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**Merrillville High School Performing Arts Department
Presents**

The Secret Garden

Based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett

**Book and Lyrics by
Marsha Norman**

**Music by
Lucy Simon**

March 23, 24, 30, 31 at 7:30 pm April 1 at 3:00 pm

Reinhart Auditorium

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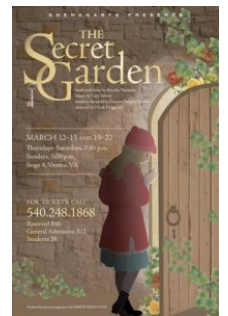
A Study Guide to The Secret Garden

The Story

The Secret Garden is the story of Mary Lennox and her discovery of a “Secret Garden” that has been locked up for ten years. Mary is a young girl who is sent to live at Misselthwaite Manor with her uncle in Yorkshire, England, after the death of her parents in India. Once there, she finds her new home to be a gloomy fortress—her uncle is rarely home, and his young son, Colin, never leaves his room, convinced that he is an incurable invalid. When Mary discovers the strange, walled garden that has been locked up for years, she enlists the help of the gardener’s apprentice, Dickon, and together they coax the garden back to life. The garden seems to have a wonderful, magical effect on all who enter it, allowing Mary to help restore Colin’s health and repair his broken relationship with his father. This musical version also introduces the large and endearing Sowerby family who serves Misselthwaite Manor and befriends young Mary.

About the Author

The Secret Garden was the creation of Frances Hodgson Burnett, who first published the story in 1909. Burnett was born on November 24, 1849 in Manchester, England. She was the third of five children. In 1865, Burnett’s family moved to Knoxville, Tennessee, in the United States, after the death of her father and the inability to maintain the family business in England. In order to help her family financially, Frances pursued her creativity and love of storytelling and began to earn a regular income from writing, which did help to support her other siblings when her mother died too. Frances Hodgson Burnett had many books published before she died in America in 1924. Among her other well-known books are The Little Princess and Little Lord Fauntelroy.



The Secret Garden, Musical Adaptation

A Musical in 2 Acts, a Prologue and 18 Scenes. Music by Lucy Simon; Book and Lyrics by Marsha Norman; Based on the novel The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett Originally Performed at the St. James Theatre, Broadway - April 25, 1991 (706 performances) and at the

Aldwych Theatre, London - 27 February, 2001 - 2 June, 2001

The Story

The year is 1911. Young Mary Lennox awakes one morning in India, to discover that her parents, and in fact, everyone she knows in the English compound in Bombay, have died of cholera. Having nowhere

else to go, she is sent to live with her brooding Uncle Archibald, in his 100-room mansion in Yorkshire. Accompanying the girl from the train station, Mrs. Medlock, her uncle's housekeeper, tells Mary she shouldn't expect ever to see her uncle, that he is still mourning the death of his beautiful wife, Lily, the sister of Mary's mother. Further, she tells Mary she will have no one to play with, and she will not be allowed to wander the halls. In short, Mary will find her life here to be as gloomy and miserable as the house itself.

Mary receives this news with stony silence. But she is wilful and determined, qualities which will change not only her life, but that of everyone in the house before she is finished. With the help of the spirits who are watching over her, Mary will upset every one of Mrs. Medlock's expectations.

On her first evening at Misselthwaite, Mary hears an eerie wailing but sees only the shadows cast by her uncle as he wanders the halls hearing what he thinks is the ghost of his dead wife.

The next morning Mary meets the irrepressible maid, Martha, who hints there might be something interesting to do outside. Mary is not convinced, but anything seems better than staying in. Proving this point, on her way out she encounters her Uncle Archibald, who seems completely lost, singing and dancing with Lily's ghost, in an empty ballroom.

Once she begins to spend her days outside, however, Mary's sourness gradually diminishes. She learns from the cantankerous head gardener, Ben Weatherstaff of a mysterious walled garden which has been kept locked since Lily's death. And she meets Martha's brother Dickon, a young forest wizard who calls forth the spring in a rock anthem. Then, accompanied by the pan pipe and dulcimer, Dickon teaches Mary to speak to the ever chirping Robin in Yorkshire, and the bird, in turn, shows Mary where to find the key to the garden.

