

# Exploring the Journey of Self Identity and Women Empowerment in Patriarchal Society in Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*

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## Abstract

*Lucy Maud Montgomery was born on November 30, 1874, in New London. She was a Canadian novelist, short story writer, and poet. One of her best novels, *Anne of Green Gables*, was a huge success. In this novel, Anne Shirley, an 11-year-old girl, is mistakenly sent to live with Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert, siblings who have planned to adopt a boy to help them with their farm, made up of the Canadian community of Avonlea. As she negotiates the difficulties of growing up in a patriarchal environment, the novel explores Anne's journey of discovery as she navigates the challenges of growing up in a patriarchal society. This novel examines the interplay of communication theories within L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, focusing on how Anne Shirley's journey reflects concepts such as interpersonal communication, identity negotiation, and self-presentation. The narrative highlights how Anne's rhetorical skills and ability to adapt her language foster connections and overcome societal barriers. By bridging the thematic elements of belonging, empowerment, and identity with communication theories, this study explores the broader implications of language in shaping relationships and self-perception in the Avonlea Community.*

**Keywords:** Orphan Wood, Rhetorical Skills, Communication, Self-identity, Women Empowerment, Patriarchal Society, Friendship, Education, Sacrifice, Female Independence

## Introduction

Anne Shirley, a young orphan girl, is the protagonist of the coming-of-age novel *Anne of Green Gables*. She is unintentionally sent to two siblings in Avonlea, Prince Edward Island, to adopt a child to work on their farm. Anne's journey of self-discovery is shaped by her interactions with the people of Avonlea. Her sense of identity evolves as she navigates relationships with Marilla, Matthew, Diana, and others and as she learns how others perceive her imaginative and outspoken nature. Anne's storytelling is central to how she engages with the world and influences others. Her vivid imagination and creative narratives help her connect with people, build friendships, and redefine her place in the community. Focusing solely on themes of self-identity, empowerment, ambitions, acceptance, and belonging shows the themes to these communication theories, showing how Anne's experiences illustrate broader concepts in communication studies. This will create a stronger focus on the theoretical aspects of her personal growth.

## Literature Review

Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* has been the subject of extensive literary analysis, with critics examining its thematic depth, character development, and socio-cultural impact. Scholars have also explored the novel's communication dynamics, rhetoric, and the power of language in shaping personal and communal identities.

The novel aligns with theories like symbolic interactions, as Anne's identity is continuously shaped through her interactions with the Avonlea community. As Irving E. Alexander discusses, character identity in literature often evolves through social exchanges, which can also reveal societal norms and expectations. Montgomery illustrates this through Anne's relationships, where her imaginative expressions challenge the rigid cultural landscape of Avonlea and foster self-discovery. The Narrative Paradigm, explored by Walter Fisher, is evident in Anne's use of storytelling to connect with others, demonstrating how shared narratives strengthen communal bonds.

Anne's dialogues in the novel reflect Aristotle's rhetorical appeal of logos, ethos, and pathos. In Anne's interactions with Marilla and her peers, her use of logical reasoning (logos) is crucial for earning their trust, while her moral credibility (ethos) and emotional expressiveness (pathos) solidify her relationships. Scholars like Miller argue that narratives with strong rhetorical appeals foster deeper reader engagement, a quality Montgomery masterfully integrates into Anne's character.

Anne's creative and expressive use of language has been studied as a tool for empowerment and belonging. As noted by Rubio, Anne's imaginative speeches and ability to articulate her thoughts defy societal constraints, allowing her to challenge expectations about gender and class. Her words give her agency in a world that initially marginalizes her. Rubio's work highlights how Anne's language not only shapes her personal growth but also influences others around her, making her a transformative figure in Avonlea.

The power of language in broader political and social contexts is another recurring theme in the novel's analysis. As Gillian Thomas suggests, *Anne of Green Gables* exemplifies how communication

fosters community and bridges divides. Anne's vibrant storytelling reflects how language can create inclusivity, a notion applicable to modern discussions about dialogue's role in political and social movements.

By weaving these theories and frameworks into its narrative, *Anne of Green Gables* serves as a compelling study of communication and language. The novel not only portrays Anne's growth but also offers insights into the transformative power of words in shaping relationships, identities, and communities.

