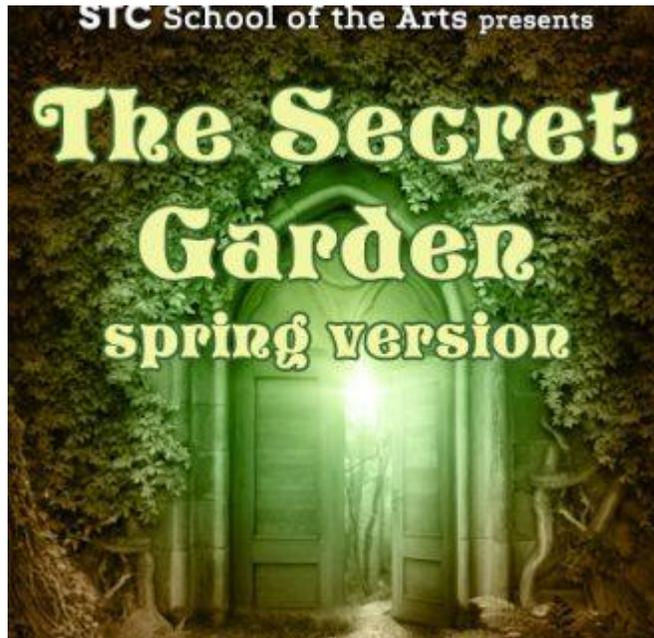


Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide



The Secret Garden: Spring Edition

Book and Lyrics by Marsha Norman

Music by Lucy Simon

Based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Study Guide Materials Compiled by Anna Miles

Sacramento Theatre Company

Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:

<http://www.sactheatre.org>

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Study Guide Materials Published with Permission from The Utah Shakespeare Company
(www.bard.org)

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*written for the Sacramento Theatre Company by Anna Miles

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About the Writers: *The Secret Garden*

By Rachelle Hughes

Although *The Secret Garden* the novel was penned just shy of 100 years ago by Frances Hodgson Burnett, it is easy to imagine she would have found kindred spirits in lyricist and playwright Marsha Norman and composer Lucy Simon who turned her classic into a highly acclaimed musical in 1991. All of them had experience writing or working with children before they worked on *The Secret Garden* and all of them seem to be motivated by their past, whether it was the death of loved one, a musical family, or educating children.

Frances Hodgson Burnette

Author Frances Hodgson was born on November 24, 1849 in Manchester England, the third of five children to home décor store owners, Eliza Boond and Edwin Hodgson. After the death of her father, Frances's mother decided to sell the business and move to America. At nearly sixteen, Frances and her family moved into an abandoned log cabin in Tennessee. Frances's once prosperous family found themselves in more humble circumstances, and Frances began to employ her pen to help her struggling family. Dedicated to her creative hobby, she picked wild grapes to earn money for paper. Her persistence paid off, and when she was just eighteen her first story appeared in *Godey's Lady Book*. The death of her mother further motivated her to pursue her writing career, and she was soon earning enough to help financially support her siblings.

In 1873 Frances married doctor Swan Burnett. After a brief stay in Europe they settled in Washington, D.C. Her writing career continued to flourish, and she had two sons, Lionel and Vivian. Although her writing credits at this time in her life were numerous, it was her best-selling novel, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) that cemented her reputation. In 1890, Frances confronted the death of a loved one yet again when her son Lionel died of consumption at the age of sixteen. Beset by depression, she looked for reprieve in spiritualism, theosophy and Christian Science, all topics that would find a place in her novels. Her novel *The White People* (1920) was dedicated to her son, Lionel.

Although her literary star was shining brightly, her marriage was unhappy. In 1898 she divorced her husband and returned to England to live with her other son. In her home in Kent she turned a walled and wild orchard into a rose garden. As she sat to write in her own garden she generated her first ideas for *The Secret Garden* that would be finished almost thirteen years later. During this contemplative time she wrote *In the Closed Room*, a novel that reflected her continuing grief for Lionel.

In 1909 she returned to America where she wrote while sitting in yet another garden. It was here she completed *The Secret Garden*. The novel began as a serial in *The American Magazine* in 1910 and was published as a book in 1911. Frances wrote over fifty novels in her lifetime, most of them for adults, but it is her book for a child that continues to capture our hearts. She died on October 29, 1924 in Plandom, New York.

