



Level 6

Suitable for:	young learners who have completed up to 300 hours of study in English
Type of English:	British
Headwords:	1200
Key words:	20 (see pages 2 and 7 of these Teacher's Notes)
Key grammar:	present perfect simple, past continuous, <i>might</i> for possibility, <i>would</i> for desires and preferences, <i>should</i> for advice, reported speech, first conditional, indefinite pronouns (e.g. <i>no-one</i> , <i>everyone</i>), adjective + <i>to</i> , intensifiers (e.g. <i>a lot</i> , <i>a bit</i>)

Summary of the story

A young girl, Mary Lennox, sails to England from India after the sudden death of her parents. She goes to live with her uncle, Mr Craven. But when Mary arrives at her uncle's big country house she discovers that her uncle rarely visits and that it is an empty and lonely place.

When Martha the housemaid gives her a skipping rope, Mary goes to play outside in the gardens. She explores the grounds and meets Ben Weatherstaff, the old gardener. A friendly robin leads Mary to a key which opens a secret walled garden that has been neglected for ten years, since the death of Mary's aunt, Mrs Craven. Mary unlocks the secret garden and decides to make it beautiful again, even though she knows nothing about gardening.

Mary tells Martha that she wishes to have a part of the gardens as her own, but keeps the walled garden a secret. Martha suggests that her young brother Dickon could help Mary. Dickon loves wildlife and knows lots about gardening. Mary shows Dickon the secret garden and he agrees to help her make it beautiful again.

Then Mary discovers another secret – her ten-year-old cousin Colin also lives in the house. Colin is very sick and weak and never leaves his room. Mary persuades Colin to meet Dickon and visit the secret garden. The three children develop a strong friendship as they work together to bring the secret garden back to life. They believe there is magic in

the garden which also helps to make Colin strong and fit again. Colin keeps his recovery a secret because he wants to surprise his father. When Mr Craven comes home he finds his son happy and healthy, and the secret garden restored to its former beauty, thanks to the efforts of the children.

Background information

The Secret Garden was first published as a serial in 1910 and as a complete novel in 1911. It was written by Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849–1924), who also wrote *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *A Little Princess*, and it is now considered a classic of children's literature.

The novel has been adapted for the stage, including a successful Broadway musical which opened in 1991, and there have been several film versions and TV serials, including three made by the BBC (1952, 1960 and 1975).

Did you know ... ?

Frances Hodgson Burnett owned a large country house called Great Maytham Hall in Kent, England – its walled gardens were the inspiration for *The Secret Garden*.

The characters

Mary Lennox is a young girl who has to leave her home in India after the death of her parents. She goes to live in England at the country house of her uncle, Mr Craven.

Mr Craven is Mary's uncle. He is very sad after the death of his wife ten years earlier and rarely visits his house in England.

Mrs Medlock is the head of the servants at Mr Craven's house.

Martha is a kind servant who looks after Mary in her uncle's house.

Ben Weatherstaff is an old gardener who has worked for the Craven family for many years.

Dickon is Martha's young brother. He loves animals and knows a lot about gardening.

Colin Craven is Mary's cousin. At the beginning of the story, he believes he is ill.

Topics and themes

Friendship At the beginning of the story, Mary had no friends and neither did Colin. But Mary, Colin and Dickon have become close friends by the end of the story. Ask the students how this happened. What was Dickon's role? Why are friends so important? What are the qualities of a good friend? How can you make new friends when you need them?

Animals Dickon has a special relationship with wild animals and they trust him and like him. Ask the students about how he treats wild animals. Does he try to protect them? Are they free to go where they want? How can people protect wild animals? What kind of wildlife do the students think there is in England / the UK? What about in their country? (See also Activity 3 on pages 4 and 5 of these Teacher's Notes.)

