

STEPPING STONES™

a chapter book

CLASSIC

# The Secret Garden

by Frances Hodgson Burnett  
adapted by James Howe



*Misselthwaite  
Manor*

WHEN MARY LENNOX came to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle, everyone said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. She arrived from India after an epidemic of deadly cholera had swept through that country like a hot, relentless wind. Many people had died, and among them were Mary's parents. Now, were it not for her uncle Archibald Craven, Mary would have found herself quite alone in the world.

She did not miss her parents, for she had hardly known them. Her father had always been busy. And her mother, who had not wanted a little girl at all, had handed her over to the care of servants from the time

Mary was born. As she was a sickly child, all the servants obeyed her and gave her her own way in everything. And now that her parents and all her servants were gone, she fully expected that whoever took care of her next would continue to obey her and give her whatever she demanded.

Mary had a thin little face and a thin little body, thin light hair and a very sour expression. She never smiled—not once during the long voyage to England. This she made under the care of an officer's wife, who was rather glad to hand her over to the woman that Mr. Archibald Craven sent to meet her in London—his housekeeper, Mrs. Medlock.

"My word! She's a plain little piece of goods!" said Mrs. Medlock of Mary, who pretended not to hear.

"Perhaps she will improve as she grows older," the officer's wife said good-naturedly.

"She'll have to alter a good deal," answered Mrs. Medlock. "And there's noth-

ing likely to improve children at Misselthwaite, if you ask me!"

Mary did not like the stout woman, whose flushed face she found common, but as she very seldom liked people, there was nothing remarkable in that.

Still, she could not help but wonder about her uncle and the place he lived in. She had heard he was a hunchback. What was a hunchback? she wondered. She had never seen one.

The next day they set out on their journey to Yorkshire. Mary sat in her corner of the railway carriage and looked plain and fretful. Her black dress made her skin look yellower than ever, and her limp hair straggled from under her black hat.

"I suppose you might as well be told something about where you're going to," said Mrs. Medlock gruffly. "It's a queer place."

Mary said nothing at all. Mrs. Medlock looked rather put out by her apparent indifference but went on.

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Mary is lonely and unhappy when she moves to her uncle's house in England. Her cousin Colin is so sickly and weak that he can't get out of bed. Mary has heard stories of a locked, deserted garden somewhere on her uncle's land. Will she ever find it? What could be inside? Life for Mary and Colin might change forever if only she could discover the magic of the secret garden.

