dreary enough place with miles and miles of wild land that nothing grows on but heather and gorse and broom, and nothing lives on but ponies and wild sheep”. She is quite right, but forgets to add a few things. She depicts the Moor as a fairly unfriendly place that is not very beautiful, and true, the winters can be very windy, cold, and dreary. But, the beauty of the Moor lies in the fact that it is not very populated, and it's wildlife is allowed to grow free and bloom how it wants. The wildlife of the Moor includes heather, gorse, and broom, which are as Mrs. Medlock says, but also moss, and sheep! Gorse can grow in poor growing conditions, and remain in bloom for a long time. They are usually yellow in color, and smell like coconuts. Broom also usually features yellow flowers. Heather is usually purple in color and grows in a bush.

India

Mary, the central character of *The Secret Garden* is born in India to English parents. India is located in south Asia, between Pakistan, Nepal, and China. It is a country that became a colony of the British Empire in 1857, and remained a colony until winning independence in 1947. Three years later, India became a republic, and constructed a constitution in 1950.

History and Influences

***The Secret Garden* - The Book**

The Orlando Shakespeare Theater's production of *The Secret Garden* is based on the book of the same name by Frances Hodgson Burnett. First published in 1909, it is Burnett's most famous work, and is considered a classic of children's literature.

Frances Hodgson Burnett - The Author



Frances Hodgson Burnett was born in Manchester, England in 1849 and then moved to Knoxville, Tennessee after her father's death when she was 16. She was left to raise her four younger siblings at the age of 18 when her mother died, and she wrote to support her family. In 1886, she wrote *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and sold a half million copies. Her other most famous children's book, *A Little Princess* was first written in 1888, under the title of *Sara Crewe*, and was re-written as *A Little Princess* in 1905. Burnett was not only known for her children's literature, but for other works as well, including a memoir of her youth, novels, and plays. She died in New York in 1924.

Meet the Characters

MARY LENNOX – A ten-year-old girl. She was raised without love or boundaries and as a result is singularly selfish and self-contained

COLIN CRAVEN – A ten-year-old English boy. Colin was raised to believe that he was ill and would die before adulthood. His every whim has been indulged while his heart was neglected by a father wracked with grief.

DICKON - A twelve-year-old Yorkshire boy who communicates with nature.

MARTHA – Dickon's older sister and a maid at the manor

THE GARDEN TREE – Nature's living symbol, connected to all of the animals, and to all of life.

MRS. MEDLOCK – A stern Yorkshire matron who is fearful that any change in the status quo will cost her job.

ARCHIBALD CRAVEN – A wealthy, well-educated middle-aged man who never got over the loss of his wife ten years ago. He has a hunchback.

BEN WEATHERSTAFF – A craggy old Yorkshire gardener who speaks his mind.

SOLDIER – English soldier in colonial India.

THE GARDEN ANIMALS – The Robin, a squirrel and rabbit

The Story

Mary Lennox is a very unhappy little girl who is born in India to English parents. Both of her parents ignore her and leave her to the care of her servants, in particular, her Ayah (woman who serves as a maid and nanny). This leaves Mary a very spoiled, sour little girl, and she becomes quite used to bossing her servants around. However, a Cholera Epidemic strikes India, and everyone in her house dies, including her mother and father, and servants.

Mary is then taken to live with her uncle, Archibald Craven, at Misselthwaite Manor, a large 600-year-old mansion located in Yorkshire, England. She is taken to the country house by Mrs. Medlock, the head housekeeper. Mrs. Medlock explains that Mary should not go exploring around the house unaccompanied, and that she is to behave. Her uncle Craven does not want her snooping around and causing trouble. Mr. Craven keeps alone, and also does not know much joy. Ten years ago he lost his wife in an accident in one of the gardens surrounding Misselthwaite Manor, and has not been happy since.

Mary adapts slowly to her new surroundings, as England is much different from India. She is left in the care of another servant, Martha. Martha challenges Mary's orders, and actually gets her to follow her own requests by telling her about her younger brother, Dickon. Dickon is very special because he has a way of communicating with the animals on the Moor. Also, he knows a lot about the flowers and plants, and other wildlife. He is gentle and knowing, and friends with the animals. Mary decides she would like to meet him. Martha also tells Mary about the rose garden that has been locked up for ten years by Mr. Craven and how the key is buried somewhere outside the garden.

While exploring the gardens of Misselthwaite Manor, Mary meets Ben Weatherstaff, who is a gardener on the manor, as well as his Robin. She finds out that the Secret Garden is just beyond a wall, and asks the Robin for help in finding the key. The Robin shows her the spot where the key is buried, and Mary makes her first real friend.

