***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 18***

### ***Anne to the Rescue***

***Summary:***

* The Premier (meaning the Prime Minister of their province) is coming to a nearby town, and pretty much all the adults in Avonlea go to see him speak. Marilla goes, leaving Anne alone with Matthew in the evening.
* Anne and Matthew have a good chat about how geometry's hard, and about politics. Matthew says he's a Conservative (a party that was for political economics and ties to England) and Anne decides she's a Conservative by association. She's glad, because Gilbert's a Grit (a party for democratic reform and free trade with the U.S.)
* Diana runs into the house suddenly, crying that her sister Minnie May has bad croup. Her parents are away, the girl (Mary Jo) who is supposed to take care of her doesn't know what to do, and the doctor is probably out of town seeing the Premier.
* Matthew leaves to get the doctor and Anne takes charge of Minnie May's care. She used to care for three twins, remember? She's got this.
* Minnie May is very sick—croup involves a high fever and closes up the vocal chords, so she's also having trouble breathing. Anne uses ipecac (which used to treat coughs and is now mostly used to induce vomiting) to treat her, several times that night.
* The doctor arrives very late (as most doctors were at the Premier talk), when Minnie May has improved. Anne explains to him what went down, and how she was scared Minnie May would choke to death before her fever broke.
* When the Barry parents return, the doctor tells them Anne saved their child's life.
* The next afternoon, when Anne wakes up, Marilla tells her that Mrs. Barry had visited and apologized.
* Anne runs to Diana's house and tells Marilla about it afterward: Mrs. Barry had apologized and cried, and then included Anne in an elegant tea using their best china set. Most importantly, Anne and Diana are back to being friends.

***Synopsis:***

A Canadian premier comes to Prince Edward Island to address a mass meeting in Charlottetown, about thirty miles from Avonlea. Mrs. Rachel loves political events, so she goes with her husband and Marilla. At home, Anne is studying, and Matthew is reading the Farmers’ Advocate when Diana rushes into the house and cries that her three-year-old sister Minnie May is sick with the croup, and neither she nor the babysitter know what to do. Matthew quickly harnesses the horse and goes for the doctor, while Anne and Diana rush back to the Barry house, Orchard Slope. Having cared for three sets of twins at Mrs. Hammond’s home who all got croup regularly, Anne knows how to care for Minnie May. Matthew arrives with the doctor at three A.M., by which time Minnie May is sleeping peacefully.

Later, the doctor tells Mr. and Mrs. Barry that Anne saved their daughter’s life. Mrs. Barry comes to Green Gables the following day and apologizes for blaming Anne for the currant wine incident. She invites Anne to tea and encourages her to be friends with Diana once again. Anne is thrilled by the news and pleased that the Barrys treat her like special company at tea.

***Critical Study:***

Nearly all the men, and a good many of the women including Marilla, having traveled thirty miles to Charlottetown to see the Premier, Anne and Matthew were left to enjoy each others company at Green Gables. Dropping her candle and plate in surprise, Anne is startled by the white-faced Diana. In a panic, she explains that her baby sister Minnie May is awfully sick with the croup and there is no one to help, her parents being away at town. Matthew goes to fetch the doctor while Anne, having cared for Mrs. Hammond's twins three times over, fetches the ipecac bottle and hastens to the Barry's to care for the child. Matthew came much delayed, having gone all the way to Spencervale to find a doctor not in town for the Premier. The doctor told the Barrys plainly that the little redheaded girl had saved their baby Minnie Mae. Forever grateful to Anne, Mrs. Barry meets the girl the next afternoon with great emotion and affection, treating her to tea with her very best china. Reunited with her best bosom friend, Anne feels mightily like saying her prayers that night, having much to be grateful for herself.

Overcoming yet another "tribulation" in her young life, Anne proves herself in a moment of calm and grace as a resourceful and levelheaded girl. As Anne grows up, she is impatient for the day when she is truly grown, "when just being treated as if you were is so nice." Marilla is skeptical, knowing that there is more to being grown up than being treated to tea and using big words. As Anne's life blossoms, she begins to embrace Marilla's religious mores.

***Critical Analysis:***

In January, the Canadian Premier comes to Charlottetown, a city near Avonlea. Most of the adults in Avonlea—including Marilla, Mrs. Rachel, and Mr. and Mrs. Barry—go to see him speak. Anne and Matthew choose to stay home. They sit by the fire talking about geometry, politics, and courting. Suddenly, Diana bursts in the door and says her little sister Minnie May is very sick. Anne rushes with Diana to the Barry house while Matthew rides their horse to get the doctor.

