***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 29***

### ***An Epoche in Anne’s Life***

***Summary:***

* Aunt Josephine invites Anne and Diana to visit her and attend the Exhibition, which is like a giant fair.
* Diana schemes to have her parents to ask Marilla so she'll let Anne go.
* Marilla relents, just like she has recently relented on fashionable clothes. (Anne has a bunch of them now.)
* Anne and Diana stay in Aunt Josephine's mansion, which is called Beechwood.
* The Exhibition is fun—Anne and Diana watch Avonlea folks win prizes for cooking and farming. They also watch a horse race and have their fortunes told.
* They get to sleep in Aunt Josephine's spare room, but it's a disappointment compared to the majesty of spare rooms in Anne's imagination.
* The next night, they see a singer perform opera, which makes Anne cry. Then they eat ice cream.
* Diana says she was meant for city life, but after thinking about the issue, Anne decides she likes Green Gables better.
* Marilla definitely prefers Anne to no Anne. When Anne returns, Marilla tells her she's glad to see her and greets her with a homey chicken dinner.

***Synopsis:***

On a beautiful September evening, Anne is bringing the cows back from the pasture when she runs into Diana, who has exciting news: Aunt Josephine has invited the two girls to her mansion in Charlottetown to see an exhibition, an event similar to a fair. The girls go to Aunt Josephine’s estate, called Beechwood, and they relish their drive. The house is richly decorated, with silk curtains, velvet carpets, and a spare bedroom specially made up for them. Anne finds that these luxuries, which she has dreamed about and yearned for, are actually disappointing and alienating in real life. She reflects later to Marilla that part of growing up is realizing that “[t]he things you wanted so much when you were a child don’t seem half so wonderful to you when you get them.”

The exhibition is exciting, with its displays of knitted lace, flowers, vegetables, and horseracing. Afterward, when Anne laments that she will have difficulty returning to normal life, Aunt Josephine offers to take the girls to a fancy restaurant for ice cream at eleven P.M. This restaurant visit comes to represent the excitement of city life to Anne. Upon returning home, Anne decides she would rather be sleeping in bed at Green Gables than gallivanting around a city.

***Significance:***Anne is greeted by Diane while bringing home the cows from the back pasture. With much excitement, Diane extends an invitation from Aunt Josephine to visit with her in town for the Exhibition. The two girls conspire to have Mrs. Barry ask for Marilla's permission, being harder to say no to Mrs. Barry than Anne. Anne, wearing a dress hand sewn by Marilla who makes them in the latest fashion now, hurried over to the Barrys the following Tuesday morning. Enchanted by the elegance of Aunt Josephine's house, the many competitions, the horse races viewed from the grand stand, and a man taking flight in a balloon and fortunes told by the whims of a little bird the two girls return to Miss Barry's in a state of exhaustion to retire to the spare room. The next evening Aunt Josephine treats the girls to a concert at the Academy of Music, where Anne is so transported that ice cream at the restaurant across the street is required to bring her back to "common life." Diana declares she is born for city life but Anne, after much thought, decides she would rather know "even in my sleep that the stars were shining outside and that the wind was blowing in the firs across the brook." Returning to Marilla and Matthew, and the familiar warmth of Green Gables, Anne is as glad to be home as Marilla and Matthew are to receive her.

At last, Anne enjoys the privilege of the spare room, only to be disappointed by her girlish expectations, and the maturing Anne supposes that growing up means leaving behind some childhood fantasies. Anne returns to Green Gables exhilarated by all that she has seen and experienced in town. While her senses were delighted, she is most glad to have met Mrs. Lynde's familiar face amongst a sea of strangers, and admits that ice cream at a restaurant is nice on occasion but she would miss the stars and the brook. As the buggy nears Green Gables, you can feel Anne stir. The trip "marks an epoch" in Anne's life, but "the best of it all was the coming home."

