

## NEW MEXICO YOUNG ACTORS Present:

### The Secret Garden



Adapted from the novel by **Frances Hodgson Burnett**

Book by **Tim Kelly**

Music and Lyrics by **Bill Francoeur**

Directed by **Paul Bower**

Choreography by **Josh Megill**

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to New Mexico Young Actors' production of ***The Secret Garden***. We are offering this study guide as a way to help you prepare your classes for our upcoming production and your experience at the theater. Included in this guide are a historical note about the original story, a synopsis of the musical, a list of characters, a vocabulary list and lesson ideas, and some audience protocol reminders. We always enjoy hearing from you and your students and look forward to receiving any pictures, stories, or comments about the production. Thank you for your interest and support of New Mexico Young Actors. We look forward to seeing you at the KiMo!

#### **HISTORICAL NOTE**

*The Secret Garden* is a children's novel written by English-American author, Frances Hodgson Burnett. Frances Hodgson was born in 1849 in Manchester, England. She immigrated with her family to the United States in 1865 and settled in Tennessee. She enjoyed writing short stories and, starting in 1868, began to be published in popular periodicals such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, and *Harper's*. In 1873 she married Dr. Swan Moses Burnett, whom she later divorced. Although Hodgson wrote stories for adults as well, she is primarily remembered as a children's author. In addition to *The Secret Garden*, her other popular novels include *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and *Sara Crewe* (1888), later dramatized as *The Little Princess* (1905). In 1909 she moved to Plandome, Long Island, New York, where she died in 1924. *The Secret Garden* is one of the most popular children's novels of all time. In a 2012 School Library Journal poll, it ranked number fifteen in the top one hundred chapter books. It has been turned into various plays and films since its publication in 1911.

#### **THE SECRET GARDEN SYNOPSIS**

The story is set in Yorkshire, England around 1900.

In the main hall of Misselthwaite Manor, the servants are excited about the arrival of the anticipated carriage from London. The carriage bears Mary Lennox, Master Archibald Craven's niece, recently arrived from India after the death of her parents. Accompanied by Mrs. Crawford and Kanchi, Mary enters and proves to be a spoiled brat.

The next morning the servants enter Mary's room with a breakfast especially prepared by the cook. Mary refuses it and rudely dismisses the staff. Back in the main hall, Miss Wiggin is applying for the job of governess when she meets Mary and is appalled.

On the grounds of Misselthwaite Manor we meet Dickon Sowerby, who is an apprentice gardener with a green thumb and a special way with animals. Mary enters and meets Dickon and the rest of the Sowerbys, who explain the mystery of the walled garden and welcome her into their family. Later,

Mary is summoned to meet her uncle Archibald in his study. Archibald has been a dour man since the death of his wife in childbirth 10 years earlier. Mary requests to have a bit of Earth in order to tend a garden and Archibald obliges.

That night we meet Colin Craven, Archibald's son, in his room. He is a terribly spoiled child who is convinced he is an invalid who will die at a young age. Mary hears him crying and enters his quarters to investigate. The two children meet and realize that they have much in common. They agree to share the discovery of the secret garden together. Later, as the townspeople are traveling to the local fair, Mary reveals to Dickon that she has found the key to the walled garden and they agree to open the gate.

Months later the doctor and nurse remark about the improvement in Colin's health, which is also noted by the rest of the staff. Mary, Colin, and Dickon are found in the garden as it is finally revealed. Mrs. Sowerby enters the garden and is surprised to see Colin in such good spirits. She decides to fetch Archibald so that he can see the recovery of his son. Archibald returns to Misselthwaite and is astonished to see his son and the garden returned to life. He agrees to learn to live and love again just as Mary and Colin have learned gratitude, humility, and the value of friendship.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**Mrs. Medlock**, housekeeper

**Martha**, young maid

**Cook**, household staff

**Jenny**, young staff girl

**Phoebe**, stable girl

**Betty**, another housemaid

**Jane**, another housemaid

**Mrs. Crawford**, escorts Mary to England

**Kanchi**, Mary's Indian servant

**Mary Lennox**, orphan, age 10

**Miss Wiggin**, governess

**Dickon**, young gardener

**Dr. Craven**, Archibald's cousin

**Mrs. Sowerby**, motherly friend and neighbor

**Nurse**, for Colin

**Archibald Craven**, master of the manor, Colin's dad

**Colin**, invalid, 10 years old

**Lilias**, memory from the past, Archibald's wife

**Maid**, at the London hotel

## VOCABULARY

The following are some words that are associated with *The Secret Garden*:

Act	Plot	Set	Props	Downstage	Upstage
Program	Director	Producer	Fiction	Cholera	Indispensable
Obstinate	Contrary	Spoiled	Tantrum	Outspoken	Oppressive
Rambunctious	Sari	Obnoxious	Coddled	Distempered	Shipboard
Governess	Smug	Peculiar	Apprentice	Regards	Codger
Johnny jump-ups	Presume	Proposition	Cockney	Potpourri	Brood
Ailments	Nuisance	Sedative	Crocuses	Consequently	Debonair
Crumpets	Relapse	Rajah	Brooch	Perpetually	

## LESSON IDEAS

### Classroom Discussion (Pre-Performance)

1. *How many of you have experienced a live theater performance? What did you see?*
2. *What are some of the differences between going to the theater and watching television or going to a movie?*

- Theater features live on-stage actors. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
- The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation for the performers is shown by close attention, participation, and applause at the proper times. The success of the production often depends on the audience.
- The theater is a very special place. Its atmosphere is entirely different from your home, where the television is always available.
- It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
- Actors wear costumes and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they portray.
- There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, effects, lighting, music, costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.

