



# Rilla of Ingleside: The Anne of Green Gables Series

*Lucy Maud Montgomery*

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## **Rilla of Ingleside: The Anne of Green Gables Series** Lucy Maud Montgomery

Rilla of Ingleside by Lucy Maud Montgomery - Rilla of Ingleside (1921) is the eighth of nine books in the Anne of Green Gables series by Lucy Maud Montgomery, but was the sixth "Anne" novel in publication order. This book draws the focus back onto a single character, Anne and Gilbert's youngest daughter Bertha Marilla "Rilla" Blythe. It has a more serious tone, as it takes place during World War I and the three Blythe boys—Jem, Walter, and Shirley—along with Rilla's sweetheart Ken Ford, and playmates Jerry Meredith and Carl Meredith—end up fighting in Europe with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The book is dedicated: "To the memory of FREDERICA CAMPBELL MACFARLANE who went away from me when the dawn broke on January 25, 1919 -- a true friend, a rare personality, a loyal and courageous soul." Frederica, Maud's cousin and best friend, grew up in Park Corner, PEI, but died in the worldwide flu epidemic of 1918/19. Frederica may have been the model for Diana Barry, Anne of Green Gables' "bosom friend": both had unusual, non-Christian first names, and the fictional Diana's husband was named, perhaps not coincidentally, Fred. Set almost a decade after Rainbow Valley, Europe is on the brink of the First World War, and Anne's youngest daughter Rilla is an irrepressible almost-15-year-old, excited about her first adult party and blissfully unaware of the chaos that the Western world is about to enter. Her parents worry because Rilla seems not to have any ambition, is not interested in attending college, and is more concerned with having fun. (In an aside, it is revealed that Marilla has died; her date of death is not specified but Rilla states it was before she was old enough to know her very well.) Once the Continent descends into war, Jem Blythe and Jerry Meredith promptly enlist, upsetting Anne, Nan, and Faith Meredith (who Rilla suspects is engaged to Jem). Rilla's brother Walter, who is of age, does not enlist, ostensibly due to a recent bout with typhoid but truly because he fears the ugliness of war and death. He confides in Rilla that he feels he is a coward. The enlisted boys report to Kingsport for training. Jem's dog, Dog Monday, takes up a vigil at the Glen train station waiting for Jem to come back. Rilla's siblings Nan, Di, and Walter return to Redmond College, and Shirley returns to Queen's Academy, leaving Rilla anxiously alone at home with her parents, their spinster housekeeper Susan Baker, and Gertrude Oliver, a teacher who is boarding with the Blythes while her fiance reports to the front. As the war drags on, Rilla matures, organizing the Junior Red Cross in her village. While collecting donations for the war effort, she comes across a house where a young mother has just died with her husband away at war, leaving no one to care for her two-week-old son. Rilla takes the sickly little boy back to Ingleside in a soup tureen, naming him "James Kitchener Anderson" after his father and Herbert Kitchener, British Secretary of State for War. Rilla's father Gilbert challenges her to raise the war orphan, and although she doesn't like babies at all, she rises to the occasion, eventually coming to love "Jims" as her own. She also assists in the elopement of a soldier whose beloved is the daughter of the town's only vocal pacifist; the pacifist's attempts to oppose fund-raising for the war effort or to criticize the war while leading prayers are a recurring minor storyline.

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