First Folio Curriculum Guide
Consistent with the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s central mission to be the leading force in producing and preserving the highest quality classic theatre, the Education Department challenges learners of all ages to explore the ideas, emotions and principles contained in classic texts and to discover the connection between classic theatre and our modern perceptions. We hope that this Curriculum Guide will prove useful to you while preparing to attend The Secret Garden.

This curriculum guide provides information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production. It contains material about the playwright, their world and their works. Also included are approaches to explore the play in the classroom before and after the performance. We encourage you to photocopy these articles and activities and use them as supplemental material to the text.

Enjoy the show!

The First Folio Curriculum Guide for the 2016-2017 Season was developed by the Shakespeare Theatre Company Education Department:

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The Secret Garden Synopsis

In Bombay India, a ten-year-old English girl named Mary Lennox is experiencing a dream ridden night filled with nursery rhymes and Hindi chanting. Awaking confused and fearful she is informed that her parents and everyone she knows has died from cholera. Mary is sent to her only living relatives at Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire, England. Her Uncle Archibald Craven lives shut up in the manor mourning the death of his wife, Lily, the sister of Mary’s mother. Archibald, practically disabled due to his hunchback and haunted by the spirits of his past, has abandoned his responsibilities in the manor. The manor is run by Archibald’s brother Dr. Neville Craven.

When Mary arrives, she is not greeted by her uncle, but by Mrs. Medlock the housekeeper. Mrs. Medlock tells Mary of her dim and lonely future at the manor. During her first night in the manor, Mary hears crying but can’t find where it is coming from. The next morning, Mary befriends a young maid Martha who encourages her to play outside and divulges that there is a secret garden.

Once outside in the gardens, she meets Martha’s brother Dickon and the gardener Ben Weatherstaff. Ben tells Mary that the secret garden is locked because it belonged to Lily, and Archibald does not want to be reminded of her death. Mary wants to locate the key to the garden, and Dickon teaches her how to speak to his robin. The robin shows Mary the hiding place of the key, but the door is still hidden. As Mary spends more time outside, her once sour and sullen attitude transforms into a positive and curious energy.

When Archibald finally meets Mary he asks if there is anything she needs to be happy. Mary’s interest in gardening has blossomed and she asks Archibald for a bit of earth. Granting this request, he dismisses Mary. Archibald and Dr. Neville Craven anguish over Mary who reminds them of Lily because they have the same eyes and the same passion for gardens. Dr. Neville reveals to the audience he was always in love with Lily, and this is why he cannot leave the manor.

That night a terrible storm rolls in and the manor is filled with sounds. Mary searches the manor for the returned crying, and finds her cousin Colin. Colin has been hidden and bedridden since Lily died giving birth to him because Archibald feared Colin was sick and would also become hunchback. Archibald only visits Colin when he is sleeping. Colin has a terrible temper, he demands that Mary visits him every day, and is jealous when she says that she will be outside gardening with Dickon. Dr. Craven and Mrs. Medlock interrupt and ban Mary from visiting Colin because they believe it will further deteriorate his fragile state. Mary runs outside upset and engrossed with memories of India. The spirits of the manor guide her to the ivy-cloaked door of the secret garden.

At the beginning of Act II, Mary dreams that everyone is alive and that the garden is beautiful. In reality, Archibald is fleeing to Paris unable to handle the memories of Lily. Dr. Craven wants to send Mary away to school to separate her from Colin. Furthermore, the secret garden appears to be dead. Dickon teaches Mary the Yorkshire word for alive: wick. He believes there is still life in the plants and they can nurse them back to life. As it flourishes, Mary urges Colin to come to his mother’s garden. Colin is afraid of leaving his room, but the spirit of Lily appears to give him the confidence to join. Dickon, Martha, and Mary show Colin the magical powers of the garden and fresh air. Two spirits from India, Fakir and Ayah, conduct a Hindu chant and “heal” Colin. He believes in the power of the garden, and despite his fears, he stands. Colin henceforth joins the garden secretly every day and regains his full strength.

