***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 4***

### ***Morning at Green Gables***

***Summary:***

* Anne wakes up and takes in the sights from her window: a large cherry tree, a garden, a clover-filled field, a brook, barns, fields, and a glimpse of the sea. No wonder she wants to stay.
* She's also in a better mood. As Marilla comes in to wake her and they have breakfast, she tells Marilla that she's glad there's a brook at Green Gables, and "Isn't it a splendid thing that there are mornings?" (4.15).
* She's still sad, she says, but she eats breakfast and talks endlessly.
* Marilla tells her to stop talking, but Anne's weird, spacey silence makes her even more nervous. Later Marilla tells Anne to go outside but Anne refuses, because leaving will be harder the more she falls in love with the place.
* Marilla thinks about how Matthew wants to keep Anne and feels herself falling under Anne's spell too, wondering what Anne will say next.
* Marilla and Anne set out for Mrs. Spencer's to figure out what happened and what to do with Anne. In his quiet way, Matthew makes it clear, when they leave, that he still wants Anne to stay.

***Synopsis:***

Anne wakes up momentarily confused by her surroundings. Her confusion turns to delight and then to disappointment as she remembers that although she is at her new home, Matthew and Marilla do not want her. Her spirits improve at the sight of the morning sunshine and a beautiful cherry tree in full bloom outside her window. Marilla yanks her out of her daydream by ordering her to get dressed. The sharpness of Marilla’s tone, we are told, belies a more gentle underlying nature, one that Anne seems to perceive and appreciate. Accustomed to an authoritarian upbringing, Anne is not cowed by Marilla’s harshness or her admonishment that Anne talks too much.

At breakfast, Anne announces that she has regained her appetite and is happy because it is morning, and mornings provide “so much scope for imagination.” Marilla hushes her, and Anne obediently quits her chattering. Throughout the silent meal Marilla feels increasingly uncomfortable, as though there is something unnatural in Anne’s silence. After breakfast, Anne declares that she will not play outside, despite the beauty of the day, because it would make her love Green Gables too much, which would cause her even more pain upon leaving. Instead, she contents herself by communing with the houseplants, one of which she names Bonny.

Throughout the morning, Marilla vents inwardly; she can tell from Matthew’s countenance that he still wants to keep Anne. She is frustrated by Matthew’s silence, and wishes he would voice his opinion so that she could defeat him with a well-reasoned argument. In the afternoon, Marilla takes Anne in the buggy to visit Mrs. Spencer and sort out the mistake. As they are departing, Matthew says that he has just hired a boy to help on the farm, an arrangement that would allow them to keep Anne. Angry, Marilla does not reply.

***Analysis (Ch1-4):***

Setting plays an important role in Anne of Green Gables. These chapters, in introducing the characters and their homes, suggest that houses reflect the personalities of their inhabitants. The Lyndes live on the main street, an appropriate place for them since Mrs. Rachel, the town snoop and gossip, likes to keep constant vigil over the activities of Avonlea. The Cuthberts live secluded on their farm, which reflects their reclusive natures. Marilla’s meticulously clean kitchen and garden reflect her own severity. Montgomery suggests we should understand the characters that people this novel by examining their homes and surroundings.

Landscape not only establishes characters’ identities; it also guides their interactions. Because Mrs. Rachel and Marilla live close to one another, they have become friends. They are not particularly compatible, but a comfortable coexistence has evolved between the two women. Mrs. Rachel’s unannounced visit to Marilla seems to be one of her regular intrusions on Green Gables. The brook that runs from Green Gables to the Lynde place is a metaphor for the relationship between the two women. Its source at the Cuthbert place is silent, formed from a network of invisible trickles of water. By the time it reaches the Lynde plot, it has become a stream, a distinct and boisterous collection of all the quiet trickles of water from Green Gables. The stream also represents the way Mrs. Rachel collects bits and pieces of news and turns them into a steady flow of gossip.

