



LITERARY SYMBOLISM IN ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

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Abstract: This article explores the intricate symbolism in Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, highlighting how symbols such as the color green, the landscape of Avonlea, and the character of Anne Shirley contribute to the novel's themes of identity, belonging, and imagination. Through qualitative textual analysis, it delves into how the setting and character development reflect personal growth and the struggle for acceptance. The study emphasizes that these symbols not only enrich the narrative but also resonate with readers across different life stages, fostering a deeper understanding of the human experience and the transformative power of love and creativity.

Keywords: literary symbolism, character analysis, personal identity, nature imagery, color symbolism, coming-of-age themes, emotional landscape, romantic idealism.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "books that grow" refers to literary works that evolve alongside readers, offering deeper insights and new meanings as they progress through different stages of life. One quintessential example of this phenomenon is Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, a novel that resonates with readers of all ages. Initially published in 1908, the story of Anne Shirley—a spirited orphan with a vivid imagination—captures the essence of childhood wonder and the quest for belonging. However, as readers mature, they often discover layered themes that speak to the complexities of identity, love, and personal growth.

Anne of Green Gables serves as a mirror reflecting the reader's own experiences, allowing for a multifaceted exploration of its characters and their



journeys. The novel's rich symbolism, relatable struggles, and timeless lessons transform it into a living text that remains relevant throughout various life stages. This article will delve into the ways in which *Anne of Green Gables* exemplifies the idea of a book that grows, illustrating how its themes resonate differently with children, adolescents, and adults, thereby nurturing a lifelong relationship between the reader and the text.

METHODOLOGY

The primary method used to analyze the text is a qualitative textual analysis of the novel "Anne of Green Gables" using a lens that focuses on the nuances of the text. The analysis portion of the study includes significant portions of the text, character-based themes, and the context based iconology of the novel. Additional literature such as critiques and other historical based sources help understand the symbolism in the text deeper in the quotations provided (Dahlie, 1999, Fuchs, 2002).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Color Green

The color green is one of the most important symbols in the novel. I, Anne's dreams and aspirations, are from the very onset associated with the color. Foster homes, like the gables, symbolizes the hope and new beginnings, and the Cuthberts home. When Anne arrives for the first time, she envisions the house as a place where she is able to grow and express her identity freely (Montgomery, 1908). The green gables, in this case, are a stark contrast to all of her previous experiences in orphanages and foster homes that were usually cold and lacking in love.

Green appears in gables throughout the story in a myriad of different forms signifying transformative growth and the beauty of nature. For instance, when Anne puts green curtains into her room and wears a green dress, it shows her desire to experience individuality and beauty in her life (Fuchs, 2002). Furthermore, green also reminds one of Avonlea's lush green landscapes that are critical for Anne's growth.



Nature serves as a restoration of her imagination, and thus deepens the bond between personal growth and nature (Dahlie, 1999).

The Landscape of Avonlea

In the novel, the aspect of setting, symbolized by Avonlea, plays a crucial role. It signifies a real and mental space that allow Anne to search for herself and her sense of belonging. Its idyllic countryside with rolling hills and blooming gardens alongside the calm shores mirrors to Anne's world, which is inner world of dreams and imagination (Fuchs, 2002). Landscapes are not mere backdrops but are critical to the characters and their lives.

Not only does Montgomery capture the essence of Avonlea's beauty, she also depicts the changing seasons that reflect the passage of time in Anne's life. Spring denotes the creation of Anne's character while summer signifies the height of her creativity and friendships. They also mark the peak of her inner and outer self. Autumn marks the era of change with its falling leaves, making Anne face the reality that growing up is an inexorable fact. Lastly, winter denotes solitude and encourages Anne to reflect upon her sense of loss and yearning (Dahlie, 1999).

In addition, Avonlea's landscape is rich with strong setting that is symbolic in nature. For example, Lake of Shining Waters shows how beauty may reside in an ephemeral notion, it serves as a place of retreat and allows Anne to draw inspiration from it, appending to the argument that nature does nurture the soul (Montgomery, 1908).

