

Anne of Green Gables

a Wheelock Family Theatre Study Guide
prepared by Jeri Hammond

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Anne of Green Gables: The Story and the Musical

Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* is the story of feisty and imaginative Anne, an orphaned child who, under the care of an elderly sister and brother, finds acceptance, love, and a home. Anne has captured the hearts of readers since the book's publication in 1908. *Anne of Green Gables* has since been published in sixty languages and has been made into television plays, a full-length motion picture, and the musical production you are about to see.

The musical version was first staged at the Charlottetown Festival, Prince Edward Island (PEI), Canada, in 1965 and proved an immediate hit. It is revived at the festival every year.

The Author: Lucy Maud Montgomery

Biographer Harry Bruce writes, "Born November 30, 1874, L.M. Montgomery spent her childhood in a rural farmhouse, like her beloved character Anne of Green Gables. Raised by strict, elderly guardians she had an early life full of loneliness and struggle; however, Maud had a secret dream: to become a writer." To learn more about the life of L.M. Montgomery read:

Looking for Anne of Green Gables: The Story of L.M. Montgomery and Her Literary Classic by Irene Gammel (2009)

Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings by Mary Henley Rubio (2008)

Maud: The Life of L.M. Montgomery, the Creator of the World of Anne of Green Gables by Harry Bruce (1992)

The Place: Green Gables

Lucy Maud Montgomery grew up in the home of her grandparents in Cavendish, PEI, about half a kilometer from Green Gables. The Green Gables house belonged to Montgomery's elderly cousins. It inspired the setting for *Anne of Green Gables*. The author visited her cousins often and spent many hours on "Lover's Lane," a favorite spot near Green Gables. The Green Gables house and surrounding farmlands have been preserved within PEI National Park and are open to visitors.

For more information about Green Gables or Prince Edward Island, refer to <http://www.tourismpei.com/anne-of-green-gables>.

There are also countless websites devoted to *Anne of Green Gables* and L.M. Montgomery. You can even find a virtual tour of the Green Gables house at <http://www.tourismpei.com/green-gables-house>.

Kindred Spirits Chronicles, is a monthly online publication launched in 1990 by Montgomery's relatives, the Campbells, who also own and operate the Anne of Green Gables Museum at Silver Bush in Park Corner, PEI. *Chronicles* includes craft ideas, recipes, event listings, and articles about Montgomery's own family and life. Subscription required. <http://www.annestore.ca/annesociety.php>

Books in the Anne Series

Anne of Green Gables (1908)

Anne of Avonlea (1909)

Chronicles of Avonlea, in which Anne Shirley of Green Gables and Avonlea play some part (short stories) (1912)

Anne of the Island (1915)

Anne's House of Dreams (1917)

Rainbow Valley (1919)

Further Chronicles of Avonlea (short stories) (1920)

Rilla of Ingleside (1921)

Anne of Windy Poplars (1936)

Anne of Ingleside (1939)

The Anne in the Author

One day in the spring of 1905, L.M. Montgomery was leafing through her notebook in search of an idea for a routine serial for a Sunday School paper when she came across something she had written years before, after a neighbor adopted a little girl: “Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for a boy. By mistake a girl is sent to them.” With that, *Anne of Green Gables* was born. Montgomery wrote, “Anne flashed into my fancy already christened, even to the all-important ‘e’.”

“I cannot remember a time when I was not writing, or when I did not mean to be an author...” Montgomery remembered in her autobiography *Alpine Path*. She describes how she felt when she received the first copy of her book: “There... lay the material realization of all the dreams and hopes and ambitions of my whole conscious existence — my first book.”

The author’s life had much in common with that of her character Anne. “Montgomery’s own childhood was a rather lonely one. She was born in 1874 in Clifton, Prince Edward Island (PEI), a beautiful landscape that was to provide the setting for many of her books. When the young Montgomery was two, her mother died of tuberculosis, and a few years later her father moved to Prince Albert to remarry and begin a new family. The youngster was sent to live with her stern, devout grandparents in Cavendish, PEI. There she met with verbal abuse, constant references to her father’s ‘abandonment,’ and punishment for youthful infractions for which she was made to kneel for long periods of time. Humiliated and lonesome, the sensitive youngster retreated inward into a dreamy, fanciful world filled with princesses, fairies, and haunted woods.”

