

The Secret Garden
by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Chapter 10: Colin goes into the secret garden

Author: Adrian Tennant
Level: Pre-intermediate
Age: Teenagers / Young adults
Time needed: 45-60 minutes
Preparation: One copy of the worksheet needed per student for Activities 1 and 2



Activity 1

- Hand out a copy of the worksheet to each student.
- Write the chapter title on the board.
- Ask the students to think of nine words they think they will hear in this chapter and write one word in each of the boxes in the grid.
- Explain that they will be playing 'Word bingo'. They should listen to the recording and if they hear a word they have written down, they must cross it out.
- If the students cross out all their words, they should put their hands up.
- Give the students enough time to write their words in the grid. Monitor and help where necessary.
- Play the recording.
- See how many words the students crossed out.
- If anyone got 'bingo', check that all nine words actually were in the chapter by asking them to read out the words.

Alternative procedure

- Get students to shout out 'bingo' rather than put their hands up.
- If someone shouts bingo, pause the recording and check the word / answer straight away.

Activity 2

- Ask the students to look at the sentences and try and complete them with the words in the box.
- Tell the students to turn the worksheet over, put their pens down and listen to the recording again.
- Ask the students to look at the worksheet again and try to complete any remaining sentences.
- Put the students in pairs and ask them to check their answers together.

- Play the recording again.
- Check the answers as a class.

Key:

- a. upset; b. working; c. surprised; d. pushed;
e. covered; f. watched; g. thin / weak; h. cross;
i. pale; j. secretly

Activity 3

- Ask the students to listen to the whole chapter again.
- Tell them that as they listen they should pretend they are one of the following characters: Mary, Colin, Dickon or Ben Weatherstaff.
- After they have listened, find out who picked which character.
- Then, choose a student to come and sit at the front of the class. Check which character they picked.
- Explain that they will 'be' that character and the other students will ask them questions connected to the chapter, i.e. if the student picked Ben then a couple of the questions might be: *Why did you get angry when you saw the children in the garden? How did you feel when you saw Master Colin standing up?* etc.

Chapter 10: Colin goes into the secret garden

Activity 1

Write words that you expect to hear in this chapter in the bingo grid below.

Activity 2

Complete the sentences with the correct words in the box.

covered cross pale weak pushed secretly
working surprised thin upset watched

- a Colin didn't get _____ when he couldn't go to the garden.
- b Colin didn't want the gardeners to be _____ when he was out.
- c Mrs Medlock was _____ when Colin said he wanted to go out in the fresh air.
- d Dickon _____ the wheelchair while Mary walked along next to it.
- e As they went into the garden, Colin _____ his eyes with his hands.
- f Colin sat in his wheelchair under the plum tree and _____ Mary and Dickon.
- g Colin was afraid to stand up because his legs were _____ and _____.
- h When Ben first saw the children in the garden he was very _____.
- i Mary turned _____ when Colin started getting out of his wheelchair.
- j Ben told the children that he had visited the garden _____ before.

Transcript

But the children had to wait for more than a week. The next few days were very windy, and then Colin got a cold. Normally, when things did not happen the way he wanted, Colin had big tantrums. But the children were so busy planning his visit to the secret garden that Colin did not have time to get upset.

At last the day they had been waiting for came. Colin sent for Mrs Medlock in the morning.

'I am going out in my wheelchair this afternoon,' he said. 'If I like the fresh air, I may go out every day. When I go, all the gardeners must stay away from the kitchen gardens. I will go out at about two o'clock. I will tell them when they can go back to their work.'

Mrs Medlock had almost gasped in surprise when Colin started talking. He had always said that fresh air would give him a cold and kill him.

'Things are changing in this house,' Mrs Medlock said to the nurse after she had left Colin's room. 'That girl from India has done something to Master Colin. I don't know what it is. But there's something different about him.'

After lunch, the nurse helped Colin to get dressed, and a servant carried him downstairs to his wheelchair while Mary walked behind. Dickon was waiting outside. The nurse and the servant arranged Colin's rugs and cushions, and then they went back inside.

When they had gone, Dickon began to push the wheelchair slowly and carefully. Mary walked next to it, and Colin lay back and looked up at the sky. The small snowy clouds were like white birds floating above the blue. The wind blew softly down from the moor, bringing a sweet, clear smell.