Anne as a Symbol

Anne Shirley herself is a complex symbol within the narrative. Being an orphan with a ring vivid imagination, she represents the perpetual search for identity and belonging. Her fiery red hair along with passionate nature sets her apart from rest of the children in Avonlea, representing individuality and nonconformity (Fuchs, 2002). Anne's relegating her life into stories combined with her whimsical attitude



towards life defies the conventions of her society, serving as an inspiration to embrace individuality.

Throughout the novel, Anne's identity is transformed as she copes with the always painful process of growing up. Her journey of self-discovery is shaped by instructive experiences of friendship, love, and loss (Dahlie, 1999). While Anne comes to terms with her negatives and fears, she represents the struggles of self-acceptance and symbolizes the strength of human spirit.

Moreover, Anne's bond with Marilla along with Matthew Cuthbert is explicable as a phenomenon of Anne's drive to find a place she belongs to. Anne's exuberance comes in sharp conflict with Marilla Cuthbert's strictness which is suggestive of conflict between conservative norms and self expression. Yet, as the bond grows, Anne gets Showed, and her free spirit enables her to blossom. This metamorphosis is symbolic of acceptance love in its pure form, and how it alters a person's identity (Fuchs, 2002).

There are far more examples to symbolism in the series of books. Additional one can be the cherry tree that Anne and Marilla plant together symbolizes growth and the blossoming of their relationship. As the tree grows, so does Anne's sense of belonging and her connection with Marilla. Anne's vivid imagination symbolizes the power of creativity and the importance of dreaming. It represents her ability to transform mundane experiences into magical adventures, highlighting the theme of seeing beauty in everyday life. The schoolhouse symbolizes both a place of learning and social interaction. It represents the transition from childhood to adulthood, where Anne faces challenges and develops her identity through her relationships with peers and teachers. The lighthouse symbolizes guidance and hope. In Anne's imagination, it represents the idea of finding one's way in life, illuminating the path toward her dreams and aspirations. Matthew's gentle demeanor and kindness symbolize unconditional love and acceptance. His support helps Anne realize her worth and contributes to her growth, contrasting with the societal expectations of the time. This



lake symbolizes beauty, inspiration, and the depth of Anne's imagination. It serves as a sanctuary for her, representing a place where her dreams can flourish and where she can escape the challenges of reality. The green dress that Anne wears to the party symbolizes her desire for acceptance and fitting in. However, its mishap (turning green from dye) serves as a reminder of her unique identity and the importance of self-acceptance. Anne's fiery red hair symbolizes her individuality and her struggle for acceptance. It sets her apart from others and represents her passionate nature, which both alienates and endears her to those around her. These symbols collectively enrich the narrative and deepen the exploration of themes such as identity, belonging, and the transformative power of imagination in *Anne of Green Gables*.

The symbolism in *Anne of Green Gables* enriches the narrative and underscores the novel's central themes. The color green, the landscape of Avonlea, and the character of Anne all interact to create a profound exploration of identity, belonging, and imagination. Montgomery's use of symbolism invites readers to reflect on their own experiences and the importance of embracing individuality.

The color green serves as a constant reminder of hope and growth, symbolizing the potential for transformation. It encourages readers to recognize the beauty in their journeys and to seek out the spaces that foster personal development. Similarly, the landscape of Avonlea reflects the idea that our surroundings can shape our identities and inspire creativity. By immersing herself in nature, Anne discovers her true self and finds a sense of belonging.

Anne's character encapsulates the struggle for identity in a world that often values conformity over individuality. Her imaginative spirit challenges societal norms and encourages readers to embrace their uniqueness. By presenting a protagonist who defies expectations, Montgomery advocates for the importance of self-acceptance and the pursuit of one's dreams (Dahlie, 1999).

CONCLUSION



In conclusion, *Anne of Green Gables* is a rich tapestry of symbolism that enhances the narrative and deepens the exploration of identity and belonging. Through the color green, the landscape of Avonlea, and the character of Anne, Lucy Maud Montgomery crafts a story that resonates with readers of all ages. The symbols in the novel invite reflection on the significance of imagination, the beauty of nature, and the transformative power of love and acceptance. As readers journey alongside Anne, they are reminded of the importance of embracing their true selves and finding their place in the world. The enduring appeal of *Anne of Green Gables* lies not only in its charming characters and enchanting setting but also in its profound messages about the human experience.

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