

SIMPLIFIED READERS

B1

LEVEL 4

# Little Women

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT



# WORKSHEETS

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**ABOUT THE BOOK**

*Little Women* is a classic American novel which was written by Louisa May Alcott and published in 1868. It has been read and enjoyed by generations of young girls across the world. It tells the lives of four teenage sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy March. The author based the novel on her own life as a young girl and the lives of her three sisters. It was illustrated by one of her sisters, who was a young artist then. When readers wanted to know more about the March girls' lives, Alcott wrote the second volume of the book in 1869 called *Good Wives*. Alcott also wrote two novels that follow the story of *Little Women* and feature the March sisters: *Little Men*, which was published in 1871 and *Jo's Boys*, published in 1886. *Little Women* has been popular ever since its publication and has been translated into many different languages. It has been adapted for the cinema, television and stage numerous times.

**SUMMARY**

Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March are four sisters living with their loving mother. Their father is away serving in the Civil War. Mr and Mrs March were a rich couple who had a good life until Mr March lost all his wealth. Mrs March had to raise her daughters in poverty. When Meg and Jo became old enough to work, they took on jobs to support the family and to help their mother pay the expenses. The oldest sister, Meg, who is now 16 years old, works as a governess for the children of a rich family. The 15-year-old Jo looks after their old, wealthy aunt, who lives alone in a big house. Despite their poverty, Mrs March and the girls are very generous and helpful to the poor.

The novel begins with the four girls sitting and talking in their living room one late December evening, waiting for their mother to come home from work. They talk about what to get for their mother as Christmas presents. Soon, their mother, Marmee, comes home with a letter from Mr March, which makes the girls very happy. On Christmas morning, each girl finds a book under her pillow, which is a present from Mrs March. Later that day, Mrs March encourages the girls to give away their breakfast to a poor family nearby. Then, their elderly rich neighbour, Mr Laurence, sends the girls fancy treats as a Christmas feast.

A few days later, Meg and Jo are invited to a New Year's Dance at the house of one of Meg's rich friends. There, they meet and become friends with Laurie, who lives with his grandfather Mr Laurence. Meg hurts her ankle while dancing, and Laurie takes the sisters home in his carriage. One day, Jo visits Laurie when he is sick with a cold and meets his grandfather for the first time. Soon, Mr Laurence meets all the girls, and Beth becomes his favourite. As Beth loves playing the piano, he sends her the little piano of his granddaughter who died years ago. In the days that follow, the girls and their mother spend pleasant times with Mr Laurence and Laurie.

The girls sometimes have problems with one another or of their own. Once Amy, who got very mad at Jo, burns

the manuscript of a story book she has been working on for a long time. And Joe becomes so angry at Amy that she nearly lets her drown while she is ice-skating. But they soon forgive each other. Meg is invited to spend two weeks at her rich friend's house. At the dance parties there, she meets rich girls and boys and envy their clothes and lifestyle. During one of those parties, she hears two women gossip about her mother. They say that Mrs March wants Meg to marry Laurie because he is rich. This upsets Meg and Mrs March too when she tells her.

One day, Laurie invites the girls to a picnic which he is going on with his friends. Laurie's tutor, Mr Brooke, also comes to the picnic. There, Jo notices that the young man is very interested in Meg. Later, Jo's story is published in a newspaper. The whole family and Laurie feel very proud of her. But one day, the family receives a telegram saying that Mr March is sick in the hospital in Washington. Mrs March borrows money from the aunt to go there and look after her husband. Mr Laurence asks Mr Brooke to accompany her on the journey. While Mrs March is away, Beth often goes to visit the poor family, and she catches scarlet fever from their baby who later dies of the disease. Beth stays in bed for days and is nearly dying. Meanwhile, Amy stays at Aunt March's house so that she won't catch the disease. Hearing about Beth's condition, Mrs March returns home immediately. Meanwhile, Mr March, whose health has improved, sends a letter saying that he will be home in the new year.

By Christmas Day, Beth recovers, and as the girls are preparing for a celebration, their father returns home. This is a big surprise for the girls. Mr March feels proud to see the girls so mature. Meanwhile, Mr Brooke has fallen in love with Meg, and opens up to her about it. Mr and Mrs March are fond of this nice man, and since Meg loves him too, they let her get engaged to him. The story ends with the whole family happily sitting and chatting in the living room together with Mr Brooke, Laurie and Mr Laurence.

**Discuss before you begin reading:**

- 1 Do you have any brothers or sisters? Do you get along with them? How would you describe their personalities? Do you have any common interests?
- 2 **a** Which do you think is more important in life, money or love? Which brings happiness?
- b** Which do you think is more important, personal goals or family responsibilities? Would you give up on your future plans or personal goals for your family?

