

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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Publication webpage:

https://www1.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/a1/ai-generated_graded_readers.html

Publication date: March 2, 2026

About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

Source Text

Original work: The Secret Garden

Author: Frances Hodgson Burnett

Source: Project Gutenberg

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Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

When Mary Lennox was sent to live at Misselthwaite Manor, people said she was the most unpleasant child they had ever seen. This was true. She had a small thin face and a small thin body. Her light hair hung flat, and her face looked yellow because she had grown up in India and had often been ill. Her father worked for the English government and was always busy and sick himself. Her mother was very beautiful but cared only for parties and fun. She did not want a child and gave Mary to an Ayah to raise. The Ayah understood that she must keep the child quiet and out of sight so the Mem Sahib would not be troubled.

Because of this, Mary grew up without love or attention. She saw mostly the dark faces of servants who obeyed her every wish. They did this because they were afraid she would cry and disturb her mother. By the time she was six years old, Mary was selfish and used to having her own way. Several governesses came to teach her but left quickly because they disliked her temper. Only because she decided she wanted to read did she finally learn her letters.

One very hot morning, when Mary was about nine years old, she woke feeling angry. She became even angrier when she saw a strange servant instead of her Ayah beside her bed.

“Why did you come?” Mary demanded. “I will not let you stay. Send my Ayah to me.”

The woman looked frightened and said softly that the Ayah could not come. Mary kicked and struck her in a rage, but the servant only repeated that it was not possible.

Something strange filled the air that morning. Servants hurried about with pale faces. Some were missing. No one answered Mary’s questions. At last she wandered into the garden alone and began pretending to make a flower bed, pushing bright red flowers into small piles of dirt. She muttered angry words,

planning what she would say when her Ayah returned.

Suddenly she heard voices on the veranda. Her mother stood there with a young officer. Mary watched them carefully because she rarely saw her mother closely. Mrs. Lennox looked beautiful in her light clothes, but now her face was pale and frightened.

“Is it very bad?” her mother asked in a shaking voice.

“Very bad,” the officer answered. “You should have gone away sooner.”

Her mother wrung her hands in fear. At that moment loud crying rose from the servants’ huts. The sound grew wild and terrible.

“What is it?” Mrs. Lennox cried.

“Someone has died,” the officer said quietly.

Soon the truth became known. Cholera had broken out. Servants fell ill and died quickly. Panic spread everywhere. During the confusion Mary was forgotten. She hid in the nursery while people rushed about the house. Sometimes she cried. Sometimes she slept. She found food left on a table and even drank sweet wine, which made her sleepy. At last she lay down and slept deeply while terrible events happened around her.

When she woke again, the house was silent. No voices sounded. No footsteps came. She wondered who would take care of her now that her Ayah was dead. She did not cry because she had never loved anyone deeply. She only felt angry that no one remembered her.

A small snake slid across the floor and disappeared under the door. Mary watched it calmly.

“How quiet it is,” she said aloud. “It is as if no one is here but me.”

Soon men’s footsteps sounded in the house. They opened doors and spoke softly.

“What desolation,” one man said sadly. “That beautiful woman—and the child too, perhaps.”

They opened the nursery door and found Mary standing alone. One officer stared in shock.

“There is a child here!” he cried. “Who is she?”

“I am Mary Lennox,” she said stiffly. “Why does nobody come?”

The men looked at each other with sorrow.

“Poor little child,” one said gently. “There is nobody left to come.”

In this sudden way Mary learned that her father and mother were dead and had been taken away during the night. The servants who survived had fled in fear. She had truly been left alone.

Mary did not feel grief as other children might. She thought mainly about what would happen to her next. She stayed for a short time with an English clergyman’s family, but she disliked their noisy children and messy house. The children soon began calling her “Mistress Mary Quite Contrary,” singing a teasing rhyme whenever they saw her grow angry.

One boy named Basil told her she would soon go to England to live with her uncle, Mr. Archibald Craven, whom she had never met.

“He lives in a great lonely house,” Basil said. “No one likes him. He is a hunchback and very cross.”

Mary refused to listen, but she thought about it later. Soon Mrs. Crawford confirmed the news: Mary would travel to England and live at Misselthwaite Manor.

She sailed under the care of a woman who paid little attention to her. In London she was met by Mrs. Medlock, the housekeeper from Misselthwaite. Mrs. Medlock had red cheeks, sharp eyes, and a loud voice. She looked Mary up and down and clearly did not admire her.

During the train journey north, Mrs. Medlock explained where Mary was going.

“The house is six hundred years old,” she said. “Nearly a hundred rooms, most of them shut up. It stands on the edge of the moor.”

Mary listened quietly, pretending not to care, though curiosity grew inside her.

“Your uncle won’t trouble himself about you,” Mrs. Medlock continued. “He keeps to himself. Ever since his wife died, he shuts himself away.”

Mary turned toward the window as rain streamed down the glass. The story made her uneasy. A lonely man in a huge house sounded cold and sad.

After a long journey, they reached a small station at night. A carriage waited to take them across the moor. The land stretched dark and endless under the wind.

“What is a moor?” Mary asked.

“You’ll see,” Mrs. Medlock replied.

Soon the carriage climbed into open land where nothing grew but low bushes. Wind rushed across the wide darkness with a strange wild sound.

“It feels like the sea,” Mary whispered.

“That’s the moor,” said Mrs. Medlock.

At last lights appeared ahead. They drove through park gates and along a long avenue of trees until a huge dark house rose before them. Only one window showed light.

Inside, the hall was vast and shadowy. Portraits and armor lined the walls. Mary felt small and lost as she stood on the stone floor.

A servant said quietly, “Take her to her room. He does not wish to see her.”

Mary was led through corridors and up staircases until she reached a room with a fire and supper waiting.