Marsha Norman

Marsha Norman is one of the predominant female voices in American contemporary theatre; so it seems ironic that she would receive a Tony Award and Drama Desk Award for *The Secret Garden*, Best Book of a Musical, an adaptation of a story that is a century old. Yet, Norman has always been consistent in choosing her literary topics. "I always write about the same thing: people having the nerve to go on," she once commented. ("Introduction," *Drama Criticism*, ed. Lawrence J. Trudeau, Vol. 8 [Gale Cengage, 1998, eNotes.com], 2006, 16 Feb, 2009, <http://www.enotes.com/drama-criticism/norman-marsha>). Everything from her first award-winning high school essay to her work on *The Secret Garden* musical has addressed her concern with human suffering and man's struggle with faith and independence.

Norman was born to fundamentalist Methodists Billie and Bertha Williams on September 21, 1947. A strict upbringing allowed few childhood friendships aside from her siblings. During her youth she relied on her interests in reading and music. Her musical talents were such that at one point she considered attending Juilliard School. Instead, she accepted a scholarship to study philosophy at Agnes Scott College, a private women's college. After she graduated in 1969, she married Michael Norman. In 1971 she received a master's degree in teaching from the University of Louisville. Norman spent a great deal of her pre-theatre time working with emotionally disturbed children at the Kentucky Central State Hospital and gifted children at the Brown School for gifted children. It is easy to imagine how the story of *The Secret Garden* would have had some familiar psychological territory for Norman. ("Marsha Norman," February 16 2009, <http://www.bookrags.com/biography/marsha-norman-dlb/5.html>.)

By 1976 Norman was writing full time. Her first play, *Getting Out*, based on a young woman patient at the Kentucky Central State Hospital, won the Gassner Medallion and Newsday Oppenheimer. She continued to write with some success but it was her fifth play, *Mother* about a suicidal woman that brought her many literary and theatrical accolades including the Pulitzer Prize. Other plays by Norman include *Third and Oak*, *The Pool Hall*, *The Laundromat*, *Sarah and Abraham*, and *Loving Daniel Boone*. She has also published a novel, *The Fortune Teller* and is the book writer for *The Color Purple*. She is co-chair of the playwriting department of Juilliard School and the vice president of Dramatists Guild of America. She lives in New York with her two children.

Lucy Simon

Lucy Simon was born in 1943 into a family of creative talent. Her parents were Richard L. Simon, co-founder of Simon and Schuster publishing house, and Andrea Louise Simon, civil rights activist and singer. Her older sister, Joanna, is a well-known opera singer; her younger sister is pop star Carly Simon; and her brother is a talented photo journalist. Still, Lucy Simon has found her own niche in this family of talented stock.

Lucy began her singing career at age sixteen, with her sister, Carly, as part of the Simon Sisters. In her stint with her sister she sang and composed children and folk songs until Lucy got married to psychoanalyst David Levine. After taking some time out to have two children Lucy revitalized her musical talents by getting involved with musical theatre. She realized she loved writing music that told stories and involved a whole cast of characters. Simon made her Broadway debut with *The Secret Garden* for which she received a Tony Award nomination. Her most recent work can be heard in the 2006 musical of *Doctor Zhivago*. (Chad Jones, "Lucy Simon's Garden Grows," January 18, 2008, <http://blogs.mercurynews.com/aei/category/broadway/>).

1981 she teamed up with yet another family member, her husband David Levine. They won a Grammy Award for Best Recording for Children for "In Harmony/A Sesame Street Record." Lucy's work has been heard in a wide variety of musical venues. She contributed songs to the off-Broadway hit *A . . . My Name is Alice* and *Fanny Hackabout*, a collaboration with Erica Long and Susan Birkenhead, and her setting of *Wynken, Blynken, and Nod* has been recorded by diverse artists. Lucy Simon continues to work her musical magic. She is hard at work on a musical adaption of *Wuthering Heights* called *Heathcliff*.

Synopsis: *The Secret Garden*

Act 1

Mary Lennox, a ten-year-old girl who loses her parents to a cholera epidemic in India ("Prologue"), is sent to live with her uncle Archibald Craven, at Misselthwaite Manor in England. He is the widower of Mary's Aunt Lily who died many years earlier. He is a hunchback and is still grieving over his wife's death.

His brother, Dr. Neville Craven, is largely responsible for the management of the manor, along with the housekeeper, Mrs. Medlock. Mary receives a cold welcome upon arrival ("The House Upon the Hill"), and she has trouble sleeping her first night when she hears the sound of crying coming from somewhere in the house.

The next morning Mary meets Martha, a young chambermaid, who tells her about the grounds, a hidden garden in particular, and encourages her to play outside. As Mary explores the grounds, she meets Ben Weatherstaff, the head gardener. Ben sings to Mary about the grounds he is tasked with tending ("It's a Maze"). Mary returns to the garden a few days later, where she learns the history of the hidden garden and its lost key, and where she befriends a robin.

