



Hampstead Stage Company
a not for profit organization

The Secret Garden A Study Guide

Created by Amanda Pawlik, Education Director
Designed and Formatted by Austen Elizabeth Edwards

The Hampstead Stage Company *Proudly Presents* **The Secret Garden** **A Study Guide**

For use with the Theatrical Production by The Hampstead Stage Company
Created by Amanda Pawlik, Education Director
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The Secret Garden

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Education Director's Welcome

Thank you so much for bringing Hampstead Stage Company to your students!

The following study guide and workshop lesson plans are meant to supplement and enhance our performance. Please note, no formal preparation is required for seeing our shows, but we hope that these educational materials will inspire your students to continue learning about classic literature. We hope you enjoy them just as much as we enjoyed creating them for you!

Sincerely,

Amanda Pawlik

Education Director

Hampstead Stage Company

About Hampstead Stage Company

We are a nationally touring children's theatre that brings high quality, professional theatre to schools, libraries, and communities all over the 48 contiguous states (everywhere but Hawaii and Alaska!). The Hampstead Stage Company's goal is to bring great books to life through live theatre; sparking an interest in reading, and creating a new way to use your imagination.

The Hampstead Stage Company got its name from our founders, who came to America from the Hampstead area of London, England to pursue their dreams. Since its inception, our company has grown into one of the largest educational touring companies in the nation. We have performed for over twenty million audience members!

Our interactive educational tours run year-round and are performed by two professional actors, each playing multiple roles. Our scripts are original adaptations, based directly on literary classics, and include children and adults from the audience. The plays last one hour, with a question and answer session following the performance. We travel to your space, and bring our own realistic sets and costumes; designed using extensive historical



research. Our productions are flexible enough to fit into any assembly/performance space.

Theatre performance helps us learn things about ourselves and the world around us. But more than that, by using our imagination we can be proud of who we are, create goals for ourselves, and even help the way we think in school and at home! Sometimes not every school gets to see live theatre—it's thanks to your teachers and parents for bringing cool shows like this to your school! So, make sure to say thank you to them the way we do at the theatre – give them a round of applause!!

The Hampstead Stage Company is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All HSC study guides and supporting lesson plans are available to download for free from our website!

Contact: Anna Robbins, Company Manager: info@hampsteadstage.org
Website: www.hampsteadstage.org

All About Pantomime

The Hampstead Stage Company specializes in a special form of theatre called pantomime. Don't be fooled, we are not silent mimes with painted faces!

Pantomime, also known as “panto”, goes back much farther than that. Panto is a form of theatre traditionally found in the United Kingdom, Australia, Zimbabwe, India, and Ireland; and has been performed since the time of Ancient Greece! The word “pantomime” comes from the Greek words pantos, “every, all”; and mimos, “imitator, actor”. Pantomime in Ancient Greece used to mean a group of actors and musicians imitating a story. Many famous poets used to write scripts for these actors, and were paid very well!

Pantomime was first performed in England as a show between the acts of an opera, so they could change the set backstage. It became such a popular performance, that it soon became a show of its own. It is said that pantomime had its first full performance in the early 19th century. Actors travelled from town to town performing well-known stories that taught a lesson, or



encouraged the audience to think about the characters, and how they solved the problems they were presented.

Now pantomime is a very well-known form of theatre in England. Shows are based on traditional children's stories, and call for a LOT of audience participation! In England, the audience often "boos" the villain character, "awws" for the damsel in distress, and yells comments to the characters such as: "he's right behind you!", "Oh, yes he is!", or "Oh, no he isn't!". Volunteers are often called on stage by the Hampstead Stage Company to act as the Chorus. They become extras, playing many characters in multiple scenes, and are often on stage as much as the two other actors!

HSC actors follow traditional pantomime casting: girls play boys, boys play girls, and there are many, many costume changes. Actors rely on their voices and physicality (the way they move their bodies) to portray different characters. Just like all pantomime shows before; Hampstead actors travel all over the country, performing in many different types of spaces!



About the Author

Frances Hodgson Burnett

Frances Hodgson Burnett (24 November 1849 – 29 October 1924, nee Frances Eliza Hodgson) was born in Manchester, England. She experienced hardship and the drive to overcome it when her father passed away when she was only five years old. During this time, her mother took over running the family's iron foundry. The business suffered in 1863 with the onset of the Civil War and the family was forced to sell the business. In 1865, the Hodgson family immigrated to the United States with the promise of financial support from a maternal uncle and settled near Knoxville, TN. Unfortunately, the financial support never came. Needing to raise money to support her family, Frances published her first stories, "Miss Carruthers' Engagement" and "Hearts and Diamonds", in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1868. When her mother passed away in 1870, the burden of financially supporting her siblings (she was one of five) passed on to her and Frances's writing soon became a major source of income for her family.

