ROYAL MTC
MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE



Anne of Green Gables–The Musical

Enrichment Guide

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Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Inninewak, Anishinewak, Dakota Oyate, and Denesuline, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player/gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre or block the view of those behind you. Please do not wear strong scents like perfume or body spray. We thank all patrons for their cooperation.

Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

About the Creators

Norman Campbell (Music) meant to become a meteorologist, but while learning to be a weatherman in Nova Scotia, he fell into work for CBC Radio writing songs. He continued to work in radio and early television, becoming a celebrated director, writer and composer over the course of his career. He co-created *Anne of Green Gables* with his wife, Elaine, and Mavor Moore and it became the "longest running musical in Canadian history, playing in Charlottetown annually for more than fifty years." Beyond his celebrated theatre work, Campbell was a pioneering CBC television director, earning Emmy Awards for his televised ballets and directing classic American sitcoms like The Mary Tyler Moore Show. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1978 for his monumental contributions to the performing arts. He was also mentioned in the Toronto Star on August 21, 1982 in an article titled "Norman Campbell Hates Hot-Air Hand Dryers"! He lived from 1924-2004.

Don Herron (Book) was an actor, writer and broadcaster who worked in Canada, England and the United States in a career that spanned 77 years. He began acting when he was twelve, and kept going until his memory became too unreliable. As a young adult, he worked as a farm hand and served in the 2nd World War before he returned to college and performing. He co-wrote the television production the Anne of Green Gables musical was based on, and, on the queen's direction, the libretto for that musical. He is a well decorated Canadian performer, who appeared in the inaugural season of the Stratford Festival in 1953 as well as Broadway and the West End. Herron was famous for his alter ego Charlie Farquharson from the variety show "Hee Haw" who he played on and off for over thirty years and from whose perspective he wrote several books. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada and received the Gemini Lifetime Achievement Award. Herron lived from 1924-2015.

Lucy Maud Montgomery (original source author) is the author of 21 novels and 500 short stories. Born in Clifton, Prince Edward Island, she drew deep inspiration from her upbringing amidst the rolling hills of Cavendish. *Anne of Green Gables* was published in 1908, and within ten years she had become known across Canada. Her Anne books have been a longstanding Canadian export, and have been translated and loved worldwide for over a century. Over her illustrious career, she authored 20 novels and hundreds of short stories, earning an appointment as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. Montgomery's family was wealthy on both sides, and both grandfathers were involved in the political systems of early Canada. Her mother died when she was 2, she was primarily raised by her grandparents, at one point trying to integrate with her father's second family in NWT, before returning. She started writing when she was 9 as an outlet because she was lonely. She became college-educated, had a number of early love affairs, followed by a long marriage that produced two children, who she put at the centre of her life, believing motherhood to be the most important job for a woman.

See the entire creative team and cast for Royal MTC's production, including their biographies, on our website, where you can also download the Ovation program.

Characters and Setting

ANNE SHIRLEY – An orphan who grows up through the play. Has signature red hair; she is exuberant and precocious. She is scholastic and well intentioned, but has a fiery temper.

MARILLA CUTHBERT – Stern, moral, and no-nonsense spinster. She lives with Matthew, her unmarried brother. She has a wry sense of humor and is eventually affectionate toward Anne.

MATTHEW CUTHBERT – A sweet, soft-spoken farmer who works the Green Gables acreage. He lives with his sister Marilla and is painfully shy toward women.

GILBERT BLYTHE – Smart, handsome, and confident. Good-natured but cocky, he inadvertently becomes Anne's adversary.

RACHEL LYNDE – Outspoken and indiscreet; the town gossip. Affectionate towards her good friend Marilla.

DIANA BARRY – Loyal, agreeable and sweet. She is Anne's best friend, schoolmate and kindred spirit.

JOSIE PYE – Selfish, harsh and scheming; Anne's worst enemy. Josie is blonde and pretty.

MISS MURIEL STACY – Schoolteacher who radiates enthusiasm and rampant desire for learning. She is a role model and mentor for Anne.

MR. PHILLIPS – Became the teacher of the town school immediately after his graduation last year. In love with his former schoolmate Prissy Andrews.

PRISSY ANDREWS – A year younger than Mr. Phillips; a student about to graduate.

MOODY MCPHERSON and RUBY GILLIS – fellow students around Anne and Diana's age.

Other townspeople, students, and their parents.

The story is set in Avonlea, at the turn of the 20th century. Avonlea is a tiny village in Canada's smallest province of Prince Edward Island on the east coast. Green Gables is a charming farm with a sizeable barn, a scenic fruit orchard, and rolling fields of produce sprouting from rusty-red soil – though this may not be shown literally onstage!

Content Overview

This section may contain spoilers.
No strong language. Light references to substances, romance, corporal punishment of children, religion, and death. For further details, please visit our recommendations page.