Secrets Mary discovers the secret garden, and later she shares the secret garden with Dickon and Colin. Ask the students why she wants to keep the garden a secret to begin with. When Colin's health improves, why does he want to keep it a secret from his father and the servants? Do the students

Key words

(see page 7 of these Teacher's Notes for the Key words in context)

branch (n)	pretend (v)
carriage (n)	robin (n)
charm (v)	rose (n) / (adj)
dig (v)	seed (n)
exercise (n)	skipping rope (n)
forward (adv)	spade (n)
fox (n)	squirrel (n)
magic (n) / (adj)	tool (n)
mist (n)	wheelchair (n)
pipe (n)	wildlife (v)

like keeping secrets? Do they think there are good secrets and bad secrets to be kept?

Health Dickon is a healthy, happy boy. Martha says that Dickon loves being outside in the fresh air, and 'no-one is healthier than Dickon'. Ask the students about Dickon's lifestyle. The story is about people who lived more than a hundred years ago. Do the students think Dickon's lifestyle is just as important today? What kinds of food contribute to good health?

Illness When Mary first meets Colin, he thinks he is ill and is going to die. Ask the students if Mary thinks Colin is ill. Does the doctor help Colin? How does Colin stop believing he is ill? Can positive thinking help people to feel better?

Exercise Dickon tells Colin that he should exercise every day to get strong and stay well. Ask the students why exercise is important. How is doing exercise different from doing a sport? What kind of exercises does Dickon show his friends? Do the students like doing exercise? Which sports do they like? (See also Activity 2 on page 4 of these Teacher's Notes.)

Gardens Mary's secret walled garden is at the heart of the story. Ask the students why it is so important to Mary. How does the secret garden help Colin and Mary? Do the students know of a beautiful garden or park in their home town? Do the students have any experience of gardening? Do they know of any special community gardens? (See also Activity 1 on page 4 of these Teacher's Notes.)

Magic Mary, Dickon and Colin think there is magic in the garden which makes plants grow and people happy. They think nature (plants and animals) can benefit sick people. What do the students think? Are there other kinds of magic in the story? Do snake charmers use a kind magic? Can Dickon charm animals? Give examples.

Children's activities in England in the past

In the story, Martha gives Mary a skipping rope. Are these popular with children today? Can the students think of other toys that children played with a hundred years ago? The children in the story spent a lot of time outside in the secret garden, and they also enjoyed cooking on a camp fire and eating outside. Do the students enjoy doing similar activities? How do the students think children of today might occupy their time without electronic games, computers or TV? (See also Activity 5 on pages 5 and 6 of these Teacher's Notes.)

Class Activities (After Reading)

Here are some activities to do with your class after reading *The Secret Garden*.

1. Community garden poster

Materials: large sheets of blank paper / card; coloured pens / pencils

- Talk about what the benefits of restoring the secret garden were for Mary, Dickon and Colin (e.g. it gave Mary something to do and brought her happiness and friendship, it brought Colin good health, happiness and friendship, it gave Dickon friendship and the chance to show his new friends his skills with animals and gardening).
- Tell the students that they are going to design a community garden. Brainstorm some ideas with the class about the kind of garden they could create. For example, it could be a garden for the students at school, a children's gardening club, a garden for a group of houses in a community, a hospital garden, or a garden in a town park.
- Divide the class into pairs or small groups. In their pairs or groups, the students decide what kind of community garden they would like to design. They brainstorm ideas for what to include in their garden. What kinds of trees, plants and flowers will it have? Will it grow vegetables? Will it have a path, a pond, a play area, seating, a picnic area, a place to keep tools, etc.?
- Give out the materials and explain to the students that they will design a poster of their garden. First, they should draw their garden out in pencil, and then colour it and label it in English.
- Go round the class and monitor the students' work, encouraging them to speak in English while they are designing their poster and providing any unknown vocabulary for labelling.
- Ask volunteers to come to the front of the class to present their poster and talk about their

community garden. The students could then vote for the best garden design.

- Display the posters in the classroom.

2. The Keep Fit exercise chant

- In the story, Dickon teaches Colin exercises to make his body strong again. Talk about the benefits of exercise with the students. Ask the students what exercises they do to keep their bodies fit and healthy. Do they do any sports?
- Copy the following exercise chant onto the board (or project it). Then say each line slowly and demonstrate the movements. Repeat several times.

Stand up straight and turn around.

Arms up high and touch the ground.

