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Writing Dialogue in *The Secret Garden*

Punctuation counts when you're writing dialogue. It helps you understand who is speaking and what they are saying. In *The Secret Garden*, by Frances Hodgson Burnett, the author uses dialogue to show how the characters relate to each other. Try your hand at adding quotation marks to the conversations below. In the first passage, Mary, an orphan, and Martha, a young servant girl, are just getting to know each other. In the second, Mary and her cousin Colin meet for the first time.

Passage 1

I don't want it, she said.

You don't want your porridge! Martha exclaimed incredulously.

No.

You don't know how good it is. Put a bit of treacle on it or a bit of sugar.

I don't want it, repeated Mary.

Eh! said Martha. I can't abide to see good food go to waste. If our children were at this table they'd clean it bare in five minutes.

Why? said Mary coldly.

Why! echoed Martha. Because they've hardly ever had their stomachs full in their lives. They're as hungry as young hawks and foxes.

I don't know what it is to be hungry, said Mary with the indifference of ignorance.

Martha looked indignant.

Well it would do you good to try it. I can see that plain enough, she said outspokenly.

Passage 2

How old are you? he asked.

I am ten, answered Mary, forgetting herself for the moment, and so are you.

How do you know that? he demanded in a surprised voice.

Because when you were born the garden door was locked and the key was buried. And it has been locked for ten years.

**Some language has been changed from the original text for clarity.*

