

MEMORY POST

The book of

Anna



Memories, one question at a time

2026 to 2027

ARLing s. r. o.

The Book of Anna

14 answers, collected from 5 October 2026 to 4 January 2027.

Every word in this book was written by Anna. Nothing has been added, corrected or tidied up.

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This is a free sample. The answers printed in it are invented for the sample and belong to nobody. A real book contains only what the person it was made for actually wrote.

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What did the kitchen smell like on a Sunday morning when you were ten?

Answered 5 October 2026

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Yeast and hot metal. My mother started the dough on Saturday night and left it under a cloth on the stool by the stove, and by seven on Sunday the whole flat smelled of it. The metal smell came from the oven door, which had a hinge that had been mended with wire and got too hot to touch.

There was coffee as well, but the coffee was for the adults and it smelled burnt to me. I did not drink coffee until I was twenty two.

What did you eat most often as a child?

Answered 12 October 2026

Potatoes. Boiled, fried, in soup, in pancakes on the days there was nothing else. I have eaten potatoes more times than I have done anything else in my life, including sleeping in my own bed.

What did your first classroom smell like?

Answered 19 October 2026

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Floor polish and wet wool. The wool was our coats drying on the pegs in the corridor, and the polish was put on in August, so it was strongest in September when we came back.

What is the first place you remember arriving at that was not home?

Answered 26 October 2026

My aunt's house in the next village. We went by bus and then walked the last part along a track with a ditch on one side. I remember the arriving more than the house: the gate had a latch that was too high for me and I had to wait for somebody to open it.

What was the first work you were ever paid for, and what did you do with the money?

Answered 2 November 2026

I picked fruit for a neighbour the summer I was thirteen. Six days, from six in the morning until it got hot, and then again in the evening. He paid me in the kitchen at the end of the week and counted it out twice so I could see it was right.

I bought shoes. Not good ones, but mine, and I chose them myself, which was the whole point. I wore them for two years and then my sister wore them for another one.

What can you do with your hands that nobody taught you in a classroom?

Answered 9 November 2026

I can tell when bread is ready by knocking on the bottom of it. Nobody teaches that, you just stand next to somebody for ten years and one day you do it without thinking.

Who was the first person you could not stop thinking about?

Answered 16 November 2026

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A boy who repaired bicycles behind the co-operative. He had black hands and he was the only person I knew who would explain a thing twice without getting impatient. Nothing came of it. He moved away in the spring and I heard later that he became an engineer, which surprised nobody.

What did money look like when you were young, and what did a loaf cost?

Answered 23 November 2026

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The notes were soft, almost like cloth, because they had been in so many hands. The coins had a mill on the edge and you could feel which was which in a pocket in the dark, which mattered because the shop was dark too.

A loaf was two and something. I remember the something better than the two, because it was always the something that decided whether there was money left for anything else. My mother kept the coins in a tin with a picture of a harbour on it, and when the tin was light you could hear it and you knew not to ask.

What did your family do on the biggest day of the year, whatever that day was?

Answered 30 November 2026

We cleaned. That was the real event, three days of it, and by the time the day itself arrived everybody was too tired to enjoy it. The windows were washed with newspaper and vinegar and the curtains came down and went back up damp.

On the day, the table was laid with the cloth that lived in a drawer the rest of the year and smelled of the drawer. My father put on a shirt with a collar that he complained about from the moment he buttoned it. My grandmother sat at the end nearest the stove and did not get up once, and food was brought to her, which was the one privilege of being old in that house.

What I remember most is the waiting. The children were not allowed into the front room until the adults said so, and we stood in the corridor listening to chairs being moved, for what felt like a whole afternoon and was probably twenty minutes.

What do you want the people who come after you to know about you?

Answered 7 December 2026

That I was not as quiet as I looked. I decided early that arguing with people rarely changed them, so I stopped doing it out loud, and the family took that to mean I agreed with everything. I did not. I simply went and did what I thought was right and let them find out afterwards, which caused less trouble in the end.

I also want them to know that the hard years were not the unhappy ones. The year we moved with two suitcases and slept in one room was the year I laughed most, because there was nothing to protect and nobody to impress. The unhappy years came later when everything was finally in order and I could not think of a reason to get up early.

And I want somebody to keep the recipe book. It is not a book, it is a school exercise book with a green cover, and half of it is my mother's handwriting and half is mine, and there is a page in the middle in handwriting neither of us recognised. My advice is to keep the page. Not everything has to be explained to be worth keeping.

The other thing is that I was lucky and I know it. Not lucky in the way people mean when they say it about money.

Lucky that the people who could have been cruel to me in the years when it would have counted simply were not, for no reason I ever earned. I have watched what happens to somebody who did not get that, and it is not a matter of character, whatever anyone tells you.

If any of you are reading this and things are going badly, here is the only thing I know for certain after all this time: it moves. Whatever it is, it moves. I have sat at a kitchen table at two in the morning quite certain that the shape of my life was fixed for good, and it was fixed for about four months, and then it was not. Nobody came and rescued me and nothing dramatic happened. It simply moved, the way water moves under ice, and one morning I noticed that it had.

A photograph from these years

Glue a photograph inside the marks and write underneath who is in it.

Who, where and when

Describe the room you slept in as a child, starting with what was on the ceiling.

Answered 14 December 2026

There was a damp mark shaped like a dog. I looked at it every night for eleven years and I could draw it now. Below that, a lamp with a paper shade that had gone yellow, and a crack running from the lamp to the corner above the window.

The room had two beds and one chair, and the chair was where the clothes lived because there was no wardrobe. The window looked at a wall about four metres away and in the afternoon the light came in sideways off that wall, the colour of weak tea.

My sister slept by the window because she said she was not frightened of it, and I slept by the door, which I always thought was the more dangerous side and never said so.

Who cooked in your house, and what did they do while they cooked?

Answered 21 December 2026

My mother cooked and she talked to the pan. Not to us, to the pan, and if you interrupted her she would lose her place and start again. She peeled standing up, always, with the bowl held against her hip, and she could do it while looking out of the window at the yard.

Who sat next to you in your first year, and what became of them?

Answered 28 December 2026

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A girl called Zuzana who could already read and did not mention it for a month, which I still think was kind of her. She became a nurse and then a teacher of nurses. We wrote to each other for about forty years and then the letters stopped, and I do not know what happened, and I never asked anybody who would know.

Describe the first time you saw the sea, a mountain or a big city, whichever came first.

Answered 4 January 2027

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The sea, at twenty six, from a train. I had been told all my life that it was big, and being told is useless. What I was not expecting was the noise coming through the window, and that the colour is not one colour, it is about nine of them at once and they move.

I went down to it on the second day and put my hand in, which is what everybody does, and I was surprised that it was cold in the sun. Then I sat on a wall for two hours and did nothing at all, which I had not done since I was a child, and that is the part I have thought about since, more than the water.

A photograph from these years

Glue a photograph inside the marks and write underneath who is in it.

Who, where and when

About this book

This book was made by Memory Post. One question was sent by e-mail each week to Anna, who answered as much or as little as they liked. The answers are printed here in the order they were written.

Every answer is printed exactly as it was typed. Spelling, punctuation and the way a sentence runs on are left alone, because they are part of the voice.

The questions, the headings and the instructions are editorial text of ARLing, prepared with AI assistance, reviewed and approved by the publisher. The answers are not: they were written by one person and by nobody else.

A new book is typeset at the end of every month and again at the end of the year, so this one is not the last. Each answer was also sent back by e-mail on the day it was written, so the words exist in the writer's own inbox as well as here.

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