In 1873, she married Swan Burnett, a childhood neighbor from New Market, TN, who would later become a doctor. Frances and Swan would have two sons, Lionel (born in 1874) and Vivian (born 1876). Burnett's first book for children, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, was published to great success in 1886. The main character of the story was based on her youngest son, Vivian. In 1888, she wrote *Sara Crewe*, which was later republished under the title *A Little Princess* in 1905.

Many of Burnett's stories feature spirited characters who overcome hardship, which some believe are representative of Burnett's own life -as she overcame the poverty and hardship of her childhood to become a successful writer. Her generosity was well-known. She often donated to projects that involved helping children. Burnett was also known for paving the way for other writers regarding copyright laws, standing up for her own work when a playwright had tried to stage a production of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* without her permission. While most well-known today for her children's books, Burnett was a successful novelist and playwright during her time. Her play, *Esmeralda*, written in collaboration with William Gillette in 1881, was one of the longest running plays of its time.



In 1890, Burnett met tragedy when her oldest son, Lionel, passed away from tuberculosis. In 1898, she divorced her husband and entered into a new marriage with her business manager, Stephen Townsend, which lasted for two years. In 1905, she received American citizenship and moved to Plandome Manor, New York. It was during this time when she wrote *The Secret Garden* (published in 1909), inspired by her long-time love of nature, the English gardens of her childhood, and the gardens at her home in Plandome Manor.

Frances died quietly in her home on October 29, 1924. She was 74 years old. Two years after her death, friends and admirers came together to form a memorial committee that would construct an intimate garden and work of art in her honor with the intention of creating an outdoor storytelling space. In 1936, the memorial finally found a home in New York's Central Park Conservatory Garden. The site features a fountain with a statute of young boy and girl (effigies of Mary and Dickon from *The Secret Garden*) playing out in nature created by sculptor Bessie Potter Vonnoh. This statute captures the joy of being in nature that Burnett so loved during her lifetime and that is evident in *The Secret Garden*.

Plot Summary

Our play opens on Dock 12, where Mary Lennox, a young girl, waits with a meager piece of luggage. She is fresh off the boat from India, arriving in England, waiting to be escorted to Misselthwaite Manor, where her uncle, Mr. Craven, lives. Mary has recently been orphaned. Both of her parents died during a cholera outbreak in India. A port official announces her arrival. Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Medlock, a matter-of-fact woman, enters and introduces herself as Mr. Craven's housekeeper. Medlock attempts to have a conversation with Mary, but she is disagreeable.

The scene shifts to Misselthwaite Manor and Mrs. Medlock shows Mary her rooms. Mary learns that she is to entertain herself and Medlock leaves her. Mr. Pitcher, the manor's groundskeeper, enters with Mary's breakfast, porridge, which Mary insults and refuses to eat. Pitcher soon leaves her, and Mary, used to being waited on, is in disbelief that no one has come to dress



her. She begins to explore the manor and is unimpressed. She decides to venture outside and explore the gardens.

Mary runs into Mrs. Medlock and complains that no one has come to fetch her and take her out to the gardens. Mrs. Medlock tells Mary that she is no longer in an Indian palace, and if she wants to go somewhere, she will need to do it herself. She gives Mary directions to the gardens -but warns her that there is a locked garden that she must not go in.

Mary explores the gardens and finds one that has a wall around it but no door. While trying to find the door, she meets a robin redbreast. Mr. Pitcher later tells her that he nursed this robin back to health when it was a fledgling and it now lives in the locked garden. Mary asks Mr. Pitcher why her uncle hates the locked garden. Mr. Pitcher, after some prodding, shares that Craven's wife had loved the garden and had loved to sit on a tree branch in the garden that was bent like a seat. One day, the branch broke and she fell to the ground. She was injured so badly that the next day she died. For this reason, Craven wants to keep the garden locked up. The memory of his wife in the garden is too painful. Needing to get back to his work, Pitcher sends Mary off to find the library and entertain herself with reading.

