



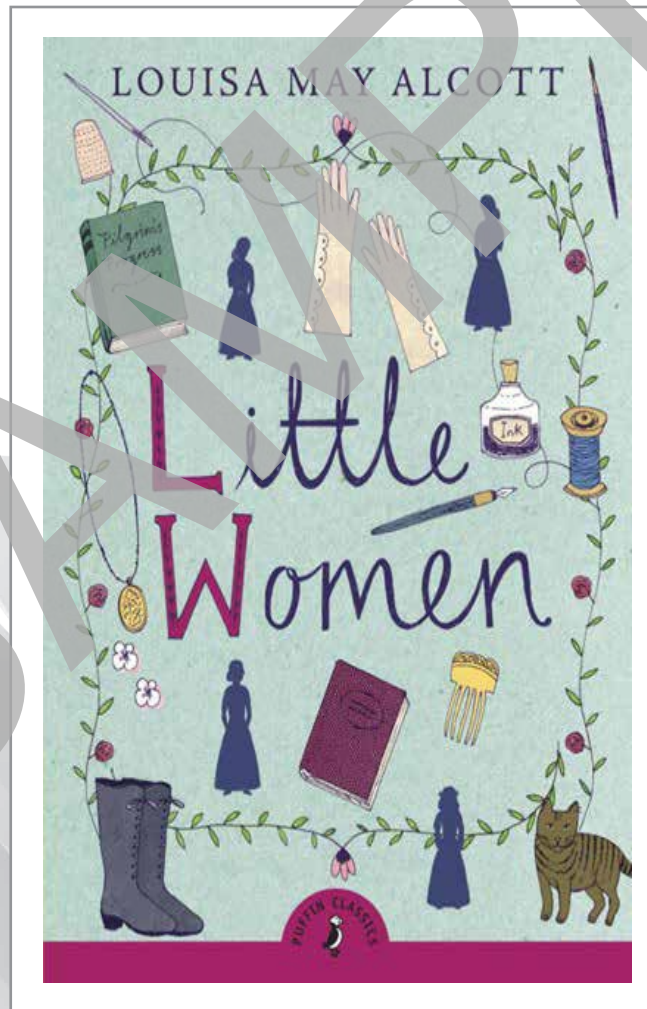
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Little Women

Louisa May Alcott



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Summary of *Little Women*

Little Women tells the story of the four March sisters. Readers are able to follow the girls as they grow and become young women. Although the four girls are very different, they maintain a strong closeness. They protect each other throughout the many trials in their lives. The story emphasizes the importance of family and the love shared by its members. The girls may not have everything money can buy, but they have learned to enjoy life to the fullest and appreciate what they do have. *Little Women* is a story of true human kindness.