Summary

Anne of Green Gables tells the story of a young orphan with a big imagination to a quiet practical family in rural PEI at the turn of the century. While she gets into endless trouble over social faux pas and outbursts of temper, she overcomes the town and community's negative stereotypes by demonstrating intelligence, kindness and great love, becoming beloved by all.

Synopsis

This section contains spoilers

The play opens in a small Prince Edward Island town called Avonlea, in the middle of a Ladies Aid Meeting, where the town's women come together to gather supplies to send to "the less fortunate" around the world. As they work, they notice Matthew Cuthbert uncharacteristically out for a drive in his formal clothes, and begin to speculate. Marilla arrives and announces he has gone to pick up a boy they are adopting to help out at the farm. The ladies speculate that they will of course be killed by the orphan who is probably some sort of murderous deviant.

When Matthew arrives at the train station, it turns out the child waiting is a girl not a boy. She is so interesting and Matthew is so unable to talk to strangers that he takes her home without telling her there has been a mistake. When they arrive, Marilla has no problem telling her that they will have to take her back in the morning, as the entire reason they were taking on a child was to help Matthew with the farm so he could take care of his heart health. Anne is devastated. As Marilla tries to put her to bed it is clear that Anne has had no formal teaching about how to pray properly, which concerns her greatly.

In the morning, Marilla tries to return her to Mrs. Spencer, the woman who had picked Anne out at the orphanage, but Mrs. Spencer has an easier fix. Mrs. Blewett needs help with her children, so they take Anne to meet her. At the meeting, Mrs. Blewett is shown to be incredibly rude and abusive to her children, and Marilla can't reconcile herself to leave Anne there, so she brings her home. Matthew and Anne celebrate. When Marilla's gossipy neighbour arrives, calling Anne ugly instead of saying hello, Anne calls her names back and is sent to her room as punishment. While Marilla tries to smooth things over with Rachel, Matthew gives Anne a lesson in turning the other cheek, convincing her to apologize. Anne apologizes and all is forgiven.

Before her first day of school, Anne meets Diana Barry and her mother, who live close by. Anne and Diana are instant friends. Diana invites Anne to her first picnic, which will include ice cream. At school, Anne learns that the teacher is too interested one of the senior girls to meet her, so she tries to join in on the lessons. She meets Josie Pye, who is mean, and Gilbert Blythe, who teases her by calling her Carrots, due to her red hair. She breaks her slate over his head, getting the teachers attention, and gets in trouble. Gilbert, obviously, now has a serious crush on Anne, Anne, obviously, will never speak to him again, and Josie, obviously, is jealous and mean about the whole thing.

By the time Anne gets home, the whole town has heard that Anne has sent Gilbert to the hospital with a life threatening brain injury. Diana's mom comes to pick up Diana, as Marilla bans Anne from the picnic for continuing to ruin their families reputation with her temper. At the last minute, Gilbert arrives, explaining it was his fault, and demonstrating that he is not in the hospital. He offers to take Anne to the picnic but she absolutely refuses.

At the picnic, we see the teacher and his favourite student sneaking away from a roll in the hay, the minister confiscating alcohol from a farmer and the mailman, and Josie Pye trying to keep the

attention of Gilbert. Anne participates in the races, and Gilbert noticeably lets her win. He offers her ice cream, but Josie trips him and it spills on her, enraging her further.

At the end of summer, the students prepare for the new school year. Josie is boy crazy, and there are rumours that Gilbert has a crush on Anne. He attempts to apologize to her again, but Josie interferes. Anne tries to get Diana to promise to be old maids together, but Diana isn't sure, and will only promise they will be best friends forever.

When they get to school, they discover they have a new teacher, as their old teacher has married the student he is insinuated to have gotten pregnant, and is now working at a store. The new teacher is a woman, who encourages learning from nature rather than from workbooks.

When Anne returns home, she tells Matthew how she loves her new teacher and tells Matthew all about her and the upcoming concert, which Marilla disapproves of. Marilla gives Anne a new dress, which is very practical, and Anne has a mixed reaction, appreciating the gesture but wishing it were more fashionable so she could fit in better with everyone else. Matthew is sympathetic, but can't express himself enough to get through to Marilla, who just calls her vain. Anne, in another melodramatic teen girl moment, decides to take matters into her own hands, attempts to dye her hair black.

When Anne comes down ahead of Marilla's tea event, it is revealed that the hair dye turned her hair green. Marilla, frustrated, but realizing the depth of impact of her resistance to fashion, cuts the green off, and settles Anne and Diana to have their own tea party. Anne accidentally serves Diana wine instead of juice, and Diana gets drunk. Marilla is embarrassed again.

At school, the new teacher invites Anne and Gilbert to take extra classes to apply for a scholarship exam. They still aren't getting along, and have become quite competitive.

