***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 21***

### ***A New Departure in Favorings***

***Summary:***

* Ch-ch-changes in Avonlea. Mr. Phillips (Remember him? The mediocre teacher?) is leaving the Avonlea school and the church is getting a new minister, who has a wife.
* Said wife, Mrs. Allan, takes over Anne's Sunday school class and lets the students ask her questions, so of course Anne loves her.
* Marilla decides to invite the Allans over for supper and tells Anne she can make a cake.
* Anne gets a little obsessive over the cake. She's made good cakes before, but she's worried she'll screw it up somehow.
* The day of the visit arrives. Anne has a cold, but her cake rises the right way and she arranges a bunch of flowers for the table, so things are looking up.
* Dinner goes well, but when Mrs. Allan tries the cake, she gets a funny expression.
* Marilla figures out that instead of vanilla, Anne accidentally flavored the cake with anodyne liniment, a painkilling medicine that involves morphine and alcohol. Awkward.
* Anne runs to her room, but Mrs. Allan is very kind about the whole thing and the night ends well.

***Synopsis:***

On the last day of June, Anne returns from school with red eyes and a soaked handkerchief in her hand. The universally disliked schoolteacher, Mr. Phillips, is leaving his job, and his farewell speech made all the girls cry. The old minister, Mr. Bentley, has also given up his post, and the Avonlea congregation chooses a young man named Mr. Allan as Mr. Bentley’s successor. The congregation welcomes Mr. Allan and his pretty young wife into the community. Anne admires Mrs. Allan, who teaches Anne’s Sunday school class, because unlike the previous teacher she encourages the students to ask many questions.

Marilla invites Mr. and Mrs. Allan to tea, and works for days preparing a generous spread of food for the young couple. Marilla allows Anne to bake a layer cake. Even though Anne has baked many cakes, she is nervous nonetheless. The cake comes out of the oven looking beautiful, and Anne is proud to serve it to her new hero, Mrs. Allan. Mrs. Allan can hardly swallow the cake, but she eats it to spare Anne’s feelings. When Marilla tastes the cake herself, she asks Anne what ingredients she used. Marilla discovers that Anne accidentally used anodyne liniment instead of vanilla, making the cake taste awful. Anne is mortified and runs upstairs, throws herself on the bed, and weeps. Mrs. Allan cheers Anne up, and Anne begins to see some good in the embarrassing situation, saying at least she never makes the same mistake twice. She is relieved to think that once she has made all possible mistakes, she will be done making mistakes for good.

***Critical Study:***

The school year ends; Anne and many of her classmates weep to see their teacher leave, even though they didn’t like him very much. However, Anne says that she isn’t too sad because now she has two months of summer vacation—and she got to see the new, young minister of Avonlea and his pretty wife. Many candidates for the minister of Avonlea had come to preach throughout the spring, and eventually, the new minister, Mr. Allan, was chosen by the congregation. Anne is smitten with [Mrs. Allan](https://www.gradesaver.com/anne-of-green-gables/study-guide/character-list#mrs-allan) as soon as she takes over her Sunday School class, particularly because Mrs. Allan said that the students could ask her as many questions as they wanted. Marilla tells Anne that they can have Mr. and Mrs. Allen over for tea soon, and she tells Anne that she can make a cake for the occasion.

Marilla and Anne are busy making a wide variety of pastries and other delicacies for the day the Allans come over. Finally, the day arrives, and Anne wakes up early to make her cake. She has a cold, but she is still very invested in making the cake as good as possible. When the Allans are over, everything goes well until it comes time for Anne’s cake. Mrs. Allan declines to try it at first because she has eaten many other things, but she agrees to have a big slice when she finds out that Anne made it especially for her. When she takes a bite, it is clear that something is wrong with the cake, but she keeps eating it anyway. Marilla takes a bite and immediately asks Anne in shock what she put in the cake. It turns out that Anne added anodyne liniment because it was in a bottle labeled “Best Vanilla” (p.220). Anne couldn’t smell the difference due to her stuffed nose.

Anne weeps, thinking about how kids at school will make fun of her. Mrs. Allan comforts her, saying that it was a little mistake and that she still appreciates Anne’s thoughtfulness. Mrs. Allan asks to see Anne’s garden. After the Allans have left, Anne tells Marilla that a good thing about her is that she never makes the same mistake twice.

