

# The Garden of Lost Secrets

by A.M. Howell

## Teachers' Notes



## ABOUT THE BOOK

Set during the First World War, *The Garden of Lost Secrets* is a historical mystery. Clara is sent to stay with her aunt and uncle while her father convalesces from his battle trauma and injuries. She discovers strange goings on at the country estate where her uncle is the head gardener and her aunt the housekeeper. The earl's pineapples are being stolen and with her new friend Will, Clara is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery.

## BEFORE READING

Before reading think about what your readers will need in order to be able to access the text. Is the context unfamiliar? Can they draw on their background knowledge and experience? How will you capture their interest?

Building background knowledge and activating prior knowledge will enable the children to access more from the story.

## DURING READING

### Secrets, Lies and Mysteries

*'Clara stood up slowly, peered over the sill of the window. She blinked. The boy had gone, evaporated into the evening air just like the steam.'*

And so begins the mystery...

The **theme** of secrets, lies and mysteries runs throughout the story. There are several interconnected mysteries. First, the mystery of the stolen fruit. Who is stealing the fruit and why?

Set up a 'solve the mystery' working wall with the title: **'Who is the Culprit?'**

As new suspects are introduced draw and add their name to the wall. Look out for clues and evidence as you read on. Some evidence may point to guilt, other evidence may point to innocence. Encourage the children to spot clues and to justify why they think it is a clue. Highlight clues that you have detected, if the children overlook them. Review the suspects board periodically. Where is the evidence pointing?

What do you think the motive might be?

Consider how effectively A M Howell is building the mystery.

At the end of the story, review together and see if you can trace the clues back. Was the evidence there all along?

### **What do you think makes a good mystery story?**

Make available a selection of mystery stories for children to read independently, share and compare.

As well as the mystery of the stolen fruit, other characters have secrets which add to the tension and suspense:

- Will is kept secreted in the hothouse boiler room.
- Clara keeps an unopened letter in her pocket which she should have given to her parents.
- Clara's aunt, Mrs Gilbert, is behaving uncharacteristically. What does she have to hide?

Consider with the children the many reasons that people keep secrets.

- What can go wrong if you harbour a secret?
- Are secrets always negative? (Think about birthday presents, surprise parties, for example)



## **Bravery**

Bravery is a **theme** that runs through the book. There are several points where Clara explicitly reflects on what it means to brave. In particular, Clara wonders whether she can be brave in the way that her father has encouraged her to be brave.

### Build a concept map

At the outset, ask the children to suggest things that they **associate** with bravery. Offer some prompts to get them thinking:

- do you know any people who are brave?
- what is the opposite of being brave?
- have you heard stories about bravery on the news?

Once you have offered the prompts, allow two minutes for the children to create their lists independently.

Gather the class together and make a class list of the children's suggestions.

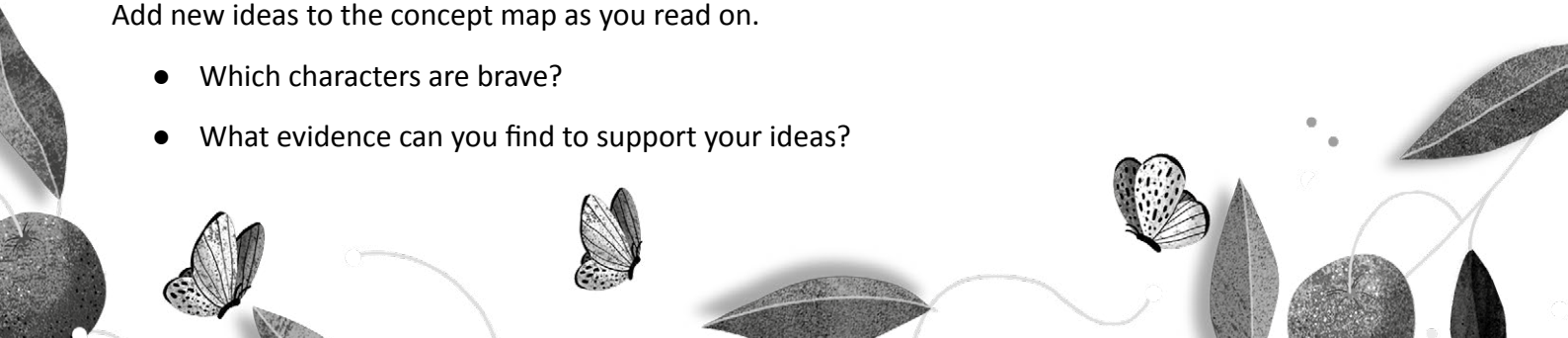
Next ask if any of the ideas can be grouped together e.g. all the things to do with overcoming fear; things to do with being strong.

During reading, ask the children to be alert for instances where bravery is referred to in the text.

Ask, 'How does this relate to bravery as you have defined it with your concept map?'

Add new ideas to the concept map as you read on.

- Which characters are brave?
- What evidence can you find to support your ideas?