**A Word Search**

Can you find the 12 hidden words here? They are related to the feelings, conditions, personalities, situations or states of people. The definitions are given in B.

H	N	O	E	N	V	Y	M	R	L	L	O	V	E	B
O	Q	Y	Y	H	M	O	H	A	A	G	J	B	G	A
G	W	V	Q	I	S	H	A	P	P	I	N	E	S	S
O	C	X	N	S	O	W	E	A	L	T	H	B	V	E
W	X	C	M	W	E	H	P	O	V	E	R	T	Y	S
A	D	H	C	A	J	Y	M	W	Y	H	U	Z	U	N
P	R	I	D	E	F	V	V	N	A	Y	M	P	F	B
R	I	A	E	F	P	Z	G	B	S	J	L	G	W	X
G	E	N	E	R	O	S	I	T	Y	X	G	A	O	M
H	E	L	P	F	U	L	N	E	S	S	A	Y	C	Z
H	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	H	S	S	X	R	C	E
R	E	S	P	O	N	S	I	B	I	L	I	T	Y	B
I	N	D	E	P	E	N	D	E	N	C	E	J	N	H
I	A	Q	D	U	T	Y	Q	L	E	Y	C	F	R	V

**B Write down the correct word (from the word search) for each definition.**

- 1 something that you have to do because it is part of your job or it is the right thing to do: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 the feeling you have when you wish you could have the same thing or quality that someone else has:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 being willing to give money, help, kindness (especially more than is usual or expected): \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 the feeling of being happy: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 the quality of giving help or being ready to help: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 living your life without the support or influence of other people; freedom: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 a strong feeling of liking or caring for someone/something: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 a situation in which someone does not have enough money to pay for their basic needs; being extremely poor:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9 a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction that you get when you or someone has done something good or achieved something important: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something due to their abilities, qualities or achievements:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 11 the state of having a duty or feeling that you must have control over something/someone: \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 a large amount of money or valuable possessions that someone has: \_\_\_\_\_

**A** Before you start reading Chapter 2, complete the table below about the March sisters.

Name	Short for ...	... years old.	What does she do?
Meg	_____	_____	a _____; _____ and _____ small children
Jo	_____	_____	looks after _____
Beth	_____	_____	stays at home; does household tasks
Amy	-	_____	_____

**B** Before you start reading Chapter 2, read each description in the table and put a tick in the boxes under the names of the correct characters.

Descriptions	Amy	Beth	Hannah	Jo	Laurie	Meg
1 shy, quiet, gentle and sweet						
2 lives next door to the March family; about 15-16 years old						
3 loves reading; writes stories						
4 tall and thin; has long, thick hair						
5 envies people who have nice clothes, nice food and a nice life						
6 loves music; plays the piano						
7 expected to go to college in two years						
8 very beautiful; has small white hands						
9 studies very hard with a tutor						
10 the loyal housemaid; treated like a family member						
11 feels responsible for her sisters						
12 looks boyish; doesn't want to be ladylike						
13 went to school in France						
14 proud, selfish, ladylike						
15 blonde hair, blue eyes						
16 likes being active; sporty						

## A Who said what to whom and when?

QUOTATION	WHO IS SPEAKING?	TO WHOM?	WHEN?
1 'Our dresses are nice enough. Yours is as good as new, but I forgot the burn in mine. What will I do?'			
2 'I think I've seen you before. You live near us, don't you?'			
3 'Mother sent her love. Meg wanted me to bring you some of her cake, and Beth sent her cats.'			
4 'Yes sir. He seems a little lonely. Me and my sisters would like to help if we can. We don't forget the wonderful Christmas present you sent us.'			
5 'Let him take a holiday. Mrs March says he is studying too hard and needs to spend time with friends. She is right. Let him do what he likes. Mrs March is doing more for him than we can.'			
6 'Try it, honey. Let's hear the sound of the baby piano.'			
7 'You were very naughty, but I think she might forgive you now. Go after them. Wait until Jo looks happy and cheerful. And then go and kiss her.'			
8 'Keep near the shore. It's not safe in the middle.'			
9 'Young ladies in America are independent. We admire and respect them.'			
10 'Your stories are very good. It will be fun to see them printed. We will be proud of our writer.'			
11 'Don't worry. I didn't borrow or steal it. I only sold what was my own.'			
12 'I would like to travel to Washington with your mother. Mr Lawrence wants me to take care of some business there.'			
13 'No, don't cry. You go to Aunt March's, and I'll come and take you out every day. We'll drive or walk, and we'll have a great time.'			
14 'Tell me, are you going to marry this man? If you do, I will not leave any of my money to you.'			