March on the spot, one, two, three, four.

Four more steps, now turn to the door.

Arms stretched wide and bend your knees.

Time to stop now sit down, please.

- Practise the chant with the students. When the students know the words, find a space for the class to exercise safely.
- The students practise the chant several times with the movements until they feel confident that they know it.
- As a follow-up, the students could then create their own exercise chants in groups and perform them for the rest of the class.

3. Wildlife survey

Materials: wildlife spot near school; internet access and / or reference books about wildlife; sheets of blank paper; clipboards (optional); binoculars (optional); digital camera (optional)

- Before the session, find out if there is a park, garden or pond near the school where the students can look for wildlife.
- Ask the students to look through the Reader and tell you which wild animals are in the story (e.g. robin, fox, blackbird, squirrel). What other wild animals do the students know?

Do they know which animals live in the English countryside? What about the wildlife in their own country? Provide some examples and the names in English of some common wild animals, birds and insects.

- Take the students to the wildlife spot near the school. Give out clipboards with a blank piece of paper and pen for noting down any wildlife (or the students can use a book to place their paper on as they record the wildlife).
- Allocate a time limit for the students to look around the area and note down the animals, birds and insects that they see, including numbers where possible.
- Monitor the students' work and help out where necessary. If you have binoculars, allow the students to use them to look at the wildlife more closely. If you have a digital camera, take photos of the wildlife that the students aren't sure of, so that they can look them up back in the classroom.
- Return to the classroom and allow the students time to summarise their findings with a survey chart, ideally including the number of different animals, birds and insects.
- Discuss the results as a class. Which was the most common animal, bird or insect spotted? Was there any unusual wildlife spotted?
- As a follow-up, you could draw up the results onto a large survey chart to display in the classroom, and the students could decorate the chart with drawings, pictures downloaded from the internet, or any photos taken of the wildlife.
- Variation: the survey could also be done with trees, plants and flowers.

4. Project: *Mary's journey*

Materials: internet access and / or reference books; atlas / map of the world; large sheets of blank paper / card; coloured pens / pencils; safety scissors; glue

- At the beginning of the story, Mary travels to England from India. Ask the students if they

know where India is. Show them India on the map. Ask if they know why Mary was living in this country (her parents were working there). In the story, the big house where Mary goes to live is in Yorkshire, in the north of England. Point out Yorkshire on the map for the students.

- Tell the students that they are going to find out about the route Mary would have taken from India by boat to London and from there by steam train to Yorkshire, and record her journey.
- Write on the board some key points for the students to find out, such as which route a boat from India to England took about a hundred years ago, which seas and oceans it sailed, how long the journey was, what facilities the boat had, how long it took to travel from London to Yorkshire by steam train, and any more interesting facts about the journey.
- Give out the materials and ask the students to do their research in pairs. They make notes, draw a map and mark out the voyage from India to London and the train journey from London to Yorkshire.
- The students then write about the journey, including any important information. They could also print out any relevant pictures from the internet or draw pictures as part of their project. (This activity could also be done as homework.)
- Display the information around the class. Discuss Mary's journey with the students.
- Variation: this project could also be done for Mr Craven's journey from Italy to England (as described on page 36 of the Reader).

5. Houses in the past

Materials: internet access and / or reference books; large sheets of blank paper / card; coloured pens / pencils; safety scissors; glue

- Remind the students that *The Secret Garden* is a story that took place over a hundred years ago.

Discuss what life was like a hundred years ago. What did people wear? What toys did children play with? What food did people eat? What were houses like in the past? How are houses different today?

- As homework or in class, ask the students to research what houses were like a hundred years ago. What facilities did they have for washing, cleaning, cooking, entertainment, etc.? What things did houses have in the past that they haven't got now? What things have houses got now that didn't exist in the past?
- Give out the materials and ask the students to create a poster contrasting houses in the past with the houses of today. They could draw pictures or print out images downloaded from the internet to illustrate their posters. They should label the images in English and write a short text about the differences.
- Ask volunteers to come to the front of the class to present their posters.
- Display the posters in the classroom.

