***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 26***

### ***The Story Club is Formed***

***Summary:***

* Life feels flat and unexciting to the Avonlea students after the Christmas concert.
* Fast forward a few weeks to when Anne turns thirteen. She and Diana are walking through the woods talking about their composition assignments. They're supposed to write a story.
* Diana's daunted by the assignment, but Anne's already done hers.
* Anne tells Diana her entire amazingly melodramatic story. It's about two friends, Cordelia Montmorency and Geraldine Seymour, who love the same man, Bertram DeVere.
* We won't spoil the ending for you, but it's a tragedy.
* Anne and Diana start a story club where they write stories for practice. Eventually they add two other friends, Jane Andrews and Ruby Gillis.
* Jane's stories are too sensible, Ruby's have too much love in them, and Diana's have too many murders (according to Anne). But they all have a good time. They also send the stories to Josephine, who's very amused.

***Synopsis:***

Anne turns thirteen, and looks forward to the day when she is really grown up and can use big words. Gossiping with Diana, Anne is disdainful of Ruby Gillis's girlhood crushes, but relishes writing a swirling romance for a school composition. Diana says she feels stifled in trying to write a story entirely out of her own head, so Anne proposes a story club where they are to write compositions to "cultivate" their imaginations. Anne adopts the *nom de plume* Rosamond Montmorency, Marilla finding the whole business to be nonsense. Anne explains that every story has a moral, elevating their purpose to a "wholesome effect." Unable to convince Marilla of the value in her work, Anne takes heart in Mrs. Allan's admission that she was herself once a mischief making little girl.

Anne and Marilla's sensibilities once again clash in the writing of Anne's florid compositions: "Marilla is such a sensible woman. It must be a great deal better to be sensible; but still, I don't believe I'd really want to be a sensible person, because they are so unromantic." In Mrs. Allan, Anne has found someone who not only indulges her imagination but encourages it, channeling it into writing compositions. Anne takes further comfort in knowing that Mrs. Allan, her ideal of perfect goodness, was not always so good herself as a child.

***Significance:***After the excitement of the Christmas concert, the Avonlea students return to their normal, humdrum patterns. Anne, now almost thirteen, vows to improve herself by imitating Mrs. Allan, refraining from saying uncharitable things and trying to do good.

For school, the students are assigned to write a piece of fiction and a composition about a walk in the winter. These assignments displease Marilla because they rely on imagination rather than memorization. They elate Anne, however, and she completes her original story early. Diana moans that she does not have enough imagination to do the assignment. To help Diana cultivate her imagination and to practice her own writing, Anne proposes that the two girls start a story club. Two of their friends, Jane Andrews and Ruby Gillis, eventually join, and the girls spend their time inventing romantic, melodramatic storylines.***Critical Study:***

After the Christmas concert, Anne finds it hard to get back to normal, boring school days. However, as the winter progresses, things do go back to normal, and soon, it is March and time for Anne’s birthday. Anne feels very grown-up because she is thirteen, meaning that she is now a teenager. Anne tells Diana on a walk to school that she is trying to be like Mrs. Allan, the minister’s wife. The two girls talk about coming milestones, such as being old enough to have a boyfriend at age fifteen and putting one’s hair up at age sixteen or seventeen.

Anne and Diana switch to talking about school. Miss Stacy often assigns compositions; for this Monday, the students are to write a story out of their own heads. Anne says that she has already written hers and tells Diana the plot, which is about friendship, love, betrayal, and death. Diana is amazed and envious at Anne’s imagination, and Anne suddenly has the idea to create a story club where students from the Avonlea school can write stories, read them to one another, and discuss them. When Anne tells Marilla about the story club, Marilla says it is a waste of time. Anne tells Marilla that she is somewhat annoyed that when she shows her stories to adults like Miss Stacy and Aunt Josephine, they find them amusing rather than tragic. However, she feels that she is doing good in the world by cheering up Aunt Josephine, and she reflects again that she is trying to become a good person like Mrs. Allan. Anne says Mrs. Allan told her she used to be mischievous when she was a little girl, and that gave Anne faith that she, too, can grow up to be good.

