

The Night Gardener

Comprehension and Critical Thinking Questions

Part 1 Arrivals

Chapter 1 Storyteller at the Crossroads

1. "And they were riding to their deaths." Why does this line of text create suspense?
2. What were Molly and Kip "in search of"?
3. Describe the response of people when asked about the Windsor Estate?
4. What is the old woman's name? What is her profession or occupation?
5. .What do people say about the sourwoods?

Chapter 2 The Silent Trees

1. What does Kip notice about the sound of the woods?
2. The horse, Galileo, did not want to cross the bridge. Why does this create suspense?
3. Kip...slid down from the bench, landing expertly on this good leg." What does this line imply about Kip?
4. Why is the end of this chapter suspenseful?

Chapter 3 Miss Penny

1. What was "strangest and most alarming" about the inside of the house?
2. Why does the little girl ask Molly if Kip has a tin cup?
3. What does the phrase "artful approach" mean?
4. Why does Penny wish she had magic hair?

Chapter 4 The Help

1. Describe the state of the house.
2. How does Molly describe Alistair?
3. "At every turn, people had made it clear: they did not want her kind." What does Molly mean by this?
4. "This house is no place for you." Why do you think Constance says this?
5. How does Molly convince Constance to let Kip and herself stay?

Chapter 5 Portrait of a Lady

1. Where will Kip have to sleep?
2. What do we learn about Bertrand Windsor's father?
3. *“Under no circumstances are you or your brother to touch the tree,” she said, her voice like an icicle.* What does this statement reveal about the tree?
4. What was unusual about the family portrait?

Something sinister was changing these people, and they didn't even seem to know it.” Why is this text important to the story?

Chapter 7 Pit and Pockets

1. Why did Kip enjoy working outside?
2. Kip could tell Alistair was a bully. Why?
3. Tormenting little girls and crippled boys? Don't think your father won't hear of this.” Who says this?
4. Why did Molly lie about who started the fight?

Chapter 8 Master of the House

1. “...you must believe me when I tell you that these men are the fastest way out of our trouble—perhaps the only way...” What does this statement suggest about the situation of the Windsor family?
2. “But there is, of course, a way to buy time.” What does Constance give Bertrand in response to this statement?
3. What do YOU think the key unlocks?

Chapter 9 The Room at the Top of the Stairs

1. “Mummy used to sing to me...” What does this statement reveal about Penny and her mother?
2. What did every title of the pictures books include?
3. “But here, everyone has horrid dreams.” Who says this?
4. Who has made the muddy footprints?
5. What is Master Windsor carrying out of the secret room?
6. What makes the end of this chapter suspenseful?

Chapter 10 Footsteps

1. What was Molly's bad dream?
2. Kip and Penny had been telling the truth. About what?

Chapter 11 Chamber Pots

1. Describe the dream Kip had.
2. How would writing a letter to their parents help Kip and Molly?

Chapter 13 A Visit from Fig and Stubbs

1. Why do you think the letter “could not be delivered”?
2. Why does Molly try to shut Fig and Stubbs out?
3. What do Figs and Stubbs want?
4. Who does Fig and Stubbs threaten? And what warning do Fig and Stubbs give?
5. What connection does Molly make about the room with the little green door?

Chapter 14 Catch as Catch Can

1. Describe the relationship between Bertrand and Constance.
2. What information does Alistair offer about his father’s plans?
3. Define “dire straits”
4. How does Constance react to Molly’s question about the ring?
5. Where do you think Constance got the new ring?

Chapter 15 The Other Thing

1. “There’s something about this land that draws folks in, even when every bone in their bodies is telling them to run far, far away....” Hester says this. Why is it significant?
2. How does this chapter add to the suspense of the story?

Chapter 16 The Garden in the Woods

1. What news does Kip bring Molly?
2. What was unusual about the flowers?
3. Who do Molly and Kip see in the doorway of the house?
- 4.

Chapter 17 The Night Man

1. Describe the night man.
2. As the night man spoke, what did Molly think she heard?
3. Describe how the water from the watering can looked.
4. “If I don’t breathe,” she thought, “he might not find me.” Why is this

moment/ statement suspenseful?

5. What saved Molly and Kip from being discovered by the night man?
6. What is the night man doing at the end of the chapter?
- 7.