6. Interview a character

- Divide the class into pairs. Explain that one student is going to be a character from the story and the other student is going to be the interviewer.
- In their pairs, ask the students to decide who the interviewer is and which character the other student is. The interviewer prepares a set of questions to ask the character, together with possible answers. Examples of questions for Mary could be: *How did you feel when you first arrived in England? How is it different from India? Do you like Mrs Medlock? Why? / Why not? What is the big house like? Do you like it? What kind of boy is Dickon?* etc. The students playing the character role should be prepared to answer these questions.
- Allow the pairs to interview each other. Go round the class and monitor their work.
- The pairs can then swap roles, with one student

choosing a different character and the other student preparing a new set of interview questions.

- Ask some volunteers to perform their interviews in front of the class.

7. Act out a scene

- Before the session, decide which scenes from the story the students can act out and how many students are needed for each scene.
- Write the scenes on the board, and allocate each one to a different group of students.
- The students read the scene in their books and decide who will play each role.
- The students write a script and practise acting out their roles.
- When everyone is ready, the students perform their scenes for the rest of the class. (They can perform them in the order that they appear in the story.)

Key words

- branch** Mary pushed against the door. She kept pushing, but grass, sticks and branches lay on the other side of the door. (p. 14)
- carriage** 'A horse and carriage will take us the rest of the way,' said Mrs Medlock. (p. 6)
- charm** 'He can charm most animals. You should see him with nervous squirrels!' (p. 16)
- dig** At the end of the path, an old man was digging. (p. 10)
- exercise** 'But I think that he just needs fresh air and exercise.' (p. 25)
- forward** Colin moved forward slowly in his chair and stood up. (p. 28)
- fox** He was there with his favourite animals – the blackbird, two squirrels and the fox. (p. 25)
- magic** It seemed to Mary that there was real magic in the garden. (p. 31)
- mist** When she breathed out she produced a kind of mist. (p. 9)
- pipe** 'When he played a pipe a snake rose slowly out of a basket,' Mary answered. (p. 33)
- pretend** He had to pretend that he could not walk. (p. 29)
- robin** The robin flew to the ground when Mary moved closer. (p. 11)
- rose** 'Roses were your mother's favourite flowers, you know.' (p. 31)
- seed** Will you go to town please, and buy flower seeds and tools for her? (p. 17)
- skipping rope** ... She ran along the path and played with her skipping rope. (p. 9)
- spade** 'Give me the spade. I'll start digging.' (p. 19)
- squirrel** Mary saw a small animal with a red coat and thick tail. It was a squirrel. (p. 9)
- tool** 'But you'll need tools and seeds. I'm sure that Dickon will help.' (p. 17)
- wheelchair** 'Is the wheelchair difficult to push?' Colin asked Dickon. (p. 27)
- wildlife** 'Perhaps he'll teach me about wildlife and gardening.' (p. 16)

While-Reading activities

Activity 1 (pages 3–8)

Match. Draw lines.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Mary woke up to a hot day, | a after dark in a horse and carriage. |
| 2 Mary was alone in the house | b and then her father's friend came. |
| 3 On the train, Mrs Medlock | c then she gave Mary a skipping rope. |
| 4 Mary arrived at the big house | d but every day was hot in India. |
| 5 In India, Mary's nurse always dressed her | e told Mary about her uncle's house. |
| 6 Martha helped Mary to dress, | f and did what she asked. |

Activity 2 (pages 9–13)

Write *T (True)* or *F (False)*.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 It was warm when Mary went outside to play. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Mary saw a squirrel and a robin in the garden. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Mr Craven was digging in the garden. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 The robin liked eating insects more than bread. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 The robin lived in the old garden behind the wall. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Ben locked the door of the old garden ten years ago. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 The robin showed Mary the key to the garden and the entrance. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Activity 3 (pages 14–17)

Write the adjectives.

beautiful fresh nervous new prettiest secret wild

- 1 Suddenly the door opened and Mary stepped into a _____ and wonderful garden.
- 2 Dead grass lay round the trees, but _____ life was starting to grow.
- 3 Mary wanted to make the garden _____ again.
- 4 Mary locked the door of the _____ garden and ran back to the house.
- 5 Martha said it was good to play in the _____ air.
- 6 Dickon could charm most animals, even _____ squirrels!
- 7 Martha wrote to Dickon and told him to choose the _____ flowers which are easy to grow.