But unable to find the door to Lily's garden, Mary decides she will plant the seeds Dickon gave her, and goes to her uncle to ask if she might have "a bit of earth". That simple request triggers powerful memories for Archibald, and as a storm rages outside, Archibald sinks further into the past. Archibald and his brother, Dr. Neville Craven, sing of how Mary reminds them of Lily, and Neville reveals that he was also in love with his brother's beautiful wife.

Scenes and Settings

The action takes place in 1906.

Opening (Prologue): India; The Library at Misselthwaite Manor; A Train Platform in Yorkshire; The Door to Misselthwaite Manor; Mary's Room; The Gallery.

Act 1 Scene I: Mary's Sitting Room.

Scene 2: The Ballroom.

Scene 3: In the Maze/The Greenhouse; The Edge of the Moor.

Scene 4: Archibald's Library.

Scene 5: The Gallery.

Scene 6: The Hallway.

Scene 7: Colin's Room.

Scene 8: On the Grounds/The Door to the Garden.

Act 2 Scene 1: The Tea Party Dream/The Other Side of the Door.

Scene 2: Archibald's Dressing Room.

Scene 3: Colin's Room.

Scene 4: The Greenhouse.

Scene 5: Colin's Room.

Scene 6: In the Maze/The Garden.

Scene 7: The Library.

Scene 8: Mary's Room/Paris.

Scene 9: Archibald's Rooms in Paris.

Scene 10: The Garden.

Victorian England

In 1900, the British Empire, ruled by Queen Victoria (1819-1901), included Great Britain and many colonies and territories around the World. One of those colonies was India, where Mary Lennox was born. Mary's father was a British Army officer, and her upper class family lived well despite great famine and plagues in parts of the colony. An infectious disease called cholera took the lives of Mary's parents and several of their servants, but spared Mary herself.

Back in England, Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 until her death in 1901. The Secret Garden takes place near the end of the Victorian Era in a part of the Northern English countryside called Yorkshire. The latter years of the Victorian Era were a long period of prosperity for the British Empire, which corresponded with the era known as the Gilded Age in the United States. The Victorian Era was also a period of great industrialization and growth. The number of people living in Great Britain more than doubled, from 16 million to 37 million, causing a huge demand for food, clothes, and housing. Among the lower class, poverty was widespread. Many children had to work rather than go to school, and more than half of them grew up unable to read or write.

Despite the poverty of the lower class, a wealthy upper class still thrived, especially in the British countryside where Mary's uncle, Archibald Craven, lived at Misselthwaite Manor. Children from rich families were luckier than poor children. They were educated, had toys and books, and had servants to look after them. During the last years of the Victorian Era and the early part of the Twentieth Century, more attention was given to all children's education and welfare. Part of that education often included a growing interest in nature, plants, and animals—themes and symbols which are very important in *The Secret Garden*.



Which key will unlock the door to *The Secret Garden*?

Key Facts

The author of *The Secret Garden* was Frances Hodgson Burnett.

Burnett was born in England in 1849 and moved to the United States in 1865. She died in 1924.

The Secret Garden was first published in 1909 in serial format. It was published as a novel in 1911.

The story begins in India, and moves to Yorkshire, England. The Yorkshire countryside contains some of the greenest, undeveloped areas of England.

The Secret Garden is set during the final years of the Victorian Era of British history. Queen Victoria ruled over the British Empire from 1837 until her death in 1901.

The Secret Garden has been made into films, plays, and musicals.

The Secret Garden is often included among the best children's books of the Twentieth Century.



FOR TEACHERS

The Secret Garden Concept Themes

Everyone defines —family|| differently.

What is a home?

Loss can be healed with love.

The seasonal cycle of nature.

Our feelings are our reality.

We have the power to overcome any obstacle.