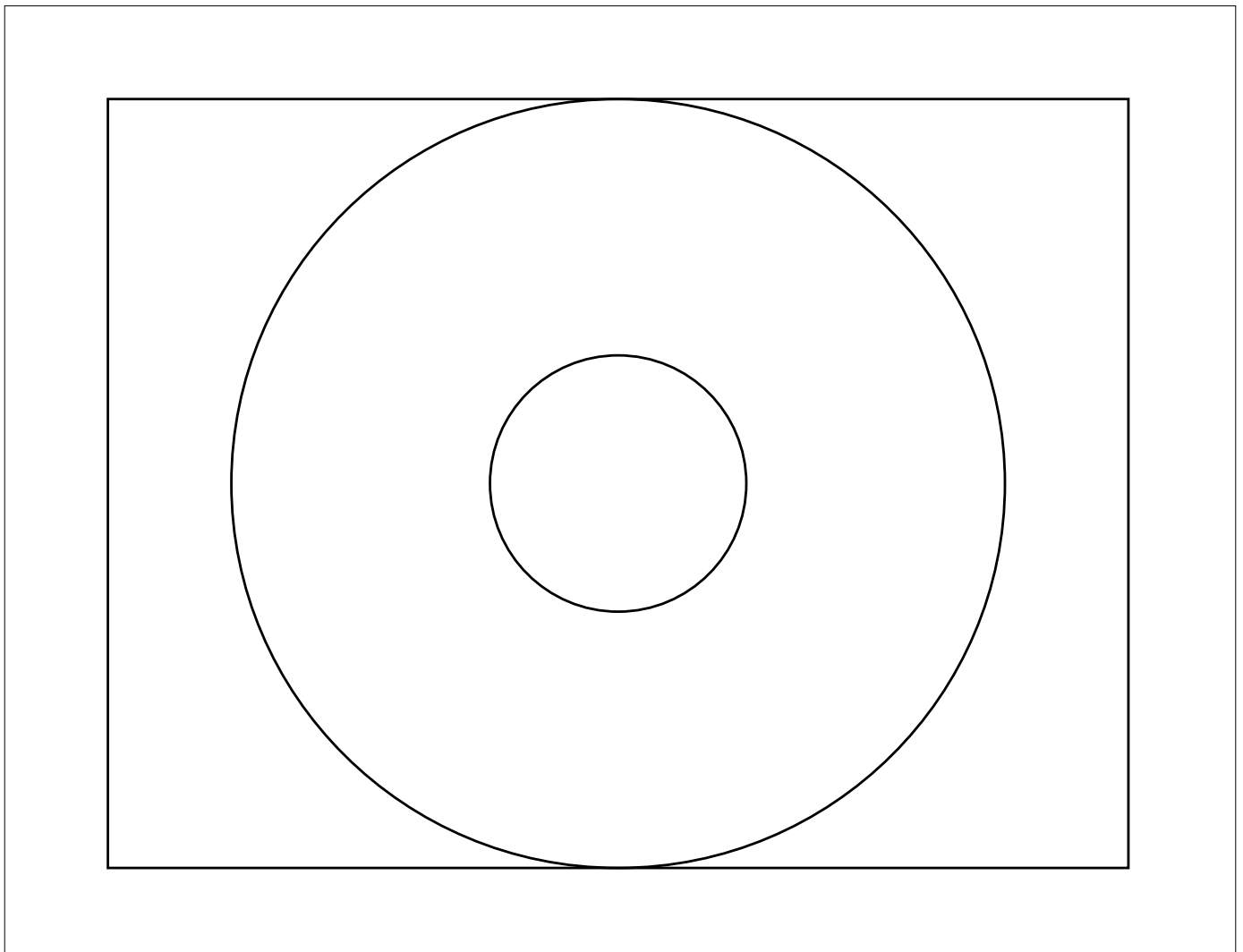


# CHAPTER 1: NEW HOME

## Historical Context: Prior Knowledge

To begin, ascertain the children's prior knowledge. Use a 'Circle Thinking Map' to record what children already know.

- In the centre circle write 'Life in Edwardian England'.
- In the outer circle make notes of what the children already know about this period
- In the rectangle (the frame of reference) write notes about where they found this information (e.g. television drama, visit to local history museum, reading)



CIRCLE Thinking Map (David Hyerle, 2011)

It may be that children know very little or they may have this period of history confused with other periods, in which case set a homework task for them to find out about:

- Life in a big country house including gardens, hothouses and summer houses
- Clothes and costumes
- Communications (letter writing, writing implements, telegrams, wireless etc.)
- Transport
- Embroidery and tapestry as a pastime

Alternatively, you could use this process for the First World War.

## Discussion

In this first chapter Clara arrives at her aunt and uncle's house. After reading, ask the children to discuss the chapter in pairs, using 'Booktalk' prompts. (Aidan Chambers, 1995). The 'Booktalk' process allows you to tap into children's prior knowledge and experience.

- Did the chapter **remind you of anything?** (e.g. other books, films, things that have happened to you or things that you have heard about?)
- Was there anything that you found **strange or puzzling** in this chapter?
- After reading what **questions** do you have?

Gather the class together and share ideas.

### Working with children's questions

Readers constantly ask themselves questions while they read. This is part of the process of inference making and prediction. To develop children's reading comprehension, it is important to provide opportunities for them to ask their own questions and guide them to find the answers.

- Make a list of their questions and ask which they think will be answered by reading on?
- Which questions could be answered by carrying out research? Ask, 'where do you think we could find the answers?'
- Are there some questions that you think might not be answered by either reading the novel or research?



# Response to literature

## Responding to character

In chapter one, we meet two of the main characters: Clara and Mrs Gilbert.

Print and cut out sets of the character cards, one set between two.

You may want to offer fewer words to some children.

Clarify the meaning of any words that are unfamiliar.

From the set of cards, ask the children to choose three words that they think best describe Clara.

Now ask them to share their three cards with another pair of children.

- Do they agree with the word choice?
- Remind them to justify their choices by referring to the text.

Ask the children to write the three selected words in reading journals or language books.

Repeat this activity periodically as you read on. Ask the children, 'have you selected the same three words or different words?. It is likely that they will choose different words at different points in the story.

Use this as an opportunity to discuss character development. Main characters in stories usually change and grow. Ask them to reflect on what brings about the change.



## Character cards

timid	playful
shy	imaginative
selfish	determined
secretive	gentle
unhelpful	nosy
curious	caring
sincere	tolerant
impetuous	adventurous
fierce	lazy
frightened	generous
brave	cowardly
rude	respectful

# Language study



## Figurative language, similes

A M Howell uses some finely tuned figurative language throughout the novel.

