

Anne of Manhattan

By Brina Starler

Behind-the-Book Essay

I can't remember the first time I read *Anne of Green Gables*, and I couldn't tell you how many times I've read it since, because as far back as I can recall, Anne Shirley has been an indelible part of my identity. As an only child, like Anne, her propensity for building entire worlds out of sheer imagination, her love for books, her inclination towards drama, and her affection for interesting words, felt very relatable. I fell in love with her hilarious stream of consciousness and her huge heart.

Anne Shirley and Green Gables loom large in the world of important literature, it endeared itself to millions of fans across multiple generations. The book, the entire series, has inspired hundreds of thousands of young people to read and dream, and not let anyone tell them they can't be or do anything they set their minds on. If I'd never picked up *Anne of Green Gables*, I wouldn't be the person, or writer, I am today.

Having the opportunity with *Anne of Manhattan* to write my beloved Anne and Gilbert in a new way and a new setting still catches me by surprise at times— it was a dream I didn't even realize I had. I immediately knew that I had to find a way to convey their complicated past and tell a story that moved from rivalry to a deep, enduring love. But it was also important for me to put Anne's ambitions for herself and her career, her sense of confidence, and her faithful friendships on the page. I can only hope I did them justice, and that readers fall in love with these new versions of Anne, Gil, and the rest of the Avonlea cast as deeply as I did with L.M. Montgomery's everlasting classic.