In order for students to best appreciate the play certain background information and understandings are helpful. As a classroom teacher decide how much or little is useful for your students.

1. Setting the place of story – location of Yorkshire and India, as well as an understanding that India was a subject state ruled by the British—not the independent country it is today – in fact, not a country at all. Some discussion of climate, culture and people of both areas would be useful.
2. Setting the time – comparison of then and now (no antibiotics, poor understanding of health, no electronics, airlines, automobiles, before either World War) depending on grade level.
3. Understanding class structure and culture of English society of the period: landowners/servants, rich/poor, expectations for children, homes, food, etc.
4. Language: Much of the dialogue of the play is in a Yorkshire dialect of English. Discuss accents, and dialects that children might already be familiar with. Talk about how it changes our need to listen carefully to understand what is being said – even though the speaker is speaking our language.
5. Discuss how someone adapts a story by changing details. Depending on whether students have read the book, discuss how a —creator|| takes what they want and leaves out or adds in material and characters and events they feel are necessary for their work. (Harry Potter movies are probably a useful example).
6. A time line that includes - 1891: birth of Colin and Mary, 1910 –cholera epidemic in India, 1911 – Mary comes to Misselthwaite Manor.
7. A relationship chart to show how Rose and Albert are married and parents of Mary. That Lily and Archie are married and parents of Colin, that Lily and Rose are sisters and that Archibald and Dr. Neville Craven are brothers.
8. Vocabulary that matters to an understanding of the story: clusters, crocus, contrary, mistress, cholera, regiment, moor, lassie, gorse, heather, maze, chambermaid, governess, contrary, gnashed, knaves, carriage, nurse, garden

Audience Etiquette

Watching live theatre is very different from watching television or even going to a movie. Since the actors are in the same room with the audience it is important to understand that anything that happens in the audience can be heard or felt on the stage and may disrupt the performance. Here are some pointers:

☞ Come to the theatre with an open mind. You may see something familiar but understand it in a new way.

☞ Take the journey of the live performance. How does a specific scene or song make you feel? Why?

☞ Once the lights dim, and the performance begins, be quiet, attentive and respectful.

☞ At live performances, laughter and applause is appropriate. Calling out words, —cat calls, || and other sounds are all inappropriate.

☞ Applause is appropriate at the end of a scene, song or conclusion of the piece (if it includes more than one movement).

☞ Food and drink are not allowed in the theatre.

☞ Electronic devices must be turned off before the performance begins.

☞ Recording devices (cameras, video cameras, etc...) are not allowed at live performances.

Kindred Spirits

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

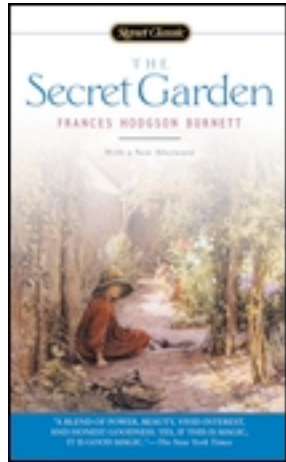
Author Frances Hodgson was born on November 24, 1849 in Manchester England, the third of five children to home décor store owners, Eliza Boond and Edwin Hodgson. After the death of her father, Frances's mother decided to sell the business and move to America. At nearly sixteen, Frances and her family 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 Plandome, 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-mar>- 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, *night, 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/>).

In 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*.

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 in the song "If I Had a Fine White Horse." 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 "Winter's on the Wing" and "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.