Ahead of the concert, Matthew gets up the nerve to go to the store to buy Anne a fashionable dress, but due to his inability to speak with strangers, he ends up with a variety of items that start with the letter P before Rachel comes to the rescue to interpret his request for a dress with puffed sleeves. Anne wears the dress to the concert, and at the end is informed that she won the scholarship and will be able to attend college. The whole town is excited to take the credit for her success, until Miss Stacy tells them off.

After the concert, Matthew is not feeling well. Marilla goes to find his medicine and he and Anne share a quiet moment where he expresses pride in her accomplishments and encourages her to stay true to herself before he dies.

Marilla decides she will sell the farm, as Anne will be gone and there is too much to do on her own. Rachel tries to console her as she struggles to find the words to memorialize what her brother meant to her. Anne comes home and tells Marilla the Barrys will take over the farm so they don't have to sell, and Anne will work on her studies long distance. Gilbert comes to visit and it turns out

he is also going to study from home for now. Anne and Gilbert reconcile and sing that they might become more than friends.

Context and Related Resources

Green Gables in Relation to Place

Anne of Green Gables is set on the traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq people, whose lands spanned much of Atlantic Canada, including what is now known as Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. As some of the earliest areas of contact with the British, it is part of the region covered by the Peace and Friendship Treaties, which predate the numbered treaties of central and western Canada, the first being signed in 1726. The residential school for this region was active from 1929 to 1967, in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia.

The sympathetic tableau recognizing Indigenous Peoples is a product of more modern times, and has even been updated from the original 1965 version. While collaboration between cultural groups could exist, historically a community like Avonlea might have been more likely to be actively petitioning the government to open their own residential school "deal with the Indians." The way this pageant appears in the play today is as a symbol of hope rather than a true historical reflection.

Cultural Norms

Anne of Green Gables is set early in Canada's history as a commonwealth nation, at a time when the phrase "the sun never sets on the British Empire" was in full force. The manners and "normal behaviour" standards that Anne's actions are judged to be strange by are British cultural norms. Among these behaviour rules, are several important ones to highlight:

- Children are to be seen and not heard
- You are expected to attend, financially support and be an active member of the Church
- Marriage was a requirement for starting a family
- Women were expected to marry and take care of a home
- Men were expected to farm, labour or otherwise provide for their families and unmarried female relatives
- If you were unable to fulfill these gendered roles there was something "wrong" with you. For example, an unmarried woman is considered an old maid, lacking in some way; or a family living in poverty is looked down on as they've done it to themselves through laziness, lack of willpower, etcetera.
- Overt displays of emotion - too much sad, happy, angry - were seen as signs of mental illness. Mental illness was treated by locking folks up in asylums where they often lived in terrible conditions and were treated inhumanely. Lucy Maud Montgomery's husband got put in an asylum for his struggles with mental illness!
- Women did not have financial independence, and were reliant on their husband or male family members to ensure they had the basics of survival. They could not own property, vote, or have a bank account. At this point in history, one of the few jobs a woman could take was a schoolteacher, but they were not allowed to hold the position once they were married.

- While slavery had been abolished long ago, racialized folks were still looked down on and often lived in segregated neighbourhoods or communities.
- Those who followed religions or ways of life other than Christianity were seen as uncivilized and in need of conversion to the Christian way of life, resulting in colonization and missionary work, including the efforts of the Canadian government to eliminate the Indigenous Peoples of Canada through relocation, starvation, and cultural erasure (residential schools).

Community and Outsiders

The result of this worldview was that if you didn't conform, you were seen as an outsider. This could be because as a member of the group you didn't fully fit in due to your temperament, interests, gender expression, religious beliefs, wealth or family status. This also applied to anyone who was not a member of your community, whether a "mainlander", ie, someone from off island, or a "foreigner", someone from anywhere but England or Canada, a "gypsy", someone who travelled with no home base, or a "savage", someone who was not Christian. This plays out in *Anne of Green Gables* in several ways, including but not limited to:

- speculation about a new orphan being brought into the community from Nova Scotia poisoning the town or being violent to Marilla and Matthew.
- Anne's quick temper - maybe due in part to her being a red head
- Matthew's social isolation and difficulty talking to people
- Mariila's unmarried status
- Anne's ignorance of how to pray
- The town's quickness to share, exaggerate, and believe the exaggeration of the slate incident.
- The fact that Mr. Phillips and Prissy "had to" get married when she became pregnant, and his removal as a teacher, and the lack of respect shown to them.
- Ms. Stacy's interest in the outdoors/science/physical activity, which was seen as too progressive
- The attitude shown towards the travelling salesman Anne buys her hair dye from.

Child Welfare and Growing Up

There are several scenes, particularly in the beginning of the play, that demonstrate child abuse. Anne hints her own mistreatment at previous placements, where she has been put to work, and where she hints at witnessing domestic violence/alcoholism. This treatment is unremarkable to the group.

