***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 17***

### ***A New Interest In Life***

***Summary:***

* Diana beckons to Anne from the window. Anne rushes out to meet her, but it turns out Diana's mother hasn't relented. Diana only wants to say goodbye.
* They say a tearful, extremely poetic farewell. Diana says she loves her, which Anne has never heard before. Anne cuts a lock of Diana's hair to remember her by.
* Anne decides to go back to school so she can see Diana again, even from a distance.
* The Avonlea children have missed Anne, and shower her with tiny gifts on her return. Gilbert leaves an apple on Anne's desk, but she ignores it. Burn.
* Anne starts trying hard in school to get ahead of Gilbert, and soon they develop an academic rivalry.
* Gilbert is friendly about it, but Anne—not so much. Soon they're promoted to the fifth class.

***Synopsis:***

One afternoon, Anne spies Diana outside beckoning to her. Anne rushes out, and Diana tells her she is still forbidden to play with Anne so she has come to say goodbye. The two have a sentimental, melodramatic parting. When Diana cries that she loves her bosom friend, Anne says, “Nobody ever has loved me since I can remember. Oh, this is . . . a ray of light which will forever shine on the darkness of a path severed from thee, Diana.” Anne asks for a lock of Diana’s black hair to keep as a memento. To combat her despair over losing Diana, Anne decides to return to school. There, she can look at Diana even though the two are forbidden to talk or play together. Anne’s classmates welcome her back with open arms and little gifts. Some of the girls send her plums, bottles, or copied poems, and two admiring boys, Charlie Sloane and Gilbert Blythe, pass her a slate pencil and an apple, respectively. Anne graciously accepts Charlie’s gift but ostentatiously ignores Gilbert’s offering. One day, to Anne’s dismay, she and Gilbert are tied as top student, and Mr. Phillips writes both of their names on the board.

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***Critical Study:***

Anne is given ten minutes to say goodbye at Dryad's Bubble to her bosom friend the next day. Each pledges to love the other devotedly, Diana offering a clip of her raven curls to console Anne during their tortured separation. That Monday Anne bravely returns to school, telling Marilla "That is all there is left in life for me, now that my friend has been ruthlessly torn from me." Anne's return to school is met with poems and plums and a yellow pansy cut from a catalogue: all of which she heartily enjoys save the strawberry apple from the Blythe orchard, scorning all things having relation to Gilbert Blythe. Like two star-crossed lovers, Diana and Anne pass notes expressing their undying affection for one another. Throwing herself into her studies, Anne proves herself to be a star pupil, rivaled only by Gilbert Blythe. However, it is in geometry that the young scholar has found her foe.

Much to Marilla's relief, her strategy has paid off, and Anne returns to school on her own accord. Devoting herself to her studies, the dedicated student in Anne begins to appear. However, the romantic, sentimental flame in Anne still burns, mourning the loss of her best companion in life. However, "one can't stay sad very long in such an interesting world, can one?" she concludes.

***Critical Analysis:***

The next day, Diana comes to Green Gables to say goodbye to Anne. They profess love to one another and Anne takes a lock of Diana’s hair to remember her by. They promise that even though they will have to act like strangers, they will be friends forever. The day after that, Anne comes down in the morning with her school books and tells Marilla she is going back to school so that she can still see Diana every day. Marilla is pleased but tries to conceal it.

At school, Anne is welcomed back happily by all of the other students. Many girls give her little gifts such as plums and a perfume bottle. Gilbert and Charlie both give Anne gifts as well, though Anne does not accept Gilbert’s. Anne is upset that Diana does not look at her at all her first day back at school, but on her second day back at school, she finds a note from Diana saying that she misses her. Anne does not have any more behavioral issues at school and focuses intently on her studies because she wants to do better than Gilbert.

Anne and Gilbert are always at the top of the class, far ahead of other students in their grade. Anne must work very hard on math and spelling to try to do better than him. At the end of the term, both Anne and Gilbert are promoted to a higher class and start studying harder subjects, including geometry which Anne finds especially hard.

***Significance:***

The next day Diana comes over to say her mother has allowed her 10 minutes to bid Anne farewell. Sobbing, the girls promise they'll never forget each other. "Diana, wilt thou give me a lock of thy jet-black tresses in parting?" asks Anne, who luckily has a pair of scissors with her. She clips a curl from Diana's head, saying, "Fare thee well, my beloved friend." Then she goes back inside and asks Marilla to bury Diana's curl with her, "for I don't believe I'll live very long."

The following Monday Anne returns to school. It's the only way she can see Diana, even if they can't speak to each other. Her classmates are delighted to have her back, and several girls give her little presents. Gilbert leaves an apple on her seat, but Anne refuses to eat it—though she does accept a fancy slate pencil from Charlie Sloane.

But Anne is bewildered because Diana won't even look at her, much less smile at her. The next day, Diana passes Anne a note explaining her mother has forbidden her even to talk to Anne in school. Anne quickly sends a note back to say she's not angry: "Our spirits can commune," she writes.