Here's an example from Chapter 1:

'You may call me Mrs Gilbert,' Mrs Gilbert said in a voice so low it seemed to slither down the stairs and curl around Clara's feet like a snake.

Introduce the term 'simile', if it is unfamiliar to the children.

Does the simile in this sentence help to create a picture of the scene in your mind's-eye?

In pairs, invite the children to practise speaking in the manner suggested in this sentence?

Having brought this example to the children's attention, challenge them to find further similes as you read on. Set up a space on your working wall where children can add examples as you read on.

At the end of each week, you can review the similes that have been added to the wall. Ask the class to locate them in the book and discuss the effect of the language.



# CHAPTERS 2 – 3

## Historical Context

### Gas Poisoning

Gas poisoning affected many soldiers during the First World War. Three types of gas were used as chemical weapons: chlorine, phosgene and mustard gas. The gases had terrible effects. Mustard gas blistered the lungs and throats, if it was inhaled, and would cause death. Even if they were wearing gas masks soldiers still suffered horrendous injuries; their bodies blistered as the gas soaked into their woollen clothing.

What effect does gas poisoning have on Clara's father?

Year 6 challenge: you could read and discuss Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est', a poem which describes the horror of gas poisoning during the First World War.

## Discussion

### What would you bring from home?

Clara doesn't bring much from home when she packs for her stay with the Gilberts.

- What do her belongings tell you about Clara?
- Would you be able to choose three things to take with you?
- What would they be? Explain your reasons.
- Compare items with other members of the class.

## Response to literature

### Whose point of view?

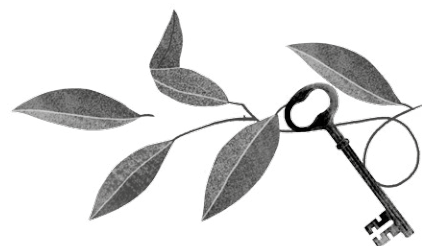
The story is written in the third person, but is focalized mainly through Clara's eyes.

Project the text onto the whiteboard using a visualiser. Reread from, 'What are you doing?' (p27) to the end of chapter 3.

Ask:

- Through whose eyes are we seeing this scene?
- What does Clara see? List the children's suggestions.
- Can we tell what Clara is thinking? List the children's suggestions.

Use a T Diagram to record the children's ideas.





Clara sees	Clara thinks
<p data-bbox="118 226 564 255">Mrs Gilbert in her stockinged feet.</p>	<p data-bbox="810 226 1374 255">She thinks that she might be slapped again.</p> <p data-bbox="810 338 1469 434">She is fearful of Mrs Gilbert because she nods so vigorously that she feels as though her head might come off.</p>

Make the point that sometimes we are explicitly **told** what Clara is thinking. However, sometimes we **infer** what Clara is thinking by the way she behaves.

What do we know about Mrs Gilbert?

Do we know what Mrs Gilbert is thinking? It is more difficult to work out what Mrs Gilbert might be thinking as Clara's point of view is privileged. We are not explicitly told what Mrs Gilbert is thinking. We might infer some things from her behaviour, but it is more ambiguous.

## Language study

### Reading italics

Write the following sentence on the whiteboard:

'It seemed impossible her father and *this* Mrs Gilbert were related – yet somehow, they were.' (p15)

Reread the opening paragraph of chapter two.

Ask the children what they notice about the way 'this' is written. Revise or introduce the term italics. How do the italics help us read this sentence? They may recognise that it changes the expression because the emphasis is put on 'this'.

Challenge them to explain how placing the emphasis on 'this' affects the meaning of the sentence. The point being made is that Clara cannot reconcile the character of Mrs Gilbert what she knew of her aunt from a previous encounter.

So, what does the writer want us to understand about Mrs Gilbert. This should lead the children to understand that Mrs Gilbert's character appears to have changed.

You might use speculative thinking to seed an idea, 'I wonder if something has happened to Clara's Aunt to make her behave differently?'

Encourage the children to look out for other instances where italics are used as you read on, ask, 'Are italics always used for the same reason?'

## Writing opportunity

Write Clara's diary about her first day with the Gilberts. How does she feel about leaving home? What are the impressions that she has of her temporary home? What does she want to happen next?



# CHAPTERS 4 – 6

## Historical context

### Battle of the Somme

*The early reports had been positive, told of few casualties and many successes. But Clara's father had shaken his head, said the reality was quite different and she shouldn't believe all she read. (p31)*

On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, there were 57,470 British casualties of whom 19,240 were killed. By the time the Battle finished, nearly five months later, the total number of British casualties was over a million.

Why would there be a difference between what was reported and what really happened? Explain that what people believed about the war was very important. How would knowing the truth affect recruitment of soldiers and the morale of the British population?

## Discussion

### Clara's Dilemma

Reread the beginning of chapter 4.

Clara has a moral dilemma. She has kept a letter meant for her parents. She has done this in order to protect them. Ask the children to consider their first thoughts. Was Clara in the wrong or in the right to keep the letter? What are the potential consequences of her actions?

Taking up a position:

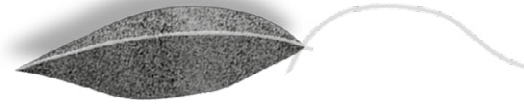
Ask the children who think that Clara is right to keep the letter to move to the right of the class. Ask the children who thought Clara's action was wrong to move to the left of the class. Children who are undecided can stand somewhere between indicating the strength of their opinion.

Once the class has arranged themselves, invite a representative from the right to explain their thinking. Then invite someone from the left to explain their thinking. The children are permitted to move if they have been persuaded to an alternative point of view by the arguments that they have heard.

Ask the children to return to their seats. Use a 'text to world' question to broaden the children's thinking. Have you ever done a bad thing for the right reasons? If you could go back in time, would you change what you did, or do the same thing again? Encourage authentic thinking and discussion, rather than coercing the children to a particular point of view.