We also see the abuse that takes place at Mrs. Blewett's house. When children are heard crying, she readily tells her guests she has locked her kids in a woodshed until supper, and then yells at the kids that she's coming to beat them unconscious. While Mrs. Blewett is then offstage with them, Mrs. Spencer (another local woman) tells Marilla that Mrs. Blewett's children are three sets of twins and a baby all under 6 years old. While Marilla changes her mind about leaving Anne after the scene, no action is taken about the state of the home or its suitability for Mrs. Blewett's own children.

V.E.H. Masters writes about the immigration of children to Canada to work in various industries. Beginning in the late 1860s and through 1967, children were "shipped" from Great Britain to

Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. “Assisted juvenile emigration” was in effect from 1869-1939, when 100 000 children were sent to Canada from British orphanages. These children were frequently ill-treated and sometimes abused. The philanthropists who funded the migration might not have had evil motives, but the process tended to not be well thought-out, which could lead to devastating consequences for the children involved. There would not have been any screening of the families, or oversight. Around ten per cent of Canada’s population is apparently descended from these children, but sometimes there was a sense of shame growing up as a “home child” and it may not have been spoken of.

The idea of a child working as soon as they were old enough to was very common, as this was before many child labour laws. In *Anne of Green Gables*, the book and the musical, we see the children of Avonlea are generally able to have more of a childhood.

Anne Shirley is lucky to create a found family in her circumstances. The Kindred Spirits Book Club podcast founders talk about Anne as an iconic character in this way; they say that there is a s recurring theme of children having meaningful relationships with adults who are not their blood relatives, and as well about how adults who are not parents can still have an impact on children and young people in their communities.

Related Resource Link: Older teens and adults may be interested to read or listen to the Auntie Bulletin Podcast about the celebration of found family in this context; you can read the article in the Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies referenced in this section as well as find a linked resource there about child welfare.

Women’s Rights and Feminism

While it is absolutely true to say that women’s rights were nowhere near where they were later in the 1900s, it is also absolutely true that most white women who were financially stable in the colonies in the early 1900s had more rights and led safer, more comfortable lives than their non-white counterparts.

Through the church, organizations like the Ladies Aid, presented in this show, gave white, Christian women a place to hold power and influence in a male-dominated colonial hierarchy. While a step forward can be celebrated, similar to the power gained in the women’s suffrage movement (getting women the right to vote) it’s important to ask which women have gained power, and acknowledge if and how they used this new power to uplift or hold back the rights of others!

The Canadian Encyclopedia calls Anne a “feminist icon.” The *Guardian*’s Jean Hannah Edelstein wrote in 2009, “It’s never stated explicitly, but Anne is definitely a feminist, and being a feminist in early 20th century Canada is a difficult path to follow,” and a producer of the 2017 CBC adaptation stated that “Anne’s issues are contemporary issues: feminism, prejudice, bullying and a desire to belong.” Many people of any gender can see themselves in Anne as someone who is declared an “outsider” yet who continues to do her best and builds relationships. The existence itself of *Anne of Green Gables* can be thought of as feminist – Margaret Atwood and other second-wave feminists

champion L.M. Montgomery's writing as literature that went deeper than just children's fiction or genre writing. Both the author and her character were trailblazers.

Glossary and Mentions

Almanac - a book predicting the weather for the year based on astrology, climate patterns and other information.

Birthday suit - if you are wearing your birthday suit means you are naked (you are "wearing" what you were born in, which is nothing.)

Blinkers - eye screens used on horses to limit their view and keep them from seeing things that could distract them.

Borneo Head Hunters – cutting off and taking an enemy's head was a traditional wartime practice of specific indigenous groups in Borneo. As Europeans colonized the area, the practice was outlawed.

Caesar and Attilla the Hun - historical figures (a Roman emperor and leader of a Central/Eastern European empire) who kids would have come across in school.

Chagrined – embarrassed.

Cherry phosphate - a sour drink, kind of like a soda, originally using phosphates to increase acidity.

Dilapidated – worn and run-down, usually in reference to a structure.

Excruciating - extremely painful.

Foreign missions - organized interventions to bring Christianity and a certain idea of civilization to non-Christian societies around the world.

Connotation - the meaning of a word beyond the definition. How the word makes you feel.

Gadding off to - running off to without thinking ahead

Gee whilikers - surprised exclamation, relatively new at the time of the play. Gee was probably short for Jesus, which would make it a little naughty to say.

Get the heaves - dry retching, coughing or gagging violently without throwing up
"He wants to be your beau" - like a boyfriend, would be attracted to you and wants to get to know you to see if you would be a good wife.

Heathen - Non-Christian.

Homely - ugly.

Ladies Aid Society - a women's organization, affiliated with the church, dedicated to helping the less fortunate, often in other countries that were deemed "less civilized."