Mary fears if Dr. Neville Craven sends her to boarding school all of Colin’s progress will be lost. Martha convinces her to write to Archibald in Paris, and asks him to return home. Archibald has worsened in Paris, and does not think he should return. Lily’s spirit appears, asks for his forgiveness, and leads him back home. Archibald is amazed at Colin’s health, and embraces Mary as his own child. He gives her Lily’s garden for she restored him and his son to health and happiness. As the three come together as a family, the spirits depart because the living no longer need to hold onto them.
At the time Frances Hodgson Burnett wrote *The Secret Garden* in 1910, India was firmly under the control of Britain. This period of British governance, called the British Raj, lasted from 1858 until 1947. During British Raj, Indian nationals lacked the power and influence to have any say in government as the British maintained a heavy military presence throughout the Indian subcontinent.

Like Mary Lennox’s experience in *The Secret Garden*, life for wealthy British families during the Raj was luxurious and extravagant. These families built elaborate houses and often had only Indian servants and governesses, which further cemented a culture of British superiority and prejudice against Indians.

In addition to the oppression by the British, India suffered heavily during the Cholera Epidemics that first ravaged the sub-continent and then spread throughout the world. It is unknown how many Indians perished from cholera in the past 200 years, however the epidemic that lasted from 1899-1923 killed at least 800,000 people in India alone. This is the epidemic that killed Mary Lennox’s parents and servants in *The Secret Garden*.

British colonialism had a tremendous and lasting impact on India. While some positive effects include creating an education system and establishing railroads and trade routes, to many, the negative impact of British rule in India far outweighs the positives. These impacts include the destruction of a native culture, huge increase in Indian poverty, and the borders drawn by the British after their exit have caused three wars since 1947.

**Questions**

1. What are other historical examples of colonialism throughout the world?
2. Can you think of any modern day examples of colonialism?
3. Describe the impact of British Colonialism in the United States.
The Secret Garden takes place in Misselthwaite Manor, a mansion in Yorkshire, England. Historically, English manor homes (or country house) served as the residence of feudal lords (i.e. Lord of the Manor) and while smaller than castles, these estates sometime feature similar fortifications to those of a castle such as walls, ditches and moats to guard from robbers and thieves. Given the size, manor homes require large staffs to care for the residents, surrounding land and property. These servants, which depending on the size of the property could be as large as two dozen people, earned meager wages and normally resided on the property (though in servant quarters with separate entrances).

In the play, Mary Lennox interacts with several key members of Misselthwaite Manor’s staff: Martha, the housemaid, Ben, the gardener and Mrs. Medlock, the housekeeper and head of staff. Below is a partial list of traditional staff positions one would find at an English manor home, along with descriptions of their duties and responsibilities.

### English Manor Employees

**Upper Servants vs. Lower (or Under) Servants** – Within the servant staff, there was a hierarchy with recognized status that established chain of command, who serves who at dinner and other privileges.

**Housekeeper/Steward** – The housekeeper served as the head of staff, managing female servants and overseeing house linens, the china closet, arrangement of bedrooms and supplies. Regardless of marital status, housekeepers are referred to as “Mrs.” If the house is so large that the staff is too big for a housekeeper to manage, a steward is employed to handle accounting (bills, wages, etc.).

**Lady’s Maid/Housemaid** – The Lady’s Maid attended to the lady’s (of the house) appearance in the way a stylist might work with a celebrity. She would do her hair and assist her with clothing (not only laying it out and keeping it straight, but also dressing and undressing the lady). Housemaids handled the cleaning of the house, which included cleaning of fireplaces and lighting of fires, removing the dust from rugs, polishing brass and silver, supplying water for washing and emptying chamber pots.

**Gardener** – The gardener had a specialized role on the estate since manors were traditionally self-sufficient homes, growing their own produce for cooking purposes. He was also in charge of green-houses and conservatories.

**Cook** – The cook would serve as head of the kitchen, handling very little of the actual prepping or cooking. The kitchen maids did most of the cooking which consisted of everything from menu creation to preparation of pastry, bread and jellies.

**Nurse/Governess** – A nurse would care for the youngest children of the house from birth, handling meals, changing and mending of clothes, recreation and bedtime. A governess is an educated middle-class girl that teaches the children until they are old enough to attend formal school.

**Butler/Footmen** – Footmen are under servants that perform a variety of duties such as cleaning shoes, laying out and cleaning up after meals, tending to fires and attends to guests in whichever rooms they occupy. The butler oversees the footmen and is in charge of wine service during meals (and in some cases bottles it or brews beer).
The Lennox/Craven Family

CAPTAIN ALBERT & ROSE LENNOX: Mary's mother and father, died of cholera epidemic in India.


ARCHIBALD CRAVEN: Mary's uncle, Lord of Misselthwaite Manor, depressed since his wife died 10 years ago.