# Response to literature



## Clara's Personality

In chapters 4 - 6 we learn more about Clara's character. More evidence is provided about her personality.

Ask the class, 'what character traits does Clara display?'

Fill in a table like the one below with evidence from the text:

Characteristic	Evidence
Imaginative	1. When she sees a flock of birds whirling into the air she thinks they 'look like mystical winged creatures'.
Inquisitive	
Timid	
Brave	

## Language study

### Prefixes

At the end of Chapter 4, a telegram is mentioned. Ask the children to work out from the context what a telegram was? Today, digital communication means that we can transmit messages around the world instantaneously, but this is a relatively recent development. In the First World War, the telegram was the means by which relatives were informed of a soldier's death and it became something to fear. The standard form sent by the British War Office to the next of kin to notify them of the death of a member of the army began with the words 'Deeply regret to inform you...'

Write the prefix tele- in the middle of a large sheet of paper and ask the children to think of as many different words with this prefix as they can.

Examples include television, telescope, telepathy, telegraph as well as telegram. Use what is already known about these words to work out what tele- means (over a distance). How does knowing the meaning of the prefix support understanding of these words?

- television - images transmitted from afar
- telescope - being able to see things from a distance, sometimes a very great distance
- telegraph - literally means that which writes from a distance but as communications have changed the meaning has shifted.
- telepathy - being able to transmit thoughts from one person to another without direct contact

# CHAPTERS 7 – 9



## Historical context

### Women at War

At the outbreak of the First World War, life for women was mainly tied to a life of domesticity. Some, notably the Suffragists, were campaigning for change and the war was about to have a huge impact on women's lives. Clara's parents discuss whether her mother should take a job at the local munitions factory. She is determined to do her 'bit'. Look at the following statements and discuss with the children whether they think they are true or false:

The first female police officers served during The First World War.	True
Women were allowed to vote.	False - it wasn't until February 1918 that women over the age of 30 who occupied a house, or were married to someone who did were given the vote and ten years later, women over 21.
Women wanted to join the army.	True - after a War Office investigation which showed that many jobs being done by soldiers in France could instead be done by women, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was established in December 1916.
Women working in munitions factories were paid the same wages as men.	False - they were paid half as much.

After the war, women's lives were significantly changed. More women had employment. Why do you think that might have been the case?

- women had proved they could work in jobs that men had done prior to the outbreak of the war
- many women enjoyed the financial freedom that employment gave them
- there were fewer men to fill all the jobs after the war

In 1918, the year that the First World War ended, the Representation of the People Act was passed which allowed women over the age of 30 who occupied a house, or who were married to someone who did to vote. Equal representation followed in 1928.



## Discussion

'Sometimes pretending to be brave is enough.' (p58)

Reread the beginning of chapter 7.

- Clara's father tells her that 'Sometimes pretending to be brave is enough'. Why does he give her this advice?
- Do you think it is good advice? Why? Why not?
- Why does Clara's father say that Clara's mother is brave?
- Have you ever pretended to be brave when you didn't feel brave inside? Did it work?
- Do people sometimes pretend to be brave to protect other people? Is this a good thing?

## Response to literature

### Introducing characters

In chapter 9, Clara meets Will. Reread pages 66-70.

Ask the children to highlight three important things that they have learnt about Will in this chapter. Ask the children to share what they have highlighted with a partner.

Gather the class together and ask the question, 'Do you think Will will be a good friend to Clara or not?' Encourage them to refer to the important things they have learnt about Will to explain their thinking. These might include:

- He appears to be friendly because he holds out his hand to shake hers.
- He appears to be honest because he puts the fallen limes next to the pot they were growing in rather than taking them for himself.
- He is keen for Clara to visit the garden again because he wants someone to talk to. He is probably lonely.

Ask the children to continue thinking as you read on. Periodically ask if their opinions about Will waiver, or remain constant.

## Language study

### Vocabulary

Sometimes words that are known to the children might be used in ways which are less familiar. Take for instance the sentence:

*'She skirted around the old tree stump, then paused, her breath hitching in her throat.'* (pp60-1)

The children may initially think that skirted has something to do with an item of clothing.

Ask what skirted means. Can they work it out from the context? Take suggestions and then offer a child-friendly definition: 'skirted means to go around. So, Clara walks around the old tree stump'.

Ask if they can see a connection between the noun 'skirt' and the verb 'to skirt'. (i.e. an item of clothing



that wraps around the body).

Tell the children that the piece of wood that runs along the bottom of the wall to protect it is called 'skirting board'. Can they work out why?

Now look at this example:

*'Clara reached up and touched a globe of fruit dangling from a branch'. (p62)*

This is another example where the children might know a specific use of the 'globe' to mean the Earth, but not necessarily associate it with the generic ball/spherical shape, as it is used in this sentence.

As before ask what the word 'globe' means. Then have the children work out the meaning from the context before providing a child-friendly definition.

What do the uses of the word globe (meaning Earth) and the globe as it is used in the sentence have in common? Can you think of any other uses of the word 'globe'?

Make explicit the point that when reading if you come across a word that you think you know but it doesn't seem to make sense, stop to ask if that word could have another meaning.

Look out for further examples as you read on.

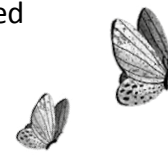
### Exploring the garden at night

Evoke the senses to encourage the children to imagine the garden at night. This task is a quick or automatic writing activity. It is designed to encourage the children to visualise the scene and to free their writing. They should not self edit as they write, they can do this later.