***Critical Analysis:***

Anne and her friends find life flat and dull after the excitement of the previous weeks. "I'm afraid concerts spoil people for everyday life," she mourns. But gradually life returns to normal and the daily dramas of school life assume their former importance.

The winter passes quickly, and Anne's 13th birthday arrives in March. She's staggered by this milestone. As she and Diana walk through the woods—Miss Stacy has assigned the class a composition called "A Winter's Walk in the Woods," and they're doing research—they gossip about their classmates. Josie Pye is as annoying as ever. Ruby Gillis thinks of nothing but boys. Alice Bell is already putting her hair up at 16, but Anne and Diana think it's ridiculous not to wait until they're 17.

Diana sighs that it will be easy enough to write about the woods, but she's dreading Miss Stacy's next assignment: "to write a story out of our own heads!" Anne's story has been finished for a week. "I just cried like a child while I was writing it," she says. It's a romance called "The Jealous Rival; or In Death Not Divided," and features girls named Cordelia and Geraldine who, unfortunately, both love a man named Bertram DeVere. Marilla thinks it's nonsense, but Matthew thinks it's fine. "That is the kind of critic I like," says Anne.

Diana is filled with admiration. If only her imagination were as good as Anne's! Diana's words give Anne an idea. Why not form a story club, with each member writing one story a week? The club is a success. Each girl uses a pen name. (Anne's is Rosamond Montmorency.) They read the stories and then discuss them. "We are going to keep them all sacredly and have them to read to our descendants," Anne tells Marilla. Ruby Gillis puts in too much lovemaking, Jane's efforts are too sensible, and Diana relies too much on murders. As a rule Anne has to come up with plots for everyone, but that's easy for her.

Marilla scoffs, "This story-writing business is the foolishest yet." Anne answers earnestly each story must include a moral. Strangely Aunt Josephine and the Allans laugh when they read some of the stories. Anne has no idea why.

June was [Montgomery](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/author/)'s favorite month, arriving "as the winter months slipped by." Indeed almost half the chapters take place in June. But she doesn't seem to have much to say about winter. A later chapter mentions "a jolly, busy, happy swift-flying winter." Later still, when Anne is studying at Queen's, she marvels "a whole winter of studies and classes" has gone by so fast.

Anne's and Diana's conversation about Alice Bell's hair is typical for the period. A similar conversation today might be about the age at which children should be allowed to get their ears pierced. In the Victorian era women's hair was an even more important part of their appearance than it is now. Girls were expected not to cut their hair if possible. A photo of Montgomery as a child shows her with hair down to her hips; in many photos of older girls and women, their hair almost reaches the floor. Girls left their hair loose or braided it. When they were old enough—usually from 15 to 17—they put it up in a variety of styles. Four feet of hair bunched on the tops of their heads must have been heavy.

The cover of the first edition of *Anne of Green Gables* featured a lovely woman whose hair is styled in a pompadour—a loose bun swept back from her forehead. The model for this image was a young woman named Evelyn Nesbit, who would later be caught up in a scandalous affair with the architect Stanford White. The image itself appeared in a 1903 issue of *Metropolitan* magazine, to which Montgomery subscribed. It's clearly intended to be Anne as a young lady, which may have been a marketing device. Both Montgomery and her publisher hoped adults as well as children would read the book. While girls would read a book with a young woman on the cover, young women might not be attracted to a cover showing a little girl.

