

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Anne of Green Gables (Unabridged) by L.M. Montgomery

Book Information

L.M. Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables (Unabridged)
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Interest Level: MG

This is the first novel in the Anne series that has delighted millions of young readers since its publication in 1908. Eleven-year-old Anne Shirley wins the heart of her foster mother.

Award: SLJ Best Book

Topics: Adventure, Life Changes; Canadian Content, Canadian Content (All); Classics, Classics (All); Countries/Regions, Canada; Family Life, Foster Children; Family Life, Growing Up; Recommended Reading, Canadian Children's Book Centre's Our Choice; Recommended Reading, Elementary School Library Collection; Recommended Reading, Oprah's Book Club - Kids Reading List; Series, Anne of Green Gables; Series, Scholastic Classics

Main Characters

Anne Shirley highly imaginative, red-haired orphan girl, who comes to live at Green Gables

Charlie Sloane classmate of Anne's

Diana Barry kindred spirit and bosom friend to Anne

Gilbert Blythe classmate of Anne's and unwitting enemy/competitor/eventual friend

Josephine Barry wealthy aunt to Diana, who enjoys how Anne can amuse her

Josie Pyle antagonistic classmate of Anne's

Marilla Cuthbert sister to Matthew, who decides to take in and train Anne

Matthew Cuthbert painfully shy elderly man whose heart goes out to Anne

Miss Stacy Anne's talented and progressive teacher

Mr. & Mrs. Barry parents to Diana

Mr. Phillips teacher with questionable teaching practices

Mrs. Allan minister's wife whom Anne takes as a role model

Rachel Lynde opinionated, though well-intentioned, Avonlea gossip

Ruby Gillis classmate and friend of Anne's

Stella Maynard & Priscilla Grant Anne's friends at Queen's

Vocabulary

beatification a state of blissful happiness

bedizened dressed or adorned gaudily or tastelessly

cogitation an act of reflection or meditation; contemplation

coruscation a sudden gleam or flash of light

obdurate unmoved by persuasion or pity; unyielding

seraph one of the celestial beings hovering above God's throne

Synopsis

This is a coming-of-age story about an imaginative, sensitive, red-haired orphan girl, who by accident or fate, comes to live with an elderly brother and sister on Prince Edward Island in the early 1900s. Through a series of mishaps and successes, Anne Shirley develops into a loving and ambitious even reliable and sensible young woman, though she maintains her inner hold on the romantic and imaginative, too. At the same time Anne matures, the story reveals how her caretakers and friends grow from their involvement with her as well, so that it becomes a question of who actually needed whom more and who has gained more from the experience.

The story opens with shy Matthew Cuthbert sent on a mission to retrieve the orphan boy he and his sister, Marilla, had sent for only to find Anne Shirley waiting at the train station instead. After some soul searching, rather than turn Anne away to the likes of Mrs. Blewett, who only desired Anne as an unpaid baby-sitter, Matthew convinces Marilla they might do Anne some good by letting her stay at Green

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Gables. Anne immediately gets into trouble by losing her temper with Marilla's nosy and opinionated neighbor, Rachel Lynde, by falsely confessing to having taken Marilla's amethyst brooch, and by breaking her slate over Gilbert Blythe's head for calling her "carrots." Anne then rises to apologize with honor, is absolved of guilt in the matter of the brooch, and excels as a student.

With time Anne develops into a uniquely beautiful young woman. She finds a kindred spirit and acquires a bosom friend in Diana Barry, only to be prevented from seeing her because she accidentally serves Diana currant wine instead of raspberry cordial. They are reunited when Anne's presence of mind and experience with children saves Diana's sister from dying from the croup. Anne holds a grudge against Gilbert for making fun of her hair and initiating the insult she suffered in front of the class, but which was really the unfair and heavy-handed tactic of Mr. Phillips, their teacher. When Miss Stacy takes over as teacher at Avonlea, Anne blossoms as a student. Anne and Gilbert become rivals for top honors all the way through Queen's, where Anne wins the Avery scholarship and the right to go to Redmond College.