DR. CRAVEN: Mr. Craven's self-serving brother.

LILY*: Mary's aunt, Archibald Craven's wife, dead for 12 years.

COLIN CRAVEN: Archibald's ten-year-old son, Mary's cousin, who is hidden away upstairs by Dr. Craven and is bedridden.

MRS. MEDLOCK: Mr. Craven's ill-tempered housekeeper.

MRS. WINTHROP: A strict headmistress.

BEN WEATHERSTAFF: The elderly, grouchy head gardener.

MARTHA: A cheerful housemaid who befriends Mary.

DICKON: Martha's brother, who tends to the garden and has magical powers.

Misselthwaite Manor

SPRITSES:

FAKIR: A religious wonder worker.

MAJOR HOLMES: Albert Lennox’s superior offers.

ALICE: Mary Lennox's friend.

AYAH: Mary’s nanny in India.

CLaire: Major Holmes’ wife.

LIEUTENANT WRIGHT: A handsome young officer.

*These characters, referred to collectively as the Spirits, are people from Mary's life in India, who linger with her until she finds her new life in the course of this story. They are free to sing directly to us, appearing and disappearing at will.
The Spirits in The Secret Garden

When Mary Lenox reaches London she is sent to her Uncle Archibald’s home, Misselthwaite Manor. Here she finds a world truly different from India; accents, behaviors, secrets, and mystery. As she begins her journey of discovery and growth in London she is supported by a group of spirits. The spirits consist of people from her past life, who are unable to move on to the after life. Mary clings to these spirits and they serve as her guide to a new life. Archibald is also haunted by the spirit of his wife Lily, who passed away. Lily often comes to him when he is in despair. The spirits make up the musical chorus, a large organized group of singers in musicals. Additionally, the spirits resemble a traditional Greek Chorus. They create a sense of unification for Mary and Archibald, and highlight the themes of the show. The spirits often sing advice to the characters, and help them through out the story. The spirits are a major dramatic element in the show just as the Greek Chorus once was.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cast of Spirits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAPTAIN ALBERT LENNOX:</strong> Mary's father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROSE LENNOX:</strong> Mary's mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALICE:</strong> Rose’s friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIEUTENANT WRIGHT:</strong> Officer in Mary's father's unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIEUTENANT SHAW:</strong> Fellow officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAJOR SHELLEY:</strong> Officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MRS. SHELLEY:</strong> Major Shelley's wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAJOR HOLMES:</strong> Officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLAIRE HOLMES:</strong> Major Holmes' wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAKIR:</strong> Religious wonder worker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AYAH:</strong> Mary's Indian nanny.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Greek Chorus

The Greeks, often considered to be the pioneers of Western theatre, were the first to introduce the chorus as a dramatic element. They represented a collective consciousness, or a single body, often wearing masks to create a sense of unification and anonymity. As time passed, choruses took a more active role in storytelling, either by taking on a role in the narrative, or by representing a collective character such as a group of townsfolk or an army.

Throughout Greek plays such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone* and *Lysistrata*, the chorus functions as a storytelling device by serving as a link between the audience and the piece itself, highlighting important aspects of the scene and projecting and emphasizing the current emotional state of the play. The chorus achieves this either through direct narration and explanation, or through analytical commentary or conversation about the events and characters of the play. In some instances, the chorus is in direct conversation with characters and actively moves and participates in the events of the story.

Questions

* Can you think of any other show you have seen or read that uses a Chorus?  
* Which do you think has more impact on an audience, a narrator or a chorus? Why?  
* Why do you think the dead characters serve as the chorus in this show?  
* What is the relationship between a musical chorus and a Greek Chorus?

(Excerpt from “The Greek Chorus Dynamic In Ancient and Contemporary Theatre” by Celine Delcayre)
Classroom Activity: The Chorus

Step 1 - Pick one of the three Spirits' songs

Step 2 - Read it alone

Step 3 - Discuss as a class the message the Chorus is trying to get across

Step 4 - Practice speaking out loud as a chorus. Try different vocal qualities (i.e. speed, volume, pitch, emotion, etc.) Make choices as a class what best suits the message.

Step 5 - Add movement to operative words, most important words, in each line.

Step 6 - Perform the piece together. Discuss how it felt to be part of a Chorus and discuss the benefits of a Chorus when trying to relate the message to the audience.

