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Remembering a great storyteller

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Library audience hears story behind Anne of Green Gables

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Imagine missing the letter R on your keyboard. This was the case for Lucy Maud Montgomery in the early 20th century when she typed the manuscript for *Anne of Green Gables*. As a result, she was forced to write in the missing Rs by hand afterwards.

This was one of many interesting anecdotes laid out by former Guelph University professor Elizabeth Waterston at the Atwater Public Library on Thursday. In a presentation entitled "Some Facts about Fiction: Anne of Green Gables and Afterwards," the woman behind Anne was unveiled. It was both a look back and a look forward — look back onto Montgomery's life and works, but also a look ahead to female authors drawing inspiration from her.

"I love her upbeat quality," Waterston said of Montgomery. "She's fun. I've always tried to see the bright side of things because of Anne."

Anne of Green Gables has become an institution and a serious Canadian export. In 1909, it was translated into Swedish. Since then, Anne has become available in 36 different languages across the world. It has sold more than 50 million copies since its publication and is especially popular in Japan, with many Japanese having Anne-themed weddings. For Waterston, her interest in Montgomery began in the 1960s.

It was at this time that she met one of Montgomery's sons. After getting to know each other, she learned that he was in possession of his mother's journals. One thing led to another and Waterston was given the chance to edit the journals, resulting in her contribution to *The Selected Journals of LM Montgomery*. To give the journals some context, Waterston tackled the entire Montgomery collection.

"As a child, I read quite a few but not all," she said, referring to Anne as a "generational thing."

She cited authors such as Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, and Jane Urquhart, all of whom have been inspired by the success story that is Montgomery. As Waterston would say, literature curriculums have become about much more than "dead white males."

For upcoming events at the Atwater Library, visit atwaterlibrary.ca