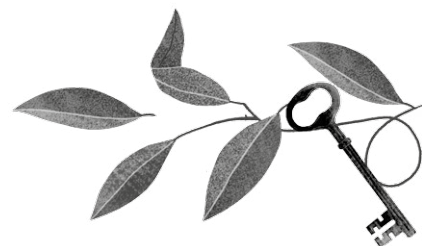
Ask prompt questions and ask the children to jot down their responses as quickly as possible. They do not need to write in sentences. Ask them to imagine in their mind's eye that they are stepping out of the cottage at night into the garden.

- Does the door make a sound? What do they do? Are there any sounds in the cottage?
- What does the grass feel like underfoot. Ask them to imagine they are looking up at the sky. What do they see? What is the temperature like? What are they wearing.
- Ask they walk across the grass towards the glasshouses, what do they notice? Are there any animals around? Are there any sounds? What can they smell in the garden?
- Is there anything unusual or strange about the garden tonight?

Gather the class and share ideas. Tell the children that they can use their ideas to write a beginning to their own mystery story.



# CHAPTERS 10 – 12



## Historical context

### Life on an Estate

The old order started to change as a result of the First World War. However big houses were still owned by landed gentry and run by servants. The household in *The Garden of Lost Secrets* has been diminished by the war, the hierarchy is still firmly in place. What clues can you find about the way of life on the Earl's estate in chapters 10 - 12?

## Discussion

### Is stealing a fruit a crime?

The children might find it quite strange that stealing fruit is taken so seriously, especially when they learn that the owner, the earl, rarely visits the hothouses where the fruit is grown. Ask the children for their views. Do they think that stealing the fruit should be taken seriously? Why? Why not?

Distribute the following statements to encourage the children to consider different points of view. Which do they agree with?



It is wrong to steal the fruit because stealing is always wrong.
It is not wrong to steal the fruit if you are starving.
It is wrong to steal the fruit because it belongs to someone else.
It is not wrong to steal the fruit if it is very ripe because it will go rotten if it is just left on the plant.
It is not wrong to steal the fruit if it has been taken by one of the gardeners because they have grown it.
It is not wrong to steal the fruit if there is plenty for everyone.



# Response to literature

## Readers Theatre

Readers Theatre is a strategy that has several purposes. It can be used to help children reflect on how character is revealed through dialogue, as well as being an aid to developing reading fluency.

In this instance, you can use Readers Theatre for a section of chapter 10 when it is discovered that fruit is being stolen.

Prepare the Readers Theatre passage by photocopying the text and highlighting the dialogue of the different characters e.g. Mr Gilbert in green, Robert in blue, the narrator is left uncoloured.

Working in groups of three, have the children practise reading the passage.

Encourage them to consider how the different characters would speak. For instance, how does Mr Gilbert answer Robert when he offers to go and see the rifle regiment?

When they have had the opportunity to practise, gather the class together and invite one group to share their reading. Ask if there is anything that they could improve. Then invite the rest of the class to comment on what they think was well executed.

Finally reflect on whether using Readers Theatre helped to refine their understanding of the characters. Ask:

- What have they learnt about Mr Gilbert?
- What have they learnt about Robert?
- What do the two characters think of each other?
- Do you learn anything about Clara in this chapter even though she doesn't speak?

You could also use Readers Theatre for the section when Will and Clara are talking in the boilerhouse (chapter 13).



# Language study

## Verbs from nouns

In Chapter 11, Clara sees Will sleeping in the boiler house.

*'A horrible thought wormed its way into her gut...'* (p79)

How is Clara feeling? What does *'wormed'* mean?

If the children don't know, ask if they can see a word within the word *'wormed'* that they do recognise i.e. worm?

When we put an -ed (past participle) on the end of worm, we change it from a noun to a verb.

Now ask them to think about how a worm moves (by crawling, wriggling). So this suggests that Clara is feeling as though her thoughts are wriggling inside her, almost like having butterflies in your stomach. However, a worm has negative associations and suggests that it is a thought she would rather not be having.

Make explicit that checking to see if you can find a word that you do know inside a word that you don't know is a useful strategy to employ when you are reading independently. If you come across a word that you don't recognise, check to see whether you know part of the word. Does it have a past participle -ed? You might be able to work out the meaning.

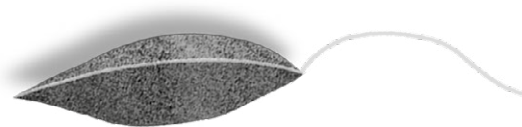
Here's another one:

*'The light nosed in under the door frame.'*

Ask, can you work out what nosed means using the strategy that we have just talked about?



# CHAPTERS 13 - 16



## Historical context

### Growing Fruit

Pose the questions:

What have you learned about fruit growing in this period of history? Make some notes about facts you have discovered so far. Find the evidence in the book.

Why do you think some fruits which we can pick up in the supermarket today were not widely available during this period? (Link to travel, transport and advances in food preservation techniques.)

Would you be able to use the information gleaned from the book to support growing your own fruit?

## Discussion

### Lies and Secrets

Lies and secrets are frequently used as plot drivers in stories and particularly so in mystery stories.

Ask the children to consider why Robert lies about his brother, Will.

Write the following words and phrases on the whiteboard: lie, fib, whopper, untruth, white lie, half-truth, compulsive liar.

- Do some of these terms sound harsher than others? Are all lies equal? Do we use some of the words like 'white lie' or 'fib' to make a lie sound less serious, or even beneficial?
- Can you think of a situation when it would be better to tell a lie, rather than tell the truth?
- Is it justifiable to tell a lie to keep yourself out of trouble?

## Response to literature

### An alternative point of view

We experience events from Clara's point of view. The reasons for the other characters' actions is ambiguous as we don't have access to their thoughts and this adds to the sense of mystery and to Clara's uncertainty and confusion.