Chapter 18 A Rude Awakening

1. “We canna up and leave like bandits. Let me square things with the mistress first. I owe her that.” What does this statement reveal about Molly?
2. When do Molly and Kip plan on leaving?

Chapter 19 The Roots

1. What happened to the live flower moments after Kip planted it beside the tree?
2. What happened when Kip touched the tree?
3. What did he discover about the other branches?
4. Why does Kip toss Courage down into the hole?
5. When Kip touched the root, what happened?
6. Why did Kip feel a sharp pain?
7. “A gust of wind howled overhead...but a strong gust just knocked him backward...More and more tiny roots came out of the soil, grasping at his legs, his arms, his neck.” What appears to be happening to Kip?
8. How was Kip saved?

Chapter 20 Behind the Door

1. What does Penny realize after Molly’s story?
2. Where did the “burst of laughter” come from?
3. What was in the center of the trunk?
4. What was the title of the book that Penny had discarded?
5. “It’s not fair. Everyone else uses this room, so why shouldn’t I?” What does this statement reveal about the family?
6. What was incredible about the handwriting on the letter?

Part Two Pursuits

Chapter 21 Special Delivery

1. *"We'll write again soon, so stay put no matter what."* Why is this part of the letter important?
2. *"They were so hungry, but not for water."* What does Kip mean?
3. *"Just cause the tree's ugly don't make it evil."* Why are Molly's words important?
4. How does Kip and Molly's relationship seem to change at the end of this chapter?

Chapter 22 Sweets

1. What did the letters give Molly?
2. Molly knew the truth about the tree. What was it?
3. *"The tree seemed to grant one specific wish to each person."* What does each wish reveal about the person?
4. What is Alistair's **motive** for wanting candy?

Chapter 23 Doctor Crouch

1. Is the doctor nice? Why or why not?
2. What does Kip ask the doctor?

Chapter 24 Cold Hands, Warm Heart

1. *"Her skin had been as cold as a corpse."* Why would Constance's skin be this cold?
2. *"Each band is a little smaller than the last."* What does this imply about Constance?
3. Are the rings killing Constance? Why or why not?

Chapter 25 The Pallor

1. *"Your sick too."* Why does Penny say this to Molly?
2. Why do you think Kip said nothing about the change in Molly?

Chapter 27 Ichor

1. Just touching the paper made her feel better, made her feel safe." Molly knows the letters aren't real. If this statement is true, why would the "fake" letters make her feel 'safe'?

2. When Kip asks Molly about the green door why does she lie?
3. After the night man stepped into the hall from Alistair's room, what did the children notice about the watering can?
4. What happened after the night man blew the leaf dust into the air?

Chapter 28 Asleep

1. When Kip reaches the ancient garden of pale flowers, what happens?
2. What did Kip realize about the night man and what he collected each night?
3. What did the night man leave at the edge of the garden?

Chapter 29 To Market

1. What alarmed Molly about the "tree's provisions"?
2. What problem did Molly have regarding bargaining in the market for food?
3. Why was Molly lying to Kip about her nightmares?
4. "All I know is that any gift from that man is no gift at all." Why does Molly say this to Kip?
5. What accusation does Hester make regarding Molly?

Chapter 30 A Story Bought, A Story Sold

1. "Now, Tollie, you run and tell every other farmer....I'll be forced to tell a tale or two about how you spike your flour with ground-up cat bones." What is important about this **dialogue** from Hester?
2. Hester uses the life of Aesop in an **allusion**. What purpose does this serve?
3. What made Molly uncomfortable about Hester?
4. What does Hester notice about Molly's appearance?
5. Kip asks Hester if she knows a story about a man and a tree. What is her response?

Chapter 31 The Legend of the Night Gardener

1. According to Hester, what are legends like?
2. What does Hester want for payment for telling the legend?
3. Why did people call the man the Night Gardener?
4. What was unique about the fruit of the tree?

5. What payment did the tree require for granting its gifts?
6. What was the Night Gardener's wish for himself?
7. What was the tree's answer to the Night Gardener's wish?
8. What does Hester mean by a "literal mind"?
9. How did the tree grant the Night Gardener's wish?
10. "Imagine what a person would do with just a little clipping from a tree like that...Why, she'd be queen of the world."
"Or she'd be swallowed whole," Kip said.
What does this exchange reveal about Hester and Kip's character?
11. What question does Molly ask herself at the end of this chapter? And Why is this question important?

