

# What Anne Shirley Teaches about Dealing with Victimhood

Almost every reader has a small, select group of favorite books which have been read enough times to make the quotation of whole passages possible. For me, that group of books includes the Anne of Green Gables series by L.M. Montgomery.

This penchant for Anne caused me to sit up and take notice when reviews began appearing about Netflix's foray into the Green Gables world with its program "Anne With an E" as seen in the trailer below. After reading those reviews, however, I've spent the last several weeks feeling decidedly troubled instead of "deliciously" excited, à la Anne.

As Willa Paskin explains in a recent [New York Times spread](#), the new Anne series is created by Moira Walley-Beckett, a writer best known for her work on "Breaking Bad." Paskin describes the result of the Walley-Beckett and Anne pairing as follows:

*"What this means in practice is that the cheerful novel has, in Walley-Beckett's hands, become much darker. Extrapolating from asides in the text, Walley-Beckett has fleshed out minor characters; given major ones back stories; drawn out themes of gender parity, prejudice, isolation and bullying; and emphasized the trauma of Anne's childhood."*

In other words, Walley-Beckett has turned Anne into the thing that most popular media – and even society at large – demands of individuals: become a victim.

Judging from the various clips and reviews I've seen, the Netflix Anne is like many of the "victims" we see proliferating on college campuses or in other media features

these days. She seems to thrive on her victimhood platform, using it to angrily lash out at the injustices she sees around her.

Which is why I find this new Anne so disturbing.

You see, L.M. Montgomery *did* have this type of modern victim in her books. Only these “victims” were the minor characters, often portrayed as the insufferable people who really had nothing to complain about, but made doing so their chief joy in life.

The main, praiseworthy characters, such as Anne, Leslie, and others, were those who had endured genuine suffering – including sexual harassment, bullying, and poverty – but rose above those tragedies and determined not to fixate on them. They moved on with life and seemed happier and better adjusted than those who had minor problems, but chose to continually air them to everyone who would listen. In other words, Montgomery gives the subtle message that dwelling on one’s victimhood – no matter how big or small – only makes things worse.

Today’s culture – including the new “Anne With an E” Netflix series – seems to have forgotten this approach to life. Would we see a more fulfilled, well-adjusted, and peaceful society if more of us chose to take a cue from the real Anne Shirley and put all claims to victimhood behind us?

Image Credit: Netflix “Anne with an E” official trailer