***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 25***

### ***Matthew Insists on Puffed Sleeves***

***Summary:***

* Matthew watches Anne with a bunch of her friends one night and sees that she looks different from them, but he can't figure out why.
* After smoking his pipe for a while, he realizes it's because she's dressed differently than them.
* He even realizes that their sleeves are somehow different. He decides to get Anne a fashionable dress for Christmas.
* In town, Matthew has two stores to choose from. He avoids his usual store because there are female clerks there. Remember how afraid he is of women?
* He gets to the other store, but there's a woman at the counter there, too, named Miss Hammond. She's very fashionable. Poor Matthew is already flustered.
* He keeps trying to ask for the dress, but chickens out at the last minute. He winds up asking for rakes, hayseed (a spring product in the middle of winter), and twenty pounds of brown sugar, which, when he brings home, really confuses Marilla.
* Matthew decides to go to the only other woman he can talk to in Avonlea—Mrs. Lynde.
* Mrs. Lynde knows what he's talking about right away and promises to make Anne something in the latest fashion.
* She's privately been thinking this whole time that Marilla was dressing Anne ridiculously, so she's happy to get involved.
* When Anne sees the dress, she's so happy that she cries. She also gets slippers from Aunt Josephine, which she can wear when she plays a fairy in the concert.
* The concert goes well and Matthew and Marilla sit together after Anne goes to bed, talking about how proud they are of her.
* Marilla admits that concerts aren't so bad and Matthew points out that Anne may need more schooling after Avonlea.
* They start thinking about sending her to Queen's Academy, a school where students can get their teaching certificate, and for some, an education that makes them eligible to get into a university.

***Synopsis:***

Matthew shyly watches Anne among her friends as they put on caps and jackets. Unsure of how but being sure of it just the same, Matthew notices that Anne is unlike her friends in some respect. After much reflection and two hours of smoking his pipe, Matthew hits on it: Anne was dressed differently than other girls due to Marilla keeping "her so plainly and soberly gowned." Matthew resolves to give Anne a dress for Christmas. Flustered in his attempt to shop for a dress, coming home with twenty pounds of brown sugar and a garden rake in its stead, Matthew petitions Mrs. Lynde to make a dress "in the new way." Mrs. Lynde is pleased to make the dress, having noticed the plain style of dress that Marilla makes for Anne. The woman is touched that Matthew would be the one to take notice: "That man is waking up after being asleep for over sixty years." Marilla feels the dress is frivolous and will only flatter Anne's vanity, but on Christmas morning the dress, a brown gloria with lace at the neck and puffed sleeves with silk ribbon, delights Anne beyond imagination. Further delighted on receiving slippers with buckles and bows from Aunt Josephine, Anne goes on to revel in her performance at the Christmas concert. The Cuthberts attend their first concert in twenty years. Marilla is proud of Anne, although she won't tell her. Matthew is proud of Anne as well, and does tell her so. One thing the brother and sister do agree on is that they need to think of her education beyond Avonlea.

Anne has brought new light into Matthew's life, waking him up after sixty years in Mrs. Lynde's estimation. And while Marilla cannot see her way to flatter Anne's vanity, even she feels a swell of pride in her performance and appearance in the concert she previously disdained as frivolous. The two must now set their minds to the best course for the bright young girl's education.

***Significance:***On a cold December evening, Matthew enters the kitchen and realizes too late that Anne and her friends are already there conducting a rehearsal of “The Fairy Queen” in preparation for the Christmas concert. Shy of all the little girls, he stays silently in the corner until they leave. While observing the group, Matthew notices that Anne is dressed differently from her friends. He becomes convinced that she needs more fashionable clothing and goes into the town of Carmody to find a bright dress with puffed sleeves. Shopping is not an easy task for such a shy man, but Matthew summons his courage and goes to Samuel Lawson’s store, which he thinks will not have a female clerk at the desk. Much to Matthew’s dismay, he finds that Samuel Lawson has hired a female clerk, Miss Lucilla Harris.

Matthew is too scared to ask Miss Harris for fashion advice, and asks for twenty pounds of brown sugar and a garden rake before making his escape. Matthew eventually asks Mrs. Rachel for help, and she picks out a rich brown fabric and uses a fashionable pattern to make Anne’s dress. Mrs. Rachel has often wondered why Marilla dresses Anne so plainly and is happy to have a part in updating Anne’s wardrobe. On Christmas Day, Matthew unveils the dress, complete with puffed sleeves. Diana comes over with a present from Aunt Josephine for Anne: delicate slippers. Anne is delighted by her beautiful new garments.

Anne’s Christmas concert is the first one Matthew and Marilla have been to in twenty years. Anne, wearing her new dress and shoes, is the star of the show. Both Cuthberts are swollen with pride. Matthew immediately tells Anne how proud he is of her, but Marilla decides not to compliment Anne.***Critical Study:***

One day, when the Christmas concert is drawing near, Matthew sees Anne and her friends rehearsing and has a sudden thought that Anne looks different from the other girls. He first thinks it’s something about her delicate, lively facial features, but after pondering it for a few hours, he realizes that Anne is not dressed like the other girls. Marilla always dresses Anne in plain colors, all in the same pattern, and never with puffed sleeves. Matthew decides that he will buy Anne a pretty dress and give it to her as a Christmas present.