Mrs. Medlock said shortly, “Here you are. These rooms are yours. Keep to them.”

In this way Mistress Mary arrived at Misselthwaite Manor, feeling more contrary than ever before.

Part 2

When Mary woke the next morning, a young housemaid was kneeling by the fireplace, cleaning it and making a fire. Mary lay still and watched her. The room felt strange and gloomy. The walls were covered with heavy cloth showing trees and people hunting in a forest. Through the window she saw a wide stretch of land without trees that looked like a dull purple sea.

“What is that?” Mary asked, pointing outside.

The girl looked and smiled. “That’s the moor. Do you like it?”

“No,” Mary answered at once. “I hate it.”

The girl laughed kindly. “That’s because you’re not used to it. It looks empty now, but in spring it smells sweet and the air is fresh. I wouldn’t live away from

it for anything.”

Mary watched her with surprise. Servants in India never spoke so freely. They bowed and obeyed without talking. This girl spoke as if they were equals.

“You are a strange servant,” Mary said coldly.

The girl laughed again. “I know that well enough. My name’s Martha. I’m not a fine servant. This house is different. There’s no master or mistress about most days.”

“Are you going to be my servant?” Mary asked.

“I’m Mrs. Medlock’s servant,” Martha answered. “But I’ll help you a bit.”

Mary sat up. “Who will dress me?”

Martha stared. “Can you not dress yourself?”

Mary frowned. “I never did. My Ayah dressed me.”

Martha shook her head. “Well, it’s time you learned. It’ll do you good.”

Mary felt insulted, but Martha continued working calmly. Soon Mary realized she would indeed have to learn new things. Martha helped her, but she expected Mary to move and try for herself.

While dressing her, Martha talked about her large family. She had many brothers and sisters who ran freely on the moor all day.

“Our Dickon,” she said proudly, “can make friends with animals. Birds and sheep follow him. Even a young pony belongs to him now.”

Mary listened with growing interest. She had never owned a pet and suddenly wished she had one.

At breakfast Mary refused her porridge.

“Tha’ doesn’t want it?” Martha said in surprise. “Our children would eat it in a moment.”

“I am not hungry,” Mary replied.

Martha looked shocked. “You don’t know what hunger is, then.”

Mary truly did not. She drank tea and ate only a little toast.

“You should go outside,” Martha said. “Fresh air will give you an appetite.”

Mary looked out at the gray gardens. “Who will go with me?”

Martha stared again. “You’ll go by yourself. Children play alone sometimes.”

Mary hesitated, but curiosity won. She put on her coat and boots and went outside.

The gardens were large and quiet. Paths wound between lawns and trees. Flower beds lay empty in the winter cold. Everything seemed still and lonely.

She walked until she reached kitchen gardens surrounded by walls. An old man digging there looked up when he saw her.

“What is this place?” Mary asked.

“One o’ th’ kitchen gardens,” he answered shortly.

He seemed unfriendly, and Mary wore her usual sour expression, so neither pleased the other at first. She walked through several gardens and an orchard, noticing high walls everywhere.

Then she heard a bird singing. A small bird with a bright red breast sat in a tree and sang cheerfully. The sound made Mary feel strangely comforted.

When she returned, the old gardener gave a soft whistle. To Mary’s amazement, the bird flew down and landed near him.

“Here he is,” the old man said proudly. “A robin redbreast. Friendliest bird alive.”

The robin hopped about, pecking the soil. Mary felt a warm feeling inside her chest as she watched him.

“Will he always come when you call?” she asked quietly.

“Aye,” said the gardener. “We’re friends.”

Mary stepped closer to the bird.

“I’m lonely,” she said suddenly, surprised by her own words.

The gardener studied her face.

“Then no wonder,” he said. “You’ve come from far away.”

His name was Ben Weatherstaff. He admitted he was lonely too, except for the robin.

“We’re alike,” he said bluntly. “Not good-looking and both sour-tempered.”

No one had ever spoken to Mary so honestly. She felt uncomfortable but thoughtful.

The robin flew to a branch and began singing again.

“Why did he do that?” Mary asked.

“He’s decided to be friends with you,” Ben said.

Mary moved closer and spoke softly to the bird.

“Would you make friends with me?”

Her voice sounded gentle and hopeful, even to herself. Ben looked surprised.

“You sounded like a real child then,” he said.

Mary asked about Dickon again, curious about the boy who loved animals.

Soon the robin flew away over a wall.

“He’s gone into the garden with no door!” Mary cried.

Ben’s face changed at once.

“There was a door once,” he said slowly. “Ten years ago.”

Mary’s curiosity grew strong. “Why is it shut?”

“Mr. Craven locked it when his wife died,” Ben answered. “Buried the key. No one goes in.”

A secret garden. Locked for ten years. The idea filled Mary’s thoughts as she wandered back toward the house.

In the following days her life followed the same pattern. She woke, ate breakfast, and walked outside because there was nothing else to do. The strong wind pushed against her as she walked, and without knowing it she grew stronger. Color slowly came into her cheeks.

One morning she felt something new—hunger. She ate her porridge eagerly.

“Tha’s got an appetite now,” Martha said with satisfaction. “That’s the moor air working on thee.”

Mary began walking faster outdoors, sometimes even running to warm herself. She watched birds, trees, and clouds. Though she did not yet realize it, the lonely child who had arrived at Misselthwaite was beginning to change.

Still, one mystery filled her mind above all others: the locked garden and the buried key.

She often walked near the walls, searching carefully. She watched the robin, hoping he would show her something. Sometimes she thought she heard faint sounds in the great house at night, as if someone were crying far away down a

corridor.

The sound troubled her. The house had a hundred rooms, most closed and silent. Who could be crying there?

One night, as wind moved through the halls and shadows lay across the walls, Mary sat up in bed and listened closely.

Somewhere in the distance, she was certain she heard a child crying.