At the Barry house, Anne’s skills from caring for babies throughout her childhood prove essential. She determines that Minnie May has croup and orders Diana and Mary Joe, a French girl babysitting the Barry children, to boil water and find ipecac. By the time the doctor arrives at 3 in the morning, she has given Minnie May the entire bottle of ipecac and the baby’s illness has begun to improve. The doctor is very impressed and later tells Mr. and Mrs. Barry that Minnie May would have died without Anne’s intervention.

In the meantime, Anne goes home in the dawn and decides to go to sleep rather than try to stay awake at school all day. She wakes up in the afternoon to find that Marilla has come home. Marilla praises Anne for knowing how to help Minnie May, gives her lunch, and then tells her that Mrs. Barry has come to Green Gables and said that Anne and Diana can be friends again. Anne is so excited that she asks permission to go to Diana’s house right away.

Anne comes home at night after spending the rest of the day at Diana’s house. She tells Marilla that Mrs. Barry apologized and treated Anne to an elegant tea using their best china. Anne says that it must be lovely to be grown up and vows that when she is an adult, she will treat children as if they were adults as well. Anne says that tonight she will say a special prayer.

***Significance:***

In January the premier of Canada visits Prince Edward Island, where a rally is held in his honor. Mrs. Lynde and her husband go—"Thomas would be useful in looking after the horse"—and take Marilla with them, leaving Anne and Matthew to keep house. They're enjoying a cozy evening together, Anne occasionally looking up from her homework to talk to Matthew, who sleepily does his best to keep up his end of the conversation.

They're interrupted when Diana rushes into the kitchen. "Do come quick," she begs Anne. Her three-year-old sister Minnie May has a terrible case of croup. The Barry parents are away, and the hired babysitter has no idea what to do.

Matthew grabs his coat and leaves the house to go for the doctor. Anne cheerily assures Diana she knows exactly what to do for croup, reminding all not to "forget that Mrs. Hammond had twins three times." She finds the ipecac bottle, and the two girls hurry back through the snow and dark to the Barry house, Anne enjoying the romance of their situation.

Minnie May is very sick, but Anne says she's seen worse cases. For hours she and Diana struggle to help Minnie May breathe better. It's three A.M. when Matthew arrives with the doctor, but by then Minnie May is on the way to recovery. Anne admits the severity of the condition to the doctor, saying, "I actually thought she was going to choke to death." Only when Anne had given Minnie May the last drops of ipecac did the little girl begin to recover. Later the doctor will tell Mr. and Mrs. Barry if Anne hadn't been there, Minnie May would have died.

Anne walks sleepily home with Matthew, who tells her to go to bed and skip a day of school. When Anne finally wakes up, it's late afternoon. Marilla tells her Mrs. Barry came to Green Gables earlier that afternoon. "She hopes you'll forgive her and be good friends with Diana again," and she wants Anne to come to the Barrys' house for tea.

The real-life premier to whom [Montgomery](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/author/) alludes is John A. MacDonald, who visited Prince Edward Island in 1890. The term *monster mass meeting* is as accurate as Marilla's description of the premier's nose (though MacDonald didn't actually visit in January; it would have been too cold to make the trip then). Monster mass meetings were the 19th-century equivalent of political rallies.

Most 19th-century homes had on hand a bottle of ipecac, which is used to induce vomiting and was used (ineffectually) to treat croup in the days before antibiotics. The word *croup* is probably onomatopoetic: it sounds like the sharp, barking cough made by its victims. An infection of the larynx and trachea, it can be either viral or "spasmodic." Minnie May has the spasmodic kind, which usually comes on suddenly at night. Seen less frequently now than it was in Anne's day, instead it can be triggered by cold weather, and modern insulated homes are warmer than 19th-century farmhouses.

Croup is frightening to witness (and to have) because it makes breathing so difficult. But it's not as dangerous as Anne and Diana believe. Nor does it involve phlegm that needs to be coughed up. Anne is right to order Mary Joe to heat some water, though. Steam can make the patient's breathing easier. But accurate croup reportage is not the point of this chapter. The point is that Anne rises so magnificently to the occasion that everyone, including the reader, realizes how competent she is. She takes instant control of the situation, knows exactly what to do, and remains cheerful throughout Minnie May's ordeal.

This is not true of Young Mary Joe, the French Canadian babysitter spending the night at the Barrys'. At first Mary Joe is too frightened to act: then she is "honestly anxious to do all she could," as if it's surprising she wants to help save Minnie May's life. English-speaking Canadians in the 19th century were commonly prejudiced against their French-speaking counterparts, and Montgomery shared the prejudice.

