

Louisa May Alcott

Little Women

Jo, Meg, Amy and Beth are the four March sisters, all very different, but always there for each other. With their father away in the American Civil War, they all have to work hard to help their mother. But there's time for fun and games, too, with their friend, Laurie. Plays, a personal post office, secret societies and even a bit of romance all help to fill their days while they grow up, hoping always for their father's return.

In this reader you'll find:

- Information about Louisa May Alcott
- CLIL History: The American Civil War
- A section focusing on *Little Women* at the cinema, theater, and on TV
- Comprehension and grammar activities including B1 Preliminary style exercises and 21st century skills activities
- Final test

Tags

Classic literature | Family life



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STAGE 1	600 headwords	Elementary	A1	Movers
STAGE 2	800 headwords	Pre-intermediate	A2	Flyers/Key
● STAGE 3	1000 headwords	Intermediate	B1	Preliminary

Classic - American English

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TEEN ELI READERS
ISBN 978-88-536-3218-0

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Louisa May Alcott

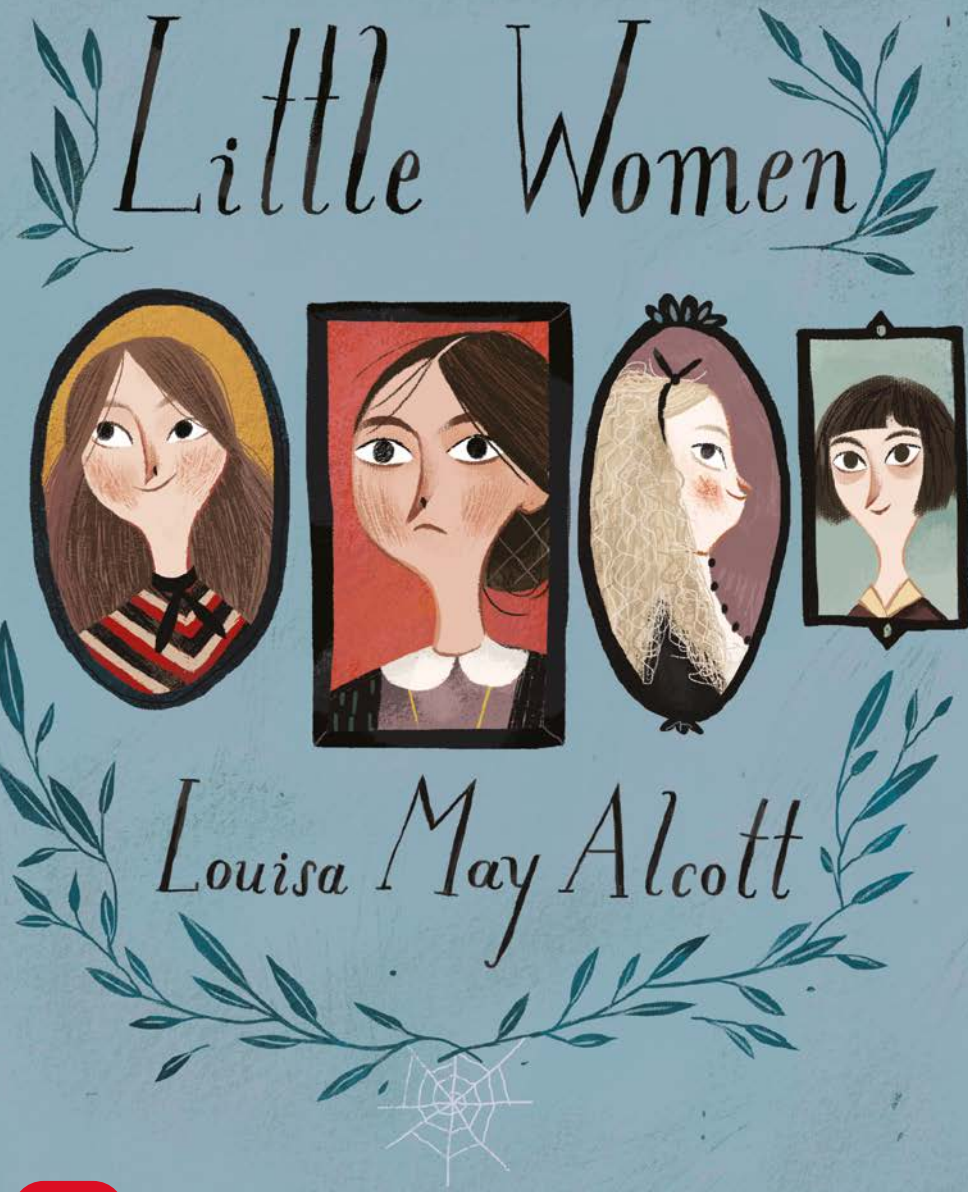
Little Women

Teen Readers

Stage 3 B1

Teen Readers

Classic - American English



Book brief

- 1** Set in New England in the early 1860s, this novel by American writer Louisa May Alcott was an immediate success.
- 2** The story follows the lives of Mrs. March and her four daughters while Mr. March, their father, is away in the American Civil War.
- 3** The story presents a different idea of women compared to the traditional role of women in the 19th century.
- 4** Mrs. March encourages her daughters to work and to have happy lives whether they're married or not.
- 5** Main themes include growing up and the importance of family.

Louisa May Alcott

Little Women

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For Review Only

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Main Characters



Mrs. Margaret March

A kind woman who teaches her daughters that love and respect are the most important things in life.

Meg

A pretty girl, Meg, is the eldest of the sisters and likes nice things.



Jo
Very direct and a bit wild, Jo loves reading and writing stories.



Amy
The youngest of the sisters, Amy is a bit selfish and loves drawing.



Beth
A sweet, shy girl, Beth loves playing the piano.



Reading B1 Preliminary

- 1 Read about *Little Women*. Choose the best answer, A, B, C or D to complete the text.