Part 3

The sound woke Mary in the middle of the night. She lay still in her bed and listened carefully. At first she thought the wind was making the noise as it rushed around the old house, but then she heard it again. It was not the wind. It sounded like someone crying—a child crying somewhere far away in the long corridors.

Mary sat up slowly. The room was dark except for the faint glow of the dying fire. The crying rose and fell, soft but clear enough that she felt certain she had not imagined it.

“Someone is crying,” she whispered to herself.

She listened harder. The sound seemed to move, as if it came from deep inside the house. Then footsteps hurried along the corridor outside her door. A door shut somewhere, and suddenly everything became silent again.

Mary lay awake for a long time, wondering who it could be. She knew there were many rooms locked and unused. Perhaps someone lived hidden in one of them. The thought made her feel both afraid and curious. At last she fell asleep again.

In the morning Martha came in as usual to light the fire. Mary watched her closely.

“Who was crying last night?” she asked at once.

Martha looked surprised. “Crying? I heard nothing.”

“I did,” Mary insisted. “A child was crying somewhere.”

Martha shook her head quickly. “No one was crying. The wind makes queer sounds in this house. That’s all.”

Mary was not satisfied. “It was not the wind,” she said stubbornly.

Martha avoided her eyes while she worked. “You must not listen to such things. Eat your breakfast.”

Mary noticed that Martha spoke too quickly, as if she wished to change the subject. This made Mary even more certain that she had truly heard someone.

After breakfast she went outside again. The cold air struck her face, but she walked faster now and no longer felt as weak as before. She went toward the gardens, hoping to see the robin.

Soon she heard his cheerful song. The little bird appeared and hopped along the path ahead of her as if leading the way. Mary followed him without thinking, smiling slightly when he stopped and looked back at her.

“You are friendly,” she said softly. “You are not like people.”

The robin flew onto a wall and began pecking at the ivy growing there. Mary watched closely. The ivy moved in the wind, and something caught her eye—a small space where the leaves hung differently.

She walked nearer and pushed the branches aside. Beneath them she saw a door hidden in the wall. Her heart began to beat quickly.

“A door!” she whispered.

The handle was covered with rust and half hidden by vines. She tried to turn it, but it would not move. The door was locked.

Mary stood very still, feeling both excited and disappointed. This must be the secret garden. She was certain of it.

“If only I had the key,” she said.

The robin flew down and began scratching at the ground nearby. Mary watched him, then slowly knelt and brushed away leaves with her hands. Something hard touched her fingers. She pulled it out of the soil.

It was an old key.

For a moment she could hardly breathe. She looked from the key to the hidden door and back again.

“Perhaps... perhaps it is the key,” she murmured.

Her hands trembled as she stood and went to the door. She pushed aside the ivy

again and placed the key into the lock. It fit.

Slowly she turned it.

The lock clicked.

Mary paused, suddenly nervous. No one had entered this garden for ten years. She pushed the door open gently and stepped inside.

The air felt still and quiet. Tall bushes and tangled rose trees filled the space. Branches crossed the paths, and weeds covered the ground. Yet even in winter Mary could see that the garden had once been beautiful. Old roses climbed everywhere, their stems twisted but alive.

She closed the door behind her and stood looking around. A strange feeling filled her chest—not anger or loneliness, but something calm and warm.

“This is my garden now,” she said softly.

She began walking slowly along the paths. Birds fluttered among the branches. The robin followed her, hopping close as if pleased she had come.

Mary knelt and touched the soil. It was dark and rich.

“Things might grow here again,” she thought.

For the first time since arriving at Misselthwaite Manor, she forgot to feel unhappy. She explored every corner carefully, imagining how the garden must have looked long ago.

After a while she heard voices far away and realized she must return before anyone noticed her absence. She slipped out, locked the door again, and hid the key in her pocket.

All that day she felt different. The secret belonged only to her and the robin. She said little during meals and answered Martha quietly, thinking constantly of the hidden garden.

That night she again heard the faint crying in the corridor. This time she listened more carefully. The sound was weak and angry, like someone who was ill and unhappy.

“Who are you?” she whispered into the darkness.

No answer came, but Mary knew she would find out someday. Just as she had found the garden, she felt sure she would discover the truth about the crying child

hidden somewhere in the great house.

Holding the secret key under her pillow, she fell asleep, already planning to return to the garden the next morning.

Part 4

The next morning Mary woke earlier than usual. For a few moments she lay still, remembering where she was. Then suddenly she remembered the garden and the key hidden beneath her pillow. She sat up quickly and felt for it. The cold metal touched her fingers, and she smiled without knowing she was smiling.

Martha came in soon after to light the fire.

“You’re awake early,” she said. “Tha’ looks different this mornin’.”

Mary tried to look calm. “I wanted to go outside sooner.”

Martha laughed. “That’s th’ moor air workin’ on thee again.”

Mary dressed faster than before, even trying to button some things herself. Martha noticed but said nothing, only watching with quiet approval.

After breakfast Mary hurried outdoors. The wind was strong, but she did not mind it now. She walked quickly toward the hidden door, looking around to make sure no one watched her. The robin appeared almost at once, flying ahead as if guiding her again.

“Good morning,” Mary said softly.

She pushed aside the ivy, unlocked the door, and slipped inside the secret garden. Then she closed the door carefully behind her.

The garden seemed less sad in the morning light. Though winter still covered everything, she could see signs of life everywhere. Tiny green shoots pushed through the soil. The rose branches were not dead; they only slept.

Mary began to walk slowly around the paths, studying everything. She remembered how Ben Weatherstaff dug the soil and decided she would do the same. She found a broken branch and used it to scrape away weeds.

At first she grew tired quickly, but she continued. The work made her warm, and her cheeks turned pink from the cold air and effort.

“I am helping the garden,” she said aloud.