'What's that smell?' Colin asked.

'It's the gorse on the moor opening out,' answered Dickon. 'The bees will be busy today!'

The gardeners had all gone, as Colin had asked, but when the children arrived at the long walk, they started to whisper.

'This is where I used to walk,' said Mary quietly. 'And this is where the robin showed me the key.'

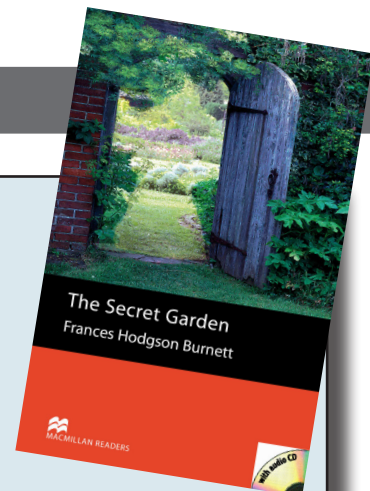
Colin's eyes grew bigger and bigger.

'And this,' said Mary, stepping onto the flower bed and lifting up the ivy, 'this is the door!'

Colin gasped as Mary turned the handle and opened the door. Then Dickon pushed the wheelchair through the door and into the garden. Colin covered his eyes with his hands until the wheelchair had stopped. Only then did he take them away and look round and round. Everywhere there were little patches of gold and purple and white. Little green leaves were growing on the branches and the walls. And all around them they heard birds fluttering their wings.

The sun fell on Colin's face like a hand with a lovely touch, and Mary and Dickon stood and stared at him in surprise. He looked so strange and different. A little bit of colour had touched his face and neck and hands.

'I shall get well!' he cried out. 'Mary! Dickon! I shall get well! And I shall live forever and ever!'



Transcript

Dickon and Mary pushed the wheelchair slowly round and round the garden, stopping all the time to show Colin things. They showed him buds that were opening and leaves that were just coming out. They showed him crocuses coming up from the earth. There were so many new things to look at that afternoon. Every hour the sunshine seemed to get more golden.

After a while, Dickon and Mary pulled Colin's wheelchair under the plum tree, which was covered in snow-white blossom. They did a little bit of work in the garden, and Colin watched them.

'Look!' cried Dickon suddenly, pointing across the garden at a flash of red. 'There's the robin! He's been looking for food for his mate.'

Colin looked up and saw the robin flying into the trees with a worm in his beak. Then the boy sat back in his chair, laughing a little with happiness.

'I don't want this afternoon to end,' he said. 'But I shall come back tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day. I'm going to see everything grow here. And I'm going to grow here myself.'

'You will,' said Dickon. 'Soon you'll be walking about and digging here like us.' Colin's face went red.

'Walk!' he said. 'Dig! Shall I?'

Mary and Dickon looked at each other. They had never asked Colin why he did not walk. They did not know if there was anything wrong with his legs.

'Of course you will,' said Dickon after a moment. 'You've got legs, just like us, haven't you?'

'There's nothing wrong with them,' Colin answered. 'But they are so thin and weak. I'm afraid to stand up because they shake so much.'

'When you stop being afraid, you'll stand on them,' Dickon said.

They were all quiet for a little while. The sun was dropping lower in the sky. Even the animals had stopped moving about. Dickon and Mary were both surprised when Colin suddenly said in a frightened whisper:

'Who is that man?'

Dickon and Mary jumped up. Colin was pointing at the high wall.

'Look!' he whispered excitedly. 'Look!'

Mary and Dickon looked up. Ben Weatherstaff was standing at the top of a ladder, looking crossly over the wall at them. Mary walked towards him.

'I always thought you were a bad one,' he said to her, shaking his fist. 'Always asking questions. How on earth did you get in here?'

Suddenly, Ben Weatherstaff stopped shaking his fist and his mouth dropped open. Dickon was pushing Colin's wheelchair across the grass towards Mary. Ben stared at Colin. He looked as if he was seeing a ghost.

'Do you know who I am?' Colin said importantly.

Ben Weatherstaff rubbed his hand over his eyes.

'Yes, I do,' he said. 'I can see your mother's eyes staring at me out of that face. I don't know how you got here. But you are that poor boy who can't walk.'