Matron - a woman in charge; in this case, of the orphanage.

Mission Fields - places where missionaries were working.

Old maid - unmarried woman.

Peddler - a travelling salesperson, often distrusted as they were not a member of the community, and or did not have a home.

Queer - strange.

Rummage brigade - an organized event to gather gently used clothing donations.
Sal volatile - an ingredient used in smelling salts, used to revive people who have fainted.

Salutary - worthy of praise.

Sash - a strip of fabric finished to use as a wide belt on a fancy dress, to show off a small waist.

Scrumptious - extremely delicious.

Sic transit gloria mundi - Latin phrase (Latin was a common school subject) meaning "Thus passes the glory of the world."

Squiffy - a little bit intoxicated/drunk.

Strichnine - a poison often used in pesticides that is hard to detect in a water supply.

Tom Fool - comes from a pejorative used against someone who was either cognitively/developmentally impaired or worked as a court jester, but by the time of our play just means extra foolish.

Explore More: Recommended Library Reading List

Explore More Anne, with a Twist

Anne : An Adaptation of Anne of Green Gables (Sort of), by Kathleen Gros
The story of Anne retold in the modern day, in this graphic novel adaptation for ages 8-12. Anne is taken in by the Cuthberts, and quickly befriends Diana Barry, a girl who lives in the same apartment building, the Avon-Lea. Anne must navigate her new home, new school, and first-time crush.
J GRAPHIC FICTION GROS

Marilla of Green Gables, by Sarah McCoy
A story of Green Gables before Anne. The year is 1837 and life holds few options for 13-year-old Marilla Cuthbert. Marilla has dreams beyond the life of a rural farm girl, and thanks to an encouraging aunt, Marilla dares to venture beyond the safety of Green Gables and into the dangerous politics of abolition and the underground railroad. FICTION MCCOY

Explore More PEI

The Landscapes of Anne of Green Gables, by Catherine Reid
Delve into the real-world places immortalized in Anne's story. Voted by Smithsonian magazine as one of 2018's best books about travel, this lushly illustrated book brings the places that inspired L. M. Montgomery with hundreds of photographs and excerpts from Montgomery's journals.
819.352 REID 2018

Explore More Lucy Maud Montgomery

House of Dreams : The Life of L. M. Montgomery, by Liz Rosenberg
Get to know the author behind Anne's story in this comprehensive biography for ages 10-14. Not shying away from the complicated aspects of life of the celebrated author, this multidimensional portrait follows Mongomery's struggles as well as her great successes. J B MONTGOMERY 2018

Looking for Anne of Green Gables, by Irene Gammel
This dual biography tells the intertwined stories of Anne Shirley and her creator. Discover the inspirations and cultural history which made *Anne* the literary classic it has become, and the writer who drew on her own life to bring her classic to life. B MONTGOMERY 2025

The glory & the dream : L.M. Montgomery's writing life by Benjamin Lefebvre
Uncover new insights into the writing life of Lucy through a variety of archival resources. From fans to lawsuits, to creative choices, the controversial decision to downplay Anne's writing ambitions, to unlikely sources of inspiration as she continued to write in Ontario about PEI. This new book will shed new light on the classic writer. 819.352 MONTGOMERY 2026

There are 1.4 million books, movies, audiobooks, eBooks and more at the Winnipeg Public Library, and all you need to borrow them is your library card. There are 20 locations throughout the city and there's an online catalogue for requesting items for pick-up at your library of convenience. An e-Library has thousands of eBooks, eAudiobooks and more! All free with your card.
Visit us at Winnipeg.ca/library

Discussion and Activities

Early/Middle Years

Make Mistakes Share with students the famous Anne of Green Gables quote: "Tomorrow is always fresh, with no mistakes in it yet." In the original text, Anne says this after making a mistake, trying not to feel bad about how often she seems to make mistakes.

Mistakes can be embarrassing, dangerous, or painful. Anne experiences the consequences of a variety of mistakes, from her hair dye coming out wrong, to serving her friend wine instead of juice. In the novel there are even more mistakes, such as taking a dare that ends up with a broken ankle, making up scary stories about the woods until she can't take the shortcut to her friends house, and almost serving Marilla's fancy guests a dessert that a mouse died in.

We all make mistakes, especially as we are growing up. While it is important to learn from our mistakes, it is also important to let go of them so we can move forward! Try one of the following exercises to celebrate, commiserate or let go of mistakes!