(*Something about the Author*, vol. 100)

Thoughts to Ponder...Ideas to Try...

- ❖ Brainstorm where authors get their ideas.
- ❖ Keep a writer’s notebook, as L.M. Montgomery did, and jot down ideas for stories and poems.
- ❖ Write from experiences in your life. Share these with your classmates.
- ❖ Find out about favorite authors and where they get their ideas.

Jean Little in *L.M. Montgomery: An Assessment* wrote that Montgomery “remembered exactly how it was to be a child...More than that, she was able to record the experience of being a child so faithfully and vividly that reading children, years later, find themselves in her stories.”

- ❖ What about L.M. Montgomery’s life made it possible for her to write Anne so believably?
- ❖ Montgomery gave Anne a happier existence than her own. Why might she choose to do that? What might that do for her? Did you ever wish you could “rewrite” an experience or situation in your own life? Explain.
- ❖ Read a biography of L.M. Montgomery and compare her life with Anne’s.
- ❖ Write a description of a person, place, or experience and try to describe it in such detail that the reader may “find” him or herself in your writing.
- ❖ Montgomery kept a journal for much of her life. “Why keep a journal?” she asked in her July 1931 entry. “I hate to think of all the lovely things I remember being forgotten when I’m dead.” (*Kindred Spirits Journal*, August 1999.) Why not keep a journal of your own?
- ❖ Research what it was like to grow up in the time of Anne. What was happening in the world? Write a journal entry as if you were living in that time.
- ❖ Write a review of the musical. Compare the musical to the book.
- ❖ Write a personal reaction to the book or musical *Anne of Green Gables*.

“I cannot remember a time when I was not writing, or when I did not mean to be an author...”

- ❖ What do *you* want to be when you grow up?

All About Anne

In a note to L.M. Montgomery, Mark Twain described Anne as “the dearest and most lovable child in fiction since the immortal Alice.”

Thoughts to Ponder...Ideas to Try...

Once I'd thought I'd like to be
A blossom growing on a tree,
White and pink and lazy as can be
But I'd be king just in the spring
So now I think it over
Gee I'm glad I'm no one else but me

Anne sings "Gee I'm glad I'm no one else but me," but often throughout the play she imagines that she's someone else or wishes that she could change something about herself.

- ❖ What things does Anne wish she could change about herself?
- ❖ Have you ever wished you could change something about yourself? If you could change something about yourself, what would it be? Why?
- ❖ Anne makes up a history for herself as the "Lady Cordelia De Montmorency." What about Anne's real history might cause her to wish she were someone else?
- ❖ What does Anne like about herself? In what way is she truly glad she's "no one else but me"?
- ❖ What do you appreciate most about yourself? Least?
- ❖ What are Anne's unique traits? What did you like best about her character?

"Well, if you call me Anne, would you please call me Anne spelled with an 'e'?"

- ❖ Why do you think it is so important to Anne that her name be spelled with an "e"?
- ❖ Interview your classmates about their names.

After Mrs. Lynde calls her "carrots" ...

ANNE: She hasn't any right to call me carrots.

MATTHEW: I heard you say as much yourself, only yesterday.

ANNE: But there's such a difference between saying a thing yourself and hearing someone else say it.

- ❖ What does Anne mean by that? Have you ever had a similar experience?
- ❖ How do you think others see you? How do you see yourself?
- ❖ Why is it important to Anne to have “puffed sleeves”?
- ❖ Do you ever dress to please other people?

Over the course of the play, Anne grows from being an “outsider” to feeling a sense of belonging.

- ❖ In what ways do you see Anne as an outsider in the beginning of the play? How does that change? Give specific examples.
- ❖ How did Anne grow up?
- ❖ In what ways are you like Anne? Unlike Anne?
- ❖ With what character do you most identify? Why?
- ❖ Create character maps depicting the attributes of the different characters in *Anne of Green Gables*.
- ❖ Compare Anne with other characters from literature.
- ❖ *Anne of Green Gables* is a wonderful celebration of the independent spirit. Celebrate your own unique individuality.