Marilla seems to consider an orphan a pair of hands rather than a child with a personality and needs. She objects to Anne because she knows Anne could not work on the farm, not because she worries that she and Matthew are inexperienced with children. The difference between Anne’s warmth and optimism and Marilla’s sternness begins a dynamic that foreshadows how much Anne causes the Cuthberts to change their routine.

Matthew and Marilla live together much like a married couple. Montgomery portrays both sister and brother as nearly sexless beings; Matthew cannot even look women in the eye, and Marilla is straitlaced and stern. However, some view their cohabitation as slightly strange. Mrs. Rachel seems scandalized at the prospect of Matthew and Marilla raising a child, perhaps in part because raising a child together suggests a married relationship. In a biographical article about her career, Montgomery wrote that incest was common in the town where she grew up; however, she makes no implication that incest exists in Matthew and Marilla’s relationship, suggesting instead that a brother and sister can live together and even, despite Mrs. Rachel’s protestations, raise a child together in a natural way. She emphasizes this point by having Anne call her new guardians “Matthew” and “Marilla” rather than “Mother” and “Father,” or even “Aunt” and “Uncle.”

***Critical Study:***

Anne wakes up feeling a little better than the night before. She spends the early morning looking out the window of the east gable at the beautiful nature outside. Marilla comes to the bedroom and tells Anne to wash up, get dressed, and come downstairs for breakfast. Anne tries her best to look nice and leave the room looking neat. After breakfast, Anne offers to wash the dishes. Marilla allows her to do so and determines that Anne is relatively skilled at doing household chores.

Marilla tells Anne that she can go outside for a couple of hours, but Anne responds that she doesn’t want to because she will fall in love with Green Gables and it will make it even harder to leave. Anne tells Marilla about the names she has already given some of the plants and trees at Green Gables. Marilla thinks to herself that Anne has cast a spell over Matthew and that she is beginning to fall under Anne’s spell as well.

That afternoon, Marilla and Anne ride in the buggy to Mrs. Spencer’s house to see about sending Anne back to the orphan asylum. As the buggy pulls away from Green Gables, Marilla sees Matthew looking after them wistfully.

***Critical Analysis:***

When Anne wakes up the next morning, she remembers her disappointment of the previous night. Still, it's such a beautiful day she can't stay sad. "I'm not in the depths of despair this morning," she tells Marilla. At breakfast she prattles on until Marilla begs her to be quiet—at which Anne completely stops talking and stares dreamily at nothing while she eats. Marilla is feeling increasingly uneasy. How can Matthew want to keep such a strange child? But after breakfast Anne does the dishes competently enough, though she refuses to play outside. She says she is "resigned to my fate now, so I don't think I'll go out for fear I'll get unresigned again."

Marilla begins to see Anne's appeal, but she is still determined to send her back to the orphanage in Nova Scotia. As she and Anne set off in the buggy, Matthew casually mentions he's hired a boy to help him for the summer, a hint there's now no need to adopt a boy—can't they just keep Anne?—but Marilla refuses to take the hint and crossly drives away.

An important moment occurs at the beginning of this chapter as Anne opens the bedroom window. The sash goes up "stiffly and creakily, as if it hadn't been opened for a long time." Then it sticks "so tight that nothing was needed to hold it up." Anne's presence is bringing symbolic fresh air into this airtight house, and once the process begins, nothing can stop it. Like the window, Anne won't be dislodged.

This chapter functions mainly as a transition between settings. There's not much action and, perhaps, a little too much of Anne's wondrous imaginings. Modern readers may squirm when Anne decides to name Marilla's geranium and the cherry tree outside her window, but she's got a poignant reason for doing so. She likes "things to have handles even if they are only geraniums. It makes them seem more like people." Once again Anne is unconsciously revealing how lonely she has been—so lonely she resorts to treating inanimate objects as friends.

In the "geranium" conversation, Anne again speaks to Marilla almost as a peer, without any of the deference that might be expected from a little orphan girl. As she explains, "You wouldn't like to be called nothing but a woman all the time." Throughout the book Marilla will often tell Anne she talks too much, but she'll never reproach her for being direct. In fact she'll later defend Anne when the girl lashes out at Mrs. Lynde. Marilla may seem stiff and severe, but she has the makings of a good guardian: she respects Anne's need to express herself.

