***Anne of Green Gables***

***Chapter 9***

### ***Mrs. Rachel Lynde Is Properly Horrified***

***Summary:***

* Back to Mrs. Rachel Lynde. Remember her? The town gossip? We're told that the only reason she hasn't visited sooner to see Anne is that she's been ill until now.
* So Mrs. Rachel Lynde arrives at Green Gables, and after describing her illness (grippe) to Marilla in great detail, she brings up Anne.
* And even before seeing her, Mrs. Lynde doesn't approve, reminding Marilla that she has no idea how to raise a child.
* Marilla calls Anne in to meet Mrs. Lynde. Anne arrives flushed from outside, still wearing her orphanage dress, with her hair all over the place.
* Mrs. Lynde tells Anne the Cuthberts couldn't have chosen her for her looks. She calls her skinny and homely (meaning ugly), points out her freckles and compares her hair color to carrots.
* Anne doesn't take it lying down. She stomps her foot, tells Mrs. Lynde she hates her, calls her a rude, impolite, unfeeling woman, and asks her how she'd feel if someone told her she was fat, clumsy, and didn't have a spark of imagination.
* Predictably, Marilla sends Anne to her room.
* But once Anne's gone, Marilla tells Mrs. Lynde that she shouldn't have been so hard on her.
* Now Mrs. Lynde is really angry. She has a lot of snide things to say to say to Marilla as she leaves the house in an outrage, including suggesting that Anne should be hit with a switch as punishment.
* Marilla can't imagine whipping a child. But she does come up with a nice, humiliating punishment: she orders Anne to apologize to Mrs. Lynde and ask for forgiveness.
* Anne refuses, saying she'd rather be locked in a dungeon. She also asks Marilla to imagine how it must have felt to hear those things, which reminds Marilla of hearing something similar when she was a child. It made her feel bad for years.
* Still, Marilla sticks to her plan and tells Anne she can't leave her room until she apologizes.

***Synopsis:***

Two weeks after Anne’s adoption, Mrs. Rachel Lynde drops by to inspect Anne. Talking with Mrs. Rachel, Marilla admits she feels affection for Anne: “I must say I like her myself ... the house seems a different place already.” Mrs. Rachel disapproves of an old maid like Marilla attempting to raise a child. When Anne comes in from outside, Mrs. Rachel sizes her up, saying, “She’s terrible skinny and homely, Marilla . . . And hair as red as carrots!” Anne flies into a fury, stomps her feet, and screams that she hates Mrs. Rachel. After calling Mrs. Rachel fat, clumsy, and devoid of imagination, she runs upstairs.

Mrs. Rachel, indignant and offended, advises Marilla to whip Anne and declares she will not visit Green Gables if she is to be treated in such a way. Rather than apologize for Anne, Marilla finds herself chastising Mrs. Rachel for being so insensitive. She is not horrified to learn that Anne has a temper; instead, Marilla is sympathetic to Anne, recognizing that she has never been taught how to behave, and she wants to laugh at Mrs. Rachel’s snobbery. When Marilla goes upstairs, she finds Anne sobbing on her bed but utterly defiant. Anne maintains she had a right to be furious at being called skinny and homely. She asks Marilla to imagine how it feels to be called such things. Marilla remembers an incident from her own childhood in which an older lady called her homely, a comment that stung for years. Despite her sympathy for Anne, Marilla thinks Anne must be punished for lashing out at a visitor. She decides not to whip Anne but to make her apologize to Mrs. Rachel. Anne refuses, saying she cannot apologize for something she does not regret.

***Critical Study(Ch1-8):***

After Anne has lived at Green Gables for a fortnight, [Mrs. Rachel Lynde](https://www.gradesaver.com/anne-of-green-gables/study-guide/character-list#mrs-rachel-lynde) comes over to see what she is like. When she arrives, Anne is playing outside. Mrs. Rachel and Lynde talk for a little while. Mrs. Rachel still thinks it is a bad idea to keep an orphan girl in one’s home, to which Marilla responds that Anne is already having a positive impact on the household. Marilla calls Anne inside to meet Mrs. Rachel Lynde. When Anne enters, Mrs. Rachel immediately begins to criticize her appearance, including her skinniness, freckles, and red hair. Anne is provoked by these insults, particularly regarding her red hair; she runs up to Mrs. Rachel, stamps her feet, and yells that she hates her. She also calls Mrs. Rachel rude and unfeeling, criticizing Mrs. Rachel’s appearance. Marilla sends Anne to her room. Anne bursts into tears, runs up to her room, and slams the door.

