

**The Secret Garden**  
by Frances Hodgson Burnett

**Chapter 3: Mary finds the key**

<b>Author:</b> Adrian Tennant
<b>Level:</b> Pre-intermediate
<b>Age:</b> Teenagers / Young adults
<b>Time needed:</b> 45-60 minutes
<b>Preparation:</b> One copy of the picture needed for Activity 1; one copy of the worksheet per pair of students



**Activity 1**

- 1 Show the students the picture from the chapter.
- 2 Ask the students the following questions: *What can you see in the picture? What's happening? Whose hand do you think it is?*
- 3 Elicit ideas from students and write these up on the board.
- 4 Play the recording from 'Mary went and walked in her favourite place ...' to the end and encourage students to compare their ideas to what actually happens in the story.
- 5 Once you've played this part of the recording, ask students which of their ideas were correct.

**Activity 2**

- 1 Hand out the worksheet and ask students to read the questions carefully but NOT to write anything down.
- 2 Tell students to turn over the worksheet and hide the questions, and then play the full recording of the chapter.
- 3 Put students in pairs and ask: How many of the questions can you answer? Again, tell them NOT to turn over their worksheets and look at the questions.
- 4 Ask the pairs to discuss how many questions they think they can answer together but tell them NOT to discuss the answers yet.
- 5 Get the 'bids' for the number of questions each pair think they can answer and make a note of these.
- 6 Tell students to turn over their worksheets to display the questions and give students time to answer them.

- 7 Get pairs to swap their questions / answers with another pair.
- 8 Read out the answers. Ask students to check the other pair's answers and say how many they got right.
- 9 See which pairs correctly predicted how many questions they could answer.

**Key:**

1. the fresh air; 2. sticks and stones; 3. he's busy / unfriendly; 4. ivy; 5. a robin (in a treetop); 6. to the orchard; 7. the secret garden; 8. she fell out of a tree; 9. someone crying; 10. the wind; 11. it was raining; 12. gold; 13. home to see her mother; 14. a fox cub; 15. behind the ivy-covered wall of the kitchen gardens; 16. a dog; 17. a worm; 18. a key; 19. ten years; 20. in her pocket

**Activity 3**

Prediction is a nice activity to use with your students. This chapter has a couple of points where prediction can be used.

- 1 Play the recording and then write up the following on the board:
  - Mary thought she heard someone crying in the house, but Martha said it was just the wind. What do you think it was? If it was someone crying, who was it? Why were they crying?
  - At the end of the chapter, Mary finds a key. She puts it in her pocket. What do you think will happen next?
- 2 Put students in groups and get them to discuss either or both of the situations.

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3 Afterwards, ask a few students to share the ideas they discussed. Get students to make a note of these so that when they hear information in subsequent chapters they can see who was right.

**Note:** It's important to make sure students understand that they won't find out if their predictions are correct immediately, but at a later stage. This may at first be a little frustrating, but later on it will help increase the anticipation and motivate them to want to hear more of the story.

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**LISTENING SKILLS WORKSHEET**

1	What was making Mary stronger and her cheeks red?	_____
2	What do Matha's brothers and sisters play with?	_____
3	Why doesn't Ben Weatherstaff talk to Mary?	_____
4	What were the walls around the garden covered in?	_____
5	What did Mary see in the secret garden?	_____
6	When Mary saw the robin, where did she run to?	_____
7	What does Mrs Medlock say nobody should talk about?	_____
8	How did Mrs Craven die?	_____
9	What did Mary hear in the house?	_____
10	What did Martha say was making the strange noise?	_____
11	Why couldn't Mary go outside for a few days?	_____
12	What colour does the gorse become in spring?	_____
13	Where was Martha going on her day off?	_____
14	What unusual pet does Martha's brother keep at home?	_____
15	Where was Mary's favourite place?	_____
16	What had been digging a hole in the flowerbeds?	_____
17	What was the robin looking for?	_____
18	What did Mary find in the flowerbed?	_____
19	How long did Mary think the key had been buried?	_____
20	Where did Mary put the key?	_____



**Transcript**

For the first week or two, every day was exactly the same for Mary. There was nothing for her to do indoors, so after breakfast she went out into the gardens. The wind, which blew down from the moor, was strong and cold. Mary had to run to keep herself warm. She did not know that this was good for her. She did not know that the fresh air was making her thin body stronger and bringing some red colour into her cheeks.

