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*Dramatic Publishing*

# ANNE OF AVONLEA

A FULL-LENGTH PLAY

Based on the Book

by

L.M. MONTGOMERY

(Author of *Anne of Green Gables*)

Adapted for the Stage

by

JOSEPH ROBINETTE



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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# ANNE OF AVONLEA

A Full-length Play  
For 9-12 Men and 15-25 Women, extras if desired\*

## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR

Anne Shirley  
Marilla Cuthbert  
Diana Barry  
Rachel Lynde  
Gilbert Blythe  
Mr. Harrison  
Fred Wright  
Anthony Pye  
St. Clair Donnell  
Annetta Bell  
Aurelia Clay  
Prilly Rogerson  
Paul Irving  
Clarice Almira Donnell  
Barbara Shaw  
Joseph Sloane  
Dora Keith  
Davy Keith

### SUPPORTING (may be doubled)

Young Anne Shirley  
Mrs. Thomas  
Mrs. Hammond  
Orphanage Coordinator  
Mrs. Spenser  
Mr. Shearer  
Jane Andrews  
Julia Bell  
Mrs. Donnell  
Eliza Andrews  
Catherine Andrews  
Daniel Blair  
Mirabel Cotton  
Charlotta the Fourth  
Miss Lavendar Lewis  
Uncle Abe Andrews  
Emily Harrison  
Stephen Irving

THE TIME: The early 1900s.

THE PLACE: In and around the village of Avonlea,  
Prince Edward Island, Canada.

\*See following page for role distribution for 9m and 15w.

Suggested Role Distribution for a Cast of  
9 Men and 15 Women

The following roles should not be double-cast

MALE

Gilbert Blythe  
Mr. Harrison  
Fred Wright  
Anthony Pye  
St. Clair Donnell  
Paul Irving  
Joseph Sloane  
Davy Keith

FEMALE

Anne Shirley  
Marilla Cuthbert  
Diana Barry  
Annetta Bell  
Aurelia Clay  
Prilly Rogerson  
Clarice Almira Donnell  
Barbara Shaw  
Dora Keith

Doubling

MALE

Mr. Shearer  
Daniel Blair  
Stephen Irving  
Uncle Abe Andrews

FEMALE

Mrs. Hammond  
Jane Andrews  
Charlotta the Fourth

FEMALE

Rachel Lynde  
Eliza Andrews

FEMALE

Orphanage Coordinator  
Catherine Andrews  
Miss Lavendar Lewis

FEMALE

Mrs. Thomas  
Julia Bell  
Mirabel Cotton

FEMALE

Mrs. Spenser  
Mrs. Donnell  
Emily Harrison

FEMALE

Young Anne  
Dora

## ACT ONE

SCENE: *At far right is a desk with an oil lamp on top. Other modest furnishings—a chair or two, a small table, etc.—suggest an old-fashioned study.*

AT RISE: *Writing at the desk is ANNE SHIRLEY, nearly 17. Three crumbled pages are scattered atop the desk as ANNE writes at the bottom of a page.*

ANNE (*speaking the words as she writes*). "...and when I was nine, I was sent to live with the Hammonds, but Mr. Hammond died, and Mrs. Hammond..." Oh no. I'm at the end of the page again. (*She crumples up the paper and tosses it aside.*) Well, I'll just have to try it again. I can't stop till I finish this.

(*As ANNE takes out another sheet of paper, MARILLA CUTHBERT, in her early 60s and wearing a robe, enters carrying a lamp as ANNE begins to write.*)

ANNE. "My name is—"

MARILLA. Anne Shirley! It's almost midnight. Come to bed.

ANNE. But I have to finish this essay, Marilla. I shouldn't have put it off so long.

MARILLA. Well, you can put it off one more day. Five o'clock in the morning comes mighty early.

ANNE. But I have to send this to Redmond College by Friday.

MARILLA. I don't know what could be so hard about writing a one-page story of your life. I could write mine in *half-a-page*, and I'm three times older than you.

ANNE. But my life has been so full and exciting, I can't possibly confine it to a single, solitary page.

