

Book Review

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES by *Lucy Maud Montgomery*

You've all heard of this book, I'm sure, and many have either read it or seen the "Avonlea" series on TV a number of years back. But did you know there are 9 books altogether in the series? They follow Anne through her education, career, marriage, children, and on into the life of her daughter, Rilla. We have all of them on the Young Adult shelf in our library, and I thoroughly enjoyed each one, reading them as an adult.

In the first book, we meet Anne Shirley, an 11-year-old orphan who's been in a series of foster homes since her parents' death. When she is sent by mistake to live with Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert at the snug white farmhouse called *Green Gables*, she wants to stay forever. But Anne is not the sturdy boy they were expecting. She's a mischievous, talkative redheaded girl with a fierce temper, who tumbles into one scrape after another. Anne is not like anybody else, the Cuthberts agree; she is independent, headstrong, but very special, a girl with an enormous imagination. All she's ever wanted is to belong *somewhere*. And the longer she stays at *Green Gables*, the harder it is for anyone to imagine life without her. . . .

Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote this book in 1908, using the backdrop of her own life on Prince Edward Island, Canada. The bucolic island setting, as well as the realism and richness of her characters - especially Anne's spirited and dramatic personality - made it an instant bestseller and eventual classic, beloved by children and grownups alike for over a century.

Part of the interest in "Avonlea" (the village where Anne lived) nowadays is that it appears to be a gentler, more innocent world, long-gone and very different from our own. But for Montgomery, Avonlea was simply reality edited a bit. She wrote from what she knew. I personally visited Prince Edward Island in 2008, the 100th anniversary of the book's publication, and was thrilled to recognize the home of Lucy Maud's aunt - the model for *Green Gables* - as well as several landmarks vividly described in the book.

While the first book is undoubtedly in a superb class by itself, and the subsequent sequels are not quite up to the same level, all nine are engrossing, transporting, and thoroughly satisfying, and - more than 100 years later - are still enthralling readers of all ages. Why not be one of them?