Activity 4 (pages 18–24)

Order the sentences.

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| a | Dickon explains how Mrs Craven died. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b | Mr Craven agrees to give Mary some ground to make a garden. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c | The doctor and Mrs Medlock tell Mary to go back to her room. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d | Mary takes Dickon to the secret garden. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e | Mary meets her cousin Colin for the first time. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f | Dickon brings the tools and the seeds for Mary. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g | Mary promises to visit Colin again soon. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h | The sound of crying wakes Mary in the night. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i | Dickon agrees to help Mary with the garden. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Activity 5 (pages 25–30)

Tick ☒ the correct answer.

- 1 Which animals did Dickon bring to the secret garden?
 - a a blackbird, two squirrels and a fox ☐
 - b a baby sheep, a blackbird and two squirrels ☐
- 2 What discovery did Mary make?
 - a She had a cousin. ☐
 - b Dickon was her cousin. ☐
- 3 What did Dickon get for Colin?
 - a some animals ☐
 - b a wheelchair ☐
- 4 Who shouted 'You children shouldn't be in the garden!'?
 - a the old gardener ☐
 - b the doctor ☐
- 5 Why did Colin pretend he could not walk?
 - a to ride in the wheelchair ☐
 - b to surprise his father later ☐
- 6 What could Mrs Medlock and the doctor not understand?
 - a why Colin was stronger ☐
 - b why Colin was hungry ☐
- 7 What did the children do in the secret garden the next day?
 - a They did exercises and ate food. ☐
 - b They did gardening and some magic. ☐
- 8 Who sent the food for the children?
 - a Mrs Medlock ☐
 - b Dickon's mother ☐

Activity 6 (pages 31–35)

Complete the words in the sentences.

- 1 Ben Weatherstaff gave Colin a r_____ t_____ to plant in the garden.
- 2 The garden looked so beautiful and Mary felt there was m_____ there.
- 3 Dickon cooked potatoes and eggs on a f_____.
- 4 In India, Mary once saw a man who could c_____ snakes.
- 5 Dickon could charm animals too, and he had a s_____ sitting on his head.
- 6 Colin and Mary sang and laughed in the garden and Dickon played his p_____.

Activity 7 (pages 35–38)

Answer the questions.

- 1 Who wrote to Colin's father?
.....
- 2 Who did Mr Craven dream about?
.....
- 3 How did Mr Craven travel back to England?
.....
- 4 Where did Mr Craven go after he spoke to Mrs Medlock?
.....
- 5 Who ran straight into Mr Craven's arms?
.....
- 6 What did Mr Craven think of the secret garden?
.....

After-Reading activities

Activity 1

Who said it? Write the names.

Mary Martha Ben Weatherstaff Dickon Mrs Medlock Colin Mr Craven

- 1 'You're a rude little girl. Can't you dress yourself?'

- 2 'I refuse to rest. I feel better when Mary's here. She must stay!'

- 3 'You can walk and run! And you're tall!'

- 4 'I got my sister's letter. I've brought the tools and seeds.'

- 5 'Perhaps he'll teach me about wildlife and gardening.'

- 6 'I sometimes feel lonely too. But I don't when the robin is here.'

- 7 'It's a lonely place, far from anywhere else.'

Activity 2

Write sentences about the characters.



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Activity 3

Write the answers in the squares. What word appears?

- 1 Colin was Mary's _____.
- 2 Mary found the _____ to the door of the secret garden.
- 3 Colin's mother fell off a _____ in the secret garden.
- 4 The _____ was a bird who was Mary's friend.
- 5 Dickon told Colin that _____ would help him get better.
- 6 Mr Craven was Colin's _____.

1						
2						
3						
			4			
5						
6						

Activity 4

Imagine you find the key to a secret place. Write a short story about the place, what you do there and who you tell about it.