The robin watched her closely, hopping nearby and singing now and then. Mary spoke to him as she worked.

“No one knows about this place but us,” she told him. “It is our secret.”

She worked until she heard the distant sound of a bell from the house. Realizing it must be time to return, she brushed dirt from her hands and left the garden, locking the door again.

During the day she felt restless, waiting for the next morning when she could return. Even food tasted better now. She finished her meals and surprised Martha by asking for more bread.

“Well now,” Martha said, pleased. “Tha’s growin’ stronger already.”

That evening Mary sat by the fire thinking about the crying she had heard at night. The mystery troubled her more now that she felt braver.

When she went to bed, she stayed awake longer, listening carefully. The house was quiet for a long time. Then, faintly, the crying began again.

Mary slipped out of bed. She wrapped a shawl around herself and opened her door slowly. The corridor stretched long and dim before her. The crying sounded clearer now, coming from somewhere deep inside the house.

She walked quietly along the passage. The sound stopped suddenly. A light appeared as Mrs. Medlock came around a corner carrying a candle.

“What are you doing out of bed?” Mrs. Medlock demanded sharply.

“I heard crying,” Mary said. “Who is it?”

Mrs. Medlock frowned. “There is no one crying. Go back to your room.”

“But I heard it—”

“You heard the wind,” Mrs. Medlock interrupted firmly. “You must not wander about. Mr. Craven does not allow it.”

Mary saw that asking more questions would bring only anger. She returned to her room, but she did not believe Mrs. Medlock. Someone was crying, and the adults were hiding the truth.

The next day she went again to the garden and worked longer. She cleared dead leaves and loosened the soil around rose bushes. The exercise made her feel strong

and happy in a way she had never known.

Later she met Ben Weatherstaff again.

“Tha’ looks better,” he said, studying her face. “Less like a sick cat.”

Mary did not feel insulted this time. “I have been outside every day,” she said.

Ben nodded. “That’s th’ way. Th’ earth an’ th’ air cures many things.”

The robin landed near them, and Ben smiled.

“He’s taken to thee,” he said. “That means tha’rt not as bad as tha’ looks.”

Mary almost laughed. The sound surprised her so much that she stopped at once, wondering what had made her do it.

She began asking Ben questions about plants and gardens. Though he pretended to be annoyed, he answered them. She listened carefully, storing every word in her mind so she could use the knowledge in the secret garden.

Each day followed the same pattern. Mary worked in the hidden garden, ate more food, and grew stronger. Her thoughts no longer stayed only on herself. She thought about the robin, about Dickon, and about the mysterious crying child.

One afternoon, while walking near the house, she heard servants talking quietly.

“He was worse last night,” one said.

“Aye,” another answered. “Doctor says he must be kept quiet.”

Mary stopped, listening. They noticed her and fell silent at once.

“Who?” Mary asked quickly.

“No one for you to trouble about,” one servant replied, hurrying away.

Mary stood still, certain now that someone lived hidden in the house. Someone sick. Someone who cried at night.

That evening she sat by the window looking across the moor. The sky stretched wide and pale above the land. For the first time she did not think the moor ugly. It looked large and free.

“Everything is changing,” she said softly, though she did not fully understand how much she herself was changing too.

She went to bed holding the secret key again, feeling that both the garden and the hidden child were mysteries waiting for her to discover.

Part 5

The days began to pass more quickly for Mary. Each morning she hurried through breakfast so she could go outside. The cold air no longer felt cruel to her. Instead, it made her feel awake and strong. She walked faster now, and sometimes she even skipped along the paths without thinking about it.

As soon as she reached the hidden door, the robin appeared, as if he had been waiting. Mary unlocked the garden and entered quietly.

Inside, the garden felt less lonely each day. Though the branches were still bare, she could see small green points pushing from the soil. She remembered what Ben Weatherstaff had said about plants sleeping through winter.

“You are not dead,” she told the rose bushes. “You are only waiting.”

She worked carefully, clearing weeds and loosening the earth. Her hands became dirty, but she did not mind. The work made her warm, and she felt proud when she finished a small piece of ground.

Sometimes she talked aloud without realizing it.

“When spring comes,” she said, “everything will grow again.”

The robin hopped beside her, listening as if he understood.

One morning the wind blew strongly across the garden walls. Mary stopped working and listened. She heard a faint whistling sound, not from the wind but from somewhere nearby. Turning quickly, she saw a boy standing on top of the wall, looking down at her.

He had bright eyes and rough brown hair, and he smiled openly.

Mary jumped in surprise.

“Who are you?” she demanded.

The boy laughed lightly and jumped down into the garden with easy movement.

“I’m Dickon,” he said. “Martha’s brother.”

Mary stared at him. “You climbed over the wall!”

“Aye,” he answered cheerfully. “I know ways in and out o’ most places.”

The robin flew straight to him and settled on his shoulder. Mary watched in amazement.

“He likes you,” she said.

Dickon smiled gently. “He likes folk that’s kind.”

Mary felt suddenly shy. She was not used to speaking with children calmly.

“I found this garden,” she said after a moment. “No one knows about it.”

Dickon looked around slowly, his expression becoming serious.

“So this is it,” he said softly. “Mother told me about it long ago. The garden that was shut when Mrs. Craven died.”

Mary nodded. “I found the key.”

Dickon did not seem shocked. Instead he looked pleased.

“It’s good you did,” he said. “Places like this shouldn’t stay shut forever.”

He walked among the plants, touching branches gently.

“These roses are alive,” he explained. “They’ll grow strong again if they’re cared for.”

Mary listened closely as he spoke about soil, roots, and growing things. He showed her how to clear weeds properly and how to loosen earth without hurting new shoots.

Working beside Dickon felt different from working alone. He spoke to birds and even to the wind as if they were friends. Animals seemed unafraid of him. A small squirrel appeared on the wall, watching quietly.