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House Upon a Hill

High on a hill sits a big old house
With something wrong inside it
Spirits haunt the halls
And make no effort now to hide it
What will put their souls to rest
And stop their ceaseless sighing
Why do they call out children's names
And speak of one who's crying

And the master hears the whispers
On the stairways dark and still
And the spirits speak of secrets
In the house upon the hill.

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The Final Storm

It's a maze this garden
It's a maze of ways
Meant to lead a soul astray
It's a maze this garden
It's a maze of ways
It's a maze this garden
It's a maze of ways
Meant to lead a soul astray

Mistress Mary, quite contrary
How does you garden grow
Had an early frost
Now its gone it's lost
Dig it up, and out you go (Mary!)
You're out, you go (Mary!)

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There's a Girl

Can it be a dream
Surely it must seem
Like a frightful dream
How can this be true
Won't her mother come
Come wake her up to play
Won't her father say
Here's a rose for you
There's a girl who no one sees
There's a girl who's left alone
There's a heart that beats in silence
For the life she's never known
For the life she's never known
Few people realize that *The Secret Garden*, the book that most readers associate with Frances Hodgson Burnett, was only one of the fifty-three novels she wrote and published, and that most of her books were for adults, not children. Although she had a lifetime love for children and gardens, she would be amazed to know that this book, which began as a magazine serial late in her life, is the one for which she is most remembered today—even though it was one that was closest to her heart.

Frances Hodgson Burnett’s love affair with gardens began when she was a small child living in Manchester, England. In 1852, when she was just three, her family moved to St. Luke’s Terrace, which backed onto fields owned by the Earl of Derby, leading Frances to recall it later in life as the “back garden of Eden.” She remembered it as a place of gardens and perpetual summer, where a small child could daydream beneath the trees and beside the flowers, ignoring the industrial city that surrounded this suburb of light and air. There were farms and country cottages close by and she became friendly with a family of market gardeners who kept pigs. Just a year later, however, her father, Edwin Hodgson, died, and his widow and five children embarked upon a decade of moving house, each time to a slightly less desirable neighborhood. Each move took Burnett further and further away from gardens, until in 1865, her mother decided to make the riskiest move of all: to join her rogue of a brother, who boasted of his accomplishments in America, in the American South during the last months of the Civil War. There the Hodgson family found itself ensconced in an unexpected place: a log cabin in a very small town outside of Knoxville, Tennessee. There, but for the generosity of their neighbors, they would have starved.

Their financial difficulties were quite real, but young Fanny (a name she quickly abandoned) found Tennessee a true Garden of Eden after the pollution of Manchester and the smuts that floated down like snow from its factory chimneys.

She had read in the back of ladies’ magazines that they paid money for stories and, having invented them for her friends back in England, she thought she might take a chance at being paid to write. The first story she sent came back with comments, but instead of revising she mailed it again to another magazine. The editor was puzzled and surprised to find an accomplished work with an English setting coming out of Tennessee; was she English or American? That evening she sat down and wrote a second one for him. Both stories were accepted immediately, and with the check that arrived she launched a career that saw her eventually become America’s highest-paid woman writer. She was only eighteen and none of her work was ever rejected.
By 1886, Frances had married a Tennessee doctor, had two sons and had written the blockbuster novel *Little Lord Fauntleroy*—her eighteenth novel, which made her hugely famous on both sides of the Atlantic. Now as Frances Hodgson Burnett she had money of her own, and bought, in cash, a seventeen-room house in Washington, D.C. From the moment of its first appearance as a serial in *Saint Nicholas Magazine* to its publication as a book a year later in 1886, *Fauntleroy* became a household name. Largely forgotten or ridiculed today, it was the *Harry Potter* of its day. The image of a sturdy and very masculine little boy in a velveteen jacket shot around the world and was to haunt her son Vivian, from whose photograph it was taken from, for the rest of his days. The story—and the plays and films it spawned—started a fashion craze that mothers loved and boys hated, as they were forced into wide lace collars and long curls, probably not helped when girls were always given the stage and film role.

Even though writing was how she had to make her living, it also enabled her to travel, buy beautiful clothes and furnish houses on England and America. Not only a writer of novels and stories, however, Burnett was also a producer of plays. Thirteen of her works appeared in West End theatres in London and on Broadway, generally written and produced by her. Prescient enough to understand the increasing role of movies, she later built clauses guaranteeing her the film rights to her books. It’s fascinating, therefore, that *The Secret Garden* did not become a stage musical or a popular film until late in the twentieth century, although apparently a now-lost film was made in 1919, five years before Burnett’s death.