The end of this chapter is thoroughly satisfying. Mrs. Barry humbles herself to Anne, who forgives her with stately magnificence.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The Premier of Canada travels to Prince Edward Island to address his supporters in Charlottetown, 30 miles away. Most of Avonlea attends the rally. [Mrs. Lynde](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde) doesn’t support the Premier, but she’s so interested in politics that she doesn’t believe a rally can take place without her, so she goes also, taking [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) along. [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) and [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) will be alone at Green Gables overnight. While Matthew dozes over a newspaper, Anne struggles with her geometry and glances wistfully at a novel her friend [Jane Andrews](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) has lent her.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Marilla continues to gain trust in Anne, willing to leave the household partly in her hands while going on an overnight trip. Though she still struggles with distractions, Anne has matured a lot over the past year and has adapted to life at Green Gables and to the challenges of student life.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) distracts herself by chatting with [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert). They talk about politics—Matthew votes Conservative so Anne decides she’s Conservative, too. It’s a good thing, she says, because “Gil—because some of the boys […] are Grits.” Anne has heard people say that when a boy goes courting, he should agree with the girl’s mother in religious matters and with the father in political matters. She asks Matthew if he’s ever gone courting. The idea seems never to have occurred to Matthew. Anne talks about some of her friends’ older sisters who are courting and finds it all pretty interesting, but she figures she won’t want more than a single “beau” when she’s older.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Though Anne is too young to “go courting” herself, the subject is interesting to her—and it’s obvious that Gilbert is often on her mind, suggesting that her interest in him goes beyond rivalry and dislike, even if she’s not fully aware of the fact herself.

***Summary Part 3:***

Just as [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) is coming up from the cellar with some apples for a snack, [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) rushes into Green Gables’ kitchen, and Anne drops everything, candle and all, in shock. Diana’s little sister [Minnie May](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) is very sick with the croup, the babysitter is helpless, and Diana doesn’t know what to do. [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) immediately goes outside to harness the mare and search for a doctor. Anne cheerfully bundles up while reassuring her friend—she took care of [Mrs. Hammond](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters)’s twins, all of whom had croup often. She gets a bottle of ipecac, and the girls hurry across the snowy fields to Orchard Slope. Anne can’t help feeling delighted to be sharing this adventure with her estranged friend.

***Analysis Part 3:***

“Croup” is a respiratory infection common in children. Ipecac syrup was a once-common cough medicine used to help clear mucus from the airways. Because of her background caring for children, Anne quickly rises to the occasion and knows how to deal with the crisis at the Barrys’. She’s even confident enough in the outcome to enjoy the occasion, after not being allowed to talk to Diana for so long.

***Summary Part 4:***

Three-year-old [Minnie May](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) is feverish, her breathing labored. [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) assesses the situation and immediately puts Diana to work heating water. She forces down many doses of ipecac, and, by three o’clock in the morning when [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) arrives with a doctor, Minnie May is sleeping calmly. Anne tells them both that she’d nearly given up; she’d never seen a sicker child, but the last dose of ipecac finally brought up the choking phlegm. The doctor looks at Anne in wonder, later telling the Barrys that Anne saved their daughter’s life—Anne is a remarkable girl.

***Analysis Part 4:***

While Anne’s orphan background been a setback in certain ways, it has also armed her with knowledge and ability that many children her age wouldn’t necessarily have, and she saves Minnie May’s life because of it. Besides her childlike and awkward ways, Anne’s background has also given her a maturity beyond her years.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) stays home from school and sleeps for most of the day. When she comes downstairs, she asks [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) about the political rally. Marilla waits until Anne has eaten some dinner and then tells her that [Mrs. Barry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) stopped by. Mrs. Barry told Marilla that Anne saved [Minnie May](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters)’s life, and she apologized for being so unreasonable about the currant wine incident. She hopes Anne will forgive her and that she and [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) will be close again. Marilla indulgently lets Anne skip washing the dishes, and Anne runs exultantly out of the house to reunite with Diana.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Anne’s rescue of Minnie May changes Mrs. Barry’s mind about her—she realizes that Anne is competent and kind-hearted after all, and Anne’s and Diana’s friendship is able to be fully restored.

***Summary Part 6:***

Anne comes home at twilight, telling [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) she is “perfectly happy,” even in spite of having [red hair](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/symbols/red-hair). [Mrs. Barry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) had tearfully kissed and apologized to her, and she had a lovely time visiting [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry)—Mrs. Barry even let them use nice china for their tea. Anne felt so grown up and she imagines that being a real grown-up must always be so nice. She tells Marilla that after such a night, she truly feels like praying.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Even though there are some things in Anne’s life that she’s powerless to change—like her red hair—there are other areas where she’s capable of taking initiative in her life, like nursing Minnie May—and these can have consequences even beyond what she’d hoped. Such things draw deep, genuine gratitude from Anne.