Chapter 32 Fruit

1. What happened to the key after Kip used it?

Chapter 33 Collapse

1. "What if the words inside these letters were not written by her parents but written by some magic of the tree—a tree that fed off people and needed to keep them close?" Why is this quote important?
2. "A voice like the wind." Why is this important?
3. What does Molly do with the letters?
4. What condition does Molly find Constance?

Chapter 34 Leeches and Lizards

1. What state is Constance in according to the doctor?
2. What does Bertrand demand of the tree?
3. What do you think Bertrand means when he says, "I want out"?
4. Who built the house around the tree?
5. The tree tempts Molly. How?

Chapter 36 Traps

1. According to Kip, why did Molly hide behind smiles and stories?
2. What is the significance of Kip spitting on his own grave?

Chapter 37 Camera Obscura

1. What is the plan to capture “the creature”?
2. Who did Dr. Crouch catch in the net?

Chapter 39 The Broken Bough

1. How did the Night Gardener respond to Molly’s accusation of the killing of the doctor?
2. How does Molly rescue Hester?
3. What did the Night Gardener throw at Molly?
4. Why didn’t the Night Gardener follow Molly and Kip across the bridge?

Part 3 Departures

Chapter 40 The Last Story

1. According to Hester, what will kill her?
2. What was Hester’s wish?
3. What gift does Hester give the children?
4. How does Molly feel about Hester now?
5. What was Hester’s “Last Story”?

Chapter 41 Alone in the Dark

1. “He’s a slave to that tree, and the only way for him to go on living is to keep it alive.” How is the Night Gardener a slave to the tree?
2. What “gift” did the tree give Kip?
3. Why did Kip NOT use the balm?
4. How did Ma and Da save the children?
5. What does Kip say his parents would want Kip and Molly to do?

Chapter 42 Return to the Sourwoods

1. Why would Kip destroy the bridge?
2. How far can the Night Gardener travel?
3. What did Alistair do with Courage?

Chapter 43 Body of Evidence

1. What had Bertrand’s father wanted to do with the tree?
2. What choice does Molly present to Bertrand?

Chapter 44 Flight

1. What is Kip's plan for the bridge?
2. Why is the arrival of Fig and Stubbs a serious problem?

Chapter 45 Unwelcome Guests

1. What did Stubbs do to Bertrand after he screamed for him to get away from his wife?
2. What does Molly tempt Stubbs and Fig with?

Chapter 46 Trust

1. "We're done taking things from the tree." Who says this?

Chapter 47 Comeuppance

1. What is Molly's plan?
2. Why will Stubbs kill the Windsors?
3. What does Fig have in his hand and what is his plan?
4. From where does the pale, thin hand come?
5. What happened to Fig and Stubbs?
6. What does Alistair do the tree? Why?

Chapter 48 Hide-And-Go-Seek

1. Where does Kip want to lead the Night Gardener?
2. How did Alistair distract the Night Gardener away from Kip?
3. What kind of teamwork did Kip and Alistair use?

Chapter 49 Lamp Oil

1. Bertrand plans to kill the tree. How?

Chapter 50 Moonlight

1. What had "blotted out...their only hope"?

Chapter 51 The Hero and the Damsel

1. What does Penny say about her mother?
2. For what does Constance thank Molly?

Chapter 52 Courage

1. “Why won’t he show himself?” What is Kip’s answer to Alistair’s question?
2. What does Kip notice about the flames on the Night Gardener?
3. What does Kip do to buy time for his sister?

Chapter 53 The Conflagration

1. What happens to the matches Molly strike?
2. What does Molly realize about the tree and its gifts?
3. What does Molly touch in her pocket?

Chapter 54 Ashes

1. What happens to the Night Gardener as the letters burn?
2. What state is Kip in when Alistair brings him back to the house?
3. How does Molly’s story help Kip?

Chapter 55 What happened Next

1. How did the people of Cellar Hollow react to the burning of the house?
2. Where will the Windsor family live?
3. What offer does Constance make to Molly?
4. What is significant about the flowers Bertrand gives Constance?
5. What gift did Alistair give Kip?
- 6.

Chapter 56 Storyteller at the Crossroads

1. What does Molly think the map is?
2. How does Molly propose to earn food and board on their journey?