Matthew goes to Carmody, a nearby town, to buy the material for the dress. When he and Marilla shop in Carmody, it is always at the store of a man called William Blair. However, Matthew will need advice about the fabric at the store, and he knows that women work at William Blair’s store. Since Matthew petrified of talking to women, he decides to go instead to Lawson’s, where he thinks only men work. To Matthew’s chagrin, a woman has recently been hired to work at Lawson’s, and Matthew is so flustered that he asks her for a number of things he does not actually need. He leaves the store without having bought the fabric, and when he gets home, Marilla is flabbergasted at his buying brown sugar when she rarely cooks with it.

Matthew decides he needs to ask a woman to deal with buying fabric and making the dress, so he goes to [Mrs. Rachel Lynde](https://www.gradesaver.com/anne-of-green-gables/study-guide/character-list#mrs-rachel-lynde). Mrs. Rachel is happy to help since she, too, has thought that Marilla makes Anne dress in clothes that are too plain. On Christmas Eve, Mrs. Rachel brings Anne’s new dress to Green Gables. Marilla thinks to herself that she knew Matthew was up to something and that Anne will become even vainer with these ridiculously large puffed sleeves. The next morning, Matthew gives Anne the dress and she cries with joy.

After breakfast, Anne goes to Diana’s house to wish her Merry Christmas and show her the dress. When she arrives, Diana shows Anne that [Aunt Josephine](https://www.gradesaver.com/anne-of-green-gables/study-guide/character-list#aunt-josephine) sent Anne a gift: fancy slippers for Anne to wear in the Christmas concert. The Christmas concert goes off without a hitch, and the narrator even notes that “Anne was the bright particular star of the occasion” (p. 255). Diana tells Anne that her recitations were beautiful and moving and that she saw Gilbert pick up a flower that fell out of Anne’s hair and put it in his pocket. Anne once again tells Diana never to speak to her about Gilbert.

At Green Gables, Matthew and Marilla both discuss how proud they are of Anne’s performance. Matthew brings up that they will need to think about paying for Anne to go to school after finishing the courses at the Avonlea school, and Marilla says that it may be best to send her to Queen’s teaching college. However, Marilla says they shouldn’t talk to Anne about this for a year or two since she will only be thirteen in March.

***Critical Analysis:***

One December evening some of Anne's classmates come to Green Gables to rehearse for the concert. Matthew tries to stay out of the way, but when the girls are leaving, he watches from the shadows as they put on their coats and caps. Anne chatters away as happily as the rest of the girls, but Matthew is worried about something he can't explain. Anne stands out from her friends—and not in a good way. What could be the matter?

After thinking hard for a couple of hours, he figures it out. Anne is not dressed like the others. Her clothes are much plainer and soberer than theirs. He recalls even Anne's sleeves are different from the sleeves on the other girls' dresses.

Matthew has promised to leave Marilla in charge of Anne's upbringing, but Christmas is almost here. Even Marilla can't fault him for giving Anne a pretty dress as a Christmas present. The problem is he has no idea how to obtain a dress for Anne.

Next morning he heads into town bent on getting the dress search out of the way quickly, not realizing a country store won't have what he wants. After a failed attempt in which he buys a rake and 20 pounds of brown sugar Marilla doesn't need, he decides to ask Mrs. Lynde for help. Delighted to make a dress for Anne, Mrs. Lynde will pick out the fabric herself, and she'll make the sleeves as puffy as they can be. The finished result is beautiful, and tears of joy fill Anne's eyes when she opens it on Christmas morning.

She gets a second unexpected present: Diana's Aunt Josephine sends her a pair of "the daintiest little kid slippers, with beaded toes and satin bows and glistening buckles." They fit perfectly, and Anne wears them when she performs at the concert—which is a splendid success.

[Chapter 25](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/chapter-25-summary/) takes place on December 25—a nice bit of planning on [Montgomery](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/author/)'s part.

There's something unforgettable about Anne's Christmas dress, which Montgomery describes in luscious detail. After all, it's the first time the author has had a chance to indulge in one of her favorite pastimes: describing beautiful clothes. Clearly she takes as much delight in this dress as Anne does. The longed-for puffed sleeves have two puffs each! Gloria, the fabric from which the dress is made, is a silk-wool or silk-cotton blend with a satiny finish. Mrs. Lynde may not be the subtlest person, but she understands what girls like.