MARILLA. Stuff and nonsense. You were born in Nova Scotia. Your parents died when you were very young. After staying with three different families, you were sent to an orphan asylum where my brother and I adopted you. You grew into a fine young lady who taught school for two years, and now you're going to college. Write that down, and come to bed.

ANNE. But there's no imagination in an essay like that.

MARILLA. Posh on imagination. Those are the plain facts. Anyway, you've already got that scholarship to Redmond. I don't know why you have to write a story of your life in the first place.

ANNE. It's required for the official application. Everybody has to do a one-page autobiography. And I'll never get it down to that.

MARILLA. Maybe you ought to talk it out first, then choose the most important things to write down.

ANNE. Yes, that's what I'll do. And you can help me, Marilla. Sit right over there, and I'll tell you my life story. Whenever you hear something you like, just nod your head.

MARILLA. I'm already nodding my head—but it's because I'm sleepy. And I'm not sitting anywhere. I'm go-



ing to bed. Besides, I already know your life story. Pretend the Redmond fellow who's going to read your essay is sitting over there. He can do the nodding while I'm doing the sleeping. Good night. *(She exits.)*

ANNE. Yes...That's a wonderful idea. I'll imagine the Redmond admissions officer is sitting right over there. *(She begins to talk to the unseen "officer" who, of course, is the audience.)* Hello, Mr. ...Mr. Redmond. *(To herself.)* Yes—Mr. Redmond. *(To "Mr. Redmond.")* My name is Anne. Anne Shirley. But I prefer to be called Anne of Green Gables.

*(ANNE moves left as the other stage lights come up. This large "open" area will be used for the various locales throughout the play. The area may have chairs, benches, tables, etc., in place for easy maneuverability between scenes. Or the space may be largely empty with set props being brought on and off by the actors as each scene is played. NOTE: There should be no attempt to create full sets and props for the many episodes. Mere suggestions of locales are all that are necessary for the often brief, fragmented scenes from ANNE's memory.)*

ANNE. I was born in Bolingbrooke, Nova Scotia, to Walter and Bertha Shirley who died of the fever when I was only three months old. We had no relatives, so our neighbor, Mrs. Thomas, took me in—though she was poor and had a drunken husband. I lived with the Thomases for eight years and helped with their four children. But then one day my stay came to an end.

*(YOUNG ANNE\*, about 10, enters carrying a crying baby bundle. She gives the baby a bottle.)*

YOUNG ANNE. There, there, Matilda Merle, here's your bottle. Your poor mother will be back soon.

*(MRS. THOMAS, wearing a dark dress, hat and veil, enters.)*

YOUNG ANNE. Was it a nice funeral, Mrs. Thomas?

MRS. THOMAS. So nice, *I* almost enjoyed it. Even though it *was* my husband. And the minister said nary a word about his drinking, which led to the accident, which led to the funeral. Which leads to the bad news I have for you. We're going to live with Grandma Thomas, but she has no room for you. Maybe someone nearby can use an orphan.

*(MRS. HAMMOND enters.)*

MRS. HAMMOND. I've had my eye on her. She's handy with children, so she can come up river and live with me and my husband and our seven kids.

YOUNG ANNE. Seven?

MRS. HAMMOND. Three sets of twins and two odd ones. On second thought I guess that makes eight. *(YOUNG ANNE hands the baby bundle and bottle to MRS. THOMAS who exits. YOUNG ANNE and MRS. HAMMOND then exit in another direction.)*

\* See Production Notes for the casting of children's roles with young adults.

ANNE. So, I went up river to live with the Hammonds for two years. Taking care of eight children was dreadfully tiring, but soon my stay there ended as well.

*(YOUNG ANNE enters carrying two baby bundles— from which crying is heard—and two baby bottles which she gives to them.)*

YOUNG ANNE. Shh. Shh. It's okay, Wilty. Drink your bottle, Woody.

*(MRS. HAMMOND enters wearing a hat and veil.)*

YOUNG ANNE. How was the funeral, Mrs. Hammond?

MRS. HAMMOND. As good as a funeral can be, I guess. But the sawmill had no insurance, so I'm dividing the children between our relatives in the States. There's nobody to take you, so you'll have to go to the orphan asylum at Hopeton.

YOUNG ANNE. Orphan asylum?