***Critical Study:***

It is fall again in Avonlea, and Anne is bringing cows back to Green Gables when she sees Diana walking toward her. Diana has good news: Aunt Josephine has invited both Diana and Anne to visit her in Charlottetown and see the Exhibition. Anne thinks that Marilla will say she can’t go, but Diana says she will have her mother ask Marilla. Anne still withholds her excitement, but she reflects that she is glad Marilla now makes her fashionable clothes, ever since Matthew had Mrs. Rachel Lynde make her a dress for Christmas.

Marilla agrees that Anne can go on the trip to Charlottetown. Anne gets up early on Tuesday and goes to Diana’s house, where they set off with Mr. Barry. The girls enjoy the drive and they are soon in Charlottetown. Aunt Josephine greets them and tells Anne how much better-looking she is now. Anne and Diana, being “little country girls” (p. 293), are dazzled by her beautiful house. Anne and Diana sleep over that night and spend all of Wednesday at the Exhibition. There are competitions for food and crafts, and Anne is proud of how many people from Avonlea win their categories. Aunt Josephine takes girls to watch horse races, where Anne refuses to bet. After that, the girls have their fortunes told, and Anne’s fortune says that she will marry a rich, dark-complected man. To end the day, the girls sleep in Aunt Josephine’s spare room as Anne was promised, though she finds it is not as exciting as she imagined it would be when she was young.

On Thursday, Aunt Josephine takes the girls to the park and then to see a concert. After the concert, they get ice cream, and Diana says that she was born for city life. Upon reflection, Anne says she was not born for city life, and she is glad for that. On Friday, Mr. Barry comes back and the girls return to Avonlea. When Anne arrives back at Green Gables, Marilla has prepared a nice dinner to welcome Anne home. Anne tells Marilla and Matthew after dinner that she had a great trip, but the best part was coming home.

***Analysis:***

Diana comes to Anne with wonderful news: Aunt Josephine has invited the two girls to spend a few days with her in town so they can visit the Exhibition (the Prince Edward Island equivalent of a state fair). Anne is delighted but also sure Marilla won't let her go. After all, Marilla "can't encourage gadding about." Diana suggests her mother rather than Anne herself ask Marilla, and permission is granted.

On the following Tuesday the girls arrive at Beechwood, Aunt Josephine's dauntingly elegant house. "Their visit ... crowded with delights," the girls spend all the next day at the Exhibition. Several Avonlea residents win prizes at various exhibits—including Mr. Bell, whose pig wins a blue ribbon. Aunt Josephine takes them to a horse race, where they're almost tempted to bet. They watch a man go up in a balloon and have their fortunes told. On Thursday the girls have a drive in the park and that evening attend a concert at the Academy of Music. "To Anne the evening was a glittering vision of delight"—and Aunt Josephine takes them for ice cream afterward.

When it's time to leave, Anne delights Aunt Josephine by hugging her and kissing her cheek. The girls are happy to be going back to Avonlea. At Green Gables, Marilla has a broiled chicken waiting for Anne. Anne says, "I've had a splendid time ... But the best of it all was the coming home."

There's something succulent about this chapter's being entirely devoted to fun. Anne doesn't have to learn any painful lessons. There's no moral. Like the girls' visit, this chapter is crowded with delights from first to last.

Exhibitions are the Canadian equivalent of state and county fairs and feature various competitions. Anne's favorites are the horses, fancywork, and flowers; other "departments" would feature competitions in baking, animal husbandry, sewing, and the fine arts. Nowadays, fairs usually have rides and midways in addition to the domestic competitions. As this chapter shows, horse races were a favorite.

Anne regularly mentions familiar people and places when she describes her adventures at the Exhibition. "I never knew how much I really liked [Mrs. Rachel] until I saw her familiar face among all those strangers," she says. Anne refuses to bet at the horse race "because I wanted to tell Mrs. Allan ... It's always wrong to do anything you can't tell the minister's wife." Anne is really a homebody at heart.

This chapter foreshadows Anne's Queen's examination later in the book and has a similar structure. Anne feels insignificant among so many strangers, has trouble sleeping in a strange bed, does well and makes the most of her stay, and returns home happily. She's a small-town girl, but she can thrive in strange new environments.

