

Discussion Questions for *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett

(some questions taken or adapted from <http://www.penguin.com/static/html/classics/readingguides/secretgarden.php>)

1. Who has read this book before? If yes, when did you last re-read it, and what was it like re-reading the book now?
2. Mary and Colin are often described as being unpleasant and rude. Martha says Mary is “as tyrannical as a pig” and that Colin is the “worst young newt as ever was.” Why are both of these children so ill-tempered? Whom does Burnett hold responsible for their behavior—theirself or their parents?
3. It’s unusual to have such unlikeable main characters in a book – why does it work in this book?
4. Have you experienced the sort of renewal experienced by characters in *The Secret Garden*?
5. *The Secret Garden* was first published in 1911. Do you think it holds up as a classic work of fiction? Why or why not? Why do you think this novel appeals to an adult audience as well as to children?
6. Why does Mary respond so well to Martha? What characteristics of Martha’s personality are responsible for awakening the gentleness hidden in Mary?
7. Is Colin’s deceased mother’s spirit present in the book? Is there someone you loved who is now gone who influenced or influences your relationship with nature?
8. In your opinion, does Mr. Craven, after subjecting his son to years of neglect, deserve redemption?
9. How do you feel about the way the book ends?
10. Were there parts of the book you especially enjoyed, or parts you did not like?
11. Are there any questions you would like to ask, or other issues or elements you would like to discuss?