“Does everything like you?” Mary asked.

Dickon laughed. “I like them first. That helps.”

Mary thought about this. No one had ever told her such a thing before.

They worked together for a long time. Mary forgot to feel lonely or unhappy. She even laughed once when Dickon told a story about a lamb following him home.

When it was time to leave, Dickon said, “We’ll keep it secret, aye?”

“Yes,” Mary said quickly. “It is our garden.”

She locked the door again, feeling happier than she had ever felt in her life.

That night she waited again for the crying sound. It came later than before, but this time she felt less afraid. She listened carefully, trying to understand where it came from.

The crying sounded angry as well as sad, as if the child were shouting between sobs.

“I will find you,” Mary whispered into the darkness.

The next day she told Dickon about the crying.

He listened thoughtfully. “There’s talk among the servants,” he said. “But no one says much. Something’s hidden in that house.”

Mary nodded firmly. “I will discover it.”

As days passed, Mary changed more and more. She ate well and slept deeply. Color filled her cheeks, and her eyes grew bright. Martha noticed first.

“Tha’ looks like a different child,” she said one morning. “Running about an’ eating proper meals.”

Mary did not argue. She knew it was true.

Even Ben Weatherstaff admitted it when she met him in the garden.

“Tha’rt not half so sour,” he said. “Fresh air’s done thee good.”

Mary smiled slightly. She no longer minded his blunt words.

Each evening she thought about two secrets—the hidden garden and the hidden child. Both seemed connected somehow to the sadness of the house.

One windy night the crying grew louder than ever. Mary sat upright in bed, certain she could not ignore it anymore.

“Tomorrow,” she said quietly, “I will follow the sound.”

She lay down again, holding the secret key tightly, feeling brave in a way she had never felt before.

Part 6

The next night Mary did not fall asleep at once. She lay waiting, listening carefully to every sound in the great house. The wind moved along the walls, and now and then a door creaked somewhere far away. At last the crying began again.

This time it was louder. It sounded angry and tired, like someone who had cried for a long time and could not stop.

Mary slipped quietly out of bed. She put on her slippers and wrapped a shawl

around her shoulders. Opening her door slowly, she stepped into the corridor.

The sound came clearly now. She followed it, walking softly along the long passage. The house felt enormous and empty. Shadows lay across the floor, and the air was cold.

She turned one corner, then another. The crying stopped suddenly. Mary stood still, listening. She heard voices whispering behind a nearby door.

“He must be quiet,” a woman’s voice said.

“He will make himself ill again,” another answered.

Mary moved closer. The door opened suddenly, and a servant came out carrying a candle. Seeing Mary, she started in surprise.

“What are you doing here?” the woman asked sharply.

“I heard someone crying,” Mary said boldly. “Who is it?”

The servant looked uneasy. “There is no one you need to know about. Go back to your room.”

Before Mary could speak again, the woman closed the door firmly behind her. Mary returned slowly to her room, but now she felt certain the crying belonged to a real child hidden somewhere in the house.

The next morning she went to the secret garden and told Dickon everything.

He listened quietly, sitting on the ground beside her.

“Maybe it’s someone sick,” he said at last. “Some folk keep sick children hidden if they think fresh air will harm them.”

Mary thought about this. “He sounds lonely,” she said.

Dickon nodded. “Lonely folk often cry.”

They worked together in the garden again. Dickon brought small tools and showed Mary how to plant seeds. He explained how sunlight and air helped living things grow strong.

“Everything wants to live,” he said gently. “You only have to give it a chance.”

Mary listened carefully. She began to feel that the garden itself was alive and that she was helping it wake from sleep.

The robin sang loudly from a branch, and Mary laughed aloud when it hopped onto her foot for a moment before flying away.

“He trusts you now,” Dickon said.

Mary felt proud and warm inside.

Later that day she returned to the house thinking about the hidden child. She watched the servants more closely and noticed how they grew quiet whenever she asked questions. This only made her more determined.

That evening Martha brought supper and sat talking as usual.

“Tha’s been out all day again,” she said. “It’s workin’ wonders on thee.”

Mary hesitated, then asked quietly, “Is there a boy in this house?”

Martha froze for a moment. “Why would you ask that?”

“Because I hear crying at night,” Mary answered.

Martha looked toward the door nervously before speaking in a low voice.

“You mustn’t ask questions,” she said. “Mrs. Medlock wouldn’t like it.”

“But there is someone,” Mary insisted.

Martha sighed softly. “I’ve said nowt,” she whispered. “Best forget it.”

But Mary could not forget.

That night she waited again. When the crying began, she rose at once and followed it more carefully than before. She counted doors as she walked and listened for the loudest sound.

At last she reached a corridor she had never seen. The crying came from behind one door at the far end.

Mary walked toward it slowly. Her heart beat fast, but curiosity pushed her forward. She placed her hand on the handle.

The door opened.

Inside was a large room filled with shadows and firelight. On a bed lay a thin boy with pale face and bright eyes. He stared at her in shock.

“Who are you?” he demanded.

Mary stared back just as boldly.

“I am Mary Lennox,” she said. “Who are you?”

The boy pushed himself up on his pillows. “I am Colin Craven.”

Mary realized at once that this must be her cousin—the son of Mr. Craven. The hidden child of the house.

Colin looked both angry and frightened.

“No one is allowed to come here,” he said. “You will be sent away.”

“I heard you crying,” Mary answered simply. “I wanted to see who it was.”

Colin’s face changed. “I was not crying,” he said quickly, though his eyes were still wet.

Mary stepped closer. She looked at him carefully. He seemed weak and pale, almost as thin as she had once been.

“You are always in bed,” she said.

“I am ill,” Colin replied. “I am going to die.”

Mary frowned. “I don’t believe you.”