Anne experiences a "bend in the road," however, after the Cuthberts lose their money when the bank they've invested in fails, Matthew dies and Marilla is at risk of going blind. Anne decides to give up the scholarship so she can help Marilla stay at Green Gables. Gilbert gives up the Avonlea school so Anne can have the teaching post. Anne admits she has forgiven Gilbert, and they agree to become the friends he believes they are destined to be.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Anne of Green Gables addresses many feelings common to girls growing up, but feelings are also regarded from more than one point of view and at different levels. Find examples of feelings in the story. Why did the characters not always realize what another character felt or misinterpret their actions?

There appears to be a conflict between feelings a person may express and what they think is appropriate to show. Furthermore, a person's own feelings and prejudices can color what they see being expressed by others.

Literary Analysis

Who benefited the most from Anne's coming to Green Gables?

The author seems to argue that while Anne obviously benefited from living at Green Gables and her way was probably eased considerably compared to what she had been living, everyone she met benefited as well--if not more. Matthew and Marilla had stagnated in their growth as individuals, but Anne opened them up to life and love again. Even the people of Avonlea had lost the capacity for imagination that Anne seemed to rekindle in some of them.

Inferential Comprehension

Many comparisons and contrasts are drawn between characters in *Anne of Green Gables*. Choose a set of characters and find one instance where they have something in common and one difference. What did the two characters gain from their interaction, if anything?

Rachel Lynde is social and opinionated, while Marilla is withdrawn but opinionated. Matthew is an old, shy man, and Anne is a young, expressive girl, yet both respected, appreciated and cared for one another. Marilla is sensible and undemonstrative; Anne is imaginative and demonstrative, yet both experienced conflict when they couldn't bring themselves to forgive a male friend when he asked to be forgiven.

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Constructing Meaning

Repeatedly when Anne is introduced, a romantic description of the scene or of nature leads or ensues. The author seeks to draw an analogy between people and their surroundings, as being more than the simple realities of plant and structure. What devices and uses of language were used and how effective were they?

Simile, personification, allusions, metaphor, and imagery used in description are common in every chapter. Characterization, dialogue and plot all contribute to the story unfolding naturally. For example, Anne renamed everything that did not sound right to her around Green Gables. The descriptions take on her spin as if she were describing them, even though they are often done by the narrator. At other times, however, Anne is allowed to tell her story and that is the only access the reader is given to those events. As a contrast, it might be helpful to note the difference, for example, when Marilla describes a scene or the narrator provides her perspective.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Literary Features Often the mood and one of the themes of *Anne of Green Gables* is romanticism and how it seems to come in response to the Age of Reason and is followed by an Age of Realism. Some students could research the English Romantics and literary history to find where Browning and Tennyson fit and why Anne would have been attracted to reading their works. A different concept that could be researched in the story itself would be to return to the text and upon a second perusal, note all the foreshadowing that occurs.

Making Predictions It might be interesting for students to predict what they believe will happen to Anne as she continues on her road of life. Readers of L.M. Montgomery's story were interested enough to encourage Montgomery to continue Anne's tales. It could also be valuable to compare and contrast Anne's life in turn-of-the-century Canada to the coming-of-age

of girls today. If Anne were alive today, how would the student's prediction change? Is there "more scope for the imagination" available to highly sensitive children now? Reasons why or why not could be explored individually or in groups.

Describing Actions or Events The students could independently observe some relatively complex and emotion-touched event and describe it on paper or to someone designated as the listener. Two or more students could address the same listener without any prior consultation with one another. Afterward, the "listener" could become the narrator for the group's story, which could then be shared with the class.

Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning Have the students practice using romantic language and imagery to describe some commonplace items or special places in their own real environment. If the student is not drawn to words alone, it would be possible to do the same in other media or a combination of media. Nature descriptions drawing upon mythic or fabulous creations are a ready choice, but it is possible to take from other literary works or even develop the student's own approach.