Marilla tells Mrs. Rachel that she will give Anne a talking-to, but she adds that Mrs. Rachel should not have insulted her. Mrs. Rachel recommends that Marilla whip Anne with a switch and says that she may not be back to visit Marilla for a while. Mrs. Rachel leaves and Marilla goes up to Anne’s bedroom. Marilla feels embarrassed at Anne’s behavior and confused as to how she should punish Anne. She does not want to whip her, but she wants to make Anne understand that she did something wrong. Marilla tells Anne that she is ashamed of her. However, Marilla thinks back to a time when her appearance was insulted as a child and how long it took her to get over that comment. Marilla tells Anne that Mrs. Rachel was too outspoken, but she adds that Anne still should never behave poorly toward an elderly guest. Marilla tells Anne that she will have to apologize to Mrs. Rachel. Anne refuses, and Marilla says Anne will have to stay in the bedroom until she decides to apologize. Marilla leaves the room and is angry with herself because she finds that she feels like laughing when she recalls Mrs. Rachel’s shocked face.

***Critical Analysis:***

[Mrs. Rachel Lynde](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/character-analysis/#Mrs._Rachel_Lynde) catches the grippe (flu) around the time Anne arrives at Green Gables and is laid up for two weeks before she's able to visit Marilla and inspect the new arrival. In those two weeks Anne has come to love the woods, orchards, and fields around her new home. She is roaming through the apple orchard when Mrs. Lynde arrives, giving the latter "an excellent chance to talk her illness fully over" and to issue a few gloomy proclamations about the dangers of bringing a strange child into the house.

When Anne comes inside, she's startled to see a stranger and stops in the doorway. Her dress is too short and skimpy, her hair is mussed, and somehow she looks more freckled than ever. Proud of speaking her mind, Mrs. Lynde immediately points out how "skinny and homely" Anne is, "and hair as red as carrots! Come here, child, I say." Anne flies across the kitchen to plant herself in front of Mrs. Lynde. Quivering with rage, she chokes out her anger: "You are a rude, impolite, unfeeling woman! ... How would you like to be told that you are fat and clumsy?"

Horrified, Marilla orders Anne up to her room. Anne stamps out, slamming the door behind her. Marilla opens her mouth to apologize. Instead, though, she finds herself saying, "You shouldn't have twitted her about her looks, Rachel ... You WERE too hard on her." Mrs. Lynde makes a dignified speech before sweeping out of the house. She recommends Marilla give Anne a good "talking to"—with a birch switch—and adds Marilla shouldn't expect her back any time soon "if I'm liable to be flown at and insulted in such a fashion."

Left alone in the kitchen Marilla realizes she's more humiliated by Anne's behavior in front of Mrs. Lynde than sorry Anne has such a temper. She makes her way up to Anne's room and asks, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" No, says Anne. Mrs. Lynde had no right to call her "ugly and redheaded"! "You hadn't any right to fly into such a fury," retorts Marilla, but Anne refuses to back down. How would Marilla "feel if somebody told you to your face that you were skinny and ugly?"

Suddenly Marilla remembers a painful scene from early childhood when she overheard someone comment on what a "dark, homely little thing" she was. She's forced to agree with Anne; Mrs. Lynde is too outspoken. Still, that character trait doesn't excuse Anne's reaction. Anne will have to go over and apologize. This Anne flatly refuses to do. Marilla tells her she'll have to stay in her room until she's willing to obey. Then she leaves Anne and heads downstairs, admitting to herself she feels "a most reprehensible desire to laugh" whenever she remembers Mrs. Lynde's dumbfounded face.

[Chapter 9](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/chapter-9-summary/) is a masterpiece of both humor and human drama. Anne gives Mrs. Lynde—a splendidly larger-than-life character—exactly what she deserves. Mrs. Lynde is properly appalled by Anne's tantrum but completely unaware she herself is responsible for Anne's rage. Marilla is torn between her sense of duty and the uncomfortable realization Mrs. Lynde was indeed rude to Anne. Anne is stung by Mrs. Lynde's remarks and knows they were glaringly personal. This may be the first time it dawns on Marilla that adults have no right to insult children; Anne feels instinctively Mrs. Lynde has crossed a line. Anne may be childishly sensitive about her hair, but her sense of justice is fully developed.