Mary wanders the long corridors of the manor, admiring the many portraits that line the walls. She enters one of the rooms and hears the sounds of someone crying. She runs into the hall to investigate and runs straight into Mrs. Medlock who scolds Mary for being in that part of the house. When Mary tries to tell Mrs. Medlock what she heard, Medlock denies it and sends Mary away.

The next day, Mary meets Mr. Pitcher in the garden where green sprouts are starting to poke through. The robin appears and Mary follows him to a pile of earth where she notices metal poking through. She digs in the earth and finds an old key -possibly the key to the locked garden -perhaps the robin knew the whole time! Mr. Pitcher enters and gives Mary a skipping rope, a gift from his sister. After showing Mary how to use it (much to Mary's amusement), Pitcher leaves Mary to skip rope in the gardens.



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As Mary begins to skip, she comes to a part of the gardens that are not as well cared for, and notices the robin. She asks the robin if he will show her the door to the locked garden. He is perched on a piece of ivy, which Mary inspects and swings on -revealing an old rusty door. She tries putting the key into the door's lock, and it works! The door to the secret garden pushes open and Mary investigates the garden -noticing that the trees are overgrown and not much green can be seen in the brown earth. Mary starts weeding the garden, with some difficulty and vows to ask Mr. Pitcher for some tools to care for the garden.

A young boy enters, and Mary knows instantly that it is Dickon, Mr. Pitcher's nephew. Dickon, who is skilled at charming animals, invites his animal friends, rabbit, fox, and crow, to come out and meet Mary. After visiting with the animals, Dickon tells Mary that he has brought some tools for her as she had asked Mr. Pitcher for them earlier. Together, the two start to work on the garden. Dickon promises Mary that he will keep the garden a secret. Dickon then exits, returning home to help his mother. Mary hears Mrs. Medlock calling for her, saying that her uncle has returned home and would like to see her. Mary leaves the secret garden and returns to Misselthwaite Manor.

Inside, Mary meets her uncle, who asks her how she is settling in and if she needs anything. Mary replies that she would like a bit of earth to plant seeds in and make things grow. Her uncle tells her that she may do so and take it from anywhere that is not wanted. Her uncle then exits, departing for the summer.

The time shifts to later that night and a rumble of thunder is heard in the distance. The crying noise that Mary heard earlier starts again, and she follows it, convinced that it is not the wind but someone crying. As she is following the noise down the hallway, she meets Colin -Craven's son and her cousin. Colin is the one who was crying. He is in a wheelchair because he is ill. He has been told he may become a hunchback when he is older or die. Mary tells Colin that there is a secret garden. When he says he will order everyone to take him there, Mary makes him promise to keep it a secret.



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Seeing that her cousin is tired, she tells Colin that she is sleepy and should go to bed, promising to come back and visit him tomorrow.

The next day, Mary meets Dickon in the secret garden and tells him about Colin. Dickon suggests that they bring Colin out into the garden to help him feel better. Mary goes to visit Colin, but hears Mrs. Medlock out in the corridors and knows that she will stop her, so she does not go.

That night, the wailing sound returns. Colin is having a tantrum because Mary did not go and visit him. Mary explains what happened. Colin continues to lament that he is not well and that he has a lump on his back. Mary asks to see the lump, and Colin shows her, but there is nothing on his back at all. Mary tells Colin that she has found the secret garden and that she will bring him there to meet Dickon.

The scene shifts to Mary bringing Colin into the secret garden. Mary pushes Colin's wheelchair into the sun and goes to find Dickon. Colin, inspired by his surroundings, begins to try to stand up and walk, and he does! Overtired from the accomplishment, Mary brings Colin back to the house to rest, saying he can meet Dickon another time. Colin exclaims that he will get well and live forever.

The time shifts to the end of the summer and we see Craven returning to the manor after being away. Craven muses that he was in beautiful surroundings, but after a while, he wanted someone to share the experience with. He heard a voice say "in the garden" and had returned home to see everyone.

We see the scene shift and Colin walks in to the secret garden and begins digging. Mary enters and tells him his father is back. Colin runs off and we hear the surprised reaction of Craven as he sees his son running toward him.



Places

Misselthwaite Manor: The house where Mary stays. We learn that it is over six hundred years old with almost a hundred rooms in it, most of them have been locked up.

India: Country in southeast Asia where Mary lived with her parents. The bright colors of this country contrast greatly with the gray landscape of the Yorkshire moors at the start of the play.

Yorkshire: County in Northern England.