- In a sharing circle, or in a format best suited to your students, invite students to share the best mistake they ever made. Explain that "best" could mean the worst consequences, the biggest life lesson, or most hilarious unexpected outcome. On the second round, invite students to point out lessons they could have learned from the mistakes that were shared.
- Independently, have students jot down a mistake that they made in the past that still bothers them, or that they still think about in the middle of a piece of looseleaf or 8.5.x11 paper. Have them fold it in half. On the outside of the folded paper, have them write "Thank you for teaching me more about _____", filling in the specific thing they learned, a friend or family member, a set of skills, or "myself". Talk about how sometimes mistakes are hard to let go of, but that by

identifying and thanking the lesson, you can replace the negative memory with a positive outcome. Tell them to put the paper in the recycling bin on the way out, or offer to lock it up for them to throw out later if they aren't ready.

Gossip versus News

PART 1: The folks of Avonlea are very nosey and often get their news by word of mouth. As anyone who has ever played telephone can tell you, word of mouth is not always the most reliable way to get information. Ironically, the folks of Avonlea, who are so down on Anne for her "weird" over-active imagination, can spin a pretty good story themselves, too. Sure, Anne, in fact, does break her slate over Gilbert's head, however, by the time she gets home, Rachel is telling Marilla how Anne's unprovoked attack sent Gilbert to the hospital where he was fighting for his life.

To explore the idea how and why gossip happens, have students:

- Play telephone! Sitting in a circle, one student whispers a message to the student beside them. You are not allowed to repeat the message. The message is passed around the whole circle until the last student has to say what they heard out loud. When the Mayhem subsides, ask
    - Who said exactly what they heard?
    - Who wasn't totally sure about some part(s) of the message, but honestly tried to remember it correctly and say the exact message, even though they weren't totally sure?
    - Who maybe changed the message a little bit for fun, or at least thought about it?

Ask students to consider how the game might affect how a story gets told in Anne's time – no phones, internet, or newspaper delivery. Memory, boredom, and ignorance of what's happening outside of your routine might change your perspective on why gossip happens, both in the story, and maybe in real life too. You can also ask students to consider why news gets exaggerated today (capitalism, clicks, fear mongering, entertainment…)

PART 2

- Play Yes, And! In this improvisational game, participants take the story or idea given to them, and advance it using the phrase "yes, and…"
    - The slate story in the play seems to follow this pattern.
    - Person one: Today, Anne broke her slate on Gilbert's head.
    - Person two: Yes, and he didn't even do anything to her.
    - Person three: yes, and his head was cut by a piece of the broken slate
    - Person four: yes, and he had to see a doctor for stitches
- The community, who already considers Anne an outsider, and therefore suspicious, gets wrapped up in the excitement of telling the story, and each telling gets more and more intense! The first person tells the facts, but you can see the story evolve a little bit at a time in each telling.
- Have students make up their own starting point, and take turns "yes, and-ing". Talk about how it feels to be a part of the activity, the feeling of being an active part of the group, of having your part in the story be accepted by the next person, or the satisfaction of impressing others in the group with your added detail.

- After the activity, ask students to think about how these feelings of acceptance could encourage bullying, impact peoples willingness to spread stories about each other, and/or to make situations seem worse than they are.

We clearly requested a boy The instigating event of this show is Matthew's recent heart attack, which necessitates him having more help on the farm. When Anne shows up instead of a boy, well, it's a musical, so there's a song about how much of a problem this is. Because it is 1900(ish) Anne is not allowed to help Matthew in the ways that a boy would; and because Anne knows they kept her despite needing a boy, when Matthew dies, she questions whether it is her fault. This is uncool, and unnecessary. Let's unpack these Very Important Gender Roles for a second.

Ask students to try to notice and recall one thing that seems to be a "boy thing" in the play, and one thing that seems to be a "girl thing." When you debrief, have students report back what they noticed. If need be, use the context section of this guide to add to the list they make.

Ask students to then share what we think about the things on your list - is working on the farm a girl thing or a boy thing? Hopefully, they notice that most of the things they split on the first list are no longer split based on gender expression. Maybe you need to be a strong kid to help on the farm, but Mrs. Blewett believes Anne to be "wirey" - thin, but strong and capable - so maybe Anne could have been what they hoped for all along.

Ziploc Ice Cream One of Anne's new and beloved experiences is participating in the community picnic, and one of the exciting draws of the community picnic is the making and sharing of ice cream! Considering the technology of the time, this was a huge effort. Using the recipe below, give your students the experience of making themselves low-tech ice cream.

As an extension, as them to research or imagine how making the amount to serve 50-100 people at once (like, where did they get ice in the middle of summer?)

https://www.gscnc.org/content/dam/gscnc-redesign/documents/Camp/Ice%20Cream%20in%20a%20Bag.pdf

What does it mean to be a grown up? In the play, Anne is at an age where she is nearly considered an adult and looks forward to being one. When sheand her bestie, Diana, get the chance to have dinner together while Marilla has her friends over, they say, "We can pretend we're grown up and say things to each other we really don't mean."