***Brief Summary:***

A red-eyed Anne comes home after the last day of school, still tearful over the departure of her teacher, Mr. Phillips. She says candidly she's not very sad and "cried because all the others did." But she feels remorseful about the times she's made fun of him or talked when she wasn't supposed to.

Still, two months of vacation are always nice, and Anne is further cheered by having met Avonlea's new Presbyterian minister, Mr. Allan, and his wife on their way home from the train station. Anne is interested in the minister's wife, dressed in blue muslin "with lovely puffed sleeves and a hat trimmed with roses."

Mr. Allan's arrival is important to his little congregation, and people vie to invite the Allans to their homes for meals. Marilla decides they should come to tea, and she and Anne work hard cooking delicacies for the occasion. Marilla allows Anne to make a layer cake—a great responsibility as far as Anne is concerned. Anne wakes up with a cold on the morning of the big day but manages to make a cake "as light and feathery as golden foam." Anne decorates the tea table and even manages to make shy Matthew feel comfortable once the Allans arrive.

Everything goes smoothly until Marilla passes out slices of Anne's cake. When Mrs. Allan tries her piece, "a most peculiar expression" appears on her face, though she continues politely eating it. Marilla quickly tastes the cake and, horrified, asks Anne what flavoring she used. Anne brings the bottle of vanilla extract to show her, and Marilla realizes it actually contains anodyne liniment—an over-the-counter cure-all—that she poured into an old vanilla bottle. Because of her cold, Anne didn't notice the difference.

Mortified, Anne rushes up to her bedroom to cry. Mrs. Allan follows her and coaxes her into the garden, "for I'm very much interested in flowers." When the guests have left, Anne reflects at least she never makes the same mistake twice.

It's likely the fateful anodyne liniment in this chapter is something like Johnson's American Anodyne Liniment, a U.S. medicine made from 1881–1906 and the most popular brand in its day. Like many patent medicines it was said to cure pretty much everything. The label on the bottle touted its effectiveness in treating various respiratory ailments along with "pain in the stomach, bowels, or side; rheumatism, spitting of blood, and all lung complaints; sore throat, spinal complaints, chronic diarrhea, dysentery, chapped hands, burns, wounds, sprains and bruises." It's easy to see why so many households had it on hand. If only it had worked, it would have been a miracle product!

One reason Johnson's anodyne liniment made people feel better was that it was almost 20 percent alcohol, 6.25 percent ether, and half a grain of opium per fluid ounce. It must have tasted seriously awful to be noticed in a layer cake, since most cake recipes call for no more than a teaspoon or two of vanilla.

This chapter makes clear how important a minister could be in a small town. The Allans are treated almost like celebrities, with Avonlea families vying to entertain them. It's Mrs. Allan who gets Anne's attention, though. Along with Miss Stacy, Mrs. Allan will become a tremendously important person in Anne's life.

Something else the chapter reveals is [Matthew Cuthbert](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/character-analysis/#Matthew_Cuthbert) is more than ordinarily shy. He seems almost pathologically so. Marilla can't tell him the Allans are going to visit, and Anne must work hard to draw him out. Indeed he was "in such a state of shyness and nervousness that Marilla had given him up in despair, but Anne took him in hand."

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

***Summary Part 1:***

On the last day of school, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) comes home with red eyes. She didn’t like [Mr. Phillips](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) that much, yet she couldn’t help crying over his farewell speech when the other girls did. She’s excited about summer vacation and the prospect of meeting the new minister and his wife. The minister’s wife is pretty, and she even wears puffed sleeves. [Jane Andrews](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) called such sleeves “worldly,” but Anne longs for them herself and feels one should make allowances for a new minister’s wife.

***Analysis Part 1:***

It's a time of transition for Anne, as she finishes her first school year in Avonlea and meets someone who will be especially consequential in her life—the minister’s wife. Anne can’t help feeling a little conflicted about her, since she’s always longed for fashionable puffed sleeves, yet she supposes that a minister’s wife ought to be above such things.

***Summary Part 2:***

The old minister, a widower named Mr. Bentley, had resigned the previous February, followed by a long period of candidates taking turns preaching each Sunday. [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) had strong opinions about each of these. She is pleased that [Mr. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) has been chosen, because she thought his sermon was interesting and that “he prayed as if he meant it,” not just out of habit. [Mrs. Lynde](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde) has also interrogated the new minister on his theology and is satisfied that his wife is a good housekeeper.

