



Secret Garden Tour

Topics:

- Literature
- Creative Drama: Movement and Mime

Summary: 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: 3-5

Time: 60-90 minutes

Materials:

- Passages from *The Secret Garden* (provided)
- Notebooks or paper, and pens/pencils for writing

Learning Targets:

I CAN use my imagination to take my partner on a tour of my favorite outdoor space.

I CAN work collaboratively to create a tour of the secret garden using passages from the book, *The Secret Garden*.

Introduction and Warm-Up (15 minutes):

Warm-Up (10 minutes):

Have students begin to walk around the room (giving clear boundaries of where to walk and not walk, for example, “do not go behind the teacher’s desk, stay in the center of the room, etc.). Let students know this should be done quietly and that they should be mindful of others in the room (try not to walk into anyone)

- You may have students play with increasing or decreasing their speed to get energy up and help with focus if needed. For example, “On a scale of 1-10, we are walking at about a 5, let’s bring it up to an 8 [Students would then increase their pace to what an 8 would feel like, the range of 1 -10 would represent that from slow motion walking (1) to almost running (10)]
- As students are walking around the room, have them think about the following prompt:
 - Think about your favorite place to go outside -where is it? Is it your backyard, the beach, a local park, a garden of your own, or somewhere else? Take a moment to really visualize this place as you keep moving about the space.
- After a few moments of allowing the students to really ponder the question, call out “freeze” and have students freeze wherever they are in the room.



- Instruct students to find the person nearest them and discuss their answers. Let students know that after 2 minutes of discussion, people will be asked to share with the whole group.
- Have students briefly share their places.
- Give everyone a follow up question, “What about these places made you so happy? Why did you like being there so much?”

Introduction (5 minutes):

Let students know, *Today, we are going to keep discussing our favorite places in nature and use our imaginations and storytelling skills to describe these places to a partner. We will also be working in groups to bring the secret garden from the story The Secret Garden to life.*

Tour of a Place (20-25 minutes)

Guided Reflection Writing (10 minutes)

- Have students find a seat and take out notebooks or paper for writing.
- Encourage students to keep reflecting about their favorite place from the opening warm-up. Let them know that they will have ten minutes to write about this favorite place in as much detail as possible.
- Encourage them to consider their place from all the senses -in addition to sight, what does the place sound like? Feel like? Smell like?
- Encourage them to also write a few sentences about why the place is so important to them and any favorite memories that they associate with this place.

Guiding Partners on a Tour of the Place (10 minutes)

- After students have written down their thoughts, assign each student a partner.
- Partners will take turns leading each other on a “tour” of their favorite place.
- To do this, students should mime and lead their partner through the space and use as much detail as possible. For instance, “Take a step down here onto the sand, can you smell the ocean breeze?”
- Remind students that they should physically act out as much of the space as possible and partners should also follow their lead. So, if one partner takes a step down, the partner following them should also do this.
- Partners are welcome and encouraged to weave in related stories about the place and include their reasons about why this place is their favorite during their tour.

Variation → Depending on the familiarity and comfort level of the students, this exercise could be done with the student being guided closing their eyes. If using this option, the student giving the tour should keep physical contact, such as a hand on a shoulder or holding a hand, as they lead their partner.

Reflection (5 minutes)

After each partner has had the chance to both guide and be led, gather students for a quick reflection:

- Was it easier to lead or follow? Why do you think this was so?
- When leading -what was challenging?



- When following -how easy was it to visualize your partner's place? What details did you find to be the most helpful?
- How did physically acting out the tour affect your understanding of what each place was like?

Creating a Tour of the Secret Garden (45 minutes)

Introducing the Activity (5 minutes)

- Split students into groups of 4-5 if possible. It will be important for there to be an even number of groups total.
- Let them know that they will all be working together to create a tour of the secret garden from *The Secret Garden*.
- If students have seen Hampstead Stage's production of *The Secret Garden* or read the book or seen another film or play adaptation of the story, ask students what details about the secret garden they remember from this. If possible, teacher or student helper could write the ideas on the board.
- *Just as you all have places in nature that are important to you, Colin, Mary, and Dickon in The Secret Garden have their own special place in the garden.*

Reading the Passage as a Large Group (7 minutes):

- Hand out passages from *The Secret Garden* -when Mary discovers the garden
- As time allows, teacher or confident readers should read out the passage first.
- Students should take note of any landmarks that are mentioned such as trees, bushes, etc. for the purpose of giving a tour of this space later in the activity.

Students Work in Groups to Create a Tour of the Secret Garden (20-25 minutes)

- In their groups, students should then read through the passage a second time making note of any other landmarks or details they may have missed the first time.
- Once students have a rough idea of the foundation of the garden, students are then encouraged to imagine what the garden will look like when everything is in bloom and brainstorm this with their group. They may be as creative as they like!
- Students may find it helpful to write this down or for the group to draw a sketch.
- Once each group has their rough vision of the garden, each group member should pick one part of the garden such as the entrance, the rose bushes, etc. and practice describing it in detail and giving a tour of that specific part of the garden just as students did with their favorite places in the previous activity.
- When groups are ready, each group should pair up with another group and groups should lead their partner groups on a tour of the garden, with each group member taking the lead for their specific part of the garden.

Closing Reflection (10 minutes)

- How did other groups visualize the garden? Was it similar to your group's ideas?
- In this story, the secret garden is described in great detail and has a positive effect on the characters in the book? Why do you think this is?



