

Lesson #31

A Tyrannical and Selfish Little Brat

When Mary Lennox was sent from India to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle, Mr. Archibald Craven, everybody said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too. She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair, and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had always been ill in one way or another. Her father held a position with the government and had always been busy and ill himself. Her mother was a great beauty who cared only to go to parties. She had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born, she handed her over to the care of an ayah¹ who was told to keep the child out of sight as much as possible. Her ayah and all the other servants always obeyed Mary and let her have her own way in everything. By the time she was six years old, Mary was as tyrannical and selfish a little brat as ever lived.

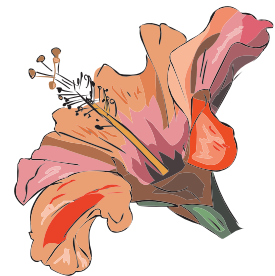
One frightfully hot morning, when she was about nine years old, she awakened feeling very cross, and she became crosser still when she saw that the servant who came to dress her was not her ayah.

"Why did you come?" she asked the strange woman. "You cannot stay. Send my ayah to me!"

The frightened woman stammered that her ayah could not come. Mary felt there was something mysterious in the air that morning. Nothing was done in its regular order, and many servants were missing. But no one told her anything, and her ayah did not come. She was left alone as the morning went on. At last, she wandered into the garden to play. She pretended that she was making a flowerbed, and she stuck big scarlet hibiscus blossoms into little heaps of earth, all the time growing more and more angry and muttering to herself the things she would say and the names she would call her ayah when she returned.

After that, appalling things happened. The cholera had broken out in its most fatal form, and people were dying like flies. During the confusion and bewilderment, Mary hid in the nursery, fell asleep, and was quickly forgotten. Nobody thought of her; nobody wanted her. When she awakened, the house was perfectly still. When people had the cholera, it seemed that they remembered nothing but themselves. Surely someone would remember and come to look for her, Mary thought. But no one came, and as she lay waiting, the house grew more and more silent.

Suddenly, she heard footsteps.



¹ayah: a nanny or maid

- RL.5.1 1. When Mary first arrives at Misselthwaite Manor, how do most people describe her?
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- RL.5.1 2. Why does Mary have an ayah?
- A) Her parents had died years ago when Mary was very young.
 - B) Mary was living with her grandparents in a different city.
 - C) Her father is sickly and busy with his government job, and her mother is interested only in parties.
 - D) both A and B
- L.5.4.A 3. Since all the servants had always given Mary her way, she had become “as tyrannical and selfish a little brat as ever lived.” From the context, you can tell that *tyrannical* means _____.
- A) considerate
 - B) lazy and forgetful
 - C) cruel and demanding
 - D) lighthearted
- RL.5.1 4. Underline two things that do not seem normal to Mary on the first morning her ayah doesn’t come to care for her.
- RL.5.1 5. What does Mary do to pass the time on the morning she is forgotten?
- A) She goes out in the garden to play.
 - B) She thinks of horrible things she will say to her servants when they do show up.
 - C) She stays in her room and sobs.
 - D) both A and B
- RL.5.1 6. Why does Mary think she is forgotten during the cholera outbreak?
- A) During the cholera outbreak, people only think of themselves.
 - B) The servants are worried that Mary might have cholera.
 - C) Every servant thinks someone else is looking after Mary.
 - D) The servants think Mary’s mother will look after her.
- L.5.4.A 7. During the confusion and bewilderment, Mary hid in the nursery, fell asleep, and was quickly forgotten. From the context, you can tell that *bewilderment* means _____.
- A) usualness
 - B) enchantment
 - C) darkness
 - D) puzzlement