

The Secret Garden
by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Chapter 8: A tantrum

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| Author: Adrian Tennant |
| Level: Pre-intermediate |
| Age: Teenagers / Young adults |
| Time needed: 45-60 minutes |
| Preparation: One copy of the worksheet needed for Activity 2 per pair of students |



Activity 1

- Write the word *tantrum* on the board and ask the students if they know what it means.
- If the students don't know what *tantrum* means, write up the following definition on the board: *when someone, especially a young child, behaves in a very angry way that isn't reasonable.*
- Elicit a few examples by personalizing the topic, i.e. give an example of when you, or someone that you know, had a tantrum. See if your students can add examples of their own.
- Ask the students to close their eyes, relax and listen to the recording carefully.
- Play the recording through once from start to finish.
- Ask the students to think about what they have just heard and answer the following questions: *Who had a tantrum? Why?*
- Elicit ideas and write a few on the board.
- Play the recording again and ask the students to listen carefully and see if they were correct.

Key: *Nobody had a tantrum, although Martha says that Colin almost did. This was firstly because Mary didn't visit him in the morning and, secondly, because she told him he wasn't ill and that he was selfish.*

Note: This is quite a tricky question for most students, as they usually expect that there will be a definitive answer to a question. By asking a question like this, you are able to gauge how well they listen and how much they understand.

Activity 2

- Tell the students that they will need to listen closely to the chapter to complete the multiple-choice questions.

- Put students in pairs and give out the worksheet.
- Point out that there are eight questions, each with three possible answers, but only one correct answer.
- Ask the students to close their eyes, relax and listen to the chapter carefully.
- Play the recording through once from start to finish.
- Tell the students to read through the questions and possible answers and choose the correct answer in each case.
- Encourage students to work in their pairs. Monitor and help where necessary.
- Play the recording again if necessary.
- Check the answers as a class.

Key: 1. c; 2. b; 3. c; 4. a; 5. b; 6. a; 7. c; 8. a

Activity 3

- Ask the students to predict what will happen in the next chapter.
- Get them to write down their ideas.

- 1 What was the first thing Mary did when she woke up?
a. got dressed b. had breakfast c. opened the window

- 2 What colour were the crocuses that Mary could see?
a. white and red b. purple and yellow c. blue

- 3 What made Mary a little nervous?
a. Dickon b. a fox cub c. a crow

- 4 What was the robin doing?
a. building a nest b. eating worms c. sitting on a branch

- 5 When Mary went back to the house, who was sitting in the corner of Colin's room?
a. Martha b. a nurse c. Colin

- 6 Why is Colin's back so weak?
a. because he doesn't sit up b. because he's old c. because there's a lump

- 7 What does Mary think will help Colin?
a. exercise b. lying in bed c. fresh air

- 8 What happened when Mary told Colin about the secret garden?
a. he fell asleep b. he became angry c. he smiled

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Transcript

On the first morning when the sky was blue again, Mary woke very early. The sun was pouring in through the windows. She jumped out of bed and ran to open the window. The moor was blue, and the fresh air that blew in was warm.

'I can't wait!' Mary said, excited. 'I'm going to see the garden!'

She knew how to dress herself by now. She put on her clothes and ran downstairs. No one was awake because it was so early, but she unlocked a small side door. And then she stepped outside. The sky was so blue and full of springtime light that she wanted to sing. She ran towards the secret garden. In all the flower beds, things had started to grow. Mary could even see purple and yellow crocuses starting to come out. The world was waking up.

When Mary arrived at the door of the secret garden, she heard a strange low sound. Looking up, she saw a crow landing on top of the wall. He made her a little nervous, and she felt glad when he flew away across the garden. But when she went into the garden, she saw that he had landed on an apple tree. Under the apple tree was a little fox cub. Both animals were watching Dickon, who was working hard on the grass below.

Mary ran across the grass to him.

'Oh, Dickon! Dickon!' she cried out. 'How did you get here so early?'

'I couldn't stay in bed!' he laughed. 'The world's begun again this morning. And the garden was lying here waiting. I ran like mad all the way here, shouting and singing! And these two came with me!'

As he spoke, the little fox cub got up and moved next to him. And the crow flew down and sat quietly on his shoulder.

'Oh, Dickon!' said Mary. 'I'm so happy!'

