

Anne Says Her Prayers

by **Lucy Maud Montgomery** *from Anne of Green Gables*

Anne Shirley is a young orphan in Canada. She has been sent by mistake to live with Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert at their farm called Green Gables. The Cuthberts are brother and sister, and they know nothing about raising a young girl, especially one like Anne. Anne is full of imagination and joy; the Cuthberts are much more serious and quiet. Marilla Cuthbert has not yet decided for sure whether Anne can stay. As this passage begins, Marilla has learned that Anne has not been taught anything about religion and doesn't know how to pray. Marilla decides this must change at once.

Marilla decided that Anne's religious training must be begun at once. Plainly there was no time to be lost.

"You must say your prayers while you are under my roof, Anne."

"Why, of course, if you want me to," assented Anne cheerfully. "I'd do anything to oblige you. But you'll have to tell me what to say for this once. After I get into bed I'll imagine out a real nice prayer to say always. I believe that it will be quite interesting, now that I come to think of it."

"You must kneel down," said Marilla in embarrassment.

Anne knelt at Marilla's knee and looked up gravely.

"Why must people kneel down to pray? If I really wanted to pray I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd go out into a great big field all alone or into the deep, deep, woods, and I'd look up into the sky—up—up—up—into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I'd just feel a prayer. Well, I'm ready. What am I to say?"

Marilla felt more embarrassed than ever. She had intended to teach Anne the childish classic, "Now I lay me down to sleep." But she had, as I have told you, the glimmerings of a sense of humor—which is simply another name for a sense of fitness of things; and it suddenly occurred to her that that simple little prayer, sacred to white-robed childhood lispings at motherly knees, was entirely unsuited to this freckled witch of a girl who knew and cared nothing about God's love, since she had never had it translated to her through the medium of human love.

"You're old enough to pray for yourself, Anne," she said finally. "Just thank God for your blessings and ask Him humbly for the things you want."

"Well, I'll do my best," promised Anne, burying her face in Marilla's lap. "Gracious heavenly Father—that's the way the ministers say it in church, so I suppose it's all right in private prayer, isn't it?" she interjected,

lifting her head for a moment.

“Gracious heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the White Way of Delight and the Lake of Shining Waters and Bonny and the Snow Queen. I’m really extremely grateful for them. And that’s all the blessings I can think of just now to thank Thee for. As for the things I want, they’re so numerous that it would take a great deal of time to name them all so I will only mention the two most important. Please let me stay at Green Gables; and please let me be good-looking when I grow up. I remain,

“Yours respectfully,
Anne Shirley.

“There, did I do all right?” she asked eagerly, getting up. “I could have made it much more flowery if I’d had a little more time to think it over.”

Poor Marilla was only preserved from complete collapse by remembering that it was not irreverence, but simply spiritual ignorance on the part of Anne that was responsible for this extraordinary petition. She tucked the child up in bed, mentally vowing that she should be taught a prayer the very next day, and was leaving the room with the light when Anne called her back.

“I’ve just thought of it now. I should have said, ‘Amen’ in place of ‘yours respectfully,’ shouldn’t I?—the way the ministers do. I’d forgotten it, but I felt a prayer should be finished off in some way, so I put in the other. Do you suppose it will make any difference?”

“I—I don’t suppose it will,” said Marilla. “Go to sleep now like a good child. Good night.”

Questions

1. Where did Anne say she would want to go if she wanted to pray?
2. What did Anne ask for in her prayer?
3. What does *humbly* mean here: "Just thank God for your blessings and ask Him humbly for the things you want"?
4. What does *irreverence* mean here: "Poor Marilla was only preserved from complete collapse by remembering that it was not irreverence"?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. assent
2. sacred
3. interjected
4. ignorance
5. oblige

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) “Why, of course, if you want me to,” **assented** Anne cheerfully.”

- a. said b. agreed c. yelled d. clapped

2) “And it suddenly occurred to her that that simple little prayer, **sacred** to white-robed childhood lispings at motherly knees, was entirely unsuited to this freckled witch of a girl who knew and cared nothing about God’s love...”

- a. easy b. difficult c. common d. respected

3) “Gracious heavenly Father—that’s the way the ministers say it in church, so I suppose it’s all right in private prayer, isn’t it?” she **interjected**, lifting her head for a moment.”

- a. asked b. inserted c. complained d. suggested

4) “but simply spiritual **ignorance** on the part of Anne that was responsible for this extraordinary petition.”

- a. lack of concern b. lack of knowledge c. lack of talent d. lack of skill

5) “I’d do anything to **oblige** you.”

- a. accommodate b. confuse c. improve d. pray for