This chapter consists mostly of dialogue, and [Montgomery](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Anne-of-Green-Gables/author/) gives the three characters many good lines. Mrs. Lynde's departing speech to Marilla is pitch-perfect, full of lofty reproach and aggrieved pomposity. "I'm too sorry for you to leave any room for anger in my mind," she intones, unconscious she's bursting with rage over childless, "inexperienced" Marilla's having sided with Anne.

Marilla manages to balance embarrassment over Anne's behavior with graceful acceptance that Anne has opened her eyes to a painful truth: adults' chance remarks have real power to wound children. Asking Anne to apologize to Mrs. Lynde is fair: "She was a stranger and an elderly person and my visitor." Asking Anne to repent her action would be unreasonable.

Although Anne has already made it clear she has no trouble speaking up for herself, this is the first time she has done so with an outsider. It's comically satisfying to watch an 11-year-old scold a woman five times her age, but Montgomery is making an important point about Anne's courage. She's not afraid to speak truth to power!

In the book's first chapter, Mrs. Lynde is described as a staunch churchwoman. Throughout the book Montgomery makes it clear religious faith is a living entity, not a litany of memorized dogma. Mrs. Lynde may go to church, but in this scene she is uncharitable and unforgiving—the opposite of the way a good Christian should behave.

***Significance:***

As soon as providence and her doctor would allow, Mrs. Rachel Lynde hurried herself to Green Gables full of curiosity about the new orphan girl. A fortnight having passed since the girl's arrival, Anne had since explored every corner of the orchard, the brook and bridge. Anne was in the raptures of doing so when Mrs. Lynde arrived, having lately recovered from the grippe. Marilla reveals more of herself than she intends in telling Mrs. Lynde that she and Matthew have taken a fancy to the girl, who she finds to be a bright little thing. Anne, her windblown red hair a fright and dressed in the short wincey dress provided by the asylum, darts into the room alighted by the pleasures of the afternoon only to be called up short by the presence of a stranger. Mrs. Lynde finds the redheaded girl odd-looking, and says so.

"Well, they didn't pick you for your looks. She's terrible skinny and homely. Lawful heart, did anyone ever see such freckles?" asks Mrs. Lynde. "And hair as red as carrots!" All a tremble, Anne calls Mrs. Lynde a "rude, impolite, unfeeling woman," and is sent to her room in a fit of anger. Surprising even herself, Marilla can not help but tell Mrs. Lynde that she had been too hard on the girl. Marilla rejects Mrs. Lynde's suggestion to swat Anne with a birch switch, deciding instead that the girl must stay in her room until ready to apologize to Mrs. Lynde for her misbehavior.

The sensitivity of a little girl to her appearance and Anne's struggle with vanity is a recurring motif of the book. While Anne readily admits to many faults, she is pained to be told by others what she so plainly believes herself; that she is a homely redheaded girl. The narrator is sympathetic to Anne's youthful anxiety about appearance, and responds to Mrs. Lynde's belittlement with a bit of her own: "Mrs. Rachel swept out and away — if a fat woman who always waddled could be said to sweep away." We also learn that Marilla was likewise hurt as a child by the remarks of an aunt about her unattractiveness, a hurt that stayed with her well into adulthood. It is a vulnerability she does not share with Anne, but one that shows her trying to be sympathetic to Anne and understand her strange ways..

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

***Summary Part 1:***

After [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) has been at Green Gables for two weeks, [Mrs. Rachel Lynde](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde) visits her, having been prevented by the grippe from coming sooner. She’s heard many rumors about Anne and is eager to see the girl for herself. Though kept busy around the house, Anne has spent the past weeks becoming intimately familiar with Green Gables’ orchards, hollows, and woods and happily talking to [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) about her discoveries—prompting smiles from Matthew and occasional scolding from Marilla, who secretly finds her interesting, too.

***Analysis Part 1:***

“Grippe” is an archaic term for the flu. Mrs. Lynde, who’s been skeptical about Anne all along, arrives disposed to criticize the newcomer. Anne, meanwhile, has found little to discourage her as she’s felt more and more at home; she’s felt welcomed and accepted. She and Mrs. Lynde are set for a clash.

