

The First Visit

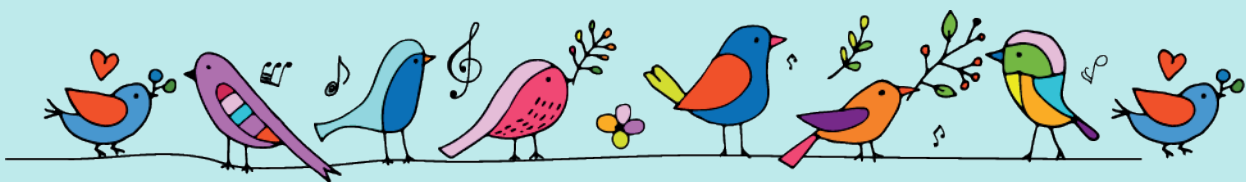
An extract from The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

It was the sweetest, most mysterious looking place anyone could imagine. The high walls which shut it in were covered with the leafless stems of climbing roses, which were so thick that they matted together. Mary Lennox knew they were roses because she had seen a great many roses in India. All the ground was covered with grass of a wintry brown, and out of it grew clumps of bushes which were surely rose bushes if they were alive. There were a number of standard roses which had so spread their branches that they were like little trees. There were other trees in the garden, and one of the things which made the place look the strangest and loveliest was that climbing roses had run all over them and swung down long tendrils which made swaying curtains, and here and there they had caught each other or at a far-reaching branch and had crept from one tree to another and made lovely bridges of themselves. They were neither leaves nor roses on them now, and Mary did not know whether they were dead or alive, but their thin grey or brown branches and sprays looked like a sort of hazy mantle spreading over everything, walls, and trees, and even brown grass, where they had fallen from their fastenings and run along the ground. It was this hazy tangle from tree to tree which made it look so mysterious. Mary had thought it must be different from other gardens which had not been left all by themselves so long; and, indeed, it was different from any other place she had ever seen in her life.

"How still it is!" she whispered. "How still."

Then she waited a moment and listened at the stillness. The robin, who had flown to his tree-top, was still as all the rest. He did not even flutter his wings; he sat without stirring, and looked at Mary.

"No wonder it is still," she whispered again. "I am the first person who has spoken in here for ten years."



Questions about 'The first visit'

Section 1 - RECALL

1. Name two plants that Mary saw in the garden.

_____ and _____

2. What were '... like little trees.'?

3. Draw lines to match the words and phrases to what they are describing.

high

grass

of a wintry brown

walls

thin grey or brown

branches

4. Where had Mary seen roses before?

Section 2 - VOCABULARY

1. Find and copy two words in the text that mean twisted and wrapped together.

_____ and _____

2. ‘...branches and sprays looked like a sort of hazy mantle...’

What is a mantle and how does it describe the branches and sprays?

3. What word is used to show that the garden is very quiet?

Section 3 - INFERENCE

1. What suggests that the garden has not been visited for many years?

2. What season do you think it is in the story? Circle one.

SPRING

SUMMER

AUTUMN

WINTER

How do you know this? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer.

3. Why do you think Mary and the robin were so quiet?

Section 4 - SEQUENCING AND PREDICTING

1. Why do you think that no-one had been in the garden to ten years?

2. How might this garden compare to the gardens that Mary had seen in India?
