

**The Secret Garden**  
by Frances Hodgson Burnett

**Chapter 6: A meeting in the night**

<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 worksheet needed for Activity 2 per student



**Activity 1**

- 1 Write the title of the chapter on the board: *A meeting in the night*.
- 2 Ask the students who they think will be meeting in the story. Elicit ideas and write these on the board.
- 3 Play the recording from the start of the chapter to '*He is my father,*' said the boy. Stop the recording there.
- 4 Ask the students if any of them guessed the correct answer and discuss.

**Activity 2**

- 1 Write the following names on the board:  
*Colin*  
*Mary*
- 2 Hand out the worksheet. Tell the students that they will need to decide who said each sentence, Colin or Mary.
- 3 Encourage the students to work in pairs and discuss their ideas as they work through the sentences.
- 4 Then, go through the worksheet as a class, asking a few students to tell you who they thought said each sentence.
- 5 Play the recording of the chapter all the way through. Ask the students to check their answers / ideas as they listen.
- 6 Play the recording again, if necessary.
- 7 Check the answers as a class.

**Key:**

*Mary: 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10*

*Colin: 2, 5, 7, 8*

**Extension Activity**

- 1 Put the students in pairs (one male with one female student, where possible).
- 2 Ask the students to role-play the conversation between Mary and Colin. Tell them that they need to try to do this from memory.
- 3 Monitor and help the pairs as they are preparing.
- 4 When they are ready, ask a few pairs to act out their role-play in front of the class.

**Note:** It isn't important that the words the students use in the role-play are all correct; rather, it's the overall meaning and ideas that they need to have understood.

Chapter 6: A meeting in the night

LISTENING SKILLS WORKSHEET

1 Did no one tell you that I live here now?

2 I don't let people see me or talk about me.

3 Oh, what a strange house this is!

4 Have you been locked up too?

5 No one believes I shall live long enough to grow up.

6 He hates the garden because she died.

7 Let's talk about the garden.

8 They could take me there in my wheelchair.

9 ... if you make them open the door like that, it will never be a secret again.

10 I shall hold your hand and sing to you quietly.

**Chapter 6: A meeting in the night**

**Transcript**

Mary took the picture back to the house and showed it to Martha.

'Oh, our Dickon's clever,' she said proudly. 'That's a picture of a thrush on her nest. It almost looks real.'

Suddenly Mary understood. The picture was like a message. Dickon wanted to show her that he would keep her secret.

Mary hoped that he would come back the next day. She fell asleep feeling excited about the morning. But in the night she was woken by the sound of heavy rain. It was beating against her window, and the wind was whistling around the house. Mary felt miserable and angry. Now she wouldn't be able to go to the garden in the morning.

She could not go to sleep again. After she had been lying awake for about an hour, she suddenly sat up in bed. She had heard something.

'That's not the noise of the wind,' she said in a loud whisper. 'It's that crying I heard before, when I first arrived here.'

She listened for a few minutes, and she became more and more sure. She got out of bed and stood up.

'I am going to find out what it is,' she said.

She followed the noise of the crying along the corridors, her heart beating loudly. At last she came to a door with a light coming from underneath. The crying was coming from inside.

Mary pushed the door open and stepped inside a large room. There was lots of beautiful old furniture in the room. A fire was burning gently. There was also a big bed. And on the bed a boy was lying, crying miserably.

The boy had a sharp white face with big grey eyes and lots of hair. He looked up at Mary and his eyes opened wide.

'Who are you?' he said in a half-frightened whisper. 'Are you a ghost?'

'No, I'm not,' answered Mary. 'Are you?'

'No,' the boy replied after a moment or so. Mary thought that he looked ill. 'I am Colin. Colin Craven. Who are you?'

'I am Mary Lennox. Mr Craven is my uncle.'

'He is my father,' said the boy.

'Your father!' gasped Mary. 'No one ever told me he had a boy!'

'Come here,' said Colin, watching her carefully with a worried face.

Mary came close to the bed. The boy put out his hand and touched her arm.

'Where did you come from?' he asked.

'From my room,' said Mary. 'I heard someone crying. I wanted to see who it was. Why were you crying?'

'Because I couldn't go to sleep,' said Colin. 'Tell me your name again.'

'Mary Lennox. Did no one tell you that I live here now?'

'No,' the boy answered. 'They were probably afraid to tell me. I don't let people see me or talk about me.'

'Why?' asked Mary.

'Because I'm always ill. I'm always having to lie down. My father won't let people talk about me either. If I live, I may be a hunchback, but I shan't live.'



Chapter 6: A meeting in the night

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'Oh, what a strange house this is!' said Mary. 'Everything is secret. Rooms are locked up and gardens are locked up. What about you? Have you been locked up, too?'

'No,' replied Colin. 'I stay here because I don't want to go out. I get too tired.'

'If you don't like people to see you,' she said, 'do you want me to go away?'

