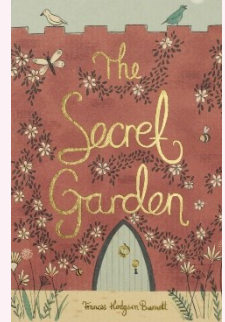




GIRL'S BOOK CLUB GUIDE

THE SECRET GARDEN

By Frances Hodgson Burnett



“And the secret garden bloomed and bloomed and every morning revealed new miracles.”

GENRE

Children's Literature

THEMES

Transformation

Chronic Illness

Friendship

Redemption

Beauty

Transformation: A dramatic change in a person's temperament, attitude and/or appearance.

CHARACTERS

Mary Lennox

Mary Lennox is an orphaned ten-year-old girl who is forced to move from India to Yorkshire, England after her parent's death to live with her uncle. Initially, she is unloved and unlovable, sickly and unkind. But as she discovers the magic within the secret garden, she blossoms into a new little girl capable of great kindness, friendship and wonder.

Colin Craven

Colin Craven is Archibald Craven's ten-year-old son and heir to Misselthwaite Manor, where Mary has come to live. His mother died in childbirth, and his father cannot bear the sight of him because it reminds him of his lost love. Because of this, Colin suffers from a deep sense of rejection and, like Mary, is disliked and difficult. Colin has also been treated as an “invalid” (an outdated term used to describe a person living with a disability) and is bedridden with servants who obey his every whim. Colin is transformed from a selfish, demanding and ill little boy to an optimistic, healthy son who has claimed his father's love.

Dickon Sowerby

Dickon is a young boy, just two years older than Mary and Colin, but infinitely wiser. Growing up in a poor family on the moors, he has an affinity with nature and animals, taming wild creatures with his calm, careful and caring heart. His mysterious effect of bringing forth life and understanding creatures also impacts Mary and Colin as they blossom alongside the secret garden with Dickon's tender care. He is the brother of Martha and the son of Susan.

Martha Sowerby

Mary's friend and maidservant at Misselthwaite. Martha is alarmingly honest to Mary, yet her heart is kind and compassionate.

Ben Weatherstaff

Ben Weatherstaff is an elderly gardener who works at Misselthwaite. Coming across as gruff and uninterested, underneath he is kind and keeps the children's garden a secret.

Archibald Craven

Mr Craven is Colin's father. His health ails both physically and mentally, and he has neglected his son while suffering grief over the loss of his wife.

Ayah

While growing up in India, 'Ayah' was Mary's primary carer, instructed by her parents to keep her away from them.

STORYLINE

Mary Lennox is a spoilt and selfish little girl living in India with her parents. After their deaths, Mary is moved to Yorkshire, England, where she learns independence and grows healthy and strong as she roams the moors and befriends a little Robin. The robin leads Mary to a secret garden, which on the surface looks dead, but underneath, things are growing and preparing to bloom – just like little Mary herself.

Mary also encounters her sickly cousin Colin and nature whisperer Dickon. Together the three unlikely friends cultivate the garden and help it awaken. As the children diligently tend to the buds, the magic found in the garden brings it all to life, including the children's hearts which transform and blossom in good health and hope.

This story is about transformation, both physically and emotionally. It reminds us that even the most sickly, unloveable and difficult people can radically blossom through friendship, beauty and the secret magic that knits the world together.

1 QUESTION ONE

“Mary Lennox is an unusual heroine because she is decidedly not lovable when we first meet her. She’s plain, selfish, crabby and uninterested in other people” (Quote from Calista Brill). Discuss how Mary transforms and grows like her garden.

2 QUESTION TWO

Mary, whose first-ever friend is a little Robin, blossoms alongside her garden as she learns to trust, confide in and befriend kind-hearted Dickon. Discuss how the friendships in the story help the children to grow.

3 QUESTION THREE

How are Mary, Colin and Dickon different? How are they the same?

4 QUESTION FOUR

Do you think Colin's illness was mostly in his body or a sickness of the heart and mind? Discuss.

5 QUESTION FIVE

Magic is at the heart of the story. How does the magic we see at work in the garden and in the children's lives remind you of the Holy Spirit's work in the world?