There was so much to see. There were leaf-buds growing on the rose branches. And there were thousands of new green shoots pushing up through the earth. There was every joy on earth in the secret garden that morning. Even the robin had a special surprise for them. They suddenly saw him flying through the trees with something in his beak. Dickon stood quite still and put his hand on Mary's arm.

'He's found a mate and he's building his nest,' he whispered to her. 'That's part of springtime. We mustn't frighten him.'

'There's something I want to tell you,' whispered Mary. 'Do you know about Colin?'

Dickon turned his head to look at her in surprise.

'What do you know about him?' he asked.

Mary told Dickon about finding Colin in his room.

'Colin is afraid of becoming a hunchback like his father,' said Mary. 'He's so afraid of it that he won't sit up.'



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Dickon thought for a few minutes.

'I knew there was a little boy who was ill', he said. 'And I knew that Mr Craven didn't like people talking about him. If he was out here, he wouldn't think about being a hunchback. Do you think we could get him to come out here?'

'I've been wondering that myself,' said Mary.

'It'd be good for him, I'm sure,' said Dickon. 'I could push his wheelchair. I'm sure we could get him out here.'

They were so busy in the garden that Mary didn't go and see Colin all day. When she finally said goodbye to Dickon and came into the house for tea, she was excited about seeing Colin. She wanted to tell him about Dickon's fox cub and the crow.

But when she went to her room, Martha was waiting there, looking worried. 'Oh, I wish you'd gone to see him today,' Martha said. 'He's been getting close to a tantrum all afternoon.'

When Mary went into Colin's room, he was lying on his back in his bed. His nurse was sitting in the corner of the room. Colin did not turn his head towards Mary when she came in.

'Why didn't you get up?' Mary asked him.

'I did get up this morning,' Colin answered, without looking at her. 'But you didn't come. So I told them to put me back in bed this afternoon. Where have you been?'

'I was working in the garden with Dickon,' said Mary.

Colin frowned and looked at her.

'I won't let that boy come here if you stay with him all the time,' he said.

Mary grew silently angry.

'If you send Dickon away, I'll never come into this room again,' she said.

'I'll make you!' said Colin. 'You're so selfish!'

'You're more selfish than I am,' said Mary. 'You're the most selfish boy I ever saw.'

'I'm not!' snapped Colin. 'I'm not selfish, because I'm always ill,' he said. 'And anyway, I'm going to die.'

'You're not!' snapped Mary. 'You just say that. I think you're proud of it!'

Colin's face had gone white and red, and he was shaking.

'I felt a lump in my back,' he choked. 'I felt it. I am going to turn into a hunchback, and then I shall die.'

'You didn't feel a lump,' said Mary, still angry. 'There's nothing wrong with your stupid back. Turn over and let me look at it. Nurse! Come here and show me his back!'

The nurse came up to the bed, looking a little frightened.

'Show her!' Colin cried. 'Then she'll see!'

The nurse helped Colin turn over, and Mary looked up and down his poor thin back.

'There's nothing there!' she said at last. 'There are no lumps. If you ever say

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there's a lump again, I shall laugh!

For years, Colin had lain in his bed thinking that he was ill. Everyone had been frightened of him. So no one had ever told him that there was nothing wrong with him. But now, hearing this angry little girl, he actually felt that she might be telling the truth.

'I didn't know that he thought he had a lump on his back,' said the nurse quietly. 'There's no lump. His back is weak because he doesn't sit up.'

Colin turned to look at her. Big tears were running down his face.

'Do you think – do you think I will live long enough to grow up?' he asked.

'You probably will if you get lots of fresh air,' said the nurse.

'I'll look after him,' Mary said to the nurse. 'You can go if you like.'

As soon as the nurse had gone, Colin pulled Mary's hand.

'Tell me, Mary,' he said. 'Have you – have you found the way into the secret garden yet?'

Mary looked at Colin's poor little tired face and her heart softened.

'I think I may have found the way,' she answered. 'And if you promise not to have any more tantrums, I will tell you about it tomorrow.'

Colin's hand trembled.

'Oh, Mary!' he said. 'If I could go into the garden, I think I would live long enough to grow up!'

'Lie quietly,' Mary said. 'And I shall tell you what I think the garden might look like.'

And quietly, Mary began to talk about the secret garden. She talked about roses that might have climbed all over the trees and the walls. She talked about crocuses that might be turning purple and yellow. And she talked about a robin that might be building its nest. And when she looked up, Colin had fallen asleep.