'No,' he said. 'I want to hear about you.'

Mary sat down near the bed. She wanted to stay in this hidden room. She wanted to talk to this mysterious boy.

'What do you want me to tell you?' she asked.

Colin wanted to know how long she had been at Misselthwaite. He asked where her room was and what she did during the day. He made her tell him all about India and her journey back to England. Mary found out lots of things about Colin, too. He had lots of wonderful toys and things. Whenever he asked for things, people always brought them to him. And if he didn't want to do something, no one made him do it.

'Everyone has to please me,' Colin told her. 'I get ill when I am angry. No one believes I shall live long enough to grow up.'

'Does your father come and see you?' Mary asked.

'Sometimes,' Colin answered, and his face suddenly looked dark and angry. 'But he doesn't want to see me. My mother died when I was born. It makes my father feel miserable when he looks at me. He almost hates me.'

'He hates the garden because she died,' Mary said, almost to herself. 'That was why he locked the garden door and buried the key.'

Colin sat up a little, and turned towards Mary.

'What garden door did he lock?' he asked. He was suddenly interested.

'It – it was a garden your mother used to like,' said Mary nervously. 'He locked the door ten years ago. No one – no one knows where he buried the key.'

'What sort of garden is it?' asked Colin, excited.

'No one has been into it for ten years,' said Mary carefully.

But it was too late to be careful. Colin was too much like Mary. He, too, was excited about the idea of a hidden garden. He asked her lots of questions. Where was the garden? Had Mary ever looked for the door? Had she ever asked the gardeners?

'The gardeners won't talk about it,' said Mary. 'I think your father told them not to say anything.'

'I shall make them tell me,' said Colin.

'Could you do that?' asked Mary, starting to feel worried.

'Everyone has to please me,' said Colin. 'If I live, this house will be mine one day.'

'Do you really think you won't live?' Mary asked. She wanted him to forget about the garden.

'Everyone says that I won't,' replied Colin. 'They think I don't know. At first they thought that I was too little to understand. And now they think that I don't hear. But I do. My doctor is my father's cousin. He is quite poor. If I die, he will have Misselthwaite when my father dies. So I don't think he wants me to live.'

'Do you want to live?' asked Mary.

'No,' Colin said, sounding cross and tired. 'My father is afraid that I will be a

Chapter 6: A meeting in the night

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hunchback like him. I don't want to die, though. When I feel ill, I lie here and think about dying. And then I cry and cry. But let's not talk about that. Let's talk about the garden. Don't you want to see it?

'Yes,' Mary said quietly.

'I do,' Colin went on. 'I don't think I ever wanted to see anything before. But I want to see that garden. I want to find the key and unlock the door. They could take me there in my wheelchair. I am going to make them open the door. They have to please me. I will make them take me there. And I will let you go too.'

He had become quite excited, and his large eyes were shining.

Mary's heart was beating hard. Everything would be spoiled. Dickon would never come back. She would never again feel like a thrush with a safely hidden nest.

'Oh, don't! Don't do that!' she cried out.

He stared at her.

'Why not?' he asked, surprised. 'You said you wanted to see it.'

'I do,' she answered, feeling as if she might cry. 'But if you make them open the door like that, it will never be a secret again.' She took a deep breath. 'You see, if we are the only people who know, perhaps we can find the door. Perhaps we can go in and shut it behind us. And then no one would know that we were inside. Oh, don't you see? It would be so much nicer if it was a secret.'

'I've never had a proper secret,' said Colin.

'Don't make them take you to the garden,' said Mary. 'I'm sure I can find out how to get into it. And then perhaps we could find a boy who could push your wheelchair. We could go alone. Then it would always be a secret garden.'

'I should like that,' Colin said slowly. His eyes looked dreamy.

'I have been here a long time,' said Mary. 'Shall I go away now? You look sleepy.'

'I am. But I am glad you came,' said Colin.

'So am I,' said Mary. 'I shall come as often as I can. But I will have to look every day for the garden door.'

'Yes, you must,' said Colin. 'And you can tell me about it afterwards. Do you know Martha?'

'Yes, I know her very well,' said Mary, surprised. 'She brings me my meals.'

'She looks after me when my nurse isn't here,' said Colin. 'Martha will tell you when to come.'

So Martha already knew about Colin! That was why she looked so worried when Mary asked her about the crying. Suddenly Mary understood.

'I wish I could go to sleep before you leave me,' Colin said a little shyly.

'Shut your eyes,' said Mary, moving closer to the bed.

'I shall hold your hand and sing to you quietly. My servants used to do that for me in India.'

'I would like that,' said Colin sleepily.

It was strange, but Mary felt sorry for Colin. She didn't want him to lie there awake. So she sat close to the bed and held his hand. And she sang quietly to him until his eyes shut and he was asleep. Then she got up quietly and went back to her room.