Anne throws herself into her schoolwork to compensate for missing Diana, vying constantly with Gilbert to be head of the class, and passing that honor back and forth. By the end of the term she and Gilbert have both been promoted into the fifth class. Anne does well in all her new subjects except geometry, where she's a complete dunce—worse even than Diana. But she doesn't "mind being beaten by Diana."

In the long run Diana and Anne's temporary separation may benefit Anne more than she realizes: it forces her to return to school. Anne is so stubborn she might have stayed away even longer, but because school is now the only place she can see her best friend, she wants to go back again. A born scholar, Anne could probably have educated herself quite well, but she's such a companionable girl that being with other students invigorates her. And since she's forbidden to speak to Diana even in school, she uses that vigor to throw herself into her studies.

The "elevated" romantic language in Anne's farewell to Diana is amusing, especially because she keeps lapsing into regular speech. The scene is a parody of the books the girls love most. It's also funny Diana can't manage this brand of rhetoric and answers Anne's flowery questions in her normal way of speaking. When Anne asks for "a lock of thy jet-black tresses," practical Diana asks, "Have you got anything to cut it with?"

It's clear Anne is a true 19th-century girl when she answers, "I've got my patchwork scissors in my apron pocket fortunately." An apron! Scissors for patchwork! Working on a quilt is such an ordinary activity for girls of the period [Montgomery](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/author/) doesn't bother to put in a quilt-making scene. Anne seems so alive readers may be reminded the book is set almost 150 years ago.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The next day, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) glances outside and sees [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) beckoning to her from afar. She rushes down to the hollow and listens in dismay as Diana explains that her mother is unrelenting—the two girls are never to play together again. Weeping, they promise to remain one another’s “bosom friend” no matter what. When Diana says she could never love anybody as much as Anne, Anne is overcome—she thought Diana merely liked her. She never believed that anyone could love her. With her patchwork scissors, she cuts off a lock of Diana’s hair to remember her by.

***Analysis Part 1:***

As Marilla had predicted, Mrs. Barry is strict with her children and thinks Anne is a bad influence on Diana—a hard blow for both of them, especially for Anne, who believed she’d found her bosom friend at last. Anne’s childhood was so lonely that she isn’t used to hearing that she is loved, so Diana’s words come as a genuine surprise.

***Summary Part 2:***

The following week, to [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert)’s surprise, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) appears with an armload of books and announces she is returning to school—at least she can see [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) there. Anne is warmly welcomed by her other friends, receiving fruit, flowers, and fond notes from the other girls. After the dinner hour, she returns to her seat to find a beautiful apple. Just before taking a bite, she remembers that this type of apple only grows in the Blythe orchard. She drops the apple instantly. In pointed contrast, she graciously accepts a decorated pencil from [Charlie Sloane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters).

***Analysis Part 2:***

The forced estrangement from Diana leads Anne to return to school. But her faithfulness to Diana is matched by her stubborn hatred of Gilbert—even her willingness to provoke him by pointedly accepting the attentions of a boy she doesn’t especially like instead.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) is silent at school. But the next morning [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) receives a note from her, explaining that her mother has forbidden her to speak to or play with Anne at school. But she encloses a handmade bookmark and promises her faithful friendship. Anne sends back a note of thanks, understanding that Diana has to obey her mother and adding that their “spirits can commune.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

Anne and Diana don’t try to resist Diana’s obligation to obey her mother (an example of Montgomery’s upholding of virtues like obedience and “being good” throughout the novel). From Anne’s perspective, “bosom friends” are so joined in spirit that they can remain connected even when circumstances prevent them from connecting in life.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) expects [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) to get into further trouble at school, but to her surprise, Anne begins to thrive. She gets along better with [Mr. Phillips](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) and, motivated by the desire to beat [Gilbert Blythe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/gilbert-blythe), throws herself into her studies. A rivalry develops. Though Gilbert sees the rivalry as friendly, Anne sees it as an extension of her grudge. She won’t even admit that he’s her rival, because she’s still determined to ignore his existence. But the class honors alternate between the two of them—including one day, mortifying to Anne, when their names appear together in a tie.

***Analysis Part 4:***

When Anne returns to school on her own terms, she does better there. She also copes with her dislike of Gilbert by seeing him primarily as an academic rival instead of simply as a hated enemy. Still, there’s no question that the rivalry is motivated by resentment, at least on her side.

***Summary Part 5:***

By the end of the term, both [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) and [Gilbert](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/gilbert-blythe) are promoted into the next class, and Anne begins struggling with geometry, lamenting to [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) that “Gil—I mean some of the others” are so good at it. And she continues to be grieve the distance from [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry). Yet the world is so interesting that she can’t stay sad for long.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Anne thrives academically despite her earlier disadvantages, showing that in addition to her stubbornness, she has grit and determination. She also copes with the difficulties in life, like her estrangement from Diana, by finding new interests, not simply by escaping into imagination.