Anne gets a second present from Aunt Josephine, and of course the concert that evening is a huge event in her life. Still, this Christmas Day seems plainer than some. This is because the Cuthberts and their friends are Presbyterian. From the 16th century through the end of the 19th, the Presbyterian Church did not treat Christmas as a holiday, although other Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church did. Only in the 19th century did Christmas begin to tiptoe into Presbyterian homes—and it's typical of Marilla hers is not one of those homes.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

One December evening, [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) is taking off his boots in the kitchen when he hears [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) and her friends practicing their “Fairy Queen” dialogue in the next room. He’s too shy to walk in on a group of girls, so he shrinks out of sight. While he waits for the other girls to leave, he notices that there’s something that differentiates Anne from her classmates. All evening Matthew somberly smokes his pipe as he tries to put his finger on what it is. Suddenly he realizes that Anne dresses differently—[Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) always puts her in drab dresses. Matthew wonders what the harm would be in buying Anne one pretty, fashionable dress.

***Analysis Part 1:***

In his own way, Matthew is more attentive to Anne’s needs than Marilla is. Though he doesn’t know the first thing about girls or fashion, his love for Anne helps him recognize areas where she might be feeling left out. Clothing is one such area, since Marilla’s efforts to keep Anne looking plain and humble cause Anne to stand out from her peers.

***Summary Part 2:***

The next day [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) goes to Carmody to buy a dress, visiting Samuel Lawson’s store instead of William Blair’s, where he normally goes. He dreads having to deal with Blair’s daughters behind the counter and assumes a man will wait on him at Lawson’s. But when he walks in, he’s alarmed to see a fashionable lady clerk behind the counter. He’s immediately overcome with shyness and awkwardness. When she asks how she can help him, Mathew falteringly asks to see some garden rakes, then some hayseed, and finally some brown sugar. Breaking out in a sweat, he asks for 20 pounds of brown sugar. Back at home, [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) is baffled and critical of the unreasonable stockpile of sugar.

***Analysis Part 2:***

This humorously awkward scene nevertheless brings out Matthew’s great love for Anne—he’s willing to put himself in one of the most uncomfortable situations imaginable for a shy, reclusive man just to help her feel pretty and accepted by her peers. Still, purchasing material for a dress proves to be beyond him—he can ask for rakes, seed, or sugar from a lady clerk, but not a dress.

***Summary Part 3:***[Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) finally decides he must rely on a woman’s help, and since [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) would never agree, he approaches [Mrs. Lynde](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde), the only other Avonlea woman he’s not afraid of. She immediately understands his plan and agrees to buy and sew a dress as a Christmas surprise for [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley). Matthew specifically asks for puffed sleeves. Mrs. Lynde is relieved that Anne will finally have a nice dress, having feared that Marilla’s attempt to keep Anne humble would only make her envious of others in the long run. She can’t believe Matthew had the idea, though—she thinks he’s “waking up after being asleep” for 60 years.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Together Matthew and Mrs. Lynde perceive that Marilla’s strategy to build humility in Anne is likely to backfire—there’s no advantage in dressing her in drab fashions when nobody else does. Mrs. Lynde also notices how Anne is stirring Matthew’s imagination in ways that would never otherwise have happened, showing the transforming effect of Anne’s love on the household.

***Summary Part 4:***On Christmas Eve, [Mrs. Lynde](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde) delivers the new dress. [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) thinks it’s a pointless extravagance—the sleeves are wasteful, and [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) will become vain. But she doesn’t resist. Anne wakes up to a snowy Christmas morning and runs downstairs joyfully. [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) greets her with the dress, and Anne gazes at it in stunned silence—the soft brown color, the frilly skirt, ruffle of lace on the collar, and puffed elbow sleeves. Her eyes fill with tears as she tells Matthew how much she loves it.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Anne finally achieves her dream of owning a dress with puffed sleeves. Ultimately, it’s not the fashionable dress that matters most—it’s the knowledge that Matthew, of all people, saw and understood Anne’s desire and made the dream come true for her. Thus it’s another symbol of how love can transform people in unexpected ways.

***Summary Part 5:***

After breakfast, [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) runs down to Green Gables with a gift from [Aunt Josephine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/aunt-josephine-barry). It contains a Christmas card to “the [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley)-girl,” and inside is a delicate pair of leather slippers that will work perfectly for the concert tonight. The concert is a success, and everyone agrees that Anne was the star. She was frightened before her recitation, but she knew she had to live up to her puffed sleeves. Diana tells her that [Gilbert](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/gilbert-blythe) picked up a rose that had fallen out of Anne’s hair onstage, but Anne says she has no interest in “that person.”

***Analysis Part 5:***

It's a triumphant Christmas for Anne, not only because of the loving gift and the inspiration it gives her, but because of her first successful public recitation. The only thing that can spoil it is the reminder of Gilbert, who despite Anne’s stubborn scorn, continues to feel affection for her.

***Summary Part 6:***

That night, after [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) has gone to bed, [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) and [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) talk about the concert (their first such outing in 20 years). Marilla admits that Anne did well and that the concert wasn’t such a bad idea. She’s proud of Anne, though she doesn’t intend to tell her that. The Cuthberts agree that they should set aside some money for further schooling for Anne, though she’s not yet 13.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Marilla still maintains that showing too much pride or affection spoils a young girl, even though she has softened on the subject of the concert. Higher education for girls—especially in rural Prince Edward Island—was not the most common thing in the Victorian period, so the Cuthberts are forward-looking in this respect.