Meanwhile, Archibald reminisces about how he met Lily ("A Girl in the Valley"). Mary enters and meets with Archibald to ask him about the ghosts which haunt the house.

The next day, Mary finally meets Dickon, Martha's brother, who suggests that she plant a garden of her own, and who convinces the robin to show Mary the way to the Garden ("Show Me The Key"). Dickon translates the robin's speech, and tells Mary she must tell the robin why she wants to visit the Garden ("The Girl I Mean To Be"); in return, the robin shows Mary the location of the missing key, but not the location of the Garden door. Mrs. Medlock finds Mary and tells her the Mr. Archibald wants to see her in the library.

Neville tries to persuade Archibald to send Mary away to school and for him to find happiness elsewhere, if not at Misselthwaite. Archibald resists, and meets with Mary, who asks him for "a bit of earth" so that she may cultivate her own small garden. After Mary leaves, both Archibald and Neville realize how much Mary reminds them of Lily, with whom both men were in love.

As a storm builds outside, Mary again hears someone crying within the manor and discovers Colin, her bed-ridden cousin. She learns that his mother Lily died when Colin was born and he is terrified that he, too, will become a hunchback like his father. He tells her of his dreams about "A Round-Shouldered Man" who takes him on adventures.

As the children are becoming friends, Mrs. Medlock and Neville enter and angrily threaten Mary to stay away from Colin. In her frustration, she rushes outside into the climax of the storm, and with the help of Lily's ghost, finds the door to the garden ("Come to my Garden").

Act 2

Archibald prepares to leave for Paris as Neville again campaigns to have her sent away to school because she is disrupting his "treatment" for Colin. Archibald again refuses and relates a dream he had of Lily and Mary together in the garden ("Lily's Eyes"). Archibald finally permits Neville to investigate a few schools for Mary and leaves for Paris.

By this time, Mary has found the door to the garden but believes everything inside to be dead. Dickon tells her that the garden is just dormant and offers his help in waking it up

("Wick"). Mary tells Colin about the garden and tries to convince him to come outside to see it. He is reluctant until he has a vision of his mother inviting him to her garden ("Come to My Garden/Lift Me Up").

Late one night, Mary, Dickon, and Martha covertly bring Colin to the garden in a wheelchair. As they spend time there the exercise and fresh air help Colin regain his health ("Come Spirit, Come Charm").

Not long after, Mary is in danger of being sent away to boarding school by Neville, but is buoyed up by Martha who tells her to "Hold On" to everything and everybody to which she has grown close. She writes to Archibald and asks him to come home ("Letter Song").

In Paris, Archibald still struggles to find peace in his life, but Lily's ghost persuades him to return home to Misselthwaite Manor ("How Could I Ever Know"). Entering the garden on his arrival, he discovers Colin in complete health ("Come Spirit, Come Charm Reprise"), running and playing with the others. Archibald, now a changed man, invites Mary to be his own, and the entire company bids all to "stay here in the garden" ("Finale").

Characters: *The Secret Garden*

Mary Lennox: A ten-year-old girl who goes to live with her uncle after her parents' deaths

Spirits:

Rose: Mary's mother, Rose dies early in the play in a cholera epidemic.

Captain Albert Lennox: Mary's father, he dies early in the play in a cholera epidemic.

Lily: Mary's aunt, Archibald Craven's wife, dies in giving birth to Colin, before the play opens.

At Misselthwaite Manor, North Yorkshire, England, 1906:

Archibald Craven: Mary's uncle and Colin's father, lord of Misselthwaite Manor, his wife, Lily passed away before the play begins.

Dr. Neville Craven: Archibald Craven's brother, he is responsible for the management of the manor, including the treatment of Colin's ailments.

Mrs. Medlock: The housekeeper

Martha: A chambermaid.

Dickon: Martha's brother.

Ben: The head gardener.

Colin: Archibald's ten-year-old son, he is confined to bed because of a mysterious ailments.

Mrs. Winthrop: The headmistress of a girls' boarding school

Healing and Change in the Garden

By Marlo M. Ihler

When author Frances Hodgson Burnett, began her writing career in 1868 at the age of nineteen, her family life was most definitely in need of some help and healing. Her family had recently moved from England to a small town in Tennessee, both her parents had died, and she was carrying the burden of financially supporting her four siblings. So it is no surprise that elements of renewal and personal growth appear in many of her works. In her celebrated story, *The Secret Garden*, these themes are the driving force behind a young girl's coming of age and the healing that follows her discovery of a hidden garden.