Family

MARILLA: Matthew and I...have decided...to keep you.

When Anne first arrives, she sings about her past:

So, I lived with the Thomases then the Hammonds,
I lived with a family in Halifax,
But none of them wanted me so I went to the
Home for the Orphans and those are the facts.

Thoughts to Ponder...Ideas to Try...

- ❖ What about Green Gables makes it a home for Anne?
- ❖ What about Marilla and Matthew make them Anne’s family? How is this different from her stay with the Thomases and the Hammonds?

Anne has just arrived, but Marilla requested a boy:

MARILLA: What good would she be to us?

MATTHEW: We might be some good to her.

- ❖ How were Matthew and Marilla “some good” to Anne?
- ❖ How was Anne “some good” to Matthew and Marilla?
- ❖ Matthew and Marilla requested a boy because they believed a boy could “help out on the farm.” Discuss the view that “A boy could plow, a boy could hay and hoe, A girl may only sit and knit and sew.” How have views on male and female work changed?

Matthew sings:

I can't find the words
Can't get out the phrases
Just when she needs love I can't sing her praises
Where do the words go when
I am before her
Oh, if only I could show
What I feel in my heart
I'd implore her
I adore her
I'd die for her
But I can't find the words

When Matthew dies, Marilla says, “Oh Matthew ... Matthew. You mustn't think I didn't love her as much as you did. It wasn't easy for me to say things...but I loved both of you just as dear as...” And she sings *I Can't Find the Words* about Matthew.

- ❖ Sometimes it's hard to say how you feel. Have you ever had trouble expressing your feelings?
- ❖ People express their love differently. What are some of the different ways that people let others know they care about them?
- ❖ How did Matthew, Marilla, and Anne show they cared about each other?
- ❖ What was special about their family? What is special about yours?
- ❖ What makes a house a home?

- ❖ Share family photos, stories, traditions...