***Significance:***

Anne wakes confused by the cherry sunshine, not sure of where she is. At first delighted by her surroundings, and then crushed by the recollection that she is to be returned, she is animated by the lovely morning. Lifting the window sash — pulled shut for some time — cherry blossoms, the apple tree orchard and lilac trees purple in flower greet her. The beauty of Green Gables lifts Anne's spirits as she surveys all that surrounds her. Over breakfast, as Marilla feels Matthew's silence gnawing at her, Anne declares the sympathetic Matthew a kindred spirit. The orphan girl proves herself useful washing the dishes but stops short when Marilla permits her to go outdoors, not wanting to become too fond of the "trees and the flowers and the orchard and the brook." Marilla is befuddled by the talkative girl, but she reluctantly acknowledges Anne's charms. Matthew announces he will hire a local boy to help on the farm, making it possible to keep Anne. Nonetheless, Marilla sets off in a fury with the orphan girl to Mrs. Spencer's (who was to have delivered the boy) for an explanation of their present circumstances.

A sensitive, precocious girl, Anne retreats from the precariousness of her circumstances into the world of fantasy: "Wasn't it a lovely place? Suppose she wasn't really going to stay here! She would imagine she was. There was scope for imagination here." Anne, all feeling and wild exuberance, has found a way to revel in sentiment without feeling the real sting of truly felt emotion.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) wakes up the next morning and remembers the awful truth of what happened last night. But the cherry tree blooming outside is so beautiful that she kneels by the window, admiring the orchard, brook, and hills of Green Gables, and imagining that she’ll get to stay here. She has seen many “unlovely places” in her life, and she can’t stop drinking in the beauty around her—until [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) enters the room and startles her with a hand on her shoulder.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Even in the midst of disappointment and heartache, Anne’s heart is open to the beauty around her, and she uses her imagination to comfort herself. Though Anne has not typically gotten to enjoy loveliness in her life, her imagination and her awareness of beauty have remained sharp, suggesting that she has a rare capacity for such things.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) interrupts [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley)’s chatter about the beauties of Green Gables and orders her downstairs for breakfast. Anne has a better appetite, saying that the sunny morning is helping her endure “affliction” cheerfully. Marilla tells her she talks too much, so she eats breakfast silently, gazing at the sky out the window. She offers to wash the dishes and accomplishes the task well enough, but then refuses to go outside when Marilla lets her; there’s no use in loving Green Gables, she says, if she isn’t going to live here.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Anne is resilient, finding reasons for happiness and hope in the face of her likely return to the orphanage. Marilla’s scolding, though it sounds cruel, also seems to be a way of distancing herself from Anne so as not to become attached to her and make her reconsider her decision to send Anne back. Similarly, fearing the grief of leaving Green Gables behind, Anne refrains from becoming too attached to its beauty.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) names the geranium on the windowsill “Bonny” and the cherry tree at her window “Snow Queen,” explaining that she likes for the things she loves to seem like people. [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) has to admit to herself that Anne is interesting, as [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) says—she seems to be “casting a spell” over them both.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Despite her distaste for anything she considers nonsense, Marilla enjoys hearing what Anne has to say. When Anne names familiar objects, it’s as if she is bringing fresh life to Green Gables.

***Summary Part 4:***

That afternoon [Matthew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/matthew-cuthbert) hitches the mare into the buggy so that [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) can see [Mrs. Spencer](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters) at White Sands and settle the matter of [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley). As she and Anne set off in the buggy, he quietly tells them that he’s planning to hire a little boy, [Jerry Buote](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters), to work for him for the summer. He lingers at the gate, watching the two wistfully as they go.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Matthew, in his quiet way, takes initiative to circumvent Marilla’s plans by hiring a farmhand—that way, Marilla has one less excuse to send Anne back to the orphanage. Matthew has clearly made up his mind that Anne belongs at Green Gables.