The Gardens: The many gardens at Misselthwaite Manor that Mary explores.

The Secret Garden: A special garden maintained by Lily Craven until she passed away ten years prior to the start of the play. The garden has been locked up by Mr. Craven, her husband, to keep out any painful memories of her.

Main Characters

Mary Lennox: A young girl, ten-years-old, stubborn, spoiled, recently orphaned.

Mrs. Medlock: Mr. Craven's housekeeper, matter-of-fact, stern.

Mr. Pitcher: Groundskeeper at Misselthwaite Manor.

The Robin: A robin redbreast. Mary's new found friend who shows her the way to the secret garden.

Dickon: A few years older than Mary. He has grown up on the moor and has a special ability for communicating with animals and a special way with the earth.

The Animals: Played by our volunteers in the show! Fox, crow, and rabbit. They come to visit Mary at Dickon's request.



Mr. Craven: Mary's uncle. Master of Misselthwaite Manor.

Colin: Mr. Craven's son, same age as Mary. When we meet him in the play he is sickly and confined to a wheelchair.

Lily Craven: Mr. Craven's wife and Colin's mother. She passed away ten years prior to the start of the story. While she is not seen in the play, her presence is felt throughout by the other characters.

Vocabulary

Cholera: A bacterial disease that causes diarrhea and dehydration, usually spread through contaminated water. In the 1800's and early 1900's, there were several outbreaks of the disease. Mary Lennox lost her parents to a cholera outbreak in India at the start of *The Secret Garden*.

Moors: Short for "moorland" -type of terrain, an area of uncultivated land typically covered in heather. Misselthwaite Manor is surrounded by moorland.

Yorkshire: A county in Northern England, also refers to the dialect of those who come from this county. Misselthwaite Manor is located here.

Preshow Discussion Questions

The following questions provide a guide for getting students excited about seeing the performance and to guide them in watching the show.

Today we are going to see a performance by Hampstead Stage Company called The Secret Garden.

- Has anyone read the book or seen a movie version of this story? If so, what do you remember most about it?
- What do you know about where *The Secret Garden* is set?
- Does anyone know who Frances Hodgson Burnett is?

If possible, write up student ideas on the board or chart paper so the whole class can see all of the answers. Let students know:



- **The Secret Garden** is set primarily in Yorkshire England-in the countryside -more than 100 years ago in the early 1900's.
- **Frances Hodgson Burnett** is the author of *The Secret Garden* -she also wrote famous books such as *A Little Princess* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. She loved to help those less fortunate than her, especially children. She also loved nature and gardens in particular.

Post Show Discussion Questions

- Have students share general reactions to the performance
- Who was your favorite character? Why?
- Are there any other questions you have about the play or theatre that the actors did not get to answer?
 - Hampstead Stage loves to receive letters and emails from schools! If they have questions or more comments they would like to share, students are encouraged to write to us! All of our contact information may be found on our website.

Workshop Lesson Plans

We have prepared the following workshop lesson plans for those who wish to expand upon seeing our performance in the classroom. These activities may be done either before or after seeing the performance. Teachers are encouraged to modify as needed for the needs of their students. A summary of the workshops is provided below. The full lesson plans may be downloaded for free from our website.

Grades K-2

Nature Poems → In this interactive workshop, students write a short “five senses poem” about their favorite place in nature -a backyard, a garden, the beach, etc. and discuss the role of nature in *The Secret Garden*. As time permits, students may choose to decorate their poems with artwork and share their poems with the rest of the group.



Grades 3-5

Secret Garden Tour→ In this interactive workshop, students write a short reflection on their favorite outdoor space and work with a partner to guide them through a mimed tour of this space. They then break into larger groups and work to create a tour of a space for the secret garden in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* using passages from the book. Concluding discussion about the positive effect nature can have in our lives.

Grades 6-8

Impactful Environments in *The Secret Garden*→ In this workshop, students learn about the basic touchpoints of Romantic Literature, and focus on one of its tenants, nature as a healing force, and how this applies to Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. Students are then led in reflecting on the change they see in the characters Mary and Colin initiated by the garden and also reflect on how nature has impacted their own lives. Large group discussion follows this activity where students share their own experiences and discuss the experiences of Mary and Colin in the story.

Works Cited and Additional Information

Many of the activities used in the workshops are inspired by the **Arts Literacy Project**. For more information, please visit their website:

<http://www.artslit.org/handbook.php>