No one had ever spoken to Colin like this. He stared at her in surprise.

“The doctors say so,” he insisted.

“You only think so because people tell you,” Mary answered. “I used to be ill too. But fresh air and work make you better.”

Colin looked uncertain for the first time.

They talked for a long while. Mary told him about the moor, the robin, and the secret garden—though she did not yet reveal its location. Colin listened eagerly, his eyes growing bright with interest.

“I have never been outside,” he said softly. “I am afraid.”

Mary felt a strange feeling of kindness toward him.

“You would like the garden,” she said. “It is alive.”

For the first time, Colin stopped complaining and asked questions instead. When Mary finally left, he looked disappointed.

“Will you come again?” he asked.

Mary nodded. “Yes.”

As she returned to her room, she realized something important had changed. She was no longer the loneliest child in the house. Now there were two secrets she shared—one hidden behind ivy walls, and one hidden behind a locked bedroom door.

The next morning Mary woke feeling excited instead of bored. For the first time since she had come to Misselthwaite Manor, she wanted the day to begin quickly. She dressed faster than ever and ate her breakfast without being told.

Martha watched her with wide eyes. “Tha’ eats like one of our own now,” she said. “Whatever’s happenin’, it’s doin’ thee good.”

Mary said nothing about Colin or the garden. Both secrets felt important, and she guarded them carefully.

After breakfast she went straight outside and hurried to the hidden door. The robin appeared at once, singing loudly as if welcoming her back. She unlocked the garden and stepped inside.

Soon Dickon arrived, climbing easily over the wall again. He carried a small bundle.

“Seeds,” he explained, opening it. “We’ll plant ’em where you cleared the ground.”

Mary knelt beside him, listening closely as he showed her how deep to press each seed into the soil.

“They’ll sleep awhile,” he said, “but they’ll wake when spring comes.”

Mary liked the idea of sleeping things waking again. It reminded her of herself—and perhaps of Colin too.

“There is a boy in the house,” she said quietly. “My cousin. His name is Colin.”

Dickon nodded slowly. “I’ve heard of him, but no one ever sees him.”

Mary told him about the crying and their conversation. Dickon listened seriously.

“If he stays shut indoors, he’ll grow weaker,” he said. “Fresh air would help him same as it helped thee.”

Mary agreed at once. “I want him to see the garden.”

Dickon smiled. “Then we must make it ready.”

They worked harder than before, clearing more ground and tying loose branches. Mary no longer tired quickly. Her arms felt stronger, and she enjoyed the work.

When she returned to the house that afternoon, she went quietly to Colin's room. He was awake and waiting.

"You came back," he said eagerly.

"Of course," Mary answered.

Colin studied her face. "You look different," he said. "You look... alive."

Mary sat beside the bed. "I have been working outside."

She described the garden again—the fresh air, the birds, and the growing plants. Colin listened with shining eyes.

"I wish I could see it," he whispered.

Then suddenly his expression darkened. "But I cannot walk. My back is weak. I will become a hunchback like my father."

Mary shook her head firmly. "You do not know that."

"The doctor says I must rest," Colin insisted.

"Resting all the time makes you weaker," Mary said. "You should sit up. You should go outside."

No one had ever argued with Colin before. Servants always agreed with him because they feared his tantrums. He stared at Mary, uncertain whether to be angry or interested.

"Tell me more about the garden," he said finally.

Mary told him everything except how to find it. She described the robin, Dickon, and the work they were doing.

Colin listened so closely that he forgot to complain. When Mary rose to leave, he looked anxious.

"You will come again tomorrow?"

"Yes," she said.

Over the next few days Mary divided her time between the garden and Colin's room. Each visit made Colin more curious about the outside world. He began asking questions instead of talking about illness.

One afternoon he demanded, "Bring Dickon to see me."

Mary hesitated. "It must remain secret."

"I promise," Colin said quickly. "I will not tell."

The next day Mary brought Dickon through quiet corridors to Colin's room. Dickon entered calmly, as if visiting a friend instead of the master's son.

Colin stared at him with wonder. "You are not afraid of me?"

Dickon shook his head. "Why should I be?"

Colin had never heard such a simple answer. He laughed a little, surprised at himself.

Dickon spoke about animals and the moor. As he talked, Colin forgot his fears. He even sat up longer than usual without noticing.

"You see," Mary said, "you are stronger already."

Colin looked thoughtful. For the first time, he seemed to doubt his own belief that he would die young.

They began planning together.

"When the weather grows warmer," Mary said carefully, "perhaps you could go outside."

Colin's eyes widened with both fear and excitement. "Do you think I could?"

"Yes," Dickon answered gently. "Slowly at first."

From that day Colin waited eagerly for their visits. He tried sitting up more each morning. He ate better and argued less with the servants.

Mrs. Medlock noticed the change and spoke to Martha.

"The house feels different," she said. "Less gloomy somehow."

Martha nodded secretly, though she guessed more than she said.

Meanwhile, spring slowly approached. Small green leaves appeared in the secret garden. Birds sang louder each day.

Mary stood one morning beside a rose bush and saw tiny buds forming.

"They are waking," she whispered.

She felt as if something inside herself was waking too. She no longer thought constantly about being lonely or unhappy. She thought about growing things, about helping Colin, and about the next day's work.

That evening, as she left Colin's room, he called after her.

"Mary," he said softly, "I am beginning to think I might live."

Mary smiled. "Of course you will."

She walked back through the long corridors feeling certain that both the secret garden and the hidden boy were changing together—and that she herself was changing with them.

Part 8

As spring moved closer, the air grew softer and the days longer. Mary noticed new colors appearing across the gardens and the moor. Small green leaves pushed from branches, and birds sang from morning until evening. Each day she hurried to the secret garden, eager to see what had changed.

