Envisioning Kindred Spirits: Anne Shirley's Imagined Community

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One of the most enduring legacies of L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* is the notion of kindred spirits (Waterston, *Magic Island*). In fact, early readers employed the expression with such frequency that within months of publication, the author bemoaned ever having used it (*Green Gables Letters*). Still, fans across the decades and around the globe continue to embrace the idea of a community of like-minded people, even though they cannot see them (Wiggins, *L.M. Montgomery*). This presentation considers kindred spirits as an imagined community, as defined by Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism (*Imagined Communities*). Such communities are socially constructed by those who envision themselves as part of a group, thus increasing agency among non-elites. Community members use a common language, and mass media contribute to the awareness of others simultaneously reading or viewing them. I consider how Anne's consumption, discussion, and adaptation of the literary canon and popular genres, her word choice and language, and her understanding of unseen kindred spirits waiting to be discovered are representative of an imagined community. I then study how these elements serve as a model for readers to envision their own such community in physical and virtual realms. I identify how these processes contribute to the imagined community among readers, one that was born with the first edition of *Anne* and continues today, reminding us that "'Kindred spirits are not so scarce'" after all.

> Envisioning Kindred Spirits: Anne Shirley's Imagined Community. Video by Julie A. Sellers, June 2020.

About the Author: Julie A. Sellers is an Associate Professor of Spanish at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, and a creative writer. A native of Kansas, Julie has travelled extensively in the Americas and Europe. She has twice been the overall prose winner of the Kansas Voices Contest (2017, 2019). Julie's creative work has appeared in *Cagibi*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Wanderlust*, *The Write Launch*, *Kansas Time + Place*, and *Heartland!*. Julie's third academic book, *The Modern Bachateros: 27 Interviews* (McFarland, 2017), received the Kansas Authors Club 2018 It Looks Like A Million Book Award.

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