Weeks later, Mary hears a flute playing, and discovers Dickon surrounded by animals. With the help of the Robin and the other animals, Mary and Dickon are shown the door, and go inside. The garden first looks lifeless and cold, but Dickon tells Mary that with love and care, the garden will be full of life. Mary is excited to discover the beauty to come and her second real friend, Dickon.

Both Martha and Mrs. Medlock realize how much healthier Mary is beginning to look since she has arrived at Misselthwaite Manor, although Mrs. Medlock thinks there is too much nonsense. Mary finally meets her uncle after spending weeks at the Manor. She asks him for permission to tend a garden that she has found, but does not tell him it is the secret garden, and he grants her permission.

Over the weeks, Mary has noticed a faint sound of crying in the halls of the Manor, but has not dared to explore because of Mrs. Medlock's warnings. However, one night she cannot stand it any longer. She discovers a little boy in one of the rooms who is the son of her uncle, Archibald Craven. Mary had never learned about him because he was

locked up and kept away from people. He introduces himself as Colin and tells her he is sick and has a lump on his back and is going to die. Mary tells Colin about the garden and that she believes its magic would help Colin to be well. She now has found a third friend.

The next day Colin is discovered screaming in his bed for Mary. He is upset because she did not come to him quickly enough, and is certain that he felt the lump on his back get bigger and that he was going to die. She proves to him that there is no lump, and Martha tells him that there is no reason why he shouldn't live to grow up.

Mrs. Medlock threatens to send away Martha and Ben, and forbid Dickon to visit Misselthwaite because Mary did not obey her order to not explore around the Manor. She does not believe that Colin will get well, and she is not happy with the disorder Mary has created.

Spring descends upon the Moor, and the garden begins to come to life. The early flowers that Dickon and Mary planted are starting to come up from the ground. Ben Weatherstaff discovers the three children, Mary, Dickon, and Colin, in the garden and starts to get angry, but then realizes that Colin is there. It is a bit of a miracle to see him because the servants of Misselthwaite all believe him to be quite ill and near death. It is an even bigger surprise to see him start to stand and walk as the magic of believing in the garden, gives him the strength to move.

During these events, Archibald Craven has been traveling, because the spring is too sad a time for him. Seeing flowers come to life remind him of his late wife. However, Martha sends him a letter asking him to come home. He feels in his heart that he was lead home, and does not get upset about the interruption to his trip. Mr. Craven discovers Colin running in the garden, and almost cannot believe his eyes! Mary tells Mr. Craven that it is the magic inside of Colin that was making him walk and run. Mr. Craven says that it is the magic of the garden and the magic of believing in all of them that was working that day.

Discussion...

Believing – Was there a time in your life when your belief in something helped you to achieve a goal? Or made you feel better? How does it feel when someone tells you they believe in you? Who do you believe in?

New Environments – Mary is confronted with many new environments and people. She experiences a whole new country, a new house, new servants, and the new physical environment of the garden. How does it feel to be submerged in a new environment? When was the last time you were in a new place? What are things that make adjusting to new places and people easier? Are there times when Mary is more successful than others in adjusting to her new life? When and how does she succeed or fail?

Nurturing – Through Dickon, Mary learns how to make the garden “wick”, which Dickon explains means “alive”. Have you ever tended a garden? Or taken care of a pet? How do you feel when you help nurture something and make it grow? Or, if you have not been the direct cause of something developing, how do you feel when you can see seasons change, or baby animals grow? Do you associate different moods or feelings with seasons? How does watching something else grow make you feel?

Activities For Building Your Very Own

Secret Garden Grades 2-6

The following is a series of activities created in relation to *The Secret Garden*. They may be used in order, or the instructor may choose specific activities based on the needs or interests the class.

1. Through Words...

Materials Needed: Paper, writing utensil

What is your Secret Garden like? Throughout the play we learn about different plants and flowers that are already in the garden, and some that Mary, Dickon, and Colin plant. If you could have your own garden, what would be in it? Would you have lots of flowers, or trees, or fountains...? The garden in the play is a very magical, special place. How is your Secret Garden special?

Begin by writing a paragraph or two describing your garden. Be sure to be as specific as possible. Use colors and shapes to describe the look of your garden. Are there any smells or feels to the garden? And don't forget to include the magic! Describe how it makes you feel as well.

2. Through Drawing...

Materials Needed: Paper, Art supplies (crayons, markers, paint, colored pencils)

Now, placing your description aside, draw your garden. Using whatever supplies you may have, visually create how your garden looks.

After writing your description and drawing your picture, present your drawing to the class, followed by reading your description. Are there differences between the two? Which did you like better? Which form do you feel more accurately could describe the magic of your garden?