For the first few days, Mary had not eaten the breakfast Martha brought her. But one morning, after several days of running around outside, she woke up with a strange feeling. She realized that for the first time in her life she felt hungry. When Martha brought her breakfast that day, she picked up her spoon and started eating it. And she went on eating until it had all gone.

'The fresh air of the moor is making you hungry,' said Martha. 'If you play outside every day you'll get bigger and stronger.'

'I don't play,' said Mary. 'I have nothing to play with.'

'Nothing to play with!' cried Martha. 'Our children play with sticks and stones. They just run about and shout and look at things.'

Mary did not shout, but she did look at things. She walked round and round the gardens and the park. Sometimes she looked for Ben Weatherstaff, but he was always too busy or too unfriendly to talk to her.

There was one place that Mary went to more than anywhere else. It was the long walk outside the kitchen gardens. The walls there were covered with ivy. In one part the ivy was so thick it looked as if no one had cut it for years. One morning, Mary was looking at the ivy and thinking about this, when she heard a loud twitter up above. She looked up and saw the robin sitting on a treetop.

'Oh, it's you!' Mary laughed happily. The first time Mary had seen the robin, he had been sitting on a treetop and she had been standing in the orchard. But looking at him now, she realized that he was sitting on top of the same tree. She looked up at the ivy-covered wall.

'The robin's in the secret garden again,' she said to herself. 'And this must be the back wall of the garden.'

Mary ran up to the green door she had gone through the first morning. Then she ran down through the kitchen gardens into the orchard, and looked up above the wall. Sure enough, there was the robin sitting on the treetop. Mary walked along, looking closely at the orchard wall, but there was no door. Then she ran back out to the long ivy-covered wall and looked at that side carefully, too. But there was no door there either.

'It's very strange,' she said to herself. 'Ben Weatherstaff said there was no door, and he's right. But there must have been a door ten years ago, because Mr Craven buried the key.'

Mary began to feel very interested in the secret garden. One evening after supper, she sat down in front of the fire and asked Martha a question.

'Why did Mr Craven hate the garden?' she said.

'Are you still thinking about that garden?' said Martha. She came and sat



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down next to Mary. It was a windy night. There was a low roaring noise as the wind rushed around the house. It beat against the walls and windows.

'Mrs Medlock says no one should talk about it,' Martha said. 'If it wasn't for that garden, Mr Craven wouldn't be like he is. It was Mrs Craven's garden, and she just loved it. They used to look after it themselves. None of the gardeners were allowed to go in it. Mr and Mrs Craven sat there for hours and hours, reading and talking. There was an old tree with a big branch, and Mrs Craven liked to sit on the branch. But one day when she was sitting on it, the branch broke. She fell to the ground and she was hurt very badly. The next day she died. The doctors thought Mr Craven would go mad and die too. And that's why he hates the garden. No one has been inside since, and no one is allowed to talk about it.'

All at once Mary felt sorry for Mr Craven. It was the first time she had ever felt sorry for anyone before, and it was a strange feeling. She sat thinking about what Martha had said. Suddenly she realized she could hear a noise. It was a strange sound, as if a child was crying. It was a long way away, but she was sure that it was inside the house. She turned round and looked at Martha.

'Can you hear someone crying?' she said.  
Martha suddenly looked confused. 'It's just the wind,' she replied quickly. 'The wind makes such strange noises. Sometimes it sounds as if someone is lost on the moor.'

