

The Secret Garden  
by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Chapter 7: Colin

<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> Select key vocabulary from the chapter for the extension activity.



Activity 1

- 1 Ask the students to close their eyes, relax and listen carefully.
- 2 Play the recording through once from start to finish.
- 3 Ask the students to write down everything they can remember from the recording.
- 4 Put the students in pairs or groups of three and ask them to discuss / compare what they wrote down.
- 5 Ask the students to put their pens down, close their eyes and listen again.
- 6 Then, in their pairs or groups, ask them to discuss what they heard this time.
- 7 Finally, ask one or two pairs / groups to report back to the class.
- 5 Put students in pairs or small groups and ask them to work together and write between five and seven multiple-choice questions on one piece of paper.
- 6 Monitor and help where needed. Play the recording again if necessary.
- 7 Finally, ask the pairs or groups to finish writing their questions.
- 8 Get the pairs / groups to swap papers and try to answer each other's multiple-choice questions.
- 9 Play the recording again. Then get the groups to check each other's answers.
- 10 Monitor and help / adjudicate where necessary.

Activity 2

- 1 Write the following multiple-choice question on the board:  
*Why can't Mary go outside?*  
a. *she's ill*  
b. *it's raining*  
c. *she has to be with Colin*
- 2 Ask the students which answer is correct. Elicit answer *b*.
- 3 Next, tell the students that you want them to write their own set of multiple-choice questions, based on what they hear in the recording.
- 4 Play the recording again and ask students to make notes. Stress that they don't have to write everything down.

Extension Activity

- 1 Revise some of the key vocabulary from this chapter (e.g. *amazement, trembling, crooked*) by playing a game of hangman. For instructions on how to play, visit: <http://www.onestopenglish.com/children/skills/beginning-vocabulary/beginning-vocabulary-practice-activities/146712.article?clearcache=1#Hangman>
- 2 If you have some extra time at the end of the class, you can put the students in pairs and get them to play a few rounds of the game together.

Chapter 7: Colin

Transcript

It was still raining in the morning, and Mary couldn't go outside. She didn't see Martha until the afternoon. But when Martha came to bring her her tea, Mary told her the news at once.

'I have found out what the crying was,' Mary said. 'I heard it in the night and I wanted to see where it was coming from. So I went to look, and I found Colin.'

'Oh, Miss Mary,' cried Martha. 'You shouldn't have done that! They will be cross with me. They will send me away!'

'They won't send you away,' said Mary. 'Colin was pleased that I came. We talked and talked. He asked me all about India.'

Martha gasped in amazement.

'I don't believe you!' she said. 'Colin won't let people look at him. When they do, he has one of his tantrums. He screams and cries so much it frightens us all. Was he really nice to you?'

'I think he almost liked me,' Mary said. 'What's the matter with him?'

'Nobody really knows,' said Martha. 'Mr Craven nearly went mad when he was born, because Mrs Craven had died. He wouldn't look at the baby. He said that Colin would just be another hunchback. Everyone worries that his back is weak. So they make him lie down and they don't let him walk. Dr Craven made him wear a metal thing on his back once. But another doctor came from London and told him to take it off. He was very angry. He said that Colin takes too much medicine. He said people shouldn't let him do what he wants all the time.'

'Do you think he will die?' asked Mary.

'Mother says it's difficult to live when you're like that. He doesn't get any fresh air. He lies on his back all day taking medicine and reading books.'

A bell rang, and Martha got up to go. When she came back, she looked surprised.

'Well, you have put him in a good mood,' she said. 'He's sitting up on his sofa reading. He wants you to go and see him.'

Mary was pleased. She wanted to see Colin very much. Not as much as she wanted to see Dickon. But she did want to see him.

Colin's room looked even more beautiful in daylight. There were colourful rugs and pictures, and lots of books. Colin was sitting on the sofa wearing a dressing gown.

'Come in,' he said. 'I've been thinking about you all morning.'

'I've been thinking about you, too,' answered Mary. 'You know, Martha is very frightened. She thinks that Mrs Medlock will send her away. She says Mrs Medlock will think Martha told me about you.'

Colin frowned.

'Go and tell Martha to come here,' he said. 'She is in the next room.'

Mary went and brought her back. Poor Martha was trembling.

'You know that you have to do what I tell you,' Colin said to her in a hard voice.

'Yes, sir,' said Martha, turning red.

'Medlock has to do what I tell her too. So when I ask you to bring Mary here,



**Transcript**

you must bring her. And if Medlock says anything about it, I'll send her away,' he said importantly. 'Now go.'

When Martha had gone, Colin saw that Mary was staring at him.

'Why are you looking at me like that?' he asked. 'What were you thinking?'

'I was thinking that I saw a prince in India once,' Mary replied. 'He spoke to his people just like you spoke to Martha. Everybody had to do what he said. And I was also thinking how different you are from Dickon.'

'Who is Dickon?' Colin said.

'He is Martha's brother,' said Mary. 'He is not like anyone else in the world. He plays on his pipe and the foxes and squirrels and birds come and listen to him. He knows about everything that grows or lives on the moor. He knows all about eggs and nests. And he knows where all the animals live. But he keeps it a secret. He doesn't want other boys to frighten them.'

Colin lay back on the sofa and his eyes grew larger.

'Tell me some more about him,' he said.

So Mary told Colin about the moor, and about Dickon's cottage and the fourteen people who lived there. She talked about Dickon's mother. And she talked about the green shoots that were sticking up out of the black earth.

'You never see anything if you are ill,' said Colin quietly.

'You can't if you stay in a room,' said Mary.

'I couldn't go on the moor,' said Colin. 'How could I? I am going to die.'

Mary didn't like the way Colin talked about dying. He almost sounded proud of it.

'Let's not talk about dying,' she said. 'Let's talk about living. Dickon is always talking about living things. He's always looking up in the sky to watch birds flying. Or looking down at the earth to watch things growing. Let's talk about Dickon.'

It was the best thing she could have said. Mary talked more than she had ever talked before. And Colin talked and listened more than he had ever done. They both began to laugh about nothing. And suddenly they seemed just like normal, healthy, happy children. They no longer seemed like a hard, unloving little girl and a poor crooked boy who thought he was going to die.

It rained for the rest of that week, so Mary couldn't go to the secret garden or see Dickon. But she enjoyed herself very much. Every day, she spent hours with Colin in his room. They talked about gardens or Dickon or the cottage on the moor, and they looked at Colin's books.

Mrs Medlock had been shocked the first time she walked into Master Colin's room and found Mary there. But Colin told her that Mary made him feel better. He said that he wanted her to come and talk to him whenever he asked.

Mary was very careful about the secret garden when she talked to Colin. She still wasn't sure whether he would be able to keep the secret. But she thought perhaps if Colin met Dickon and saw things growing, he wouldn't think about dying so much. She knew that the gardens and the fresh air had been good for her. She had grown stronger and fatter, and her cheeks were red. Perhaps the fresh air would be good for Colin too.