

Washington state Letters About Literature 2005-2006 Winning letter, Level II

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Olympia, Washington

Dear L.M. Montgomery,

There is a path that runs through our meadow and leads to a small concrete stage, now overgrown with ivy. In the winter, rain transforms the path into a rushing stream that creates a lake where ducks sit and quack. In the fall, leaves cover the path, and in the summer, blackberry tendrils crowd it. I like it best in the spring, though, because the reawakened sunlight seems to bring back the shadows of the people who watched the performances on the stage fifty years ago.

I bring this up because it reminds me of your Anne Shirley, and her walks--Birch Path, Lovers' Lane, and The White Way of Delight. I admire Anne, much as she idolized the heroines of Mrs. Morgan in Anne of Avonlea. I run to her for comfort when I'm dissatisfied with my own life. She takes me away from the popular people who call me a nerd to revel with her and Phil at Patty's Place in Anne of the Island. I can relate when she and Leslie cry in Anne's House of Dreams because Jem is growing up too fast. I feel the same way about my friends and me; already we are expected to have boyfriends, wear makeup, and forget about the beautiful castles-in-air that we painted so diligently when we were younger.

There is a scene in Anne of Avonlea that has stuck with me since I first read it. The passage describes Anne's influence over Gilbert:

"She held over him the unconscious influence that every girl, whose ideals are high and pure, wields over her friends...Anne's greatest charm was the fact that she never stooped to the petty practices of so many of the Avonlea girls--the small jealousies, the little deceits and rivalries, the palpable bids for favor." [Montgomery, 1909. Page 168]

I was reminded of this quote two weeks ago when I was at a party where a gossip was trashing my friend Alison, who was invited to the party but could not attend. Thinking of what Anne would do, I took the gossip aside and told her she should stop. She then turned on me.

That night I cried because of her attacks, but the next day I began rereading the series for the eighth time, hungry for a chat with Anne that would remind me why I take the path through life that I do. I hope that if ever Anne and I were to meet, I would be worthy of her friendship. She and her "scrapes" inspire me everyday.

Fondly,

Clare Kane