Reread the beginning of Chapter 16 up to, '*He gave Clara a sorrowful look which burned into her bones and made her feel very sorrowful indeed*'. (p118)

Use an interview technique to explore the scene from an alternative point of view. For this session, it would be useful to have another adult to either take on the role of Mr Gilbert or to support the children in posing questions. It is also possible for the children to take on the role of Mr Gilbert if they already have experience of working in this way.

Working with the class, devise a set of questions to ask Mr Gilbert as a means of considering what he might potentially be thinking and feeling at this part of the story.

For example:

- What did you think when you walked into the room and saw Clara?
- Why were you so upset about the broken tapestry?
- Do you enjoy having Clara staying with you?
- Why did you offer to talk to Mrs Gilbert rather than letting Clara talk to her?
- Do you think Mrs Gilbert is too harsh with Clara?
- The tapestry seems to have a special meaning for you. Why is that?



## Language study

### Parentheses

Write the following sentence on the whiteboard:

*'She looked through the unevenly arranged key hooks near the back door (one bronze key looked quite hopeful, but when she had fed it into the lock it had jammed and taken an age for her to wiggle it out), the woodwormy drawers in the kitchen (filled with ancient silverware in need of a good polish), and even the dusty outhouse stacked with logs.'*

This is a long sentence, but if we break it down, we can see that it isn't difficult to read.

First, let's remove the text in parentheses (brackets) and see what remains:

*'She looked through the unevenly arranged key hooks near the back door, the woodwormy drawers in the kitchen, and even the dusty outhouse stacked with logs.'*

Ask, 'what is happening in this sentence?' (The children will be able to explain that Clara is searching for something.)

Now let's look at the parentheses:

*'(one bronze key looked quite hopeful, but when she had fed it into the lock it had jammed and taken an age for her to wiggle it out)'*

What does this tell us? She has found an item and is taking time to examine it before continuing her search.

Reinsert the text in parentheses back into the sentence 'She looked through the unevenly arranged key hooks near the back door (one bronze key looked quite hopeful, but when she had fed it into the lock it had jammed and taken an age for her to wiggle it out),

The information in parenthesis provides additional detail about the keys on the key hook. It's also giving us more information about Clara's thoughts.

Let's do the same with the other parentheses:

*'(filled with ancient silverware in need of a good polish),'*

Ask, what does that tell us? Reinsert into the sentence:

*the woodwormy drawers in the kitchen (filled with ancient silverware in need of a good polish),*

This gives us more information about what was found in the drawers and Clara's thoughts about what she sees.



Explain that now we have deconstructed the sentence, we can see that it is simply a list of the places that Clara is searching in with additional information about what she finds.

Have a look for more examples of parentheses as you read on and encourage the children to consider if they always fulfil the same purpose.

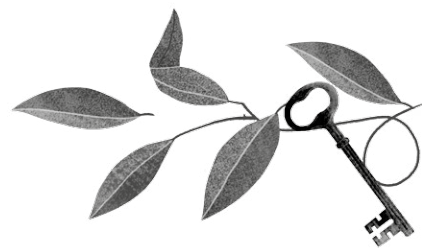
## Writing opportunity

### Writing from an alternative point of view

Write the scene where Clara breaks the tapestry from Mr Gilbert's point of view.



# CHAPTERS 17 – 20



## Historical context

### Soldiers

During the First World War cowardice was considered a crime. For instance, a soldier deserting the battlefield would have been shot for treason. Many soldiers suffered from terrible mental health problems after their experiences at the front. The condition of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was not understood or recognised. Today the armed forces have access to counselling to help them cope with traumas that they experience in combat.

When Clara sees Thomas cry in the woods, she is unsure how to respond:

*'Soldiers did not cry. They were strong and brave.'* (p143)

Invite the children to discuss their responses to this quotation. Ask, 'Are soldiers expected to hide their emotions? Is a soldier who cries less brave?'

Why do you think it is considered an act of treason if a soldier runs away from a battle? The punishment is very harsh, do you think it is justified?'

## Discussion

### Clara and the Letter

Clara struggles more and more with the uncertainty of knowing what she should do with the letter meant for her parents. She wrestles between opening it and risking finding bad news which would cause her parents grief and knowing she is keeping a secret. Write on the board:

Clara should open the letter.

Clara should not open the letter.

Invite contributions for both statements justifying responses with reference to the text.

Conscience Alley is a useful technique for exploring a character's dilemma. One half of the class should make a line on one side of the room and the other half should form a line opposite. They represent the different points of view.

One child in role as Clara will pass along the alley created by the two facing lines. The children on both sides offer advice as she passes them. When 'Clara' has reached the end of the alley, invite 'her' to reflect on the advice heard and whether it will help her make a decision about what she should do.

## Response to literature

### Building tension

Reread the section in Chapter 20 that starts, '*Clara bit her bottom lip*' to '*It's clear. Let's go.*' pp 145-148)

Working in pairs, ask the children to make notes showing the ways in which tension is built in this passage.

Gather the class together and share ideas. Some suggestions:

- Use of questions 'What had caused the soldier to be so upset? And what was in the basket?'
- Short sentences 'Something was different. She paused.'
- Silence followed by sudden interjection 'Oi... you there'
- Sound – rifle catch, heavy breaths, footsteps
- Longer sentences picking up the pace
- Shorter sentences increasing tension: 'Hiding.'

## Language study

### Figurative Language

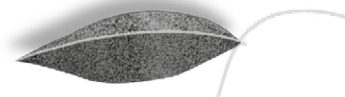
Clara makes a comparison to her family, likening them to skittles:

*'They were like wooden skittles waiting to be knocked over by a large wooden ball, with no one to pick them up, brush them down and stand them up again.'*

Ask, 'What does this sentence tell the reader about Clara's thoughts? What technique has the author used here to make the comparison?'



# CHAPTERS 21 – 24



## Historical context

### Hospitals

Clara's visit to the hospital gives her an insight into life in the trenches. Ask, 'How did hearing Charlie's account affect her? What does she learn? What information can you glean from Clara's visit to the hospital about what the places were like for soldiers recovering from their injuries?'