After reading your description, and viewing your drawing, what is the relationship between the two? Could your drawing influence your writing? Setting your first description aside, now focus on your drawing, and write a few paragraphs describing it. How is this new description different from your first?

3. Tending Another's Garden...

After viewing the class's drawings, and listening to their descriptions, divide the group into partners. Each student will take their partner's drawing and describe it with words. Be sure to not only describe how it looks, but also how it makes you feel. Focus on the mood of the drawing. When finished, read this description to your partner. How does your partner's description differ from your own? Did they see things in your garden you didn't know were there?

4. Through Movement

In the Orlando Shakespeare Theater's production of *The Secret Garden*, a tree serves as a central image in the garden. This tree is portrayed by a woman, and throughout the play, the tree changes in appearance. How is it possible for a person to act and move like an inanimate object? What types of things would they have to do to become alive as a non-moving thing? And even though a tree may not walk around, how would it walk if it could?

Using the following prompts, the instructor will lead a garden exploration with the class. You will need a room with plenty of un-obscured space, and open imaginations! You may also wish to have some sort of device for playing music, and possibly mats. The instructor will encourage the group with side coaching designed to gently shape the arc of the exercise. The instructor should feel free to alter any of the prompts to fit the needs of the class.

1. First, remind the students that this space is place where their imaginations may run free. There are no right or wrong ways of completing the exercise. Throughout, the student should fight the urge to verbally respond to your prompts. Encourage them to DO – respond with their imaginations and bodies.

2. Have the students begin spread out in the space. Prompt them to clear their minds of all other thoughts, and just to be in the space right here and now.
3. Encourage them to imagine they are seeds. Ask: Are you a small seed or a large seed? What shape are you – round, smooth, flat, furry?
4. Next the seed is planted. Ask: How does it feel to be in the earth? Is it warm? Cold? Is it dark? Wet? Dry? Are there other seeds around you? Or roots of other plants? What is that like?
5. Now imagine the seed is beginning to grow. Prompt the “seeds” to begin to sprout in the earth. Ask: How does it feel to break out of the shell of the seed? It is easy? Is it hard? How does the earth feel?

At this point, some students may wish to vocally respond. Encourage the class to use their imaginations and bodies to explore the feelings they are experiencing. Have them do, not explain.

6. As the sprout pushes through the ground, have the students concentrate on receiving nutrients. Ask; How does it feel to be watered? Can you feel the warmth of the sun yet even though you are not above ground? How does it feel to push through the dirt?
7. Now lead the students to imagine they are sprouting from the earth. Ask: How does it feel to be free from the earth? Can you feel the sun? Can you see other plants around you?
8. Encourage them to stay focused on themselves for the moment. As their plant, tree, or flower continues to grow ask them prompts about themselves. Ask: What type of plant are you? A tree? A flower? What color are you? How deep are your roots? Can you feel the breeze? The rain? Is it warm or cold? Continue with as much exploration as you wish.
9. At this point, encourage the group to imagine how their particular plant would move. Begin with the head, arms, and torso, and then prompt them to walk. Ask: How does your plant’s head move? How do they nod “Yes” or “No”? Do they look up to the sky or down to the ground? How do their arms move? Do they bend at the waist or curve around? How does your plant walk? Slow or fast? Light steps or heavy steps?
10. While you have the group walking, now encourage them to make sound. Ask: Does your plant make high sounds? Low sounds? Loud sounds? Soft sounds? Do they speak English? Or plant speak?

11. At this point, you can lead the group (if they haven't already) to notice the other plants in their garden. Ask: How do the other plants affect you? How do you fit into this garden? Are there other plants like you?

12. As a group, you can lead them through different environmental situations, and encourage them to continue using their imaginations and creativity. Add a few level changes to the space (a folded-up mat, balls, fun noodles), or lead the group through experiencing the seasons.

Just as in the completion of the exercise there are no wrong ways, there are also no wrong ways of leading the exercise. Take your time exploring all of the different elements, and encourage the students to really use their imaginations and bodies. For the clarity of the exercise, it is usually best to have only the instructor's voice lead the prompts. This way, the class is left to their own interpretations. Also, students may find it easier to not feel subconscious in the beginning prompts by having their eyes closed.

The Sounds of the Garden

Music may be used to further inspire the explorations. The following are 5 albums or music types that might be useful. These could be used throughout the exercise, or perhaps to accompany the end of the exercise when exploring seasons. You may want to create a selection of music for the exercise, beginning with something soothing and slower in rhythm and building to something with a faster tempo. Encourage the students to think about the sounds around them, not only from the music, but the other students as well. You may use whatever music you like, but music without lyrics may better allow the students to continue forming their own ideas. Some selections are described as dark or light – these might be used accordingly when exploring emotions or seasons. It might be best to begin with more atmospheric music, and then more to more melodic, up-beat selections.