MRS. HAMMOND. You'll have lots in common with the children there. *They* don't have parents either.

*(The ORPHANAGE COORDINATOR enters.)*

ORPHANAGE COORDINATOR. We're overcrowded and understaffed. But we're required to take you till somebody requests an orphan. Let's hope it's quick. Welcome, child. *(MRS. HAMMOND takes the two baby bundles and bottles and exits as YOUNG ANNE and the ORPHANAGE COORDINATOR exit in another direction.)*

ANNE. I stayed at the asylum for four long months until that providential day when Mrs. Spenser came to call.

*(MRS. SPENSER enters wearing a hat and veil. A moment later, YOUNG ANNE and the ORPHANAGE COORDINATOR enter.)*

YOUNG ANNE. So, you see, ma'am, I never really had a home since I was a tiny—*(MRS. SPENSER clears her throat.)* Oh, no. Did somebody else die?

ORPHANAGE COORDINATOR. No, child, that's just the fashion nowadays. *(To MRS. SPENSER.)* May I help you?

MRS. SPENSER. I'm Mrs. Spenser, and I've come to fetch a child for a couple on Prince Edward Island. They're a brother and sister, and they need help on the farm.

YOUNG ANNE *(pleadingly)*. Please—please!

ORPHANAGE COORDINATOR. Will this one do okay?

MRS. SPENSER. I suppose she's as good as any.

YOUNG ANNE. A home—a home at last!

ORPHANAGE COORDINATOR. Make sure they take kindly to you. We can't take you back. *(MRS. SPENSER and YOUNG ANNE exit in one direction, the ORPHANAGE COORDINATOR in the other.)*

ANNE. So we sailed to Prince Edward Island and took the train to Bright River where I was picked up by Marilla's brother, Matthew. Dear, dear Matthew. He died two years ago, but he was my kindred spirit. In fact, if it hadn't been for Matthew, I might have been sent right back to the orphan asylum. You see, Mrs. Spenser made a big mistake.

(MARILLA enters wearing an everyday dress.)

MARILLA (calling back over her shoulder to an unseen person offstage). But we asked for a boy, Matthew.

(YOUNG ANNE enters hesitantly.)

MARILLA. This is a pretty piece of business.

YOUNG ANNE. You don't want me? You don't want me because I'm not a boy? (Near tears.) I might have expected it. Nobody ever wanted me. I might have known it was too beautiful to last. (She cries.)

MARILLA. Don't cry. We're not going to turn you out-of-doors tonight. We'll have some supper, then you can sleep upstairs.

YOUNG ANNE. I'll go to bed, thank you, but I can't eat when I'm in the depths of despair. Can you?

MARILLA. I've never been in the depths of despair, so I can't say.

YOUNG ANNE. You could imagine what it would be like.

MARILLA. I've got my hands full handling the *real* things in life. I've got no time for imagination.

YOUNG ANNE. Yes, ma'am. Good night, ma'am. (She exits. MARILLA slowly begins to pace.)

ANNE. Marilla was all for sending me back, but Matthew, in his quiet way, held fast to keeping me. The next morning I was on needles and pins.

(YOUNG ANNE enters.)

YOUNG ANNE. Oh, please, won't you please tell me if you're going to send me away or not?

MARILLA (*after a deep breath*). Oh, I suppose you might as well know. Matthew and I have decided to keep you. That is, if you'll try to be a good girl and show yourself grateful. (*YOUNG ANNE stares at MARILLA in relief and disbelief, then quietly begins to cry.*) Why, child, whatever is the matter?

YOUNG ANNE. I'm crying. I don't know why. I'm glad as glad can be. I've never been happier. Can you tell me why I'm crying?

MARILLA. Maybe because you're all excited and worked up. I'm afraid you laugh and cry far too easily... Yes, you can stay here, and we'll try to do right by you. Now you go upstairs and unpack while I make breakfast. (*They exit in opposite directions.*)

ANNE. And that's the way it began. Before long, I'd made a lot of friends in Avonlea. My neighbor and kindred spirit—Diana Barry.

(*DIANA BARRY enters.*)

DIANA (*speaking out front, not directly to ANNE*). I heard that you were a strange girl, Anne Shirley, but I think I'm going to like you real well. (*She exits.*)

ANNE. Marilla's best friend, the nosy, but likable, Mrs. Rachel Lynde.