Little Women is a book about family life. The story is about four sisters (1) _____ grow up in a poor family and are always trying to find ways to (2) _____ some money. Their father is away at war, so the four girls try and help their mother as (3) _____ as they can. The girls have all got very different characters. Meg, the (4) _____, is sixteen years old and is very pretty. She helps the family (5) _____ teaching children. Jo, on the other hand, is tall and slim and often acts more like a boy. She looks (6) _____ an old lady but doesn't find it very interesting. Beth, thirteen years old, is the quietest of them (7) _____. She's shy and peaceful and most of the (8) _____ lives in a world of her own. Amy, the youngest, is also the (9) _____ beautiful and she knows it! With her blue eyes and long, blonde, curly hair, she feels very important and always acts like a young lady. (10) _____ all these differences and all their problems, Mrs. March manages to keep the family together.

- | | | | | |
|----|------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------|
| | A parents | B life | C relationship | D house |
| 1 | A which | B whose | C who | D where |
| 2 | A earn | B do | C arrange | D involve |
| 3 | A many | B lots | C few | D much |
| 4 | A most old | B elder | C older | D eldest |
| 5 | A with | B by | C at | D for |
| 6 | A for | B at | C to | D after |
| 7 | A all | B every | C each | D both |
| 8 | A days | B hours | C time | D period |
| 9 | A such | B much | C most | D very |
| 10 | A Unless | B Anyway | C But | D Despite |

Writing

- 2 **Little Women** is about the life of the March family.
Read these questions and write your answers.

21st
Century
Skills

- 1 Describe the place where you live.
Do you like it? Why? / Why not?
- 2 Who do you live with and what do you do with your family in your free time?
- 3 Who has the same kind of character as you?
- 4 How much time do you spend with your family and how much with your friends?
- 5 What kind of things do you have to do at home to help with the housework?
- 6 Would you like to live on your own? Why? / Why not?



Listening

- 2 3 Listen to the start of Chapter 1 and decide if these sentences are true (T) or false (F).

The girls are talking about Christmas.

T F

☒ ☐

1 Meg would like to be rich.

☐ ☐

2 The girls will receive lots of presents at Christmas.

☐ ☐

3 Their mother is with their father.

☐ ☐

4 Jo likes reading.

☐ ☐

5 Amy is the artist of the family.

☐ ☐

6 Their father has always been poor.

☐ ☐

Christmas Time

►2 “I hate being poor when it’s Christmas,” complained Meg, looking down at her old dress.

“I know; Christmas without presents just won’t be the same,” said Jo.

“It’s not fair that other girls have lots of nice things,” said Amy sadly.

“But we’ve got Father and Mother and each other,” said Beth quietly from her corner.

All four girls were sitting around the fire in the living room. They were waiting for their mother to come home. Their father was away at war like many others.

