

The Secret Garden

Grades 4-6

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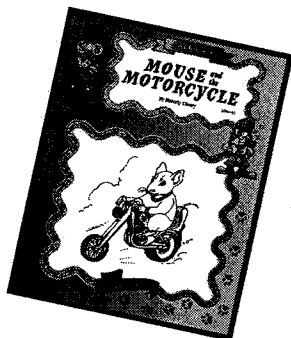
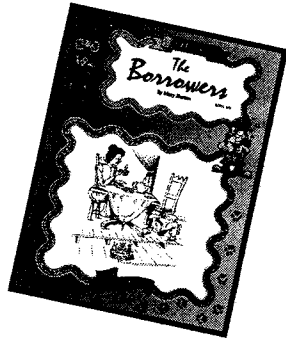
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Expectations

The students will:

- become familiar with the writings of Frances Hodgson Burnett.
- become acquainted with the lifestyle, attitudes, and customs of people living in England during the late 1800s.
- understand that people and characters can change their ways and attitudes.
- develop, improve and reinforce many new and learned skills through the reading of good literature.
- improve their abilities to write and express their ideas creatively.

Summary of Story

Six-year old Mary Lennox is orphaned when her mother falls ill to cholera. She is sent to live with her strange Uncle Archibald Craven at Misselthwaite Manor. A miraculous change overcomes the once sickly, spoiled little Mary as she is surrounded by people who refuse to let her continue in her accustomed manner. She soon learns, from a housemaid named Martha, that Misselthwaite has hundreds of rooms that are locked and even one garden that has not been opened for ten years.

With nothing else to do, Mary is soon led to the garden's key and the garden itself by a robin. She is delighted to watch the garden come to life as she and her new friend, Dickon, tend to the bulbs and roses in the neglected area.

Mary soon discovers another secret - Mr. Craven has an invalid son, Colin, locked away in one of the Manor's rooms. Mr. Craven barely sees his son and resents him because his beloved Mrs. Craven died while giving birth to Colin. It is her garden that has been locked since her death.

The two children became friends and Mary hopes that Colin will come to love the secret garden as much as she does. When Mary finally decides that she can trust Colin to keep the events of the garden a secret, she shows him the garden. He is as delighted with it as she was.

Believing in the magic of the garden, Colin is determined to learn to become strong and walk like a healthy, young boy. The children keep his recovery a secret from the adults, as Colin wants his father to be the first to know. He hopes his restored health will cause his father to learn to love him.

Upon returning to the Manor after a long absence, Mr. Craven is surprised and delighted with the incredible changes in both young Mary and his son. The children have blossomed, along with the roses in his late wife's garden. He realizes that he has many things in life to be happy about, especially the magic.

Author Biography

Frances Hodgson Burnett was born in England in 1849. In 1865 her family moved to the United States where they lived in a log cabin with relatives. She began writing, as a teenager, to help earn extra money for her family. Her stories written for adults were very well received.

In 1873, Frances married Swan Burnett, a doctor, whom she later divorced.

Some years later, she wrote stories for children. It is her children's stories, such as *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *Sara Crew* (later published as *A Little Princess*) and *The Secret Garden*, for which she is best remembered.



The garden in this story is based on a real rose garden in Kent, where she lived from 1898 to 1907. She cleared a wild orchard in order to plant roses.

In total, this gifted storyteller produced more than 40 books as well as many short stories. She died in New York in 1924.

Teacher Input Suggestions

Note: It is strongly recommended that the teacher read the novel and the material in this resource well in advance of implementing them into the reading program. The teacher's knowledge and interest in the story is essential in order to maintain the enthusiasm of the students.

1. *The Secret Garden* can be used in conjunction with themes about friendship, family, and self-esteem.
2. Choose and list the vocabulary words and their meanings that students may have difficulty with and discuss them with your students. Add any other words that they suggest as they read the book.
3. Distribute copies of *The Secret Garden* to the students. Have them examine the cover and discuss the title, characters, author, and artist. Ask them to make predictions about the story. (Page references in this book were obtained from Dell Yearling, December 1987 edition.)
4. Relate information about the author using the Author Biography in this resource.
5. Give each student a copy of the sheet called "Characters in the Novel". Instruct them to fill out the sheet each time that a new character is mentioned in the book. They are to record information about the character (appearance, personality, relationship to other characters, etc.) and make personal comments.
6. Display students' artwork completed during this resource around the class.
7. Paint a mural of a scene that would be seen in one of the chapters of *The Secret Garden*.
8. Display and read other books written by the author. Frances Hodgson Burnett has also written *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *Sara Crewe* (later published as *A Little Princess*) for children.
9. Discuss the qualities of a good friend. Discuss friendships between boys and girls. How are they different than girl to girl or boy to boy friendships.
10. Make a 'Secret Garden' bulletin board display. Have each of the students describe their own dream garden and what they would do there. You may want to group the children into boy/girl pairs for this.
11. *The Secret Garden* is available on video cassette. Choose one of the versions to show to your class at the end of the novel study. Compare the similarities and differences between the book and the movie.

Vocabulary

The Secret Garden contains words and unusual Yorkshire dialect that some students may find challenging. It is best to discuss vocabulary words in the context they are given in the book. Therefore, rather than listing these words, this book includes activities that allow the students to use the new vocabulary in a meaningful way.



Discussion Questions

Prereading:

- Who makes up your family?
- What is the most important thing that your mother/father has taught you?
- How do you feel about Nanny's? Should they be treated like a member of the family? Should they be the ones to instill morals and values in the children they care for?
- How do you think you would be a different person if your mother and father completely ignored you as a young child? In what way would your personality be the same as it is today?
- What is a friend? Who is your best friend? Why?
- What makes you a good friend?
- What do you and your friends do together?
- Could you tell your best friend **everything** or do you have a few secrets?
- Do you ever fight/argue with your friend? About what? How do you make up?
- Should children ever keep secrets from adults? Why and when or why not?
- What does "mind over matter" mean? Do you believe in mind over matter?

Reading Discussion Questions

Chapter One - There's No One Left

Describe Mary Lennox. What type of person is Mary? How is Mary like you? How is she different?

Chapter Two - Mistress Mary Quite Contrary

How did Mary feel about her mother's death? Do you think her feelings are understandable? Why or why not? Was she more affected by her Ayah's death or her mother's death?

Chapter Three - Across the Moor

What is a moor? (Mrs. Medlock describes it on page 27.) How did Mary feel about the moor? Why? What does Mr. Pitcher tell Mrs. Medlock when they arrive at the Manor? How do you think Mary feels about this?

Chapter Four - Martha

Why did Mary tell Martha that she was a 'strange servant'? If you had your own servant, what things would you want him/her to do for you? What things would you insist on doing for yourself? Who or what gave Mary a 'pleased feeling'? In what ways did Ben tell Mary that they were alike?

Chapter Five - The Cry in the Corridor

Why did Mr. Craven lock the garden? What would you have done in his situation? Why? What did Mary think she heard in the halls of the Manor?