

# The Secret Garden

*The Secret Garden* tells the story of Mary, a young girl whose parents have both died. Mary is sent to live with her uncle in a grand manor in a remote part of Yorkshire. In this extract, the manor's housekeeper, Mrs Medlock, collects Mary from the train station in London.

She thought Mrs Medlock the most disagreeable person she had ever seen, with her common, highly coloured face and her common fine bonnet. When the next day they set out on their journey to Yorkshire, she walked through the station to the railway carriage with her head up and trying to keep as far away from her as she could, because she did not want to seem to belong to her. It would have made her angry to think people imagined she was her little girl.

But Mrs Medlock was not in the least disturbed by her and her thoughts. She was the kind of woman who would "stand no nonsense from young ones." At least, that is what she would have said if she had been asked. She had not wanted to go to London just when her sister Maria's daughter was going to be married, but she had a comfortable, well paid place as housekeeper at Misselthwaite Manor and the only way in which she could keep it was to do at once what Mr Archibald Craven told her to do. She never dared even to ask a question.

"Captain Lennox and his wife died of the cholera," Mr Craven had said in his short, cold way. "Captain Lennox was my wife's brother and I am their daughter's guardian. The child is to be brought here. You must go to London and bring her yourself."

So she packed her small trunk and made the journey.

Mary sat in her corner of the railway carriage and looked plain and fretful. She had nothing to read or to look at, and she had folded her thin little black-gloved hands in her lap. Her black dress made her look yellower than ever, and her limp light hair straggled from under her black crepe hat.

"A more marred-looking young one I never saw in my life," Mrs Medlock thought. (Marred is a Yorkshire word and means spoiled and pettish.) She had never seen a child who sat so still without doing anything; and at last she got tired of watching her and began to talk in a brisk, hard voice.

"I suppose I may as well tell you something about where you are going to," she said. "Do you know anything about your uncle?"

"No," said Mary.

"Never heard your father and mother talk about him?"

"No," said Mary frowning. She frowned because she remembered that her father and mother had never talked to her about anything in particular. Certainly they had never told her things.

"Eh!" Mrs Medlock said, "but you are like an old woman. Don't you care?"

"It doesn't matter" said Mary, "whether I care or not."

An adapted extract from *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

1 What evidence is there in this extract that *The Secret Garden* is set in the past?

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2 marks

2 Read lines 16-18. In what ways does Mary differ from a traditional storybook heroine?

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2 marks

3 Describe Mrs Medlock's attitude towards Mary using examples from the text.

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2 marks

4 Read line 29. What do you think Mary means by this?

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2 marks

5 Think about the personalities of Mr Craven and Mary. In what ways are they similar?

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2 marks

Total  
out of 10

### Extra Activities

- Imagine that you are Mary. Write a diary entry covering the events of the extract.
- How do you think Mr Craven will react to Mary when she arrives at Misselthwaite Manor? Write a short passage describing their first meeting.
- Mary is 10 years old, but Mrs Medlock compares her to "an old woman". Do you agree with Mrs Medlock? Explain your answer.
- Do you want to read more of this book? Write a paragraph explaining why or why not.