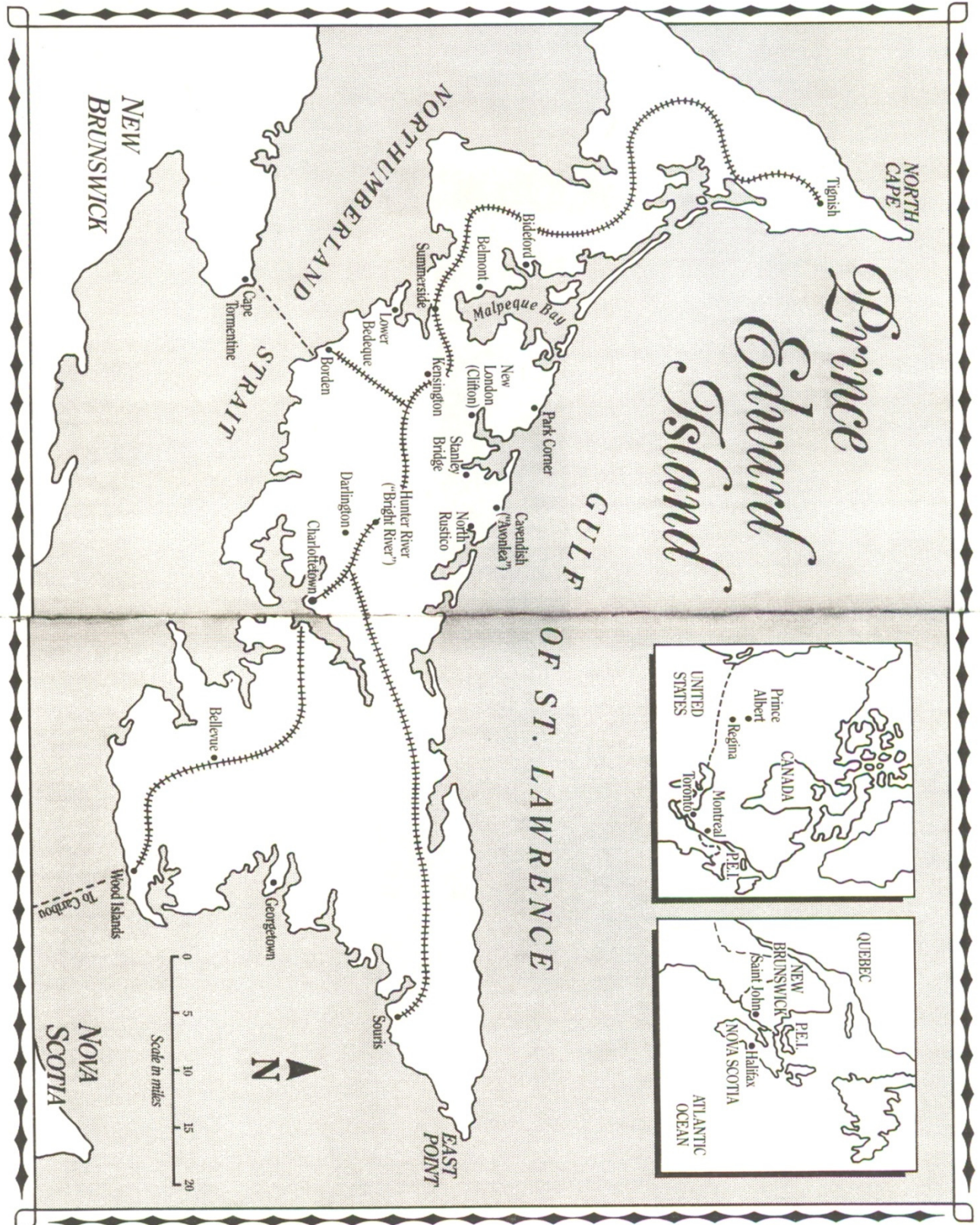
There's No Place Like Home

“Nothing would be worse than giving up Green Gables.”

The sense of place is an important part of *Anne of Green Gables*. Montgomery biographer Harry Bruce noted: “Maud wrote that, to some extent, Avonlea was Cavendish. While Anne’s Willowmere, Violet Vale, and Dryad’s Bubble were purely imaginary, her Lover’s Lane, Old Log Bridge, Haunted Wood, and Shore Road came straight out of Maud’s Cavendish childhood.”

Thoughts to Ponder...Ideas to Try...

- ❖ Research what Green Gables was like. What made it such a special place to Anne and Montgomery?
- ❖ Make a travel brochure for Avonlea (Cavendish, PEI).
- ❖ Draw or paint what you imagine these places look like: Green Gables, The White Ways of Delight, Lover’s Lane, The Snow Queen, The Red Roads.
- ❖ Go on a nature walk or think of a place that you love. Make up names for those special places as Anne does and as Montgomery did when she was a child.
- ❖ Find Prince Edward Island on a map. What can you discover about its climate and features?
- ❖ Look at the map of Prince Edward Island. Design geography questions for your classmates.
- ❖ Make a topographical map of Prince Edward Island.
- ❖ Make a map of Avonlea using Anne’s special places and names. Include a legend.
- ❖ Make a map of a fantasy setting. Write a story set there.
- ❖ Find words that Montgomery uses to describe the setting of her story. Try to use descriptive language to make your story setting come to life.
- ❖ Make a story map of the places found in *Anne of Green Gables*.



- ❖ Keep a world and US map and record the settings of books as you read new stories. How does the location add to the appeal of the story?
- ❖ How do the set, lighting, and costume designers create a sense of place and time in the musical version? How is this the same or different from what you imagined reading the book? How would watching a film version be different?
- ❖ Make your own set design for a production of *Anne of Green Gables*.

Kindred Spirits

Kindred Spirits
 Just you and me, ever to be
 Now we're kindred spirits
 loyal and true
 truer than blue
 All out life through, we two

Thoughts to Ponder...Ideas to Try...