## Discussion

### The letters

Ask the following questions:

- What do you think about Clara's decision to look for her mother's letters?
- Is her behaviour justified or not justified?
- What would you do if you were in Clara's position?
- Why do you think Clara defends her aunt when Will is so convinced that she is the thief?

## Response to literature

### Character development

Characters rarely stay the same from the beginning to the end of the story. Reread the beginning of chapter 22 up to, '*stealing fruit from the ear!*'. Ask the following questions:

- What new information are we given about Mrs Gilbert in this chapter?
- Is Clara's opinion of her aunt changing?
- What is your opinion of Mrs Gilbert? Has it altered?

Look back at the words selected from Chapter One and reflect on whether you would change any of these now.

## Language study

Inscription The inscription for the tapestry intrigues Clara.

*'Deep peace of the quiet earth.'*

Ask, '*What image is created by this inscription?*'

Enrichment activity.

Invite the children to respond by creating a piece of art or music to accompany the words, which reflects the mood.





# CHAPTERS 25 – 30

## Historical context

### A Fitting Acknowledgment

Will's father's uniform and personal possessions are returned through the post. Clara feels there should be a more fitting acknowledgement of the sacrifice he made.

In what other ways are the sacrifices made by those who have lost their lives in battle recognised?

Introduce the term 'Memorial'. Set the children a homework challenge to find a war memorial in your local area. Does the memorial bear an inscription?

Red poppies are another way in which we remember the sacrifice of those who fought in the First World War and subsequent wars. After the war had ended, red poppies were the first flowers to grow on the decimated battlefield. They symbolise remembrance and hope.

## Discussion

### Is Will guilty?

Towards the end of Chapter 25, Will tells Clara, *'there's nothing scarier than not knowing the truth.'* (p189) By the end of Chapter 30, Will's honesty has been called into question. Ask, 'Do you think Will is guilty or innocent?'. Split the class into groups and ask them to look at the evidence that Will is guilty of stealing the fruit. Fill in a table with evidence for each heading:



Will is guilty

Will is not guilty

Now go into role as a judge hearing the evidence for each side. Half the class are defending Will and the other half accusing. At the end of the discussion ask the children for their verdict explaining their reasoning with reference to the events of the story.

## Response to literature

### Words and Thoughts

This activity relates to chapter 26. It is designed to encourage the children to read between the lines. To consider the difference between what might be said aloud and a character's innermost thoughts and feelings.

Start with an open question: 'Have you ever been in a situation where you have said one thing, but really have been thinking something else?'. Provide a personal example to illustrate what you mean. For example, I remember being given a knitted hat scarf and gloves for Christmas that my grandma had knitted. They were itchy and not very fashionable. I didn't like them at all but I didn't want to hurt her feelings, so I said that I liked them. It's the same with characters in stories, sometimes they say things but there are hints that they might be thinking something completely different.

Ask for four volunteers. One pair is going to be Will and the other pair is going to be Clara.

Explain that you are going to read the narrator's part.

One child is going to read Will's part. Their partner is going to speak Will's unvoiced thoughts. Another is going to read Clara's part. Their partner is going to speak Clara's unvoiced thoughts).

Model with an example. Start reading from the beginning of the chapter. After Clara's first lines of dialogue ( '*Are you sure the Regiment aren't practising in the woods?*' ), voice Clara's thoughts (e.g. I'm scared that we could get shot by accident).

Point out how few words are spoken in this most poignant scene. Ask, 'Why do you think that might be?'

## Language study

### Idiom

Write the following sentence on the whiteboard: *Had Will pulled the wool over her eyes?* p226)

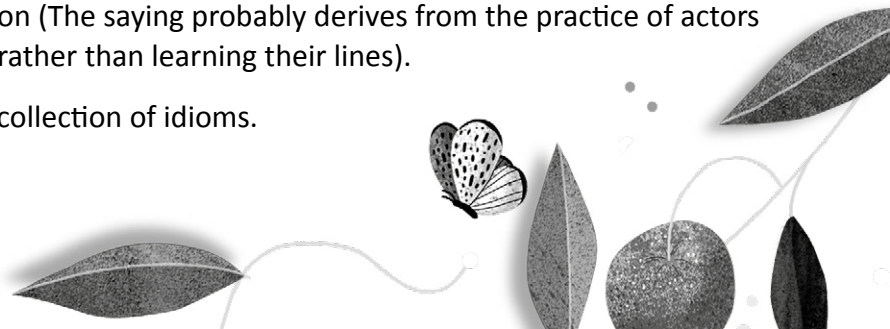
Ask the children if they can work out the meaning of the idiom from the context. If there are no suggestions, explain that it means 'deceive'.

Explain that 'to pull the wool over your eyes' is a common saying. Introduce the term 'idiom'. Although the exact origin of this idiom isn't known, it could refer to the days when people wore woollen wigs. To pull the wig over someone's eyes so that they couldn't see would make it easier to deceive them.

Here are some more idioms to do with items of clothing:

- 'Pull your socks up' means to make an effort.
- 'If the cap fits wear it' means to accept the criticism
- 'Off the cuff' means without preparation (The saying probably derives from the practice of actors reading lines written on their sleeves, rather than learning their lines).

Ask, 'Do you know any others?'. Make a class collection of idioms.



# CHAPTER 31 – 35

## Historical context

### The Likes of Us

Clara reads the servants' rules (p155). Ask, 'What does this list tell you about attitudes to servants at this time? How do you feel about this? Do you think servants were treated well by the Earl?'