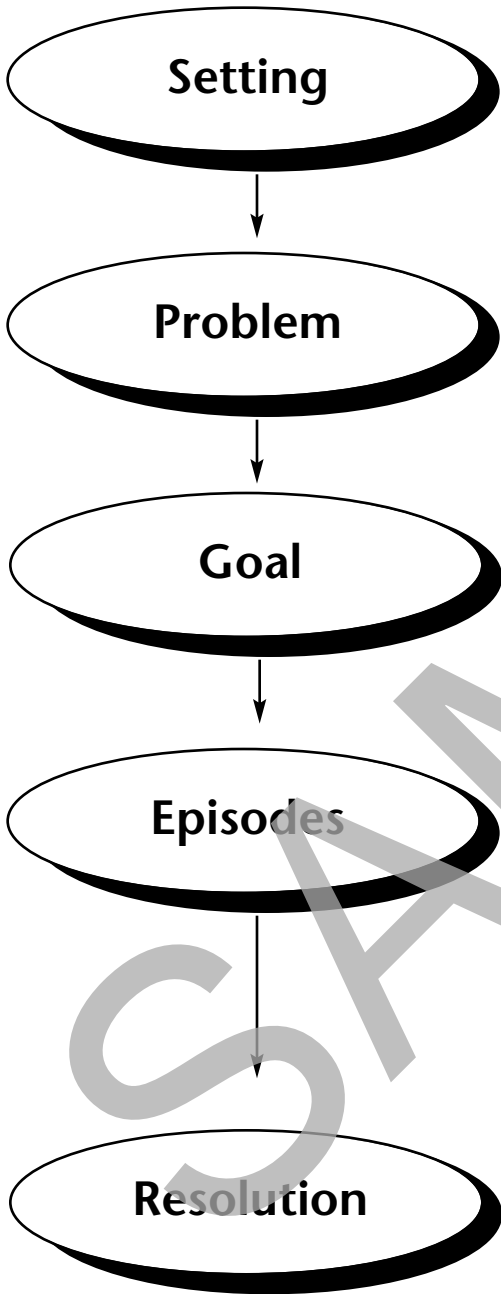
About the Author

Louisa May Alcott, who shines through the story as Jo, grew up in the Orchard House in Concord, Massachusetts. The lives of the Alcott family closely parallel the story of the March family. It is possible to visit the Orchard House and see the very rooms mentioned in the novel. You can also see drawings and writings created by members of the Alcott family.

Introductory Activities

1. **Previewing the Book:** Have students study the cover of the book. Ask them to respond to the following questions about what they see: who? what? where? when? why? Based on their answers, students predict what the novel will be about.
2. Given the following clues, have students write a paragraph predicting what they think will happen in the story:
responsibility pride family freedom maturity
3. **Character Diary:** Introduce the main characters as Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. Tell students many things are going to happen to each of them throughout the novel. Ask students to pretend they are one of the characters. As students read, encourage them to make diary entries from that character's perspective. At various times, students will be able to share their entries with classmates.
4. Create an attribute web (see page of 10 of this guide) with students for each of the following ideas: responsibility, pride, family, freedom, maturity. Focus on one word at a time. Begin by writing the word in the center of a large piece of paper. Ask students to quickly tell what each word brings to mind. Encourage students to elaborate on particular ideas.
5. **Prediction Chart:** Have students set up a prediction chart to use as they read the novel. (See pages 5-6 of this guide.)
6. **Anticipation Questions:** Have students respond to each of the following statements with a "thumbs-up" (I agree) or a "thumbs-down" (I disagree) and discuss their responses.
 - Families should always support each other.
 - It is hard to be happy with your life when you do not have much money.
 - It is difficult to maintain a relationship with someone when they live far away.
 - You should always look out for yourself.
 - If you do not have much, you need not worry about trying to help others.

Story Map



Characters _____

Time and Place _____

Problem _____

Goal _____

Beginning → Development → Outcome

Resolution _____

Note: This novel is divided into many short chapters. For the purpose of this guide, chapters have been grouped into sections.

Chapters 1-4—pages 1-26

Vocabulary

grumbled (1)	contentedly (1)	altered (1)	sacrifices (1)
statirical (2)	dignity (2)	recesses (3)	chrysanthemums (3)
atmosphere (3)	timid (3)	hearth (4)	dramatic (4)
machinery (5)	chaplain (5)	affection (6)	celestial (6)
hobgoblins (7)	renouncing (7)	slough (7)	despond (7)
hastily (8)	abashed (8)	heroically (9)	buckwheats (9)
procession (9)	gruel (10)	enacted (10)	escort (10)
tumultuous (11)	capital (11)	garret (12)	poplins (13)
exertions (13)	snood (14)	jovial (15)	dwindled (15)
forlornly (15)	demeanor (16)	blunderbus (19)	arnica (20)
dismally (20)	fretting (21)	horrid (21)	implored (21)
momentary (21)	blighted (22)	cultivate (22)	discontented (22)
irascible (23)	affliction (23)	aristocratic (24)	Grecian (24)
console (24)	quenched (24)	dismal (24)	carnelian (25)
recitation (25)	soberly (26)		