- ❖ Anne and Diana are “kindred spirits.” What does that mean?
- ❖ What does Anne like about Diana? What does Diana like about Anne? How do they complement each other?
- ❖ What do they like to do together?
- ❖ What are the qualities of a good friend?
- ❖ What makes someone your friend?
- ❖ If you had lived in Avonlea, who would you have liked to have as a friend? Why? Who might have been your “kindred spirit”?
- ❖ Do you have a “kindred spirit”? Tell or write about this important person.
- ❖ Do you think Matthew and Anne were “kindred spirits”? Explain.
- ❖ Mr. Phillips is replaced by a new teacher, Miss Stacy. Anne says, “Diana, Miss Stacy’s a kindred spirit.” What about Miss Stacy makes her a kindred spirit?
- ❖ How is she different from Mr. Phillips?

- ❖ Do you think Miss Stacy is a good teacher? Does her style match Anne's?
- ❖ What does the character of Miss Stacy tell you about Montgomery's views on learning?
- ❖ Write about a teacher who made an impact on you.

Imaginings

If you sit around and find the world is gloomy
 And it isn't just your cup of tea
 It's easy to imagine that it's rose-in-bloomy
 You can think the things you want to be
 So when all is said and done
 Imagining's a lot of fun

ANNE: Oh, Miss Cuthbert, even though I'm not going to stay at Green Gables, I think I could make a much nicer prayer if I imagined that I am.

MARILLA: Never mind your imaginings. Just thank Him for the blessings he has given.

ANNE: That's where I need my imagination!

Thoughts to Ponder...Ideas to Try...

- ❖ What purpose did Anne's imagination serve for her? What purpose did L.M. Montgomery's imagination serve for her?
- ❖ How does Anne's imagination get her in trouble?
- ❖ How was Anne's imagination viewed by others? Marilla? Matthew? Diana? Gilbert? Miss Stacy?
- ❖ What are some examples of Anne's imaginings?
- ❖ What are some valuable ways to use your imagination?
- ❖ What are your favorite times to imagine?
- ❖ Where did Anne get such an imagination?
- ❖ What inspires your imagination?
- ❖ What are some things you imagine? Do you ever daydream?

- ❖ Have you ever imagined yourself living a different life from the one you have? Why? If it was to cope with difficult things, did it help?

Have you ever pretended to be someone else? Think about the actors in the production. Did they believably play their characters? What did they do to “bring the character to life”? Try this acting exercise in the classroom.

- ❖ Ask students to choose a character from *Anne of Green Gables* to portray and have them create a mental picture of their chosen character.
- ❖ Then, have students move silently around the room as you pose this series of questions for them to answer with their bodies and physical movements.
 - How does my character move?
 - With what part of my body do I lead?
 - What are some of my character’s gestures or physical habits?
 - Do I move in straight lines or in curves?
 - Do I move rapidly or slowly?
 - What do I look like when I’m sad? Angry? Surprised?
- ❖ Have students put all their choices together into actions as they continue moving about the room.
- ❖ Direct students to let their character’s voice emerge from the physical persona they have begun to create, greeting the others in the room with their character’s voice, gestures, etc.
- ❖ Finally, give students ten seconds to figure out how to freeze their characters in a pose that really captures who he or she is, and FREEZE!
- ❖ Follow up with a whole-group discussion about interesting or surprising ideas that arose during the exercise.

Some of Anne’s imaginings come from books and her love of language.

- ❖ What are some favorite books that inspire your imagination?

After Anne says the word, “excruciatingly,” she adds, “Isn’t that a scrumptious word? It took me weeks to learn how to say it right.”

- ❖ Here is a list of some of the words and phrases that Anne uses. Do you know what they mean?

Dire anguish

Depths of despair

My life is a perfect graveyard of broken hopes

Buccaneer

Danubian waltzes

Aristocratic

Dilapidated

Chagrined

Solitary

Rescind

Kindred

The iron has entered my soul

I am standing on the threshold of eternity at last

Excruciatingly

Anne of Green Gables can serve to inspire an exploration and celebration of the imagination! **We hope you have found these ideas to be helpful. Let your imagination take it from here...**