As Anne and Diana discuss Alice Bell's hair, they can't know Anne will dye her own hair green in the following chapter. Anne's hair is long and thick at the moment; after the dye adventure, she won't be able to think about "putting it up" for years.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

After the concert, life seems terribly dull to [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley). Aside from some quarrels and rivalries sparked by the event, however, life in Avonlea school soon returns to normal. Later that winter, Anne turns 13. She and [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) walk to school through the woods, wondering what it will be like to be “really grown up” in two years. Two years after that, the girls will be considered old enough to wear their hair up, in adult style. They continue to chat and gossip about their classmates and hopes for the future. Anne has to remind herself not to make “uncharitable speeches” about the classmates she dislikes, like [Josie Pye](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters). [Mrs. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-allan) says people should never speak uncharitably of one another, and Anne wants to be just like Mrs. Allan.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Though it still sounds quite young and not particularly “grown up,” fifteen marked the age at which young people began to date, participate more in social activities, and begin to think about life beyond school—hence Anne’s and Diana’s eager daydreams about it at age 13. Mrs. Allan continues to be Anne’s model for what she wants to be like when she’s grown up—showing that for Anne, being grown up isn’t simply a matter of being able to go courting or wearing one’s hair up, but of aspiring to good character as well.

***Summary Part 2:***

The girls take note of their surroundings as they walk—they’re assigned to write a nature-themed composition for [Miss Stacy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/miss-muriel-stacy). But Miss Stacy is also requiring them to write an original story soon, and [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) dreads this because she thinks she has no imagination. [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley), on the other hand, has already written her story (“The Jealous Rival; or, In Death Not Divided”) about two maidens named Cordelia and Geraldine. In the story, a handsome young man named Bertram saves Geraldine’s life and proposes to her. (Anne asked her friend [Ruby](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) about her older sister’s marriage proposal but decided it was insufficiently romantic, so she made Bertram’s much more flowery.) Meanwhile, Cordelia is secretly in love with Bertram and one day pushes her rival to her death in a river. When Bertram jumps in to save Geraldine, they drown in each other’s arms. Cordelia then goes insane and spends the rest of her life in an asylum.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Under Miss Stacy’s tutelage, Anne’s imagination receives a more suitable channel: story-writing. Though Anne’s hilariously dramatic story of Cordelia and Geraldine isn’t particularly vital to the plot, it’s a good example of how Anne’s imagination works at this point—it’s vivid and detailed, but still overdramatic (and not showing a very mature understanding of romance, to say the least).

***Summary Part 3:***[Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) is deeply impressed by [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley)’s story and wishes she had such an imagination. Anne encourages her with the hope that she could cultivate one. She decides they should start a story club in order to practice. At first it’s just the two of them, but eventually it expands to include [Jane Andrews](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters), [Ruby Gillis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters), and a few others. Each girl writes one story per week, then reads her story aloud for the others to critique. Anne tells [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) that she usually has to give the others ideas. Ruby’s stories always have too much romance, Jane’s are too sensible, and Diana’s have too many murders, since she doesn’t know what else to do with her characters. Marilla thinks this all sounds like nonsense, but Anne assures her that the stories are always wholesome and that she insists on putting a moral into each one. (The Allans agree, although when Anne read them her story, they laughed at the wrong moments.)

***Analysis Part 3:***

From her own experience as an orphan, Anne cultivated her own imagination. Now she encourages her friends to do the same, showing that she’s able to direct her imagination in useful ways toward others. The girls’ stories are still quite immature and silly (hence the Allans’ inability to withhold laughter).

***Summary Part 4:***The club also sent four of the best stories to [Aunt Josephine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/aunt-josephine-barry), who said she’d never read anything so amusing. The girls were confused by this reaction, since they’d been trying to be “pathetic.” [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) says that at least she knows the story club is doing something good for the world, which [Mrs. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-allan) says should be everyone’s goal. Anne tells [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) that Mrs. Allan got into lots of mischief when she was a little girl, and that knowing this encourages her; maybe someday she, too, will be good like Mrs. Allan. Marilla tells her to stop chattering and finish washing the dishes.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Anne uses “pathetic” in the sense of pathos, or a sad, pitiful quality—one that can be quite funny when overdone, as Aunt Josephine’s reaction suggests. Still, Anne achieves her goal of making others’ lives better through the use of her imagination. She is also encouraged to learn that, although she’s always thought of Mrs. Allan as being “naturally good,” Mrs. Allan also had to make mistakes and grow just like Anne does, which gives Anne hope.