(*RACHEL LYNDE enters.*)

RACHEL (*also speaking out front*). Well, Marilla, I'll tell you plain that I think you're doing a mighty foolish thing—bringing a strange child into your home. But I don't want to discourage you, Marilla. (*She exits.*)

ANNE. And, of course, mixed in with one's friends, there has to be an occasional "enemy" or two.

*(GILBERT BLYTHE enters sneakily, creeps up behind ANNE and points to her hair.)*

GILBERT *(in a sing-song voice)*. Hair-the-color-of-carrots! Hair-the-color-of-carrots! *(Offstage laughter is heard as GILBERT exits quickly.)*

ANNE. That was Gilbert Blythe. He was the handsomest boy at school, and all the girls were dead-gone on him. But the day he made fun of my red hair in class and yelled—

GILBERT'S VOICE *(offstage)*. Carrots! Carrots! *(Offstage laughter is heard again.)*

ANNE. —I was humiliated. Gilbert apologized, but I broke a slate over his head anyway ... The next year we got a wonderful new teacher, Miss Stacy. But wouldn't you know, just before school started I broke my leg playing a game of "I Dare You" over at Diana Barry's. *(She sits gingerly and stretches her right leg which she rubs.)* I missed the first two weeks of school.

*(GILBERT enters carrying some books.)*

GILBERT. Anne?

ANNE *(somewhat coolly)*. Hello, Gilbert. What are you doing here?

GILBERT. Miss Stacy let me bring your books and assignments to you.

ANNE. Why did you want to do that?

GILBERT. Maybe it's because I don't want you to have any excuses when I score higher than you on the Queen's entrance examinations.

ANNE (*warming slightly*). Perhaps you'll be the one looking for an excuse.

GILBERT (*smiling*). We'll see... Goodbye. (*He exits.*)

ANNE (*standing*). Though we did come to tolerate each other, Gilbert and I remained adversaries for quite a while. On second thought, we were more like competitors. We both tied for the highest score on the Queen's Academy entrance examinations. And when we graduated from Queens, Gilbert won the gold medal for highest honors, and I won a full scholarship to attend Redmond College the next year. When Miss Stacy resigned from the Avonlea school, Gilbert was given the teaching job here. And I was getting ready to begin my life as a college girl. But as so often happens, things abruptly changed.

(*MARILLA enters wearing a Sunday hat and coat.*)

MARILLA. Time for church, Anne.

ANNE. Marilla, you've been very quiet recently. I think you're keeping something from me... What is it?

MARILLA (*resigned*). Oh... you may as well know. I saw the eye specialist about my headaches last week.

ANNE. You told me that.

MARILLA. But I didn't tell you that he said I couldn't read or do any kind of work—or I'll be blind in six months.

ANNE. Marilla...



MARILLA. I can't run the farm anymore. I've got to sell Green Gables. Rachel Lynde said I could board with her. I'm just so thankful you're taken care of with that scholarship.

ANNE. You mustn't sell Green Gables. I'll stay here with you.

MARILLA. But you'll be at Redmond College.

ANNE. I'm not going to Redmond. I'll get a teaching job here to help pay the bills.

MARILLA. Where will you teach? Gilbert Blythe already has the job in Avonlea.

ANNE. Then I'll stay right here and run the farm for you.

MARILLA. I can't let you give up that scholarship.

ANNE. And I can't let you give up Green Gables.

MARILLA. But your dreams... your ambitions.

ANNE. They haven't changed. There'll be time for that later on. We've just come to a little bend in the road. That's all. Now, let's go to church.

MARILLA (*embracing ANNE*). You blessed girl.

(*GILBERT enters.*)

GILBERT. Good morning.

MARILLA. Why, Gilbert Blythe. What brings you here on a Sunday morning?

GILBERT. I—I wonder if I might see Anne for a moment.

MARILLA. Of course. I'll go on to church. But you two hurry along. The minister begins the service right on time.

GILBERT. Yes, ma'am. (*MARILLA exits.*) Hello, Anne.

ANNE. Gilbert.