***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 12***

### ***The Delights of Anticipation***

***Summary:***

* Late for her sewing, Anne runs into the house one afternoon to tell Marilla about an upcoming Sunday school picnic. Anne describes the picnic like it's going to be the best party in the world. Oh, and there's going to be ice cream there, which Anne's never had before.
* Marilla agrees to let her go and promises to bake her a basket. Anne's so grateful she kisses her. Marilla's freaked out by how much she likes being kissed and makes Anne do her patchwork.
* Anne sits down with her patchwork and plunges into another speech. Stuff Anne talks about: the playhouse she and Diana have set up between their farms, how she'd love to faint because it seems romantic, how she couldn't bear the disappointment of the picnic being cancelled if there was bad weather.
* Marilla points out that Anne has talked for ten minutes without stopping.
* For the next week, Anne's all about the picnic. She tells Marilla she grew cold from excitement when they made an announcement about it in church.
* Marilla worries that Anne gets too excited about things, and that her life will be full of disappointment. But Anne argues that it's better to have fun looking forward to things than to expect nothing.
* Marilla wore her amethyst brooch to church, which we're told is her heirloom and most prized possession. Anne loves the brooch too.
* Uh-oh. We sense something coming.

***Synopsis:***

Anne Shirley flies into the kitchen, where Marilla waits impatiently for the girl to do her patchwork. Breathless, Anne bubbles over with excitement about the Sunday school picnic. Marilla scolds Anne for her tardiness, who apologizes, explaining that the fascination of Idlewild (a patch of birch trees, home to her and Diana's playhouse) was too great for her. Never having tasted ice cream, it being beyond imagination, nor having been to a picnic, Anne is wild with anticipation. Marilla gives her permission and promises to bake Anne a basket. Anne lovingly kisses Marilla on the cheek, who is deeply touched but guards her emotions. As the picnic nears and Anne's excitement grows, Marilla cautions Anne that she sets her heart too much on things; so much so, she is bound for disappointment. To which Anne responds, "Oh, Marilla, looking forward to things is half the pleasure of them." As they continue on their way to church, Anne admires Marilla's amethyst brooch, given by a seafaring uncle to her mother, and then bequeathed to Marilla herself.

Marilla counsels Anne on setting her heart too much on something, but in Anne we see a determined optimist, one who is always looking to find the best in people and her surroundings. Guarding her emotions, Marilla can't help but be touched by the girl.

***Critical Study:***

Anne comes flying into the house to tell Marilla there's going to be a Sunday school picnic the following week—with ice cream, something she's never tried. Can she go? Marilla gives permission, and Anne kisses her for the first time. Marilla is much more touched by the gesture than she lets on.

In a fever of anticipation, Anne "talked picnic and thought picnic and dreamed picnic." By Sunday Anne is bursting with excitement. That same Sunday, as always, Marilla wears her amethyst brooch to church. It's her favorite possession, and Anne is smitten with admiration when she sees it for the first time. Amethysts, she says, are what she used to think diamonds looked like; she cried with disappointment the first time she saw a real diamond. She asks to hold the brooch for a minute—and that's where the chapter ends.

This is more like a remnant than a full chapter. Anne asks for permission to go to the picnic, brings Marilla up to date on her activities with Diana, and thinks about the picnic some more. Perhaps [Montgomery](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/author/) thought combining this material with [Chapter 14](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/chapter-14-summary/) would make too long a chapter. Whatever the case, its main function is to set the stage for the all-important Sunday school picnic.

There's something poignant about Anne's delighted anticipation of the picnic. That she's worried about bringing "a basket of things to eat" shows how unused she is to these small entertainments, and to a modern reader it may seem inconceivable that she's never tried ice cream. But this is the first decade of the 20th century, when making ice cream is a complicated procedure, especially in summer. The ice for the ice cream churn—a block from someone's ice house—will need to be chipped before being added to the churn, and the canister holding the ice cream mixture will need to be cranked by hand until it's stiff and cold enough.

