

The Secret Garden

Frances Hodgson Burnett

Text adaptation by Clare West

Illustrated by Cherie Zamazing



Original Bookworms Series Editor:
Jennifer Bassett

Activities

Before reading

Mary's parents have died, and she is sent to live in her uncle's big old house in Yorkshire. There is nothing to do all day, and no one to talk to except old Ben Weatherstaff, the gardener. Mary is bored and lonely. But then Mary learns about the secret garden. No one has been inside it for ten years – except the robin, who flies over the wall. Mary watches the robin, and wonders where the key is . . .

And then there is that strange crying in the night, somewhere in the house. It sounds like a child crying . . .

1 Read the introduction to the story. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Mary is an orphan.
- 2 Mary goes to live in a large house in Yorkshire.
- 3 Mary has got a lot of friends.
- 4 Mary isn't interested in the secret garden.
- 5 Mary thinks there might be another child in the house.

2 Why do you think the secret garden is locked? Tick one of the boxes.

- 1 No one wants to use it.
- 2 Somebody died there.
- 3 It is very wild.
- 4 There is a dangerous animal in it.
- 5 There are lots of birds in it.

CHAPTER 1 Little Miss Mary

Nobody seemed to care about Mary. She was born in India, where her father was a British official. He was busy with his work, and her mother, who was very beautiful, spent all her time going to parties. So an Indian woman, Kamala, was paid to take care of the little girl. Mary was not a pretty child. She had a thin angry face and thin yellow hair. She was always telling her servant Kamala what to do. Mary never thought of other people, but only of herself. In fact she was a very selfish, disagreeable, bad-tempered little girl.

One very hot morning, when she was about nine years old, she woke up and saw that instead of Kamala there was a different Indian servant by her bed.

official a person who decides important questions

selfish a person who thinks only of himself or herself

disagreeable not pleasing, bad-tempered

bad-tempered often cross and angry



pretend to try to
make somebody
believe something

'What are *you* doing here?' she asked crossly. 'Go away! And send Kamala to me at once!'

The woman looked afraid. 'I'm sorry, Miss Mary, she – she – she can't come!'

Something strange was happening that day. Some of the house servants were missing and everybody looked frightened. But nobody told Mary anything, and Kamala still did not come. So at last Mary went out into the garden and played by herself under a tree. She pretended she was making her own flower garden, and picked large red flowers to push into the ground. All the time she was saying crossly to herself, 'I hate Kamala! I'll hit her when she comes back!'

Just then she saw her mother coming into the garden with a young Englishman. They did not notice the child, who listened to their conversation.



'It's very bad, is it?' her mother asked the young man in a worried voice.

'Very bad,' he answered seriously. 'People are dying like flies. It's dangerous to stay in this town. You should go to the hills where there's no disease.'

'Oh, I know!' she cried. 'We must leave soon!'

Suddenly they heard loud cries coming from the servants' rooms at the side of the house.

'What's happened?' cried Mary's mother wildly.

'I think one of your servants has just died. You didn't tell me the disease is *here*, in your house!'

'I didn't know!' she screamed. 'Quick, come with me!' And together they ran into the house.

Now Mary understood what was wrong. The terrible disease had already killed many people in the town, and in all the houses people were dying. In Mary's house it was Kamala who had just died. Later that day three more servants died there.

All through the night and the next day people ran in and out of the house, shouting and crying. Nobody thought of Mary. She hid in her bedroom, frightened by the strange and terrible sounds that she heard around her. Sometimes she cried and sometimes she slept.

When she woke the next day, the house was silent.

'Perhaps the disease has gone,' she thought, 'and everybody is well again. I wonder who will take care of me instead of Kamala? Why doesn't someone bring me some food? It's strange the house is so quiet.'

But just then she heard men's voices in the hall.

'How sad!' said one. 'That beautiful woman!'

'There was a child too, wasn't there?' said the other.

'Although none of us ever saw her.'

disease illness

scream to cry out
loudly

Mary was standing in the middle of her room when they opened the door a few minutes later. The two men jumped back in surprise.

'My name is Mary Lennox,' she said crossly. 'I was asleep when everyone was ill, and now I'm hungry.'

'It's the child who no one ever saw!' said the older man to the other. 'They've all forgotten her!'

'Why was I forgotten?' asked Mary angrily. 'Why has nobody come to take care of me?'

The younger man looked at her very sadly. 'Poor child!' he said. 'You see, there's nobody left alive in the house. So nobody *can* come.'

In this strange and sudden way Mary learnt that both her mother and her father had died. The few servants who had not died had run away in the night. No one had remembered little Miss Mary. She was all alone.

Because she had never known her parents well, she did not miss them at all. She only thought of herself, as she had always done.

'Where will I live?' she wondered. 'I hope I'll stay with people who'll let me do what I want.'

At first she was taken to an English family who had known her parents. She hated their untidy house and noisy children, and preferred playing by herself in the garden. One day she was playing her favourite game, pretending to make a garden, when one of the children, Basil, offered to help.

'Go away!' cried Mary. 'I don't want your help!'

For a moment Basil looked angry, and then he began to laugh. He danced round and round Mary and sang a funny little song about Miss Mary and her stupid flowers. This made Mary very cross indeed. No one had ever laughed at her so unkindly.