

Who are you, anne  
with an "e?": naming  
in anne of green  
gables



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

A name is an intrinsic characteristic of an object: that is, a name represents the object and explains it most implicitly. This is the reason why people tell their names first when they introduce themselves, get little bit upset when their names are called in a wrong way, and decide a baby's name carefully. Furthermore, the study of naming, which believes that name decides one's entire life, is activated in Eastern countries. Here is a girl who puts emphasis on name as much as scholars of this study: the little orphan girl, Anne Shirley, who turns naming into one of the central issues in the novel that bears her name, *Anne of Green Gables*.

Through out the whole book, Anne puts strong stress on naming. She wants her own name to be different, puts special names on all the beautiful things like road, lake, geranium, cherry tree, pond, forest, and etc, and avoids calling the name of her competitor. Indeed, there are two main reasons that Anne emphasizes naming so much, and how these affects Anne's behavior and the novel. First, Anne identifies the name with the object, and tries to change viewpoints through naming. She says to Marilla, " I read in a book once that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but I've never been able to believe it. I don't believe a rose would be as nice if it was called a thistle or a skunk cabbage" (38). To Anne, if name changes, her perspective on the object changes accordingly, even though the object remains the same. That is, name is more important than any other thing to Anne in defining the object.

This means that she could change her viewpoints through changing name romantically. This is the main reason why she sticks to her name. At the first meeting with Anne and Marilla, she implores to Marilla, " Will you please call <https://assignbuster.com/who-are-you-anne-with-an-e-naming-in-anne-of-green-gables/>

me Cordelia? [...] but oh, please do call me Cordelia. [...] But if you call me Anne please call me Anne with an e" (24, 25; emphasis added). Also, when Mr. Phillips spells her name without an e, she says, " The iron has entered into my soul" (113). To Anne, a mere letter, which has no affect on pronunciation, is so significant, because: " When you hear a name pronounced can't you always see it in your mind, just as if it was printed out? I can; and A-n-n looks dreadful, but A-n-n-e looks so much distinguished" (25). In other words, it is so important for her name to be distinguished, as Anne wants to be " divinely beautiful" and believes that the perspective on the objects changes according to its name (17). Thus, she is trying to view objects more romantically, through changing name which is identical with the object.

Second, naming shows her affection about others and how her harsher life than others affected Anne. In fact, others also know that name is somewhat important. People want to have a good name, and enterprises decide their name carefully. However, they do not emphasize naming as much as Anne. An ordinary person would just name the road ' the Avenue' rather than ' the White Way of Delight.' She or he would not give special name to all of the road, lake, geranium, cherry tree, pond, forest, and etc, even though they are so beautiful. What makes this difference is thoughtful attitude resulted from her hard life as an orphan girl.

First of all, keep in mind that naming shows affection and interests toward the object that one likes. Imagine how parents would feel when they decide the name of their dear baby. They would be very thrilled and happy, hoping that they could find the best name for their baby. This is how Anne feels

<https://assignbuster.com/who-are-you-anne-with-an-e-naming-in-anne-of-green-gables/>

when she gives name to “ fascinating” things. When she ponders on the name that exactly fits with the object, she cares about the object so much that the process of naming “ crowd[s] other things out” (121). Through the process, she puts her best efforts that she refuses the name that “ Anybody can think of” (106). When she finds one through that process, she knows that it “ is the right name for it”, as she feels like this: “ When I hit on a name that suits exactly it gives me a thrill” (19). That is, her continuous naming is resulted from affection and the thrill she feels.

Then, why does Anne show affection on so many beautiful things so much more than others? Before coming to Avonlea, Anne lived a life that Marilla expressed as “ a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect” (41). She does not want others to go through these hardships like her. For example, she does not want to forget even imaginary friends as “ They would feel so hurt if I [forgot] and I’d hate to hurt anybody’s feelings, even a little bookcase girl’s or a little echo girl’s” (61). Also, she says, “ when I am grown up, I’m always going to talk to little girls as if they were, too, and I’ll never laugh when they use big words. I know from sorrowful experience how that hurts one’s feelings” (146, 147; emphasis added). This thoughtful attitude is resulted from her own history which was harsher than others.

Now, here’s how this attitude is connected with naming. The opposite thing of affection is being disregarded. As naming shows affection, she thinks that it is neglecting the object not to give name that fits with it. Thus she tries to give names to many objects, especially beautiful things. For example, when she sees ‘ the Avenue’, she says, “ they shouldn’t call that lovely place the Avenue. There is no meaning in a name like that” (18). That is, she tries to

<https://assignbuster.com/who-are-you-anne-with-an-e-naming-in-anne-of-green-gables/>

show affection about objects, whose values are neglected by others, by giving name. Furthermore, this is also the very reason why she does not want to say name of Gilbert-to show disregard and no affection intentionally. On the contrary, that she calls Gilbert's name after forgiving him shows that she started to respect and like Gilbert. Thus, naming is a tool for Anne to express her considerate mind formed through harsh past.

Naming plays the role of showing who Anne is implicitly and more clearly. If Anne did not care about naming, it would have been harder to find out how Anne tries to view the world hopefully and romantically. That is, making Anne regard naming importantly is a method to emphasize the theme of the novel. That Anne would find romance in her life and be thoughtful even if life is so harsh carries the message that the reader, too can assert individuality, even through a task as simple as naming.