### Anne's Misplacement Journey

On a June day in Avonlea, Prince Edward Island, Mrs. Rachel Lynde sees Matthew Cuthbert, her neighbor, leaving his home. Curiosity drives her to see her buddy, Matthew's sister Marilla, who shares the Green Gables farm with him. When Rachel heard that Marilla and Matthew were planning to adopt a Nova Scotia orphan boy from Mrs. Spencer, head of the orphanage, she was literally taken aback. At the train station, Matthew finds an eleven-year-old girl with red hair seated there instead of the anticipated boy.

An old brown hat hung over two braids of thick red hair, and she wore awful yellowish gray clothing. It had a little, skinny, freckled face with big, vibrant eyes. Matthew is thrown off guard by the sweet, talkative, big-eyed girl and can't bear to disappoint her, so he brings her back to Green Gables. She introduced herself to Anne Shirley; they both decided to accept her and gave her farm work in Green Gables. Anne is overjoyed to be allowed to stay.

Anne begins to get acquainted with the beauties of Green Gables. Anne's primary goal is to form meaningful relationships with the people in Avonlea. Anne communicates her values through Anne's actions and words, such as her determination to be her authentic self despite others judgments. For example, her insistence on maintaining her imagination and creativity reflects the value of individuality. Anne aims to show how communication can create a sense of belonging. Anne's integration into the Avonlea community, from her bond with Marilla and Matthew to her acceptance by others, showcases the

importance of dialogue, understanding, and shared experiences in building a strong community. This showcases her self-determination and even finding joy after the challenging circumstances of her past life.

### **Anne Discovering Self Identity**

Matthew and Marilla decided to give her a good education. Anne begins her schooling journey in Avonlea. Quickly Anne finds kindred spirit hearty women the new school teacher, Miss Stacy becomes mentor and encourager, and Anne begins to flourish in school. She attends the local school, where she has very intelligent imagination and impulsiveness. There she got a best lovable friend named Diana Barry; she became best from the moment they met. She is the only girl who is very close in Green Gables. This is evident in Anne's interactions with Diana Barry, where Antony emphasizes the importance of genuine friendship, loyalty, and trust.

Anne often uses logical arguments to justify her actions or prove her capabilities, particularly with Marilla. For example, when Marilla questions her worth, Anne argues rationally for why she deserves to stay at Green Gables, emphasizing her willingness to work hard and contribute meaningfully to the household. Her logical reasoning demonstrates her resourcefulness and ability to persuade others through practical examples. Anne's moral values and strong sense of integrity enhance her credibility among the people of Avonlea. Her honesty and determination to do the right thing, such as confessing when she accidentally ruins Marilla's brooch or owning up to her mistakes during school conflicts, establish her as a trustworthy and ethical individual. These moments strengthen her relationships with those around her.

Anne's emotional expressiveness is one of her defining traits, enabling her to form deep connections with others. Through her imaginative storytelling and passionate descriptions, she appeals to the emotions of her friends and family. For instance, her heartfelt apology after dyeing her hair green or her emotional outpouring during moments of gratitude and joy help others understand her feelings, creating empathy and strengthening bonds.

At this point, Anne has transitioned from young to teenage. Anne's identity begins to change. With

the love and support of Matthew and Marilla, she feels valued in a way she never had before in her life. Anne truly starts to realize that she is worthy of a family and a place to which she really belongs. She realizes she is no longer just 'Anne Shirley orphan' rather than 'Anne of Green Gables'. Marilla and Matthew rooted a community with dreams, talents, and a strong sense of self-love, confidence, and identity that she never had before. Anne excels in her studies and is determined to prove herself academically.

### **Adventures and Achievements of Anne**

At the age of sixteen, Anne goes to Queen's Academy, a prestigious institution. Her close friend Diana also accompanied her. Entering the academy, she quickly distinguishes herself as one of the brightest students in her class. Her natural intelligence and competitive spirit, fueled by her academic rivalry with Gilbert Blythe and other students, drive her to achieve outstanding results. Anne's primary goal at Queen's Academy is to distinguish herself as a scholar. She successfully achieves this by earning high marks and accolades, demonstrating her intellectual dedication and hard work. Her winning the Avery Scholarship is a significant milestone, representing her academic excellence and recognition as one of the most capable students at Redmond. This accomplishment fulfills her objective of proving her abilities in a competitive academic environment.