***Analysis Part 2:***

While Mrs. Lynde upholds more conventional standards, Anne thinks that sincerity—not just acting out of habit, but really “meaning it”—is the most important thing about a person’s religious faith, and she perceives that Mr. Allan meets that standard.

***Summary Part 3:***

The new minister and his wife are enthusiastic young newlyweds, and Avonlea embraces them both instantly. In [Mrs. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-allan), [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) quickly discovers a “kindred spirit.” She becomes Anne’s Sunday school teacher, and she invites the girls to ask as many questions as they like. Anne is also inspired by Mrs. Allan’s cheerfulness—it contrasts with [Mr. Bell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters)’s solemnity. Mrs. Allan seems happy to be a Christian, making Anne realize that religion doesn’t have to be a melancholy thing.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Mrs. Allan becomes the next “kindred spirit” in Anne’s life. For Anne, there’s a slight distinction between a bosom friend and a kindred spirit—while a bosom friend is more like a best friend, a kindred spirit is someone who sees the world in a similar way. Mrs. Allan also gives Anne a warm, personable vision of Christianity that she is happy to aspire to, unlike the more solemn, remote ones she’s mostly witnessed in the past.

***Summary Part 4:***

When [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) plans to have the Allans over for tea, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) begs for permission to bake a special cake for the occasion, and Marilla agrees, since Anne’s baking has improved over the past year. Anne relishes the whirlwind of preparations for this important visit. She tells [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) of the various jellies, pies, preserves, cakes, and biscuits they’ve been making. She’s frightened that her cake will turn out poorly.

***Analysis Part 4:***

In a small town like Avonlea where most people’s lives revolve around the local church, inviting the minister’s family over for tea would be a landmark event. Anne wants to do her part to impress the Allans.

***Summary Part 5:***

On the day of the Allans’ visit, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) wakes up with a bad cold from playing at the spring the night before, but her excitement is undiminished. After breakfast she bakes her cake, and to her delight, it turns out beautifully. She even wins [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert)’s permission to decorate the table with ferns and roses, and she is ecstatic when she sees [Mrs. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-allan)’s approving smile. Even shy [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert), gently coaxed by Anne, comes to the table and talks with the minister.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The Allans’ visit seems to be going as well as Anne could hope for—her cake is a success, and her kindred spirit, Mrs. Allan, approves of her efforts. It seems to be the rare occasion when everything is going just right for Anne.

***Summary Part 6:***

When it’s time for cake, [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) encourages the guests, though they’re stuffed from the other food, to try some for [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley)’s sake. [Mrs. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-allan) cheerfully takes a slice, but as soon as she tastes it, her expression turns strange. Nevertheless she keeps eating. Marilla quickly samples the cake and demands to know what Anne put into it. Blushing, Anne insists it was only vanilla. Indeed, when she checks the pantry, she finds a clearly-labeled bottle of vanilla. But when Marilla opens it, she immediately smells that it’s actually anodyne liniment—she’d broken the liniment bottle last week and poured the remainder into an old vanilla bottle. Anne couldn’t smell it because of her cold.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Just as things appear to be going without mishap, however, it becomes clear that something has gone awry with Anne’s cake—it’s flavored with liniment oil, a topical medicine for use on aches and pains.

***Summary Part 7:***

Anne flees to her room in tears. When she hears footsteps approaching, Anne wails that she’ll never live down this catastrophe. And she’ll never be able to face [Mrs. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-allan) again. But when she hears a cheerful voice say, “Suppose you jump up and tell her so yourself,” she sees that Mrs. Allan has come to check on her. Mrs. Allan is troubled by Anne’s distress and assures her it was only a mistake. She coaxes Anne downstairs to show her the flower garden, and in the end, Anne enjoys the visit. Later, Anne reflects to [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) that it’s comforting to know she never makes the same mistake twice, and eventually she’ll have to run out of new ones. Marilla tells her to feed the remaining cake to the pigs.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Because Anne has wanted so much to impress Mrs. Allan, this catastrophe is particularly embarrassing. But Mrs. Allan is indeed a kindred spirit—she has the sympathy, kindness, and sense of humor to put Anne at ease over the mistake. For her part, Anne is beginning to understand the potential value of mistakes—they help a person learn how to do better the next time, and ideally a person will be able to avoid the same mistakes in the future.