

TELL ANNE OF GREEN GABLES, IN 500 WORDS OR LESS,
WHAT SHE MEANS TO YOU.



Dear Anne Shirley,

I feel immense pleasure in being able to write to you: my friend, my mentor, my idol, and my inspiration.

I come from a patriarchal Muslim society. In my world, women are hidden behind curtains, their voices silenced at birth. Their opinions must match those of their fathers, brothers and husbands. Their jobs are to remain at home and raise children to carry on the family name. It is a very desolate life in my world.

I was told that I talk too much and ask too many questions; that I read too much and have a terrible temper; that I am too restless and not elegant enough; that I run around like a boy and must learn the graces of women; that I must silence the spirit in me because my men do not approve. Can you imagine that Anne? How miserable I felt when I had to silence my spirit to suit the whims of my father and brother!

My curiosity was cured before it began. Books and magazines were strictly forbidden from entering the Kingdom. In my ninth year, I met you. After the first Gulf War, the Americans went back to their land, leaving behind garbage that became our treasure. I found your book sitting in a pile of trash in the American compound, and I instantly fell in love with your red braids and big grey eyes. I spent the next three days reading it, and getting to know you. Those three days were the defining moment of my life. I found myself in you, through you. I was not alone in being rebellious and curious and free spirited. Anne, you became my soul-mate and to this day I hold your memory dear; you drive and inspire me every single day to be the woman I want to be.

Just as you were driven to be better at academia than Gil-I mean the others, I was driven to study and pass all entrances into Canadian universities, with a vengeance against the men who owned me. In Canada, I became closer to you in spirit and in personality. I was celebrated as being well-spoken, headstrong and independent. My opinions were unique and appreciated. For the first time, I was respected on account of being a woman.

Equipped with a passion for life that you instilled in me, I am sitting in Ottawa today, your nation's capital. I am working on a Masters degree related to the position of women. I dream of a teaching position at a Canadian university, proving that women like you and I can not be silenced.

Thank you Anne Shirley of Green Gables, thank you for helping me find myself; for inspiring me to venture into other worlds, for cultivating my imagination and instilling in me a passion for living. Your memory will always stay with me, and I assure you, your spirit will not be in vain.

I remain forever your embodiment,

-Sarah Khan

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YEARS OF
ANNE