Although writing and gardening could not shield her from life’s tragedies, they did help her get through some of her life’s greatest sorrows. When her sixteen-year-old son Lionel tragically died of tuberculosis in her arms in Paris in 1890, she had his casket covered in violets. When her second marriage ended—a marriage that she was probably blackmailed into by a young English doctor and aspiring actor ten years her junior—she and her sister Edith retreated to a house that would become Frances’s most cherished home: Maytham Hall, in Rolvenden, Kent, which she first leased after her divorce from her American husband.

Rumors always surrounded her and there were plenty of reasons for her wanting to escape. From the time that *Little Lord Fauntleroy* first made her famous, she was constantly in the press and in the public eye. She crossed the Atlantic thirty-three times in her lifetime, and whenever one of the ships she traveled on docked, she was met by a crowd of newspaper and magazine reporters who wanted to know about her difficult health, her latest book and her love life. When she filed for divorce, her lawyer made sure she was safely on board a ship heading for England before serving the papers. Gardens were, for her, a retreat.
At Maytham, she had set up an outdoor study, with a table and chair under the trees near the rose garden, and wrote each morning in the company of a robin that grew tame, the later inspiration for Mary Lenox's robin in *The Secret Garden*, which was, in fact written in America. When she moved back to America for good she built a beautiful house with spacious gardens in Plandome on Long Island, and next door built a cottage for her surviving son Vivian and his family. As she grew older she spent her winters in Bermuda with her sister Edith and kept a full-time gardener.

Burnett claimed that *The Secret Garden* was the first children’s story to appear in an adult magazine. The first installment made its appearance in *The American Magazine* late in 1910. She wrote to her friend Ella Hepworth Dixon after the story’s serial publication that “it was our Rose Garden as it would have been locked up for years and years and years—and some hungry children had found it. You cannot think how everyone loves that story. People write to me with a sort of passion of it.”

*The Secret Garden* begins and ends in gardens, one a garden of death in India, and the other a garden of revitalization and resurrection in England. Burnett believed to the end of her own life in the healing and resurrecting power of gardens. The last chapter of *The Secret Garden* is called “In the Garden,” and the last thing that Burnett wrote, on her deathbed, was a magazine article by the same name. As in *The Secret Garden*, she always saw gardens as places of healing and return to health.

After she died, the little article was republished as a book, with watercolor pictures and photographs of her own gardens at Plandome. It ends with the words that have come to symbolize her other life’s work: “As long as one has a garden one has a future,” she wrote, “and as long as one has a future one is alive.
Frances Hodgson Burnett, author of *The Secret Garden* book, was known to have a deep and lasting love of English Gardens. Mary Lenox, the 10 year old protagonist in *The Secret Garden*, begins to transform from sad and depressed to hopeful and positive by taking ownership in planting and tending for her “bit of dirt”. She discovers a magic quality in the garden that benefits several other characters by the end of the show. Mary’s love of gardens is inspired by Burnett’s own experiences with English Gardens.

English Gardens are famous for their beauty and distinct features such as rolling lawns, pebble paths, ponds, and large clusters of flowers. Perennials, plants that live for more than two years, and annual flowers are mixed together to give color and wonder to gardens. Below you will find some of the common English garden flowers.

**Questions**

1) In *The Secret Garden*, why do you think the garden is represented as a place of magic?

2) Which flower do you think Mary would pick to plant? Why?

3) Which flower do you think Colin would pick to plant? Why?
Mary Mary Quiet Contrary

The classic nursery rhyme Mary Mary Quiet Contrary is often brushed over as a fun song, but not everyone knows its dark origins. Mary Tudor, also known as Bloody Mary, is the famous daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. Mary Tudor was a devout Catholic, and became Queen of England in 1553. She promised to return England to the Catholic faith and made it her duty to remove all Protestant Faith from the country. Protestant execution became normal during her reign which lead to her nick name Bloody Mary.

The nursery rhyme is said to be about Bloody Mary and her quest to return Catholicism to England. Two major interpretations have come to be known. The first detonates that the silver bells represent Catholic bells, cockle shells as pilgrimage, and pretty maids as nuns in a row. The second interpretation is far more violent; Silver bells represent thumb screws, cockle shells as a torture device, “all in a row “ meaning lining up to be beheaded, and “how does your garden grow” meaning all of the people Mary was adding to cemeteries. These different meanings could indicate the common people wanting to secretly comment on Queen Mary’s violence and express how they truly felt about her religious conquests.