Soundscapes – These have become increasingly popular. You may have recognized **Lifescapes** kiosks at your local shopping center that allow you to sample the many options including **Bagpipes of Scotland**, **Garden Rain**, **Shakespeare**, and **Songbirds: Prairie**. Choose what would work best with your class. Examples of other album titles include: **Songbirds at Sunrise**, **Misty Forrest Morning**, or **Garden of Serenity**.

Classical – **J.S. Bach's Inventions** offer lively selections (Invention #1 and 8 will sound and feel "happier", and Invention #13 will offer a still quick, but darker feel) as well as **Bach's cello suites**, which also offer slower selections. (The Prelude from the first Suite will have a happier, lively sound, and the Sarabande from the first suite will be slower; Suite V Prelude will be slower, but feel very dark, and the allemande will also feel dark, but have a quicker tempo)

Jazz – Verve has a collection titled "Jazz Masters" **Count Basie** is 2nd in their series. Basie offers a lively, big band feel. Some of the tracks on the disk do have lyrics. Classics such as "April in Paris" and "One O' Clock Jump" would be great. A slower selection would be "Blue and Sentimental".

World Inspiration –Music reminiscent of the area that *The Secret Garden* takes place might be a great way to tie in the location of the play. Any one of **Loreena McKennitt's** albums would be a great choice for incorporating Celtic music.

Rhythm - Music that is very rhythmic in nature may help inspire the students to think abstractly about their movements. **Putumayo World Music** is a series of world sounds that might offer some various influences, including Celtic sounds, and other forms of folk music. The series features CD's that are specific collections from selected geographical areas and provides a nice sampling of music. There is also a series devoted specially to children. Check out their website at www.putumayo.com to view their selection.

Be creative and have fun – any music will add to the experience.

5. Planting the Seed

Materials needed: Seeds, potting soil, pots, water, and a space with exposure to sunlight. A notebook and writing utensil.

Dividing into teams, or individually, plant a seed and watch it grow. Keep a journal recording the growth of the plant. Include drawings of how the plant looks through its stages of life. Write about what it is like to care for something. If divided into “green teams”, write about what it is like to be mutually responsible for a living thing. How will the responsibilities of caring for the plant be divided if on a team?

After the plant grows enough, transplant the class's plants to a secret garden of their own. Have the students write about the experience and draw the garden as a whole.

6. Personalizing the Plant

Does your plant have a name or personality? After the movement exploration, write about your plant's personality. How did you feel as the plant? How did the other plants in the garden make you feel? Write a narrative story with your plant as a central character.

Or...if you have grown a plant, write about it. Give it a name and a personality. What is something extraordinary that could happen to your plant? Write a narrative story with your plant as the central character.

So, What did you think? : Constructing A Critique

In order to have any kind of art, the artist creating the work must have some intent, or purpose, and there must be an audience. As an audience member, a person may experience a different reaction than other audience members. All of these reactions are very important. They are responses to what the artist originally intended, and are necessary to complete the circle of the artistic experience!

What thoughts, feelings, or observations did you experience during *The Secret Garden*. How have those feelings changed since you saw it?

You be the critic...

Write or draw (for younger students) a critique of the show, and present your thoughts to the rest of the class. A **Critique** is an essay or article that expresses an individual's opinion of an artist's work, such as a painting, play or book. Not only is a **critique** an expression of a particular person's opinion, it also helps inform other people of what a particular work of art is like. Of course, the best way of experiencing a piece of art is first-hand. The individual expressing their opinion is the author of the **critique**, and they are called **Critics**. **Critics** are relied upon to be honest and fair about their thoughts feelings, likes and dislikes.

So...what did you think? What is your honest opinion of *The Secret Garden*? What elements of the show did you like or dislike and WHY? Don't forget to consider all of the elements of the show, as theatre is a collaborative art form, and all of its aspects must work together to make it successful. Did the lighting, costumes, scenery, sound, or acting have a particular influence on you? WHY? Would you recommend this production to someone else? Why or why not?

How do your thoughts compare to your friends??

Standards and Benchmarks for Study Guides—2007-2008:

Participation in the Shakespeare Alive experience and attendance at a live performance of a Shakespearean play can aid student's development toward meeting the following Sunshine State Standards:

Theatre Arts Standards TH.D.1.3 & 4

Theatre Arts Standards TH.E.1.3 & 4

And

Language Arts Standards LA 8.2.1.1-5

Language Arts Standards LA910.2.1.1-5

Language Arts Standards LA 1112.2.1.1-5