Colin went bright red and sat up.

'I can walk!' he shouted. 'I can!'

'You – you haven't got a crooked back?' asked Ben.

'No!' shouted Colin.

Transcript

'And you haven't got crooked legs?' Ben said in a shaky voice. It was too much for Colin. Suddenly his anger made him stronger than he had ever been before.

'Come here!' he shouted to Dickon, pulling the rugs off his wheelchair. 'Come here now!'

Dickon rushed to Colin's side. Mary felt herself turn pale.

'He can do it! He can do it!' she whispered to herself.

Dickon threw the rugs on the ground and took Colin's arm. His thin legs came out and his feet were on the grass. Then Colin was standing up, looking strangely tall. He threw his head back and his eyes shone.

'Look at me!' he shouted up at Ben Weatherstaff. 'Just look at me!'

'He's as straight as I am,' cried Dickon.

Then Ben Weatherstaff did something very strange. He choked and put his hands together, and tears ran down his cheeks.

'Oh, it was all lies!' he said. 'You're as thin as a stick and as white as a sheet. But you're not crooked. You'll be a fine man one day. God bless you.'

Dickon held Colin's arms strongly, but Colin stood straighter and straighter.

'I'm your master when my father is away,' Colin said to Ben. 'You must do what I say. This is my garden. You mustn't say anything about it. Now get down from that ladder. Go out to the long walk and Mary will meet you there. She'll bring you here. I want to talk to you. We did not want you, but now you will have to be in on the secret.'

Ben Weatherstaff still couldn't stop looking at Colin's face.

'Oh, my boy,' he almost whispered. Then he added, 'Yes, sir, yes, sir.' And his head disappeared as he went down the ladder.

Mary ran across the grass to meet him, and Colin turned to Dickon. His cheeks were red.

'I'm going to walk to that tree,' Colin said, pointing at a tree close by.

He walked to the tree. Dickon held his arm, but he walked without stopping. When Ben Weatherstaff came through the door, he saw Colin standing there.

'Look at me!' said Colin. 'Am I a hunchback? Have I got crooked legs?'

'No,' said Ben, looking him up and down. 'You haven't. Why don't you sit down, young master. And tell me what to do.'

Dickon had put a rug under the tree, and Colin sat down on it.

'What work do you do in the gardens, Weatherstaff?' he asked.

'Anything they tell me to,' Ben answered. 'They kept me here because your mother liked me.'

'My mother?' said Colin, and he looked about quietly. 'This was her garden, wasn't it?'

'That's right,' said Ben. 'She loved it.'

'It's my garden now,' said Colin. 'I like it. I shall come here every day. But that must be a secret. No one must know that we come here. Mary and Dickon have worked and made it come alive. We'll ask you to come and help sometimes. But you must come secretly, when no one can see you.'

Ben's face twisted into a dry old smile.

Transcript

'I've come secretly before,' he said. 'She liked this garden so much, your mother. She asked me to look after it for her. So after she died, I came and did a bit of work for her every year. But I didn't come through the door. I came over the wall.'

'That's why so many roses are still alive,' said Dickon. 'I thought someone had done some work here.'

Dickon had left a trowel lying on the grass near the tree, and Colin suddenly reached out and picked it up. He had a strange look on his face, and he started digging at the earth. His hand was weak. But as they watched him, he dug the trowel into the earth and turned some over.

'You said I'd walk like other people,' he said excitedly to Dickon. 'And you said I'd dig. This is only the first day, and I've walked. And now I'm digging!'

'Would you like to plant something, Master Colin?' Ben Weatherstaff asked. 'I could get you a rose in a pot.'

'Go and get it!' said Colin, digging happily. 'Quick! Quick!'

Ben Weatherstaff hurried away to find the rose. Dickon took his spade and helped Colin make the hole deeper.

'I want to do it before the sun goes down,' said Colin, looking up at the sky.

When Ben came back, Colin put the rose into the hole. Ben and Dickon helped him fill the rose in and press it down.

'It's planted!' said Colin at last. 'Help me up, Dickon. I want to stand up and watch the sun going down.'

Dickon helped Colin up. And when the sun finally went down at the end of that strange and lovely afternoon, Colin was standing on his two feet laughing.