Questions

1) When does Mary Lenox first hear this nursery rhyme in the musical? What is happening simultaneously in the play?
2) Why do you think children use to sing this to Mary Lenox?

Classroom Activities: Nursery Rhyme Origins

1) Have each student choose another famous nursery rhyme and research the history of the rhyme and its original meaning.

2) Have students teach their nursery rhyme to the class and present their historical findings. Students should include what their original thoughts about the nursery rhyme was before they researched it.

3) Follow-up Writing Assignment: Have students adapt their nursery rhyme into a short story. Who are the characters in the nursery rhyme? What is the setting? What is the main event suggested by the rhyme? Have students tell the story of what happens to these characters.
Marsha Norman is on a mission. The award-winning playwright’s career has covered Broadway, Hollywood and numerous theatres worldwide. Her accolades include a Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award® and, in 2016, the Dramatists Guild Career Achievement Award. She has co-directed the playwriting program at Juilliard for nearly a quarter of a century. And at this point in her career she is determined to tell the story of women.

“We have to tell the whole human story,” Norman explains. “If we don’t tell the story of what women and girls have accomplished, done, seen, said, brought about, missed out on, we are missing half of the stories of life on the planet.”

Norman was not aware of the story of Mary Lennox when, in the late 1980s, she was approached by producer and set designer Heidi Ettinger to adapt The Secret Garden. The opportunity was unexpected but welcome—though Norman had never written a musical before, she often daydreamed about it, imagining those around her breaking into song. But her success to that point was as a writer of dramas, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning ‘night, Mother and other plays that dealt with intensely dark issues such as suicide or prison. Now Ettinger and Norman had to figure out how to put a 10-year-old girl at the center of a multi-million-dollar musical.

As the process unfolded, later incorporating composer Lucy Simon, they determined that the success of the musical would be found in the strength of young Mary. She remembers, “We were thinking: let’s cause the musical theatre world to turn around for a moment and look at this girl as a valid and powerful hero.”

To focus on Mary, Norman had to make changes to the original story’s plot and structure. In Burnett’s book, Mary recedes from the center of the story as Colin gains focus. She knew as an adaptor she needed to be careful not to alienate a generation of readers who had grown up with the novel. “I quickly discovered it was one of the most beloved books of all time. I even discovered there was a Secret Garden secret oath. I would mention that I was working on it, and people would immediately put their hands over their hearts and say, ‘Ohhh. That was my favorite book from my childhood’—in those same exact hushed words.”

Adaptors have to remember the readers and, if living, the author—something she had to consider with her adaption of The Color Purple, currently enjoying a revival on Broadway. Though she sees the adaptor’s obligation to the original as important, she says simply, “I’m not afraid of it.” Since The Secret Garden novel is public domain, Norman had more flexibility to restructure the story. But with the balance of obligation in mind, she knew it was her duty in transitioning the work to the stage not to lose the heart that people love.

“What people love about this story,” Norman reflects, “is the safety and protection that awaits Mary. What spoke to me was the implicit promise that parents want to make to their children, that whatever happens (even if I die of cholera at a dinner party) you will find a safe place to grow up, where people will take care of you, and love you: you will find a home.”

But Norman discovered the core of The Secret Garden’s appeal is not only the story of the search for home that she likens to The Wizard of Oz. Mary is not just a girl caught in circumstances out of her control—the final resolution is brought about by Mary’s own actions. “By helping others, she is herself healed…She does this with the most natural and simple and human desires. She’s helping Colin because he needs help. The end. That’s who Mary Lennox is.
"The novel speaks to the power of the natural world to heal a broken soul, and instructs the reader that it is through helping others that you yourself are saved. The book says: Go outside. Don’t dwell on your losses. Trust your ability to help other. Eat simple food. Exercise. These ideas come up over and over in the book. And clearly, they are instructions we still need to learn, given their prominence in today’s medical literature. She wrote this book in 1911. That she was ahead of her time is putting it mildly. Or perhaps it reminds us that as humans, we keep hearing the same good advice. But do we take it? That’s a whole other topic."