Appendix -Text from *The Secret Garden* Chapter 9 (Mary discovers the secret garden)

It was the sweetest, most mysterious-looking place any one could imagine. The high walls which shut it in were covered with the leafless stems of climbing roses which were so thick that they were matted together. Mary Lennox knew they were roses because she had seen a great many roses in India. All the ground was covered with grass of a wintry brown and out of it grew clumps of bushes which were surely rosebushes if they were alive. There were numbers of standard roses which had so spread their branches that they were like little trees. There were other trees in the garden, and one of the things which made the place look strangest and loveliest was that climbing roses had run all over them and swung down long tendrils which made light swaying curtains, and here and there they had caught at each other or at a far-reaching branch and had crept from one tree to another and made lovely bridges of themselves. There were neither leaves nor roses on them now and Mary did not know whether they were dead or alive, but their thin gray or brown branches and sprays looked like a sort of hazy mantle spreading over everything, walls, and trees, and even brown grass, where they had fallen from their fastenings and run along the ground. It was this hazy tangle from tree to tree which made it all look so mysterious. Mary had thought it must be different from other gardens which had not been left all by themselves so long; and indeed it was different from any other place she had ever seen in her life.

"How still it is!" she whispered. "How still!"

Then she waited a moment and listened at the stillness. The robin, who had flown to his treetop, was still as all the rest. He did not even flutter his wings; he sat without stirring, and looked at Mary.

"No wonder it is still," she whispered again. "I am the first person who has spoken in here for ten years."

She moved away from the door, stepping as softly as if she were afraid of awakening some one. She was glad that there was grass under her feet and that her steps made no sounds. She walked under one of the fairy-like gray arches between the trees and looked up at the sprays and tendrils which formed them. "I wonder if they are all quite dead," she said. "Is it all a quite dead garden? I wish it wasn't."

If she had been Ben Weatherstaff * she could have told whether the wood was alive by looking at it, but she could only see that there were only gray or brown sprays and branches and none showed any signs of even a tiny leaf-bud anywhere.

But she was inside the wonderful garden and she could come through the door under the ivy any time and she felt as if she had found a world all her own.

The sun was shining inside the four walls and the high arch of blue sky over this particular piece of Misselthwaite seemed even more brilliant and soft than it was over the moor. The robin flew down from his treetop and hopped about or flew after her from one bush to another. He chirped a good deal and had a very busy air, as if he were showing her things. Everything was strange and silent and she seemed to be hundreds of miles away from any one, but somehow she did not feel lonely at all. All that troubled her was her wish that she knew whether



all the roses were dead, or if perhaps some of them had lived and might put out leaves and buds as the weather got warmer. She did not want it to be a quite dead garden. If it were a quite alive garden, how wonderful it would be, and what thousands of roses would grow on every side!

Her skipping-rope had hung over her arm when she came in and after she had walked about for a while she thought she would skip round the whole garden, stopping when she wanted to look at things. There seemed to have been grass paths here and there, and in one or two corners there were alcoves of evergreen with stone seats or tall moss-covered flower urns in them.

As she came near the second of these alcoves she stopped skipping. There had once been a flowerbed in it, and she thought she saw something sticking out of the black earth—some sharp little pale green points. She remembered what Ben Weatherstaff had said and she knelt down to look at them.

"Yes, they are tiny growing things and they might be crocuses or snowdrops or daffodils," she whispered.

She bent very close to them and sniffed the fresh scent of the damp earth. She liked it very much.

"Perhaps there are some other ones coming up in other places," she said. "I will go all over the garden and look."

She did not skip, but walked. She went slowly and kept her eyes on the ground. She looked in the old border beds and among the grass, and after she had gone round, trying to miss nothing, she had found ever so many more sharp, pale green points, and she had become quite excited again.

"It isn't a quite dead garden," she cried out softly to herself. "Even if the roses are dead, there are other things alive."

She did not know anything about gardening, but the grass seemed so thick in some of the places where the green points were pushing their way through that she thought they did not seem to have room enough to grow. She searched about until she found a rather sharp piece of wood and knelt down and dug and weeded out the weeds and grass until she made nice little clear places around them.

"Now they look as if they could breathe," she said, after she had finished with the first ones. "I am going to do ever so many more. I'll do all I can see. If I haven't time today I can come tomorrow."

She went from place to place, and dug and weeded, and enjoyed herself so immensely that she was led on from bed to bed and into the grass under the trees. The exercise made her so warm that she first threw her coat off, and then her hat, and without knowing it she was smiling down on to the grass and the pale green points all the time.

The robin was tremendously busy. He was very much pleased to see gardening begun on his own estate. He had often wondered at Ben Weatherstaff. Where gardening is done all sorts of delightful things to eat are turned



up with the soil. Now here was this new kind of creature who was not half Ben's size and yet had had the sense to come into his garden and begin at once.

Mistress Mary worked in her garden until it was time to go to her midday dinner. In fact, she was rather late in remembering, and when she put on her coat and hat, and picked up her skipping-rope, she could not believe that she had been working two or three hours. She had been actually happy all the time; and dozens and dozens of the tiny, pale green points were to be seen in cleared places, looking twice as cheerful as they had looked before when the grass and weeds had been smothering them.

"I shall come back this afternoon," she said, looking all round at her new kingdom, and speaking to the trees and the rose-bushes as if they heard her.

Then she ran lightly across the grass, pushed open the slow old door and slipped through it under the ivy. She had such red cheeks and such bright eyes and ate such a dinner that Martha was delighted.

*Note -Ben Weatherstaff is similar to the character Mr. Pitcher in Hampstead Stage Company's adaptation of *The Secret Garden*.