“Father won’t be with us,” said Meg. “Marmee¹ says that this is going to be a hard winter for everybody, especially for all the soldiers in the army. That’s why we must forget about presents.”

For a moment, they all thought about what they wanted for Christmas. They each had a dollar. Jo wanted a new book; Meg, something pretty to wear; Beth, some new music for her piano; Amy, some new pencils to draw with.

¹ **Marmee** mother (in this story)

The four sisters are talking about the poor Christmas they’re going to have this year. Their father is away at war and they only have a dollar each to buy something for themselves.

➤ Beth, Jo, Amy and Meg are sitting around the fire talking about how sad Christmas is going to be without presents. They’re knitting socks for the army.



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Their father had been a rich man once, but had lost all his money when the girls were still little. ■



3 “I’d love to go and fight with Papa¹, instead of staying here and knitting socks for the army,” said Jo.

“Oh, Jo!” said Beth, laughing. “You’re more like a brother than a sister to us, so we need you here to protect us.”

They all laughed, then suddenly, Amy looked at the clock on the wall above the fire and saw that it was 6 o’clock. The girls immediately forgot all their worries and Beth put her mother’s slippers² near the fire. “Marmee really needs new slippers; these ones are so old,” she said.

“I’ll buy her new slippers for Christmas,” said Jo immediately.

“No, I will, I’m the eldest,” said Meg.

“Why don’t we all buy her something instead of a present for ourselves?” suggested Beth.

“What a wonderful idea, Beth!” said the others all together.

“I’ll buy her some gloves,” said Meg.

“I’ll get her new slippers,” said Jo.

“I want to give her some handkerchiefs,” said Beth.

Their father had lost all his money a long time ago and now they’re poor. When they see how old their mother’s slippers are they each decide to buy her a present instead of something for themselves.

¹ Papa Father

² slippers



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“And I’ll give her a little bottle of perfume¹ so I’ll have some money left to buy my pencils,” said Amy.

The others all laughed. Amy was the youngest so she was allowed to be a little selfish.

It would be a lovely surprise for their mother. They decided to go shopping the following afternoon. Then the girls started talking about the play they were preparing for Christmas night. It was a family tradition and they always all had fun. When Mrs. March arrived that evening, she found her four lovely daughters chatting happily around the fire.

That night she had a special surprise for them: a letter from their father. It was full of stories about camp life, but he never complained once about anything. Everyone cried at the end and missed him even more.

“I’ll try and not be wild, and be what he loves to call me, ‘a little woman’, and do my duty here,” said Jo.

Before going to bed, Beth played the old piano and they all sang as they did every night.

Christmas morning arrived and Jo woke up first.

The girls always put on a play on Christmas night. When Mrs. March gets home she reads a letter to them from their father. They all miss him. Jo says she’ll try to be ‘a little woman’ which is what her father always calls her, instead of being wild.

¹ perfume 

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She called the others and they went downstairs to see their mother, but she wasn't there.

"She's probably out helping someone," said Hannah, who had lived with them since Meg was born, and was more of a friend than a servant¹ to them all. Just then, Mrs. March came in.

"Merry Christmas, my lovely girls," she said, kissing each of them.

"Where have you been?" asked Jo.

"Near here, there's a mother with six hungry children, and a baby. They have nothing to eat or drink. Will you give them your breakfast, my sweet daughters, as a Christmas present?" asked Mrs. March. She already knew they'd say yes and soon they were all carrying baskets of food over to the unfortunate family. When they arrived at the Hummel's poor house, Hannah made a fire and the girls gave the hungry children the food. Once back home, the girls had bread and milk for their Christmas breakfast, but they were happy, especially when they gave their mother the presents they had bought.

That evening the girls had fun acting for their friends. At the end of the play, Mrs. March told

On Christmas morning, the girls and their mother take their breakfast to a poor family who have nothing. Back at home the girls only have bread and milk for their Christmas breakfast but they're happy especially when they give their mother her presents from them.



Mrs. March, Hannah and the four girls are going to the poor family's house with food and wood to make a fire.

¹ **servant** a person paid to help with the cleaning and cooking



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Their neighbor¹, Mr Laurence sends them nice things to eat as they were so kind to the poor family. They don't know him or his grandson very well.