## Discussion

### The Earl and the Butler

In Chapter 33 Clara approaches the Earl to plead Will's innocence. At the end of the chapter she has encountered both the Earl and his butler, Richardson. Which of the two shows greatest sympathy for Clara? Fill in the table below with evidence from the chapter:



---

The Earl	Richardson

The children may conclude that the Earl is more sympathetic to Clara than Richardson. Does this surprise them?



## Response to literature

### Visualisation

In Chapter 33 Clara enters the Big House which is strikingly ornate and different to the surroundings that she is used to. Visualisation is a technique that can aid understanding by helping to build an image in the mind's-eye.

Explain to the class that you are going to reread part of the chapter and you would like them to try and picture the scene in their heads, as if they were watching a film.

After you have done this distribute paper and drawing materials. Ask them to draw what they imagined. While they draw, read the passage again.

When you have finished, ask the children to work in pairs. The first child shows their picture while the second child explains how they think the picture relates to the passage. (Note: they are not explaining their own picture). Next, the first child adds detail to the explanation if anything has been missed out.

After they have done this ask:

- Did visualisation help you to imagine the scene?
- Did your partner see the scene in a different way?
- Did you learn anything from the way that your partner visualised the scene?

## Language study

### Imperious

In Chapter 34 the butler gives Clara an 'imperious' look. This is likely to be an unfamiliar word. Begin by asking pairs of children to give each other the same look. Remind them that we can use the context of the word to support meaning making.

Ask, 'What do we know about Richardson from the way he has already behaved towards Clara? How is he likely to be feeling when she is sent away?'

Share the following list of synonyms and antonyms. Working in pairs ask the children to sort them into two piles: words they think fit the meaning of imperious and those that do not.



commanding	arrogant	domineering	unassuming
humble	overbearing	meek	officious
forceful	amenable	bossy	authoritative

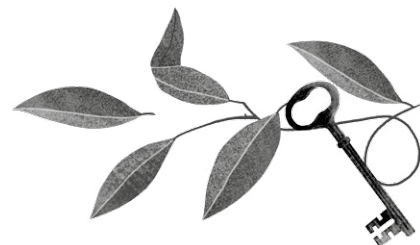
Once the words have been sorted, ask. 'What kind of person would give an imperious look?'

Can the children define the word from context? Once they have done this use a range of dictionaries to locate a definition.

You will find that looking in a range of dictionaries will reveal subtle differences in definitions. Finally consolidate understanding by asking children to use the word in a new example sentence.



# CHAPTER 36 – END



## Historical context

### Zeppelin Attack

Prior to the First World War, civilians had been largely unaffected by war for many hundreds of years. Britain was attacked for the first time by German airships dropping bombs in 1915.

Read the following description from Chapter 10 of a zeppelin:

*'These huge pencil-shaped floating machines with the capacity to drop bombs from their gondolas and blow entire houses to smithereens. The thought made her skin shudder and prickle in equal parts. Were the Germans really going to send hundreds of these flying machines to obliterate England?'* (p72)

When the zeppelin attacks in Chapter 38, Clara sees:

*'A long, silver cigar-shaped balloon loomed in the sky ahead.'* (p274)

What do these descriptions tell you about the way a zeppelin looked? Find an image to compare it with.

How do you think people felt when the bombs began to be dropped? Reread Chapter 38 for further evidence.

## Discussion

### Courage

Now that you have reached the end of the story, revisit the concept map that you created at the beginning. You should have been adding ideas as you went along, but if not, ask the children to review the chapters and to identify different aspects of bravery in the story.

Chapter 37 is called 'Courage'. Ask:

- Why is the chapter given this title?
- Can you be courageous even if you are afraid?
- How important has the concept of courage been to this story?

## Response to literature

### Revisiting character

Distribute the character cards that you used at the beginning of the story. Working in pairs, ask the children to select the three cards that they think best describe Clara. Share ideas with another pair. Did you have the same three words or different words. Explain your thinking.

Gather the class together. Can you suggest any other words that you think describe Clara at the end of the story?

Make the point that main characters usually grow and develop through the story. Ask, 'What do you think were the most significant things that happened in the story, which helped Clara to grow?'

# Language study

## Clara's Envelope

The contents of the letter Clara has kept unopened are revealed in Chapter 36:

*'cautiously optimistic that with extensive rehabilitation he will make a full recovery...'* (p261)

Some of the language used is formal and official and may be unfamiliar to the reader (as well as Clara). Read the three definitions for each word to the class. Can they work out which is correct using the context of the sentence.

optimistic	Feeling unsure about an outcome.
	Expecting things to turn out well.
	Expecting things to turn out badly.
extensive	Large in amount or scale.
	Very small.
	The outside of something.
rehabilitation	To restore someone to health or normal life through training and therapy.
	To put someone's name on an official list.
	To find someone a new home.

Ask pairs of children to 'translate' the sentence into less formal everyday language.





# AFTER READING

Once you have completed the story you can review the events and reflect on the way the mystery has been solved.

## The real thief

Robert is revealed to have been the villain all along.

What clues were there when you look back at the events of the story?

Begin with Clara's first encounter with Robert in Chapter 5. Can you find anything suspicious here?

When we read mystery stories it is gratifying to review and find the ways the author has planted the seeds.

## 'Booktalk'

Reflect on the story using the 'Booktalk' prompts used at the end of the first chapter:

- Did the story remind you of anything (other books, films, things that have happened to you or things that you have heard about?)
- Was there anything that you found strange or puzzling?
- After reading are you left with any further questions?

Give time for group discussion before gathering the class to share responses.

## Ask the author

When we have finished reading a book we may have questions we would like to ask the author. Encourage the children to formulate a question which could be linked to the 'Booktalk' or could be about the craft of writing.

Read the author's note. There may be some answers here.

## Title

The book title is *'The Garden of Lost Secrets'* Ask:

- Why do you think the author gave it this title?
- What are the lost secrets referred to?
- Do you think there could be any more secrets?
- Can you suggest an alternative title for the book?