The introduction of Marilla's brooch seems to come out of nowhere and end abruptly. Nonetheless it makes for a good aside and provides an insight into life during this period. Modern mining techniques have made amethysts seem less valuable now that semiprecious stones can be produced in bulk. But gem mining and gem cutting were very difficult at the time this book was written. Anne's comparatively late realization that diamonds are not purple indicates both diamonds and amethysts are a rarity. This brooch may be Marilla's only piece of jewelry, and that it contains a lock of her mother's hair makes it even more precious. [Chapter 13](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/chapter-13-summary/) ends abruptly as a cliffhanger of sorts. The reader suspects something will happen to that brooch, and Anne's happy chatter makes it clear she has no idea trouble is coming.***Critical Analysis:***

In August, Anne excitedly tells Marilla that the Sunday School is planning a picnic. Anne is especially excited that there will be ice cream, which she has never tasted. Marilla tells Anne to work on her patchwork until teatime, which Anne does grumpily. Anne tells Marilla about how she and Diana have created a pretend house in a clearing in the woods, complete with stones for seats and broken dishes for pretend meals. Anne talks on and on until Marilla tells her to be quiet for a while.

For the rest of the week, Anne is frantic about whether the picnic will be canceled for bad weather. Marilla tells Anne that she is setting herself up for disappointment by getting her heart set on things, but Anne responds that “looking forward to things is half the pleasure of them” (p. 119).

The narrator notes that that day, Marilla wears her amethyst brooch to church, as she always does. The brooch has been passed down from Marilla’s mother. The narrator also notes that when Anne first saw Marilla’s brooch, she was dazzled by it and asked Marilla if she could hold it.

***Significance:***

Marilla fumes as she looks out the window and sees Anne talking to Matthew forty-five minutes after she was supposed to go inside and do chores. Marilla’s anger diminishes as Anne bursts into the room and joyfully describes the Sunday school picnic planned for the following week. She cannot wait to attend and to have her first taste of ice cream. When Marilla agrees to let her attend and says she will bake a basket of food for Anne to take along, Anne flies into her arms and kisses her cheek. Marilla flushes with warmth, though she disguises her pleasure with an injunction to Anne to be more obedient. Anne talks excitedly about her adventures with Diana and especially about their playhouse in the woods, which is composed of discarded pieces of board and china.

When Marilla tries to hush Anne and quell her excitement about the upcoming picnic, Anne replies that she would rather look forward to things and risk disappointment than follow advice from stodgy ladies like Mrs. Rachel who say, “Blessed are they who expect nothing for they shall not be disappointed.” Anne says she was disappointed when she finally saw a diamond because it was not half as beautiful as she had imagined. She envisioned that a diamond was as colorful as the best amethyst, a stone that pleases both Anne and Marilla. Marilla has an amethyst brooch, her most prized possession, which she wears to church. Anne loves it so much that she begs Marilla to let her hold it for a minute.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

One August afternoon [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) sternly summons [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) inside—she played with [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) too long, and now she’s chatting with [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) instead of doing her sewing. Anne bursts indoors with the news that there’s going to be a Sunday school picnic next week, including ice cream—can she go? Marilla scolds Anne for coming in 45 minutes late, she but agrees that Anne can go. Anne joyfully kisses Marilla’s cheek, and Marilla covers up her delight by ordering Anne to do her patchwork.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Life is filled with exciting new experiences for Anne, for whom Sunday school social events—and delights like ice cream—have previously been subjects for imagination, not reality. These exciting experiences often distract Anne from paying attention to the duties of the moment, which frustrates Marilla as she tries to teach Anne responsibility. Yet Marilla isn’t untouched by Anne’s warmth, either.

***Summary Part 2:***

As [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) reluctantly tackles her sewing, she talks to [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) about [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry). Diana doesn’t have as much imagination as Anne, but she’s perfect otherwise. The two have made a playhouse in a circle of birch trees on Mr. William Bell’s land. They have mossy stones for chairs, boards for shelves, and broken dishes, and they’ve called the spot Idlewild.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Anne’s friendship with Diana continues to grow—Anne has plenty of imagination for both of them. Anne has a way of enchanting her environment, as she sees imaginative potential in nature and even in discarded objects.

***Summary Part 3:***

Over the next week, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) thinks and talks constantly of the Sunday school picnic. On the way home from church, [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) warns Anne that she sets her heart on things too much and will suffer many disappointments in life. That day Marilla is wearing her amethyst brooch to church as usual, an inheritance from her mother. Anne loves the brooch and asks to hold it for a minute—she thinks amethysts might be “the souls of good violets.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

Marilla mostly sees the downside of Anne’s active imagination and worries that it sets Anne up for heartbreak in her life. A brooch is a piece of jewelry, much like a pin, that is often worn just beneath the throat. Anne’s fascination with the brooch, combined with her anticipation of the picnic, sets up the coming conflict.Mishaps, Milestones, and Growing Up Theme Icon