The garden was no longer silent and empty. Tiny shoots covered the beds they had cleared. Rose bushes showed swelling buds, and fresh grass spread across the ground. Mary felt proud when she looked at the work she and Dickon had done.

“It is coming alive,” she said happily.

Dickon nodded. “Aye. It only needed someone to care for it.”

The robin sang loudly above them, flying from branch to branch as if celebrating. Sometimes he followed Mary closely, and she spoke to him without feeling foolish.

Mary herself had changed greatly. She walked with energy and no longer tired easily. Her face held color, and her eyes shone with interest. She laughed often now, especially when Dickon told stories about animals on the moor.

“Tha’ laughs like a proper child now,” Dickon said one morning.

Mary thought about this. She realized she had once been quiet and angry almost all the time. Now she felt lighter, as if the fresh air had opened something inside her.

At the house, Colin also began to change. He waited eagerly for Mary’s visits and listened closely whenever she described the garden. Dickon came often too, bringing stories and small gifts from the moor—feathers, smooth stones, and once a tiny wild flower growing early in a sheltered place.

Colin held the flower carefully. “It grew outside?” he asked.

“Aye,” Dickon said. “And there’s thousands more coming.”

Colin looked thoughtful. "I want to see them."

Mary smiled. "You will."

They began preparing him slowly. Each day Colin tried to sit up longer. At first he complained of tiredness, but Mary refused to agree with him.

"You are stronger than you think," she said firmly.

Dickon supported her words gently. "The body grows strong when the mind believes it can."

These ideas fascinated Colin. He had always believed he was weak because everyone told him so. Now he began to wonder if thoughts themselves could change a person.

One afternoon he said suddenly, "If plants grow because they want to live, perhaps people do too."

Mary nodded seriously. "Yes. The garden is teaching us."

They began calling this feeling "magic." Not magic from stories, but something quiet and powerful that helped living things grow.

"The magic is in the air," Colin said. "And in us."

Soon he made an important decision.

"I want to go outside," he declared.

Mary felt both excited and nervous. "We must be careful," she said. "No one must stop us."

Dickon agreed. "We'll take thee when the day is warm and still."

For several days they waited. During that time Mary worked harder than ever in the garden, making paths clear so Colin's chair could pass easily. She imagined his face when he saw the flowers for the first time.

At last a bright morning arrived with gentle sunshine and almost no wind.

Dickon brought a wheelchair quietly through a side entrance. Mary helped Colin sit up and wrap himself warmly.

Colin trembled slightly. "What if I cannot do it?"

Mary looked directly at him. "You can."

Slowly they moved through the corridors and out into the open air. Colin closed his eyes as sunlight touched his face.

“It feels warm,” he whispered.

He breathed deeply, surprised by the freshness of the air.

Step by step they pushed the chair toward the hidden garden. Mary unlocked the ivy-covered door with shaking hands.

“Ready?” she asked.

Colin nodded.

The door opened.

Sunlight filled the garden. Birds sang loudly, and flowers began to open everywhere. The scent of earth and growing plants surrounded them.

Colin stared in wonder.

“It is beautiful,” he breathed.

Tears filled his eyes, but this time they were not tears of sadness.

The robin flew down and perched nearby, singing as if greeting him. Dickon laughed softly.

“He’s welcome thee,” he said.

Colin looked around slowly, taking in every detail—the roses, the grass, the sky above the walls.

“I thought I was going to die,” he said quietly. “But I feel... alive.”

Mary felt happiness rise inside her stronger than anything she had known before.

They spent the morning there. Colin listened to birds and touched leaves carefully. For the first time, he forgot to think about illness.

Before returning inside, he said firmly, “We will come here every day.”

From that moment, the secret garden belonged not only to Mary and Dickon but also to Colin. Together they worked, talked, and laughed, growing stronger with each visit.

The great house no longer felt as silent or sad. Though most people did not yet know why, something had begun to change at Misselthwaite Manor—something as quiet and powerful as the first green shoots pushing through winter soil.

Part 9

After Colin's first visit to the garden, everything seemed different. Each morning he asked eagerly when they could go outside again. Mary noticed that he no longer spoke constantly about illness or death. Instead, he asked about plants, birds, and the weather.

Dickon arrived early each day, bringing news from the moor. Sometimes he carried small tools, and sometimes he brought animals that trusted him—a tame crow once sat calmly on his arm, and a small fox watched from the garden wall before running away again.

Colin watched these things with wonder.

"They are not afraid," he said.

"Animals know when folk mean no harm," Dickon answered.

Colin began spending longer hours in the garden. At first he remained in his chair, but he sat upright more easily each day. His face gained color, and his eyes grew bright with excitement.

Mary felt proud when she saw the change.

"You are stronger," she told him.

Colin nodded. "I feel it."

They spoke often about the "magic" that helped them grow well. Colin believed strongly in it now.

"The magic is making me live," he said one morning. "I will not think about being ill anymore."

Dickon agreed gently. "Thinking happy thoughts helps the body same as sunshine helps plants."

Colin practiced breathing deeply and sitting straight. Sometimes he lifted himself carefully from the chair, holding Dickon's arm for support. At first he trembled, but each attempt grew easier.

One bright afternoon he stood for several seconds alone.

Mary clapped her hands. "You did it!"

Colin laughed loudly, a sound rarely heard in the house before.

"I stood!" he cried. "I truly stood!"

They celebrated quietly, careful not to attract attention. The secret must remain

hidden until Colin grew strong enough to surprise everyone.

Meanwhile, the garden burst into life. Roses formed leaves, flowers opened in many colors, and bees hummed among them. The air smelled sweet and warm.

Mary worked happily beside Dickon, no longer thinking of herself as lonely or unwanted. She felt part of something larger—the garden, her friends, and the growing world around her.

Even Ben Weatherstaff noticed the changes when he saw Mary one day.