The humanitarian spirit at the heart of *The Secret Garden* led to the enormous success of the 1991 musical. On Broadway the soaring melodies and hopeful story resonated beyond simple family entertainment. Many have commended the production for its ability to speak to people who are grieving by showing the resilience of the human heart. It remains a show that viewers connect with very deeply. Norman used to hear from people touched in childhood by the book—but now generations of young people have been brought up on the musical.

Seeing the impact of Mary’s story deepened Norman’s commitment to telling more stories of women and to providing support for female playwrights. As an educator, that commitment has become an imperative. Each year Julliard accepts an equal number of male and female writers. With over 20 years of playwrights finishing the program, Norman started to realize that she was leading a “controlled experiment”—and she was unhappy about the outcome. The female graduates, she points out, have not been recognized or elevated in theater as they should have—or even produced at the same level as their male peers.

“That’s not okay with me,” she declares. “It’s not okay to train people that I know are going to have a harder struggle than the men to be recognized. That’s just not right.” So, instead of just noting the imbalance, Norman has turned into an advocate and leader for change.

With fellow playwrights Julie Jordan and Theresa Rebeck, Norman founded The Lilly Awards Foundation. The group strives to honor the work of women in American theatre. In addition to annual awards, they provide tools and fund resources like *The Count*, a national survey that tracks the rates of production for female writers, as well as writers of color. Beyond the Foundation, she is striving, along with Jordan—her “comrade and colleague in the struggle”—to make real changes that can help female playwrights lower barriers, including ways to fund childcare. After “dragging my children all over the country whenever I had workshops,” she knows first-hand that childcare is a fixable problem faced by many female playwrights at their most productive age.

She crafted her own balance of motherhood and career at a time when change seemed inevitable. Her work gained prominence alongside the successes of Wendy Wasserstein, Tina Howe and Beth Henley. She thought they had succeeded. But, she now sees that the wave of success was short lived, observing, “After a couple of years the door slammed shut behind us.” Knowing this history, she is even more determined to make changes that stick. “Asking theatres to help us tell the stories of women seems like a thing we shouldn’t have to do—but it turns out it is.”

With this in mind, her writing is focused on stories that she is afraid will go untold without cultural support. She is currently writing a musical about two of the many women who fought in the Civil War dressed as male soldiers.

Marsha Norman uses the phrase “powerful luminous female energy at work” to describe Mary Lennox. It is a phrase that resonates with Norman’s work to spotlight the stories of women, stories that are relevant and demanding to be told, just like *The Secret Garden*: “People still feel lost; people still suffer disruptions in families that cause them to feel like they don’t know where their home is.” Through these stories, Norman aims to create real change, moving us towards a world where “children will be able to grow up and find a place where they belong and live in joy and hope”—the very world that we glimpse in Mary’s garden.
Classroom Activities: Adaptations

An adaptation is a new version of a story told in a different genre. *The Secret Garden* is a musical adaptation of a novel written by Frances Hodgson Burnett in 1911. An adaptation generally keeps many of the same characters and plots as the original source material, but also can make many changes to create a new piece of art.

Create your own adaptation of the novel *The Secret Garden* or another original source of your choice (make sure you choose a source that you have not already seen made into a movie, play, or TV show—you can even choose a nursery rhyme, children’s book, song, short story, or newspaper article).

*Follow these steps to write a scene for your adaptation:*

1. **Create Your Characters**
   - Who are the two main characters in your story?
   - Describe your character’s personalities as much as possible, answering such questions as: What are their names, ages, and occupations? What are their likes and dislikes? How do they treat other people? What is their level of education? What are their beliefs?
   - What is their relationship to each other? How long have they known each other?
   - What is the main conflict these characters have with each other in this specific story?

2. **Determine Your Setting**
   - Where does the story take place? What is the time period? Is this a real or fictional setting?
   - What is a specific place that these characters might encounter each other?
   - Describe the physical environment as much as possible, answering such questions as: What do the characters see around them? How does the place affect their mood? What objects could the characters pick up or touch? What sounds or noises happen in this place? What smells or tastes are in the environment?

3. **Shape Your Story**
   - What’s the big event that starts the beginning of your adaptation?
   - What happens to these characters at the end of your adaptation?
   - What are the most significant events in the story that cause your characters to change?

4. **Write a Scene**

A dialogue is a conversation between two characters. Begin by writing a dialogue between your main characters. Pick a specific moment in the story when your characters would speak to each other (maybe when they first meet, or when they are all alone, or at the height of their conflict with each other). Make at least one of the characters experience a significant change by the end of the dialogue.