- What do you think they mean by that? Why do they think grown ups don't say what they mean? Do adults today say things they don't really mean to each other?
- What does it mean to be a grown up today? Is it something you look forward to? Make a web on the board or chart paper and write up students' ideas.
    - this conversation could go many directions, especially depending on the age, life experience and maturity of your students. You should be prepared for discussions of stress, responsibilities, parenting, and use of alcohol or marijuana.
    - Extend the conversation by discussing what students feel they need to live a good life as an adult, at a developmentally appropriate level.

Treaty Education - Peace and Friendship Treaties Anne of Green Gables is set on Indigenous lands covered by the Peace and Friendship Treaties. These treaties are different than the numbered treaties in Manitoba in a number of ways. For example, the Peace and Friendship Treaties commit Canadians to living alongside Indigenous folks, neither group interfering with the other's way of life. Using www.whose.land/en, explore the Peace and Friendship Treaties, the original Treaty agreements between the Canada and the Indigenous Peoples of Eastern and Atlantic Canada. This is an excellent opportunity to look at the Two Row Wampum belt, its symbolism, and intention, as part of your study of Canada's past, present and future.

Provocations (Middle/Senior Years, or Adults!)

Discussions and activities involving more complex concepts and critical thinking.

"If it hadn't been for me" - Who is responsible for Anne's success? Anne begins the play with few material goods, is spiritually speaking, "the next thing to a heathen," and as an unfortunate orphan who will probably poison the town's drinking water, according to the good women of Avonlea. She ends the play smart enough to win a prestigious scholarship and kind enough to offer the scholarship to her competition when she decides to stay home to help Marilla after Matthew dies.

One of the final songs of the show is "If it hadn't been for me" in which the townspeople take turns explaining how they are responsible for Anne's success. Her teacher, kind of a "weirdo" like Anne, and definitely an outsider like Anne, eventually stops them and admonishes them for overlooking Anne's excellence and hard work.

Have students consider: Who will you consider responsible for your successes as you grow up? How much credit will you attribute to your family, school, and community, and how much will you keep for yourself? How much privilege do you acknowledge being part of your success? What obstacles have been put in your way, and how have you risen and surpassed them?

Nationalism of the Anne Era of Canada Anne of Green Gables is set in a very young Canada, is very pointedly set in "paradise", aka PEI, and is a world famous and beloved Canadian text. This pride in an idyllic Canada is seen throughout the series, increasing in later stories where Anne's children are active in World War One.

Discuss: How is the younger generation feeling about the romanticizing of this era of Canada's History? Can we get into a romance, let alone a love affair with Canada's idyllic countryside, now that we are aware of the atrocities being done in the name of western expansion by the Canadian Government at this time?

Read the poem *I Lost My Talk* by Rita Joe, which shares the perspective of someone who attended Residential School in Atlantic Canada, as a counterpoint to the story of Anne. How was Anne's school experience different than that described in *I Lost My Talk*? How was it the same? Use the questions on the Poetry in Voice website to extend your thinking on teaching and learning at Residential School. https://poetryinvoice.ca/read/poems/i-lost-my-talk

Extension: Anne experienced two different styles of teaching at her school. Mr. Phillips was very traditional, expected quiet students, working individually on academics. Miss Stacy led exploratory, nature focused, collaborative lessons. Would Anne have been as successful if Miss Stacy hadn't taken over? What made Miss Stacy's method more engaging for the students?

Comparing Adaptations As one of the most cherished works of fiction in the Canadian lexicon, it has been adapted for film, television and stage many, many times. Below is a collection of clips from a variety of these film and television adaptations, particularly the carriage ride home from the train station and the scene where Anne breaks her slate over Gilbert's head for calling her Carrots. Pick some clips and ask students to compare and contrast the different versions of the characters, intensity of the action, variations in plot or script. What parts of Anne are consistent, or seem to be at the core of this story? What parts do writers take liberties with? Can you think of why things may or may change? (Consider year it was made, the type of production (animated, tv, film), the audience (Canadian, International), etc.)

Anne of Green Gables, CBC 1985

Carriage ride: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYIJkwhVaLo

"Carrots" scene: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdglss_WHjU

Anne with an "E", Netflix reboot, 2017

Carriage ride (at timestamp 9:10, this is a full episode)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hWw9trjvvU

"Carrots" scene: https://youtu.be/6kmXFXsSH1M

Comparison Video – A collection of three animated versions:

"carrots" scene: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Fo9FoiT0OQ

Study of how film versions compare to the books, including novel's character descriptions:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uplHYD-6k3Q

Shy vs. Social Anxiety In some versions of Anne, Matthew is portrayed as shy, but in the musical, Matthew has a stutter, and monologues about regretting he can't bring himself speak, or find the right words. Have a discussion about shyness and social anxiety, or mental health more broadly - most feelings and behaviours are common experiences, but how do you know when shyness crosses the line to social anxiety, when nervousness, or worry becomes an anxiety disorder, or when being sad becomes depression?