## **Classroom Discussion and Activities (Pre or Post-Performance)**

### **Reading/Writing**

- Read the novel *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. It is one of the most popular children's stories of the twentieth century.
- Compare the novel to the musical. How does the story differ from the musical? What did the playwright maintain from the original story? Why do you think the playwright chose to eliminate or change certain elements of the original? Do you agree with the playwright's decisions?
- Have students write a question about a specific scene or character in the musical. They can ask the questions as a whole class activity or work in small groups.
- Explore the relationship of protagonists and antagonists in classroom stories and draw a comparison to relationships in the musical, such as Mary and Colin, Mary and Dickon, Colin and Archibald.
- Write a sequel to the musical. What happens to the children, Mary, Dickon, Colin, as they grow older? How does the relationship between Colin and his father blossom? What becomes of all of those Sowerby children?

### **Science**

- *The Secret Garden* includes different types of flowers that would be found in an English country garden. Explore these flowers—crocuses, daffydowndillys, Johnny jump-ups, violets, marigolds, snowdrops, coral bells—and identify common characteristics. Why would they thrive in the climate of an English garden?
- Have the students design and create a garden of their own. Perhaps you could turn it into a school-wide project.
- Research diseases that were common in the early twentieth century. What were/are the causes and symptoms of cholera, rheumatic fever, typhoid, polio, scarlet fever? Are any of these diseases eradicated? When were vaccines created and how do they work to prevent disease?

### **Art**

- Create a class mural of the musical. Include scenes from the story such as Misselthwaite Manor, Mary's sitting room, Colin's bedroom, the garden.
- Draw a picture of a favorite scene or character.
- Re-create the secret garden using clay forms in a box.
- Draw an advertisement or program cover for the musical.

- Design stage scenery for *The Secret Garden* or another story that you would like to see on stage.

### **Music, Dance, & Film**

- Ask the students to identify musical instruments that they heard in the musical. Discuss other instruments that could have been added for greater effect.
- Can you identify any recurring musical themes or motives in the music?
- How did the music express the action or emotion of the story (tempo, volume, range of notes, etc.)?
- Did you hear any incidental music (purely instrumental music that functioned as background music for a scene change)?
- One of the dances from *The Secret Garden* is in a Scottish folk style. Identify some characteristics of Scottish folk dance. Compare it to other folk dances—Irish dance, Square dance, etc.
- Discuss how dance adds to the storytelling of a musical.
- Schedule a movie day and show all or part of the 1993 Warner Brothers film, *The Secret Garden*.

### **Math**

- Create a budget for a theatrical production. List all of the expenses involved (set design and materials, professional musicians, lighting design, props, costumes, theater rental, scripts, royalties, etc.). Discuss ways that a theater company might raise money to cover all of the expenses.
- Using a spreadsheet, create a rehearsal schedule for a theatrical production. Discuss how much time it might take for the cast to learn all of the staging and dancing. How many hours a day/week/month does it take to put on a production?

### **History/Social Studies**

- Mary Lennox travels from India to England in 1900. Find these two countries on a map. Draw the route that they may have taken. What were the means of travel in the early twentieth century? How long would the journey take?
- *The Secret Garden* is set in Victorian England. Research this era. What were some of the customs and styles of this time period?
- Plan a Victorian Day for your class! Have simple costume pieces available for the students to wear, such as hats or scarves, and enjoy an afternoon of tea and crumpets or scones.
- Explore what life may have been like for someone in a wheelchair at the beginning of the last century. What were some of the difficulties at that time that individuals with physical challenges today may not have to face?
- Since Mary was born in India, there are several references to Indian culture in the script. Research the country of India. Define terms such as sari and sahib. What is the relationship between England and India? How was that relationship perceived a century ago? Examine Indian cuisine, customs, religion, language, and other cultural traits.

### **Theater Etiquette**

*Discuss the role of the audience and proper theater etiquette.*

- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything and so that you will not disturb the rest of the audience while trying to get comfortable in your seat. Lights go out before the curtain goes up and seating is very difficult after that time.
- It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully.

- The KiMo Theatre is a historic building. Please respect and preserve the beauty of the KiMo by not bringing food and beverages (including water, gum and candy) into the theater. These items are permitted in the lobby only.
- There is no intermission during the performance, which is 75 minutes in length. Be sure to use the restroom before the performance begins.
- Although you may wish to say something to the actors, you need to hold your thoughts, as you will disturb their concentration.
- Sing or participate *if* and *only if* you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important.
- Listen to how the music sets the mood and affects your own feelings.
- Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song, dance, or joke.
- Be sure to turn off *all* electronic devices and cell phones. Do not text during the performance. This is very inconsiderate to the performers and distracting to your fellow audience members.

## **SOURCES**

**The Secret Garden book:** [www.read.gov/books](http://www.read.gov/books)

### **English Gardens & Flowers**

[www.gardendesign.com/English](http://www.gardendesign.com/English)

[www.flowerglossary.com](http://www.flowerglossary.com)

[www.all-my-favourite-flower-names.com](http://www.all-my-favourite-flower-names.com)

### **Victorian England**

[www.englishheritage.org.uk](http://www.englishheritage.org.uk)

<https://britishheritage.com/victorian-england>

### **India**

<https://www.britannica.com/place/India>

[www.culturalindia.net](http://www.culturalindia.net)

### **Diseases**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

### **Folk Dancing**

<https://www.britannica.com/art/folk-dance>

<https://hobbylark.com/performing-arts/Scottish-Dancing>

This study guide was compiled by Billie J. Little, a former Board member of New Mexico Young Actors, Inc., and Paul Bower, Executive Director of NMYA. Copyright 2018. All Rights Reserved.