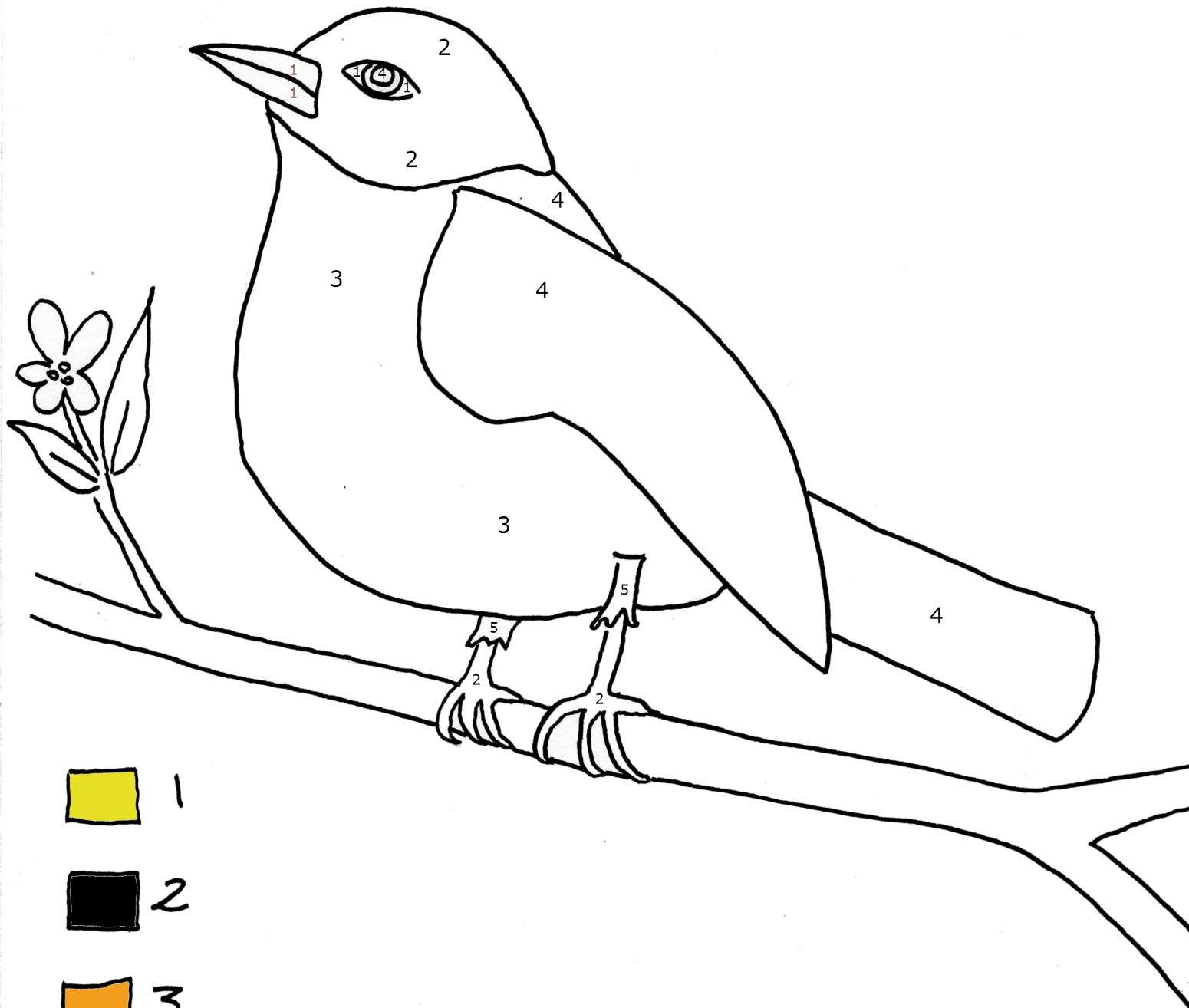
Other Major Themes

Other major themes relating to healing are the components of human companion-ship, 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 being 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."





The American robin is one hard working mother. She spends 4 to 5 day building her nest. In year a mother robin can produce up to three successful broods. Once laid the robin's eggs take up to two weeks to hatch, the mother must sit on the eggs to keep them warm. When the tiny robins do hatch they have no feathers and their eyes are not fully developed. Father and Mother robin are very busy collecting food to feed their babies who eat up to 35- 50 meals a day, mostly consisting of worms and fruit. Mother robins keep the nest clean by eating the chick's fecal sacs. At just a few weeks old the baby robins leave the nest not quite ready to fly.