Anne's experiences at Queens's Academy allow her to continue expressing her individuality and creativity. Her storytelling ability and imaginative nature remain central to her character, earning her admiration for everyone. Anne's achievements in winning Avery Scholarship reflect her ability to balance academic success, personal relationships, and self-discovery. By excelling in her studies, cultivating meaningful connections, and maturing emotionally, Anne fulfills her goals and sets a foundation for future success. These accomplishments align closely with her broader objectives of intellectual growth, personal fulfillment, and navigating the complexities of life with resilience and grace.

This scholarship not only honors Anne's academic achievements but also grants her the

financial stability to continue her education at Redmond College. This achievement solidifies her reputation as one of the most talented students and opens the door to achieving dreams and goals. Matthew and Marilla are proud of her, and they are pleased to send Anne to Redmond College. However, Anne is ready to embark on this new journey.

Unexpectedly, tragedy strikes. Matthew dies suddenly of a heart attack, and Marilla's money is lost in bank failure. Due to this, Marilla's eye starts to fail. Looking at these miserable circumstances, Anne decides to give up her scholarship and selflessly remains in Green Gables to help and take care of the Marilla and Avonlea communities. After this Anne joins as a teacher at Carmody School in Green Gables with the accompaniment of Diana Barry and continues her life independently, hoping for a bright future and having the bravery to accomplish her life ambitions.

### **Compare and Contrast Anne's Empowerment**

Anne's decision to stay behind in Avonlea, gave up her opportunities for further education and personal growth, demonstrates her deep sense of responsibility and love for Marilla. Anne is already an accomplished young woman, having excelled in her studies, but her sense of family and duty takes precedence. Her sacrifice represents a common expectation for women who were often expected to sacrifice their needs, goals, and ambitions especially for family above their own personal or professional goals.

If a boy were in Anne's position, the societal expectations would likely differ. A boy might have been less pressured to stay and care for Marilla, as men were traditionally encouraged to pursue careers, further education, and independence. His goal might have leaned more toward academic achievement and professional success, as society would likely have expected him to do so. His objectives would likely have been focused on continuing his education and securing a future career rather than assuming the role of caretaker.

Anne Shirley's role resonates as a powerful example for the 21st century. Her sacrifice, love, loyalty, and selflessness challenge the traditional female roles, making her a relatable and inspiring

figure for women today. She inspires readers to embrace their unique qualities and strive for self-fulfillment, making her a model for self-empowered, authentic womanhood that resonates across generations. Anne's character celebrates self-worth and ambition, valuing her intelligence and creativity over societal expectations as a proper female role in society, and captures reader's hearts for generations.

### **Summing Up**

Anne Shirley's journey in *Anne of Green Gables* exemplifies the enduring power of language to challenge societal expectations and foster connections. Her ability to articulate her thoughts enables her to navigate her transition from an orphan to an integral member of the Avonlea community. This transformation is not merely personal but reflective of broader social and political themes, where language acts as a tool for empowerment and change. Anne's journey showcases how reclaiming her voice becomes a means of self-empowerment. Her ability to articulate her identity and assert her agency reflects the transformative power of language, particularly in overcoming marginalization and societal constraints.

In contemporary contexts, the role of language in movements advocating for equality, diversity, and social justice mirrors Anne's use of communication to assert her identity and challenge prejudices. Rhetoric, whether in political discourse or grassroots activism, continues to shape public opinion and drive societal transformation. Anne's narrative underscores how the ability to communicate effectively can empower individuals to overcome adversity, foster understanding, and inspire collective progress. By bridging Anne's personal journey with broader societal reflections, this novel highlights the timeless relevance of Montgomery's work in understanding the dynamics of language and communication.

Thus, through this novel, Lucy Maud Montgomery makes readers to think about the Person growth, social expectations, limitations, social norms, acceptance, and pursuit of everyone's dreams and ambitions in their life.

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