One particular detail is curious: on the morning the girls leave for Charlottetown, Anne "hastened over the brook and up through the firs" to Diana's house, where the girls will be driven by Mr. Barry. Anne is going to be away for a few days, meaning she must be weighed down by some form of luggage—but there's no question of her being picked up by the Barrys. She's always walked to Diana's, and it's assumed by all the adults she can handle doing it with a travel bag.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

One beautiful September evening, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) leads the cows down the path at Green Gables, reciting her favorite lines from a Walter Scott poem, when [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) runs toward her with news. [Aunt Josephine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/aunt-josephine-barry) has written with an invitation for the two of them to visit her in Charlottetown for the Exhibition. Anne is delighted but afraid that [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) won’t let her go “gadding about,” so Diana says she’ll get her mother to speak to Marilla about it. Anne hopes she can go so that she can wear her new coat to town—Marilla always lets her dress fashionably these days, so that [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) won’t go behind her back about it.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Marilla has softened even more towards Anne—under Matthew’s gentle prodding, she even lets Anne dress like other girls her age. An out-of-town overnight visit is another matter, though. Better understanding how to handle Marilla’s doubts these days, they decide to let Mrs. Barry handle the invitation.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) agrees that [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) can go to Charlottetown. It’s 30 miles from Avonlea, so [Mr. Barry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) drives Anne and [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) there early in the morning. Around noon they reach [Aunt Josephine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/aunt-josephine-barry)’s shady, rambling old mansion. Aunt Josephine greets them, telling Anne she’s much prettier than she used to be. The girls are awed by the splendid mansion filled with velvet and silk decorations, though Anne decides that such luxury leaves little room for the imagination.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Sure enough, Marilla agrees to the Charlottetown trip. Despite her excitement at getting to stay with Aunt Josephine, Anne discovers that one of the joys of lacking luxury is that one can imagine it. When a person has everything they dream of, there’s less to hope for an imagine.

***Summary Part 3:***The next day, the girls attend the Exhibition, where they enjoy the exhibits of horses, flowers, and needlework; a few Avonlea folks take prizes in different contests. They even attend the horse races (though [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) refuses to place a bet, wanting to be able to tell [Mrs. Allan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-allan) everything later) and have their fortunes told. Sleeping in the spare room isn’t quite the thrill Anne has always imagined it would be: “the worst of growing up,” Anne decides, is that childhood dreams don’t seem nearly so wonderful when they’re actually fulfilled. They finish off the visit by hearing a prima donna sing at the music academy and having late-night ice cream. Anne decides that city life isn’t really for her. She also dislikes the way [Aunt Josephine](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/aunt-josephine-barry) laughs at even her most solemn statements. But she loves the old lady and boldly kisses her cheek before they leave. Aunt Josephine is a selfish old lady who mostly looks at other people as sources of amusement, but she realizes that if she had someone as sweet as Anne around, she’d be “a better and happier woman.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

The “Exhibition” is something akin to an Island-wide agricultural fair. One of the greatest excitements of the visit is the delight of being hosted in a spare bedroom—though Anne discovers this isn’t as exciting as she’d imagined it to be when she was younger. But growing up involves the realization that sometimes, dreams aren’t quite what one has always hoped they’d be. Nevertheless, the visit is a delight, for Aunt Josephine most of all—Anne’s sweetness disrupts her typically selfish attitudes about people.

***Summary Part 4:***[Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) and [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/diana-barry) enjoy reliving the whole trip during the drive home, but the Green Gables homecoming is the biggest joy to Anne. [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) has a nice supper waiting for Anne and admits she’s been lonely for the past four days. Anne tells Marilla and [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) all about the trip and says it “marks an epoch in my life.” But coming home was the very best of it.

***Analysis Part 4:***

The whole trip to Charlottetown, despite the many delights it held for Anne, has made her realize that certain things are even better than adventure and imagination: the familiar comforts of home. Now that home is a reality for her, she doesn’t have to rely on imagination as much as she once did.