- Tap a guidance counsellor, health teacher or do some research if you don't have the background to have this conversation on your own! It's a very powerful, relevant and meaningful conversation for students in Middle and High School.

Curriculum Connections

English Language Arts – Relevant topics include historical lens, adaptations, women's voice, recitation, identifying misinformation, critical reading for assumptions and attitudes, character interpretation and motivation.

The following suggested connections are from the 2026-released Manitoba Framework of Learning. These are from the Grade 10 Curriculum, but similar outcomes from other senior years grades are comparable and similarly applicable. This list is not exhaustive.

FROM STRAND A: Building Literacy

- General Learning Outcome: Oral Language Communication. Learners engage in oral language communication as a recursive process of listening, speaking, and interacting to construct meaning, exchange ideas and perspectives, and expand their understanding of themselves, others, and the world.
    - Listen and Comprehend ELA.10.A1.2 Examine how speakers use language choices, voice, organization, rhetorical strategies, and verbal/non-verbal communication to influence audience understanding and response.
    - Speak and Interact ELA.10.A1.4 Exchange and develop ideas through dialogue (partners, group); make relevant connections among the contributions and viewpoints of others to build shared thinking; respond thoughtfully and respectfully to deepen understanding and extend collaborative thinking.
- General Learning Outcome: Language as the Foundation for Reading and Writing Learners build and apply foundational knowledge and skills, including letter knowledge, sound awareness, word structures, vocabulary knowledge, and language conventions, to engage as active readers, writers, and communicators.
    - Vocabulary Knowledge ELA.10.A2.6 Apply an expanding vocabulary and knowledge of word relationships, meanings, and nuances to understand texts; select and refine vocabulary to communicate ideas clearly, precisely, and effectively in different contexts.
    - Language Conventions ELA.10.A2.7 Analyze how language conventions (e.g., syntax, sentence structure, grammar, usage, mechanics) contribute to meaning, clarity, and coherence in texts; apply language conventions purposefully to communicate ideas clearly and effectively.

FROM STRAND B: Comprehend and respond

- General Learning Outcome: Think Critically about Texts Learners analyze ideas, information, viewpoints, and perspectives within and across texts to build understanding. Learners use evidence from texts to develop, support, and evaluate interpretations.
    - Analyze Ideas and Information ELA.10.B3.1 Examine ideas, themes, facts, opinions, and perspectives within and across texts; explain how evidence supports interpretations and deepens understanding of people, experiences, and issues.
- General Learning Outcome: Consolidate Understanding Learners reflect on, extend, and integrate new learning to develop deeper understandings. They respond to texts by

sharing interpretations, perspectives, and insights that expand, challenge, and/or refine their thinking.

- Reflect on New Learning ELA.10.B4.1 Explain and connect new ideas and understandings gained from texts; reflect on how new learning extends or expands existing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.
- Response to Text: Self and Others ELA.10.B4.2 Examine and share responses to texts by integrating personal, cultural, and textual connections; explain how ideas, aesthetic features, and perspectives contribute to insight, appreciation, and emotional response. ELA.10.B4.3 Compare and explain personal response with those of others and of broader community contexts; examine how assumptions, experiences, and perspectives can shape interpretations and influence understanding.

Certain activities such as writing a compare-contrast paper fall under Strand C: Compose and Create.

Drama
Connecting - The learner develops understandings about the significance of the dramatic arts by making connections to various times, places, social groups and cultures.
DR-C2 - The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.
Responding -The learner uses critical reflection to inform learning and to develop agency and identity
DR-R1 - The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.
DR-R2 - The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences
DR-R3 - the learner analyzes and interprets drama/theatre experiences.

Social Studies – Grades 5, 6 (“Canada: A Country of Change”), and 11 cover the history of Canada, Canadian society, racism and stereotypes, and colonization (globally and nationally).

Health – Mental Health topics such as shyness vs anxiety, healthy ways to express anger or sadness, the pressures of growing up.

Guide Creator Biography

tala gammon is normal human that does normal human things, including mothering, learning, and hoping. incredibly lucky to have a day job teaching performing arts at st. john’s high in the beautiful north end of winnipeg, she moonlights as a fibre artist and playwright. in terms of the green gables of it all, tala was born and spent the first 11 years existing on the traditional lands of the Mi’kmaq peoples, 6 of those years in the town where the first Peace and Friendship Treaty was signed, reading about Anne in a much less critical and reflective way than she does now.

Sources

https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anne-of-green-gables

etamonline - searchable etymological dictionary https://www.etymonline.com

Short write up regarding the first Peace and Friendship treaty signed in Canada in 1726. www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=17832

www.whose.land/en - search and access information regarding traditional lands, treaties, and residential schools

Interview of Don Harron on how Anne of Green Gables the musical came to be _https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woPLzKnJRVY

Don Harron https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/don-harron

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