***Summary Part 2:***

While [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) plays in the orchard, [Rachel](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde) visits with [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert), detailing her illness and questioning Marilla on her surprising decision to keep Anne. Marilla admits that Anne’s presence has already made the house “a different place.” Mrs. Rachel looks skeptical—there’s no telling how such a child might turn out, she warns Marilla.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Already, Marilla feels that Anne has brought more to Green Gables than mere usefulness—she’s transformed the place in a way that’s hard to quantify. Mrs. Rachel still believes that an orphan is intrinsically suspect.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) calls [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) inside to meet [Rachel](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde). Fresh from her wanderings, Anne looks awkward—she’s still wearing her ill-fitting orphanage dress, her freckles stand out, and her [red hair](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/symbols/red-hair) is ruffled. Mrs. Rachel greets her with the comment, “they didn’t pick you for your looks, that’s sure.” Furthermore, she’s “skinny and homely,” and Mrs. Rachel has never seen such freckles before—or hair as red as carrots! She tells Anne to come closer.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Anne’s introduction to Mrs. Lynde could hardly be more unfortunate. She looks as disheveled as possible, and Mrs. Lynde is primed to see her faults. It must wound Anne dearly to have a stranger affirm that she is ugly, since that’s one of Anne’s deepest insecurities.

***Summary Part 4:***

In response, [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley) leaps across the room and stamps her foot, crying, “I hate you!” with each stamp. She tells [Mrs. Rachel](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde) that she’s a “rude, impolite, unfeeling woman” for speaking to her this way. How would Mrs. Rachel like to be told that she’s fat, clumsy, and without imagination? Anne says she will never forgive Rachel for hurting her feelings like this. Shocked, [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) orders Anne to her room, and Anne goes, crying and slamming her door.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Anne is keenly sensitive about her looks, and Mrs. Rachel’s abrupt criticism comes as a shock. Her words feel like a rejection, and Anne can’t restrain the hurt she feels in response.

***Summary part 5:***

[Mrs. Rachel](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde), collecting herself, tells [Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) she doesn’t envy her bringing up such a child. To Marilla’s own surprise, she tells Rachel that she shouldn’t have made fun of [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley)’s looks. She doesn’t excuse Anne’s behavior, she continues, but Rachel should remember that Anne has never been taught what’s right. As Mrs. Rachel angrily leaves, she sarcastically says that she’ll be more mindful of “the fine feelings of orphans” from now on, and she advises Marilla to give Anne a “talking to” with “a fair-sized birch switch,” the only language she thinks Anne will understand. It worked on her own 10 children, after all.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Marilla surprises even herself by hurrying to Anne’s defense, showing how sympathetic she really is toward Anne. Mrs. Rachel just sees Anne as an “orphan” whose personality and struggles she doesn’t yet appreciate, and to whom she thinks her own childrearing experience ought to apply.

***Summary part 6:***

[Marilla](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/marilla-cuthbert) slowly goes to [Anne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/anne-shirley)’s room, wondering what to do; she doesn’t believe she could follow [Mrs. Rachel](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/anne-of-green-gables/characters/mrs-rachel-lynde)’s advice to hit Anne. Finally she faces a tear-stained Anne and tells her she’s ashamed of her behavior, which Mrs. Rachel will soon repeat everywhere. Anne miserably tells Marilla that Mrs. Rachel’s criticisms enraged her—imagine being told to your face that you’re ugly. This suddenly reminds Marilla of being a small child, called “a dark, homely little thing” by an aunt. Marilla sympathizes, admitting that Rachel was too outspoken. But Anne must go to Mrs. Rachel and apologize for her temper and ask for forgiveness. Until she does that, Anne will have to stay in her room. In that case, Anne says, she’ll have to stay in her room forever. Marilla leaves Anne to think about it overnight, but as she goes downstairs, she pictures Mrs. Rachel’s face and has a terrible urge to laugh.

***Analysis part 6:***

The way Marilla deals with Anne’s misbehavior shows some important developments in Marilla’s character. For one thing, even though Anne’s outburst will inevitably fuel gossip in Avonlea, Marilla refuses to be intimidated by Mrs. Rachel’s angry opinions. She also shows herself capable of deep empathy, having endured cruel remarks as a child herself. Finally, Marilla has an unexpected sense of humor about the situation, though she doesn’t let Anne see it. Despite her strictness and rigidity in many things, Marilla is supportive and even tender towards Anne in her own way.