

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Main and Helping Verbs

Verbs that are made up of more than one word are **verb phrases**. In a verb phrase, the **main verb** names the action. The **helping verb** helps tell the time of the action. Some common helping verbs are *has, have, had, am, is, are, was, were, do, does, did, can, could, will, would,* and *should*.

- The main verb is always the last word in a verb phrase. (The horse is looking at me.)
- There may be more than one helping verb in a verb phrase. (She has been riding horses a long time.)
- Helping verbs such as *is* and *are* show that action is happening in the present. (Annamae *is reading* about the Navajo.) *Was* and *were* tell that the action happened in the past. (The class *was reading* about the Navajo last month.) *Will* tells that the action is going to happen in the future. (We *will study* the Anasazi next week.)

**Directions** Underline the verb phrase in each sentence. Put one line under each helping verb and two lines under the main verb.

1. I have ridden horses for years.
2. Right now I am mending my old saddle.
3. Some friends will visit the ranch tomorrow.
4. They have come to the ranch many times.
5. The wind is blowing gently on the range.
6. Within two days, we will have reached the mountains.
7. You can see everything from the mountain.
8. My chores will be waiting for me.
9. My sister is reminding me to take pictures.
10. People from the city should visit the ranch often.



**Home Activity** Your child learned about main and helping verbs. Have your child model an activity such as making a sandwich. Ask him or her to explain the job using sentences with verb phrases.

Read the passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

## from *The Secret Garden*

*Excerpt from The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett,  
published by Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1911.*

1 [Mary] went out into the garden as quickly as possible, and the first thing she did was to run round and round the fountain flower garden ten times. She counted the times carefully and when she had finished she felt in better spirits. The sunshine made the whole place look different. The high, deep, blue sky arched over Misselthwaite as well as over the moor<sup>1</sup>, and she kept lifting her face and looking up into it, trying to imagine what it would be like to lie down on one of the little snow-white clouds and float about. She went into the first kitchen-garden and found Ben Weatherstaff working there with two other gardeners. The change in the weather seemed to have done him good. He spoke to her of his own accord.

2 “Springtime’s comin’,” he said. “Cannot tha’ smell it?”

3 Mary sniffed and thought she could.

4 “I smell something nice and fresh and damp,” she said.

5 “That’s th’ good rich earth,” he answered, digging away. “It’s in a good humor makin’ ready to grow things. It’s glad when plantin’ time comes. It’s dull in th’ winter when it’s got nowt to do. In th’ flower gardens out there things will be stirrin’ down below in th’ dark. Th’ sun’s warmin’ ‘em. You’ll see bits o’ green spikes stickin’ out o’ th’ black earth after a bit. . . .”

6 . . . Very soon she heard the soft rustling flight of wings again and she knew at once that the robin had come again. He was very pert and lively, and hopped about so close to her feet, and put his head on one side and looked at her so slyly that she asked Ben Weatherstaff a question.

7 “Do you think he remembers me?” she said.

8 “Remembers thee!” said Weatherstaff indignantly. “He knows every cabbage stump in th’ gardens, let alone th’ people. He’s never seen a little [girl] here before, an’ he’s bent on findin’ out all about thee. Tha’s no need to try to hide anything from him.”

9 “Are things stirring down below in the dark in that garden where he lives?” Mary inquired.

10 “What garden?” grunted Weatherstaff, becoming surly again.

11 “The one where the old rose-trees are.” She could not help asking, because she wanted so much to know. “Are all the flowers dead, or do some of them come again in the summer? Are there ever any roses?”

<sup>1</sup> **moor**: an area of land that is full of grasses

12 “Ask him,” said Ben Weatherstaff, hunching his shoulders toward the robin. “He’s the only one as knows. No one else has seen inside it for ten year’.”

13 Ten years was a long time, Mary thought. She had been born ten years ago.

14 She heard a chirp and a twitter, and when she looked at the bare flower-bed at her left side there he was hopping about and pretending to peck things out of the earth to persuade her that he had not followed her. But she knew he had followed her and the surprise so filled her with delight that she almost trembled a little.

15 “You do remember me!” she cried out. “You do! You are prettier than anything else in the world!”

16 She chirped, and talked, and coaxed and he hopped, and flirted his tail and twittered. It was as if he were talking. His red waistcoat<sup>2</sup> was like satin and he puffed his tiny breast out and was so fine and so grand and so pretty that it was really as if he were showing her how important and like a human person a robin could be.

17 Oh! to think that he should actually let her come as near to him as that! . . . She was so happy that she scarcely dared to breathe.

18 The flower-bed was not quite bare. It was bare of flowers because the perennial plants had been cut down for their winter rest, but there were tall shrubs and low ones which grew together at the back of the bed, and as the robin hopped about under them she saw him hop over a small pile of freshly turned up earth. He stopped on it to look for a worm. . . .

19 Mary looked at it, not really knowing why the hole was there, and as she looked she saw something almost buried in the newly-turned soil. It was something like a ring of rusty iron or brass and when the robin flew up into a tree nearby she put out her hand and picked the ring up. It was more than a ring, however; it was an old key which looked as if it had been buried a long time.

20 Mistress Mary stood up and looked at it with an almost frightened face as it hung from her finger.

21 “Perhaps it has been buried for ten years,” she said in a whisper. “Perhaps it is the key to the garden!”

<sup>2</sup> **waistcoat:** vest

**1** How does the first paragraph contribute to the reader's understanding of the passage?

- A** It lets readers know that events will be presented in order of importance.
- B** It provides readers with a reason for why Mary searches for the lost key.
- C** It hints that Ben Weatherstaff is the person who has hidden the lost key.
- D** It sets up a joyful mood that will contrast with the thrilling mood at the end.

**2** In paragraph 1, the text describes how the change in weather has been good for Ben. Which detail from the passage shows a similar response in Mary?

- A** Mary runs around the fountain flower garden ten times.
- B** Mary finds Ben digging in the first kitchen-garden.
- C** Mary sniffs the air and smells fresh, damp earth.
- D** Mary asks Ben about the garden where the robin lives.

**3** Which sentence from the passage supports the idea that Mary is visiting the garden for the first time?

- A** "She went into the first kitchen-garden and found Ben Weatherstaff working there with two other gardeners."
- B** "'In th' flower gardens out there things will be stirrin' down below in th' dark.'"
- C** "Very soon she heard the soft rustling flight of wings again and she knew at once that the robin had come again."
- D** "'He's never seen a little [girl] here before, an' he's bent on findin' out all about thee.'"

**4** When Ben Weatherstaff says that the earth is "in a good humor," he means that

- A** it is full of fully-blooming flowers
- B** it is full of funny-looking insects
- C** it is bare after a long winter
- D** it is ready to make new plants

**5** Which statement **best** expresses the theme of the passage?

- A** The beauty of nature lasts only for a short time.
- B** The outdoors can be a source of wonder and mystery.
- C** Humans and nature are almost always in conflict.
- D** The natural world is often a dark and unfamiliar place.

**6** Which sentence from the passage **best** supports the idea that Mary and the robin have met before?

- A** "'Springtime's comin',' he said."
- B** "'Do you think he remembers me?' she said."
- C** "'Tha's no need to try to hide anything from him.'"
- D** "'What garden?' grunted Weatherstaff, becoming surly again."

**7** The narrator of the passage helps the reader understand Mary by

- A** revealing Ben Weatherstaff's thoughts of her
- B** describing how the robin looks at her
- C** describing her face and showing how it changes
- D** quoting her speech and revealing her thoughts