Meg and Jo are invited to a party. They're pretty even if their clothes are old. Jo doesn't really care what she looks like. Meg wears shoes with high heels even if they hurt her.

them all to come to the kitchen for supper.

Everybody was surprised to see the table full of ice cream, cakes, biscuits, sweets and chocolates. "When old Mr. Laurence heard what you did for the Hummels, he decided to send you these things," explained their mother.

Mr. Laurence was an old gentleman who lived in the big house next door with his grandson, but they didn't know them very well.

"Remember when the cat ran away and the grandson brought it back?" asked Jo. "We started talking, then he saw Meg coming and walked off. We must try and speak to him, I'm sure he's lonely," she said.

Next morning, Meg and Jo received an invitation to a party on New Year's Eve. Meg was very excited but also worried about Jo's dress. Like hers, it was old, but at least Meg's wasn't burnt at the back. Jo, who didn't care so much, promised to stand against the wall all night. The night of the party, the girls looked very pretty despite their unfashionable clothes. Meg put on high-heeled shoes which hurt her, but she wore them just the same.

¹ **neighbor (US)** the person who lives in the house next to yours
neighbour (UK)

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At the party Meg talked to the other girls. Jo stood against the wall. She was bored so found a dark corner to hide in. Suddenly, she realized there was somebody else there. It was the “Laurence boy”! They both laughed and soon they were having fun talking about everybody at the party. Laurie seemed interested in Meg and said how pretty she was. Then, Jo heard Meg calling her. She was sitting on a sofa, holding her ankle. She couldn’t walk.

“I knew you’d hurt yourself with those shoes. Now, how am I going to get you home?” said Jo.

“Don’t worry,” said Laurie, “I’ll take you home in my grandfather’s carriage¹.”

“Oh no, it’s so early! You can’t want to leave the party already,” said Meg.

“Don’t worry, I always go home early,” said Laurie.

So that night, the girls went home in a beautiful carriage; the perfect end to a brilliant evening.

However, next day, both girls had to go back to work; Meg to the four spoiled children she taught, and Jo to Aunt March, who was always in a bad mood. ■

At the party Jo meets Laurie, their neighbor and they start chatting. He seems interested in Meg. Then Meg hurts her ankle and Laurie takes them home in his grandfather’s carriage. The next day the two girls have to go back to work.

¹ carriage 

Think

Do you like going to parties? Why / Why not?

Reading Comprehension

1 Match the sentences with the person who said them.

Then, put them in order (1 to 7) as they happen in Chapter 1.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 ☒ Merry Christmas, my lovely girls. | ☒ Marmee |
| 2 ☐ I'll buy her some gloves. | |
| 3 ☐ Don't worry, I always go home early. | B Amy |
| 4 ☐ She's probably out helping someone. | C Beth |
| 5 ☐ Why don't we all buy her something instead of a present for ourselves? | D Jo |
| 6 ☐ I'd love to go and fight with Papa, instead of staying here and knitting socks for the army. | E Meg |
| 7 ☐ And I'll give her a little bottle of perfume so I'll have some money left to buy my pencils. | F Laurie |
| | G Hannah |

Reading BI Preliminary

2 Complete the text about Chapter 1 with one word in each space.

Mrs. March was very kind and she had taught her daughters to be the same. Therefore, on Christmas morning the girls (1) _____ happy to give their breakfast to a poor family. Then, their neighbor, Mr. Laurence, sent lots of nice things (2) _____ them to eat on Christmas evening after hearing (3) _____ kind they had been. On New Year's Eve, Meg and Jo went (4) _____ a party. They met Mr. Laurence's grandson there, (5) _____ took them home in (6) _____ grandfather's carriage after Meg hurt her ankle.

Writing

21st
Century
Skills

- 3 A** Write four short descriptions of the sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. Talk about:

- their character
- their hobbies and interests

- 3 B** Now say which sister you prefer and why.



Before-reading Activity

Vocabulary

- 4** Read the sentences and complete the words which all appear in Chapter 2.

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| A place with plants and flowers. | <u>g a r d e n</u> |
| 1 Something sweet to eat, usually made with flour. | c _ _ _ |
| 2 A person you don't know. | s _ _ _ _ _ |
| 3 The person who lives in the house next to yours. | n _ _ _ _ _ |
| 4 A talking bird. | p _ _ _ _ |
| 5 A place full of books. | l _ _ _ _ |
| 6 A short written message. | n _ _ _ |