**A Mark the sentences as True (T) or False (F). (10x2=20 pts)**

- \_\_\_1 The four sisters never complain about their life.
- \_\_\_2 Mr and Mrs March have been poor ever since they got married.
- \_\_\_3 In his letter, Mr March writes about the difficulties of the war.
- \_\_\_4 Mr Laurence knew the girls' grandfather.
- \_\_\_5 Mr Laurence is not very friendly with the neighbours, but he is a very kind man.
- \_\_\_6 Meg envies the lives of rich people.
- \_\_\_7 Beth was taught at home by her father because she was too shy to go to school.
- \_\_\_8 The girls do not invite Laurie to their play, thinking he won't come.
- \_\_\_9 Laurie complains that his grandfather never lets him do what he likes.
- \_\_\_10 Laurie feels uncomfortable around Mrs March.

**B Mark the correct answers. (10x3=30 pts)**

- 1 Amy burns Jo's manuscript because she didn't let her - - - .**
- a draw the pictures for it
  - b read it
  - c come to the theatre with her and Meg
- 2 What do the girls do for the poor Hummel family on Christmas Day?**
- a They invite them to have breakfast at their home.
  - b They give them their own breakfast.
  - c They give the children the slippers they have made for them.
- 3 When does Jo see Laurie for the first time?**
- a when she is at a dance party on New Year's Eve
  - b while she is skating on the river
  - c when he brings back her cat, which ran away
- 4 Why can't Jo dance at Mrs Gardiner's New Year's Eve party?**
- a She doesn't want anyone to see her stained gloves.
  - b She doesn't know how to dance.
  - c She has to hide the burn on the back of her dress.
- 5 Meg and Jo began to work when Mr March - - - .**
- a lost his fortune
  - b went to war
  - c got too ill to work
- 6 Jo enjoys being in Aunt March's house because - - - .**
- a she doesn't have to work or study there
  - b she can have good food there
  - c it has a library full of books
- 7 What does Mrs March do when she gets angry?**
- a She folds her lips tight and leaves the room.
  - b She speaks to Hannah, who comforts her.
  - c She hides herself in the bedroom and cries.
- 8 Mrs March wants her girls to - - - .**
- a get married and have kids
  - b become rich
  - c be good, happy and successful

**9 What does Mr Brooke send Meg?**

- a a poem that he wrote
- b the translation of a German song
- c a card with love words on it

**10 Mrs March advises Jo to - - - .**

- a keep trying to control her anger
- b work harder
- c marry Laurie

**C Fill in the blanks with the names. (13x2=26 pts)**

- 1 The girls call their mother \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't like girlish talk.
- 3 Beth makes a pair of slippers for \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ reminds Mr Laurence of his dead granddaughter.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ keeps talking to Meg at the picnic.
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ keeps the glove that Meg lost.
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ is the only person that knows Jo has given her story to a newspaper.
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ wants to be a famous artist.
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ goes to Washington together with Mrs March.
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ visits the Hummel family every day when Mrs March is in Washington.
- 11 Brooke's interest in Meg upsets \_\_\_\_\_.
- 12 The girls do not know that \_\_\_\_\_ sent a telegram to Mrs March about Beth's illness.
- 13 Aunt March loves \_\_\_\_\_ the most.

**D Who said the following? Write the names. (7x2=14 pts)**

- 1 'They have nothing to eat, and the oldest boy came to tell me they were suffering.' \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 'I want to tell you something, Mother. It's about Meg. Something bothers me.' \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 'You are rich if you have a good man's heart. That is better than a fortune.' \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 '... and I see that you have all grown up. You are all more mature and calmer.' \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 'I'll wait, and meanwhile, you may learn to like me. Would it be too difficult for you, dear?' \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 'So you want to marry a man without money, position or business, Meg?' \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 'I'll stand by you, Jo, all the days of my life. I promise.' \_\_\_\_\_

**E Match the two halves of the sentences (1-5 with a-e). (5x2=10 pts)**

- \_\_\_1 On Christmas Day, the girls were very happy that ...
  - \_\_\_2 They came back home from the Hummels ...
  - \_\_\_3 Mrs March thought Jo did well to sell her hair ...
  - \_\_\_4 Meg and Jo sent Amy to Aunt March ...
  - \_\_\_5 Jo was not very happy about the engagement of Meg and Mr Brooke ...
- a ... so that she wouldn't get scarlet fever.
  - b ... and had breakfast with just bread and milk.
  - c ... they gave away their food to the Hummels.
  - d ... because she didn't want to lose her.
  - e ... but feared that she would regret it later.

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