*How many scenes of your adaptation can you write? How many scenes do you need to make a full-length adaptation that tells the entire story?*
The Secret Garden: Discussion Questions

1) How are musicals and plays different from each other?

2) What is an adaptation? Why do you think the authors chose to make a musical adaptation of the novel, The Secret Garden?

3) How did the music help tell the story?

4) What is the relationship between the garden growing and the characters growing during the play? How do the characters start out vs how does the garden start out? How does the attitudes and the opinions of the characters change as the garden blossoms?

5) Why do you think Collin accepted the treatment of his medical conditions? If you were in Collin’s position would you have accepted staying in your room or would you have acted differently?

6) As Collin’s thoughts become more positive how does his health change? There is a famous phrase called mind over matter. Meaning that your mind has more power over situations then your body, and you can overcome physical issues with your mind. Do you believe this is true? Why or why not? Give an example of a time where the power of positive thinking has helped you.

7) Do you think Mary would have changed from a shrill negative girl to a positive curious one if her parents did not pass away? Why or why not?

8) What are some of the differences between the adults and the children in the musical?

9) Life and death is a major theme in The Secret Garden. What design elements were used in the production to enhance this theme?

10) Spirits are said to stay on earth because they have unfinished business. Do you think Mary’s spirits are staying because she has unfinished business with them or because they have unfinished business with her? Are they helping her hold onto the past or to move forward?

11) Can you think of any other movies, plays, television shows that have a child lose both of their parents and have a major emotional and psychological change for the better? What similarities can you find between those characters?
The phrase “theatre etiquette” refers to the special rules of behavior that are called for when attending a theatre performance.

Above all, it is important to remember that the actors on stage can see and hear you at the same time you can see and hear them. Be respectful of the actors and your fellow audience members by being attentive and observing the general guidelines below:

**Before you go:**
- Your personalized ring-tone is not part of the sound design of this production. Please help us create the appropriate Verona soundscape by turning off your cell phone and other electronic devices (iPods, games, etc.). Not only will it be inaccurate production element, but it can be very distracting, not to mention embarrassing, when a cell phone goes off during a performance. The lights from cell phones and other electronic devices are also a big distraction, so please no text messaging.
- We’re sure that you would never stick your gum underneath your chair or spill food and drinks, but because this theatre is so new and beautiful, we ask that you spit out your gum before entering the theatre and leave all food and drinks in the lobby or the coat check.
- We don’t want you to miss out on any of the action of the play, so please visit the restroom before the performance begins.

**During the performance:**
- Please feel free to have honest reactions to what is happening on stage. You can laugh, applaud and enjoy the performance. However, please don’t talk during the performance; it is extremely distracting to other audience members and the actors. Save discussions for intermission and after the performance.

**Thoughts about the importance of being an audience member from Shakespeare Theatre Company Artistic Director Michael Kahn**

“When you go to the theatre, you are engaging with other living, breathing human beings, having an immediate human response. In the theatre you sense that all of this may never happen again in this particular way.

As a member of the audience, you are actually part of how that’s developing—you have a hand in it … You are part of a community where you are asked to be compassionate, perhaps to laugh with or grieve as well as to understand people, lives and cultures different from your own.”
Resource List

Shakespeare Dictionaries

Books on Teaching Shakespeare

Books on William Shakespeare’s Life and Writing

Websites
Shakespeare Theatre Company—http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/education
  ON SHAKEspeARE: Articles and information about Shakespeare’s life and world.
  Teacher Curriculum Guides: Plot synopsis, character maps, lesson plans and discussion questions.
In Search of Shakespeare: Shakespeare in the Classroom—http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/
  The companion website to Michael Wood’s four-part PBS series In Search of Shakespeare, this site includes extensive research about Shakespeare’s life and works, as well as interactive features.
Folger Shakespeare Library—http://www.folger.edu
  Includes excellent resources for further reading about Shakespeare, as well as fun games and information designed specifically for students and teachers.
Shmoop Teacher Resources—http://www.shmoop.com
  Learning Guides, Homework Help, Study tools and Test Prep

Standards of Learning
Participation in our student matinee program and the lessons and activities found in this curriculum guide support grade 8-12 Common Core standards in English Language Arts and The National Core Arts Standards for responding and connecting to Theatre Art. Primary content areas addressed include but are not limited to:

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