But Martha seemed worried about something. Mary stared at her. She was sure that the noise she had heard was not the wind. She did not believe that Martha was telling the truth.

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It rained for the next few days, and Mary could not go outside. But one morning she woke and sat up in bed immediately.

'Look at the moor! Look at the moor!' she called to Martha.  
The rain had stopped and the wind had blown the clouds away. There was a deep blue sky high above the moor. Mary had never seen such a blue sky.  
'Yes,' said Martha cheerfully. 'The spring is coming.'

'I thought perhaps it always rained or looked dark in England,' Mary said.  
'Oh no,' replied Martha. 'Yorkshire's the sunniest place on earth when it's sunny. Just wait till the gorse turns gold and the heather flowers. Then the heather looks like purple bells, and it's full of butterflies. You'll want to get out there first thing in the morning and stay out there all day, just like our Dickon!'

Martha went on cleaning out the fireplace. 'I'm going across the moor today,' she said. 'It's my day off and I'm going home to see my mother. Oh, I am glad!'

Mary had started to rather enjoy listening to Martha talk about her family. She especially liked to hear about Martha's mother and Dickon. When Martha told stories about what 'Mother' had done, they always sounded comfortable.

'I think I like your mother,' said Mary.  
'Everyone likes my mother,' Martha replied. 'She's so sensible and hard-working, and friendly and clean.'

'I like Dickon too,' said Mary. 'And I've never seen him.'

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'Well,' said Martha, 'I've told you that the birds and the sheep and ponies like him ... He's even got a little fox cub that he keeps at home. And a crow that flies about with him everywhere. Everyone likes Dickon, even the animals.'

After Martha had gone home, Mary felt lonelier than ever. She went out and ran round and round the fountain. And after that she felt a little better. Then she went into the kitchen garden and found Ben Weatherstaff working there. Even he seemed more cheerful on this beautiful morning.

'Springtime's coming,' he said. 'Things are beginning to happen in the flower gardens, down there in the dark. You'll see bits of green starting to stick out of the earth soon.'

'What will they be?' asked Mary.

'Crocuses and snowdrops and daffodils,' said Ben. 'You watch them. They'll grow a little bit more every day.'

At that moment, the robin flew down and hopped around near Mary's feet.

'Do you think he remembers me?' she asked Ben Weatherstaff.

'Of course he does!' he replied. 'He's never seen a little girl in the garden before, and he's trying to find out all about you.'

As Mary slowly walked away, she was thinking. She had begun to like the garden. And she had begun to like the robin, and Dickon, and Martha's mother. She was starting to like Martha, too. That felt like a lot of people for someone who had never really liked anyone before.

Mary went and walked in her favourite place, behind the long ivy-covered wall at the back of the kitchen gardens. And that was when the most interesting and exciting thing happened to her. She heard a twitter, looked down and saw the robin. He was hopping about on the earth. She knew that he had followed her, and she felt so pleased that she trembled a little.

'You do remember me!' she cried. 'You do!'

The robin hopped among the bushes in the flower-bed. A dog had been digging a hole there, and the robin stopped to look for a worm in the earth. As Mary watched the robin, she noticed an old metal ring half-buried in the earth where the dog had been digging. When the robin flew up into a tree nearby, she reached down and picked the ring up. But it wasn't just a ring. It was an old key, and it looked as if it had been buried for a long time.

Mary stood up and looked at it. She felt almost frightened. 'Perhaps it has been buried for ten years,' she said in a whisper. 'Perhaps it is the key to the garden!' Suddenly she felt very excited. What would the garden look like now, after being shut up for so many years? If she could find the door, she could go into it every day. Nobody would know where she was. She liked that idea very much.

Mary put the key in her pocket and walked slowly up and down beside the wall. But the only thing she could see was thick ivy. She felt disappointed. But she decided to keep the key in her pocket. Then if she did find the hidden door, she would be ready.

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LISTENING SKILLS IMAGE

Image