Adaptations of the Story

As the creative minds behind the musical version of the story, Marsha Norman (book and lyrics) and Lucy Simon (music) had Burnett's rich and rewarding material with which to work. They created an immensely successful Broadway production, garnering numerous accolades including seven Tony Award nominations, two Tony Awards, and a Drama Desk Award for outstanding music, all in 1991. In fact, Daisy Eagan, who at age eleven played the lead role of Mary and won the Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical, is still the youngest person ever to win a Tony.

The story of *The Secret Garden* is so popular that it has been adapted numerous times for screen and stage. Some of the most well known are a 1949 black-and-white MGM film starring Margaret O'Brien, a 1975 television series, a 1987 Hallmark Hall of Fame television movie, and the most acclaimed, the 1993 film directed by Agnieszka Holland, starring Kate Maberly as Mary (www.imdb.com). Other adaptations include movie and television sequels, Japanese anime, novels based on the source material, a ballet, and an opera (to be presented by the Northwest Children's Opera in June 2009).

The Healing Place

When discussing the story of *The Secret Garden*, one cannot help but be aware of the themes of healing and personal change. It is interesting to note that the author Frances Hodgson Burnett was an avid practitioner of Christian Science, New Thought, and Theosophy. These movements, which were at peak popularity at the turn of the twentieth century, profess belief in the power and necessity of positive thinking, law of attraction, the healing powers of the mind, and divinity in nature.

These tenets heavily influenced *The Secret Garden*. Burnett used the garden as the central symbol, a place of personal devastation (as with Lily Craven's death and Archibald's mourning) and subsequent restoration (as with Mary's self-discovery). It is evident that Burnett intended to tell a story where one of the strongest sources of healing power comes from within the individual. As New Thought philosophy professes: a person can change their life by changing their thinking, and that thought and attitude affect one's experiences (www.newthought.org/new_thought.html).

For Your Musical Consideration

In the musical version, it begins with a mood of secrets, solitude, and sadness. While growing up in India, Mary's parents die from a cholera epidemic and she is sent to live with her uncle, Archibald Craven, at Misselthwaite Manor in England. It is not until we meet Martha, Mary's maidservant, that the story begins its pivotal curative shift. A character filled with kindness and hope, she introduces creativity, imagination, and play to Mary's dark and lonely world. It is Martha who first mentions the forbidden garden and encourages Mary to explore the out-of-doors.

The minor character of Ben Weatherstaff, the head gardener at Misselthwaite Manor, is important in providing exposition to the story. He relates the history of the garden that once belonged to Lily, Archibald's deceased wife, and the reasons why it was locked. Even as he warns Mary to "stay away from Miss Lily's garden," he seems to counter his own admonition in "It's a Maze." He talks of learning and persevering through making choices, or getting through the maze, almost a commentary on Mary's personal journey throughout the play.

Mary's transformation continues to take place as she befriends others, especially Martha's brother Dickon. He becomes her gateway to the natural world, as he has special talents with the local flora and fauna. He represents the healing powers inherent in living things, expressly welcoming the warm spring in "Wick." Through their budding friendship he becomes an agent of change for Mary, helping her to thaw and grow, like the earth around them. She then in turn affects others for the better.

One such example is the character of Colin who is sickly and has been hidden away from the world's view until Mary accidentally discovers him one night. He, like the garden, has essentially been uncared for except for the basics of food, water, and medicine. His existence is severely lacking in love, affection, and any kind of creative outlet. Once Mary enters his life, she tends to Colin like she does the garden, applying everything she learns, hoping to transform him into a happy, healthy, and curious child.

The most difficult character to gauge is Archibald Craven, Colin's father and Mary's uncle. His healing has been excruciatingly slow, as he continues to mourn his wife's death after ten years, as in "Lily's Eyes" and "Where in the World." He refuses to let in any reminders or remembrances and his only solace is escape through travel. He, perhaps out of all the characters, needs the deepest emotional healing.

Other Major Themes

Other major themes relating to healing are the components of human companionship, friendship, determination, and love. "The human heart is . . . a powerful force in this story," says Jim Christian, director for this summer's Festival production of *The Secret Garden*. "It has the capacity to cause the most exquisite pain, a miraculous ability to heal, and the precious gift of feeling love" (Director's Notes, Nov. 2008).

Within this "pastoral fiction," there is a deep contrast between the social standings of the characters. Suffering, secrecy, and sickness seem to be tied with those in the upper class. Those that represent and affect positive change are the country folk who are "more truthful,

compassionate, and noble than people not in close touch with nature”
(www.bookrags.com/studyguide-secret-garden/style.html).

