

Plot, character and setting

SECTION

4

Who and where?

Objective: To compare the usefulness of techniques such as visualisation, prediction and empathy in exploring the meaning of texts.

What you need: Copies of *The Secret Garden*, photocopiable page 18, scissors, paper and glue.

What to do

- Discuss with the class the various settings featured in *The Secret Garden* and make a list: Mary's parents' bungalow, the clergyman's house, the boat, the train, the manor, and so on. Circle the main settings: the secret garden and Colin's room.
- Next, draw up a list of the main characters.
- Talk about the fact that so much of the plot of *The Secret Garden* centres around conversations between two people only. Tell the children to imagine new meetings and conversations between two characters.

- Provide pairs of children with photocopiable page 18. Invite them to look at different combinations of two characters and one setting and to discuss and make notes on what the characters might say. For example, Mary and Colin meet at night in Colin's room – but who else might meet Colin there? When do they meet and what do they say?

- Invite the children to select their most successful combinations of characters and settings and to share the made-up conversations with the rest of the class.

Differentiation

For older/more confident learners: Encourage the children to reflect on how the settings contribute to the events in the story.

For younger/less confident learners: Allow the children to focus on just four settings and four characters.

First meetings

Objective: To make notes on and use evidence from across a text to explain events or ideas.

What you need: Copies of *The Secret Garden* and writing materials.

What to do

- Talk with the class about all the first meetings that take place in the book. Many of these are built up with anticipation. Ask the children to think of three first meetings (Mary and Martha; Mary and Colin; Mary and Dickon; Dickon and Colin; and so on) and to re-read the relevant passages.
- Invite the children to choose one meeting and ask: *Was it good? Was it surprising? How did the characters react to each other?* Dickon's meeting with Colin is magical for Colin; Mary's meetings with Martha and with Mr Craven both go surprisingly well; Colin is not as scary as Mary fears. It is a feature of the book that the meetings

between characters are subtly different from what may be expected.

- Encourage the children to make notes about the selected meeting and then take turns to present their thoughts to the class. They should take on board any interesting comments offered by their audience.
- Now ask the children to write a report about the meeting with subheadings such as 'Expectations', 'The meeting' and 'Moving forward' (how the relationship between the characters works out).

Differentiation

For older/more confident learners: Ask the children to add an extra paragraph to their report describing the significance of the meeting to the plot.

For younger/less confident learners: Allow the children to focus only on the expectations and the meeting when they write their report.