“Tha’ looks well,” he said. “Almost pretty, if tha’ doesn’t mind me sayin’.”

Mary laughed instead of feeling insulted.

“The garden is helping,” she replied.

Ben nodded knowingly. “Gardens do that.”

Inside the house, servants whispered about the strange improvement in Colin’s health. He no longer screamed or demanded constant attention. He ate well and slept peacefully.

Mrs. Medlock spoke about it with surprise. “The boy grows quieter every day,” she said. “It is most curious.”

No one guessed the truth.

One morning Colin announced something important.

“I want to walk,” he said firmly.

Mary felt nervous but excited. Dickon stood beside him, ready to help.

Slowly Colin placed his feet on the ground. He held Dickon’s shoulder and took one careful step. Then another.

His face turned pale with effort, but he did not stop.

“I can do it,” he whispered.

Mary walked beside him, ready to catch him if he fell. After a few steps he sat again, breathing hard but smiling widely.

“Tomorrow I will walk farther,” he declared.

Each day he practiced. Soon he could walk across part of the garden alone. His confidence grew quickly, and laughter came easily to him now.

“I shall live forever,” he said joyfully one afternoon, throwing his arms wide.

Mary laughed. “Perhaps not forever,” she said, “but a very long time.”

They began planning how to reveal the secret. Colin wanted his father to see him strong and healthy instead of weak and hidden.

“He believes I am dying,” Colin said. “I want him to see the truth.”

Dickon agreed. “It will be a grand surprise.”

Before that could happen, however, they continued working quietly, allowing Colin’s strength to grow naturally.

One evening Mary walked alone through the garden after Dickon and Colin had returned inside. The sun was setting, and golden light filled the space. Birds settled into branches, and the air felt calm and peaceful.

Mary remembered the lonely child she had been when she first arrived. She could hardly believe she was the same person.

“The garden changed me,” she said softly.

The robin sang nearby, as if agreeing.

She locked the door carefully and returned to the house, feeling certain that something wonderful was coming soon—something that would change not only their lives but the entire house of Misselthwaite Manor.

Part 10

As the weeks passed, Colin grew stronger every day. Walking became easier, and soon he no longer needed Dickon’s arm for support. He practiced moving slowly across the garden paths, concentrating carefully on each step. Mary watched proudly as he improved.

“You see?” she said one morning. “You were never meant to stay in bed forever.”

Colin laughed. “I used to think I was always ill because everyone told me so. Now I think I was only lonely and afraid.”

Dickon nodded. “Fresh air an’ good thoughts cure many troubles.”

The secret garden was now full of color. Roses climbed the walls, flowers opened in bright groups, and bees moved busily among them. The place no longer looked forgotten. It felt alive and joyful.

The three children spent long hours there, talking and working. Colin liked to

give orders playfully, pretending he was a king ruling his garden.

“This shall be the healthiest place in England,” he declared one afternoon.

Mary laughed. “Then we must work harder.”

Even Ben Weatherstaff began to notice strange changes. One day he entered the garden unexpectedly and stopped in shock when he saw Colin standing.

“By th’ stars!” he cried. “It’s th’ young master!”

Colin smiled calmly. “Yes. I am not ill anymore.”

Ben stared in wonder, then slowly removed his cap. “Well now,” he said softly, “there’s been magic at work here.”

Colin nodded seriously. “Yes. But we made the magic ourselves.”

After that, Ben became part of their secret. He promised to tell no one until Colin wished it.

Meanwhile, far away, Mr. Archibald Craven traveled through Europe, still carrying deep sadness from his wife’s death. He rarely thought of Misselthwaite except with sorrow. Yet strange dreams began to trouble him—dreams of his wife calling to him from a garden filled with roses.

One night he dreamed she stood smiling among flowers and seemed to beckon him home. When he woke, he felt a strong desire to return to England at once.

Back at Misselthwaite, Colin made his final plan.

“When my father comes home,” he said, “I will walk to meet him.”

Mary felt excited and nervous. “He will be astonished.”

Dickon grinned. “He won’t believe his own eyes.”

The children continued their daily visits, waiting for news of Mr. Craven’s return. Colin practiced walking longer distances. Soon he could cross the entire garden without resting.

One bright morning a message arrived: Mr. Craven was coming home.

Colin’s face grew pale with excitement, but he stood firmly.

“Tomorrow,” he said, “we show everyone.”

The next day dawned clear and warm. Colin dressed carefully and walked with Mary and Dickon through the garden gate and across the lawns toward the house. Servants who saw him gasped in amazement.

“Master Colin!” they cried. “He is walking!”

Word spread quickly through the manor.

At that moment Mr. Craven entered the grounds, tired from travel. He looked older and sadder than before. As he walked slowly forward, he saw a group of children approaching.

At first he did not recognize them. Then he saw Colin walking toward him—straight, smiling, and strong.

Mr. Craven stopped as if frozen.

“Father,” Colin called.

For a moment the man could not speak. He stared in disbelief, then hurried forward.

“Colin?” he whispered.

Colin walked the last steps alone and stood before him.

“I am well,” he said proudly. “I am going to live.”

Mr. Craven fell to his knees and held his son tightly. Tears filled his eyes, but they were tears of joy instead of grief.

Mary and Dickon watched quietly as father and son embraced.

Soon Colin led his father toward the secret garden.

“I must show you,” he said.

When Mr. Craven entered the garden, he looked around slowly. Memories filled his face, but instead of pain he now felt peace. The roses bloomed again just as they had when his wife was alive.

He understood then that the garden had healed not only his son but himself as well.

The doors of the garden were opened at last. No longer hidden, it became a place of happiness and life.

Mary stood among the flowers, feeling sunlight on her face. She was no longer the lonely, contrary child who had arrived at the manor. She had found friendship, purpose, and joy.

The garden had grown—and so had they all.