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Mother think it isn't nice to spend money on pleasures when men are sacrificing their lives at war? *(She thinks it is selfish to think of oneself under the circumstances.)*
2. Why does Father's letter make all the girls feel guilty? *(He says he is proud of them and they are afraid of letting him down.)*
3. What do the girls receive under their pillows Christmas morning? *(a guidebook on how to live)*
4. Why is it unusual that they have a servant, Hannah? *(They do not have much money.)*
5. Why do the girls agree to give up their breakfast? *(They wish to help their needy neighbors.)*
6. What does the family receive in return for their kindness? *(Mr. Laurence sends them goodies.)*
7. Why does Mr. Laurence decide to do such a nice thing for the March family? *(Answers will vary.)*
8. Why are gloves of such importance? Why will Mother care about the handkerchiefs? *(Answers will vary.)*
9. Why does Jo say she doesn't think fine ladies enjoy themselves anymore than they do? *(Even though they might not have much, they still have a great deal of fun.)* Do you agree with Jo? *(Answers will vary.)*
10. Why does Meg say the pilgrims are not setting out as they ought to? *(They are not behaving in a manner Mother would like.)*
11. Why is it important that Mother waves to the girls as they leave everyday? *(Answers will vary.)*
12. Describe Mr. Laurence. *(Answers will vary.)*
13. How do you feel about the old man's statement about giving his sons for the good of the country? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer. *(Answers will vary.)*
14. What lesson has the old man taught Mother? *(Answers will vary.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. **Research:** Research clothing worn in the novel's time period. There are numerous types of clothing mentioned throughout the novel. Encourage students to find or draw pictures that represent the dress of the day to place around the room.
2. **Journal:** The March family chooses to give up their Christmas breakfast to help a family in need. What have you done to help someone less fortunate? How did it make you feel knowing you helped someone?
3. **Comprehension:** Create a family tree for the March family. Be sure to include all the children. Include their ages at the start of the book. Make additions and revisions to the tree as you continue to read the novel.

Chapters 5-8—pages 26-52

Vocabulary

betokening (27)	wistfully (27)	blancmange (28)	beckoned (29)
solitary (30)	reveled (30)	immensely (30)	quaint (31)
obliged (31)	dismay (31)	abruptly (32)	courtesy (33)
vivacity (33)	conservatory (33)	amiss (34)	inquiring (35)
disposition (35)	plague (35)	enticements (36)	anecdotes (36)
blithely (38)	crotchety (39)	deliberately (40)	cordially (41)
centaur (41)	pardonable (42)	consigned (42)	pretense (43)
contraband (43)	obediently (43)	composure (43)	conscience (43)
portentous (43)	infringed (43)	ignominious (44)	anteroom (44)
indignation (44)	benignant (44)	corporal (45)	conceited (45)
mischievous (45)	bridled (46)	coaxingly (46)	pacify (48)
abominable (49)	penitent (51)		

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the young Laurence boy stay in the house all the time? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. How does Jo feel when she discovers Mr. Laurence standing in the room with her? *(She is embarrassed about her comments about him.)*
3. Why does Laurie's attitude or countenance change with Jo around? Explain your answer. *(Answers will vary.)*
4. Describe the grandfather's reaction when Jo complements Laurie's piano playing? *(He does not seem to approve of all the compliments and wishes Jo would stop.)*
5. Reread the last two paragraphs in Chapter 5. What are they discussing? Explain your answer. *(Answers will vary.)*
6. Why is Beth so grateful to get to play the piano? *(They cannot afford one at their house.)*
7. Why does Mr. Laurence give Beth a piano? *(She reminds him of his deceased granddaughter. Also, he is a kind and generous man who enjoys doing kind deeds for others.)*
8. How does Beth's affection make Mr. Laurence feel? *(Answers will vary.)*
9. Is it nice for Amy to tell Jenny she will not receive any limes? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*
10. Why is it so humiliating to be swatted and forced to stand in front of the class? Would it be embarrassing to you? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*