Perhaps the greatest lesson of *The Secret Garden* is taught by Dickon: “The strongest roses will fair thrive on bein’ neglected, if the soil is rich enough” (2.4). Given the chance, even those in the most dismal of situations can grow and flourish. It is then no wonder that this tale of redemption and healing has such wide appeal. While *The Secret Garden* is “best known as a piece of children’s literature,” says director Jim Christian, “it offers deeply powerful themes and principles that are at the very heart of the human condition.”

Study Questions: *The Secret Garden*

- 1.) **Gardens-** What other famous gardens come to your mind, from history, mythology, and literature (ex: the Garden of Eden)? What gardens have you experienced in your real life? What do gardens usually symbolize, in both literature and in real life? What might the garden in *The Secret Garden* symbolize, and how does it compare or contrast to the other gardens you've thought of?
- 2.) **Sickness-** Why do you think Colin believes he is sick, even though he is not? Why does the garden make him better?
- 3.) **Magic-** In *The Secret Garden*, robins and ghosts communicate with humans, and nature magically heals. Do you believe the magic in the story is real, or is it a more metaphorical magic? What real-world phenomena might the magic in the story symbolize?
- 4.) **Growth-** How does the growth of the human characters parallel the growth of the garden? In what ways does the story connect the humans to the natural elements of the play?
- 5.) **Family-** How does *The Secret Garden* define the idea of a "family," and how does that definition change over the course of the play?

Study Guide Questions: Engage With the Play

By Anna Miles

Take charge of your theatre-going experience and make it your own by asking yourself questions before, during, and after watching a play.

Questions to ask before the play:

If you **HAVE** read the play:

How did you envision the set, or the visual world of the play, while reading?

How did you imagine the characters looked while reading the play?

What themes did you notice repeating throughout the play?

What images jumped out at you while reading the play?

How would you describe the central theme of the play in one sentence?

If you **HAVEN'T** read the play:

Do you know anything about the play? If so, what do you know?

In General:

When you think about "theatre," what impressions come to mind? What does "theatre" mean to you?

What do you expect your experience to be when you watch a play? Do you expect to be bored? Excited? Engaged? Curious? Angry? Tired?

Questions to ask after the play:

If you **READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the production set differ from what you had imagined while reading the play? How was it similar? How did these changes affect your understanding of the story?

Did the characters look different from how you envisioned them looking while reading the play? Did they sound different? Act differently? How did these changes affect your understanding and

opinion of each character? How did these changes affect your understanding of the overall story?

How did the themes and images you noticed while reading translate to performance? Did the same themes and images jump out at you? Did you notice new ones?

Did this particular production seem to have the same central theme, or a different central theme from the one you discovered while reading? What elements of the staging, acting, or design helped convey the theme?

Did they play gain or lose anything in performance? Did you enjoy reading it more, or watching it?

If you **DIDN'T READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the play live up to your expectations? Did it turn out the way you thought it would? Was your knowledge of the play correct?

Were you able to follow the story?

Which part of the story did you most respond to? What themes and images jumped out at you?

Which character did you most relate to? Why?

In General:

How did this production change or confirm your original impressions of "theatre"?

How did your experience watching the play differ from how you expected it would go?

In your own words, how would you summarize the plot of the play? How is the plot different from the story, or the thematic implications, in the play?

Did you feel the story was relevant to your life? How and why?

Did you feel the story said something about our society, or about the world at large? If so, what?

Do you feel this story is an important one to tell and keep telling? How and why?

What kind of stories do you most respond to?

Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive at the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to participate.
- Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap. It can also be a violation of an actor's contract.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).
- Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.

Additional Resources

***The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, Project Gutenberg**

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/113/113-h/113-h.htm>

The full text of the original novel.

***The Secret Garden* Study Guide, MacMillan Young Learners**

[https://cdn.macmillanyounglearners.com/readers-public/EXPLORERS 5 THE SECRET GARDEN teacher notes.pdf](https://cdn.macmillanyounglearners.com/readers-public/EXPLORERS_5_THE_SECRET_GARDEN_teacher_notes.pdf)

***The Secret Garden's* Hidden Depths**

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/aug/05/secret-garden-frances-hodgson-burnett>

An article by Anna Clark for *The Guardian*.

100 Years of *The Secret Garden*

<https://publicdomainreview.org/2011/03/08/100-years-of-the-secret-garden/>

Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, author of *Frances Hodgson Burnett: The Unexpected Life of the Author of The Secret Garden*, takes a look at the life of Burnett and how personal tragedy underpinned the creation of her most famous work.

***The Secret Garden*- A Summary (Britannica)**

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Secret-Garden>