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with
NEW ACTIVITIES



Real Women



In 1868, Louisa May Alcott was a struggling writer, who wrote thrillers for magazines, using the name A. M. Barnard. One of her publishers asked her to write a novel for girls and young women. At first, Alcott didn't know what to do. She said she didn't know many girls, apart from her sisters, and that she preferred boys. Fortunately, she changed her mind, and *Little Women* was an immediate success.

Real life

Alcott based the story on her own family – she was the second of four daughters and the family often had money problems. The book was very different from children's literature of the time, where characters were often either very good or very bad. Alcott's characters were more realistic, and the plot focused on daily life and experiences.

Alcott didn't enjoy writing the story, and she thought that the finished book was boring. But when her publisher gave it to his niece and her friends to read, they all loved it.

As you read the story, decide which of the sisters is your favourite. Which one is most like you?

Making a difference

Little Women tells the story of four very different sisters – the March sisters – and their journey from childhood into life as young women. The story celebrates their strengths and differences, but above all, it celebrates the power of women. For the first time in literature, young women are seen as strong individuals who make their own decisions. Alcott teaches us that we have the power to make a difference in our lives and become better people.

Science-fiction author Ursula Le Guin says that Jo March inspired her to become a writer. Le Guin says:

"She is close as a sister and common as grass."

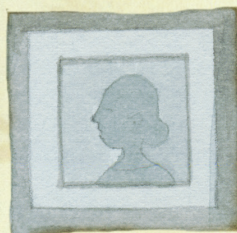
... In pairs, discuss what she means.

GLOSSARY

- **childhood:** time when one is a child
- **focused on:** looked at in detail
- **inspired her:** made her want to do something
- **niece:** daughter of one's brother or sister
- **preferred:** liked better
- **publishers:** people who make books
- **struggling:** in difficulty
- **thrillers:** exciting mystery stories

Little Women

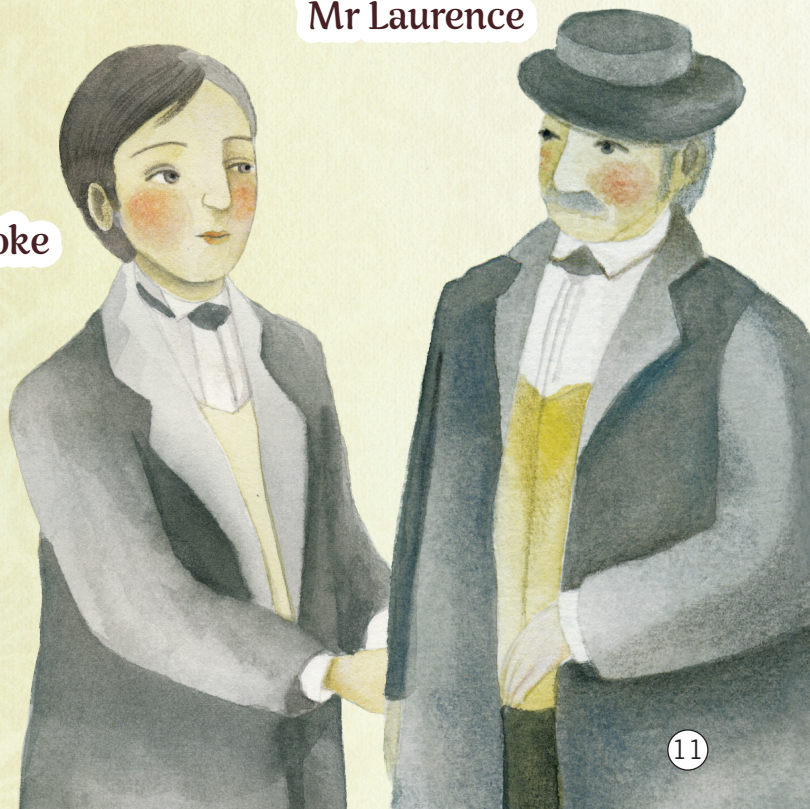




Laurie

Mr Laurence

Mr Brooke



BEFORE READING

- 1 Look at the pictures, and read the descriptions of the four March sisters. Complete the text with the words from the box.

blonde oldest shy writer



Meg



Jo



Beth



Amy

- a Meg is the, and she's very pretty.
- b Amy is the youngest, and she has hair and blue eyes.
- c Beth is 13 years old. She's very
- d Jo is tall and thin. She wants to be a

- 2 Look at the picture of Laurie. Circle the adjectives that describe him.

friendly

good-looking


shy

fair

ugly

dark



- 3  Work with a partner. Look at each other. Then describe your partner to the class.



4 Listen and write the correct names below.

A I don't care about clothes or hairstyles.

B I'm very shy.

.....
C I love beautiful things.

.....
D I love pretty clothes.

5 Write the correct heading for each group of words below.

means of communication war hobbies jobs

a servant doctor tutor

b telegram note letter

c army men soldiers

d knitting sewing reading

6 Use some of the words from Exercise 5 to complete the sentences below.

a In the 1860s in America, some families had a who cooked, cleaned, or cared for them.

b Some richer families also had a, a private teacher usually employed to educate their children.

c A was a means of fast communication invented in the 19th century.

d The fighting in the army were usually all men.

e In the 1860s, many people made their own clothes by or



1 The March sisters



It was December, and the snow was falling quietly outside. The four March sisters were sitting around the fire in the parlor. They were knitting socks for soldiers. There was a war, and everyone had to help.

Meg was the oldest of the four sisters. She was sixteen. She was very pretty, and she loved pretty clothes. Jo was fifteen. She was very tall and thin. She was different from Meg. She didn't care about • dresses or hairstyles. She was a tomboy •. Beth was thirteen. She was very shy and quiet, and she seemed to live in a happy world of her own. The youngest, Amy, looked like a snow princess with her blue eyes and blonde hair. She loved beautiful things, and she was a little vain •. She also thought that she was a very important person.

'Christmas isn't Christmas without any presents,' Jo said sadly.

'I hate being poor!' Meg said, looking at her old dress.

'Some girls have lots of nice things, and other girls have nothing at all,' said Amy. 'I don't think it's fair •.'

'But we've got Father and Mother, and each other,' said Beth.

The four sisters looked happy for a moment when they remembered this.

Then Jo said, 'But we haven't got Father.'

Their smiles suddenly disappeared. Mr March was far away with the soldiers.

'Mother says our men are suffering •, and we mustn't spend money for pleasure •,' Meg said. 'That's why we can't have presents this year.'

GLOSSARY

- **didn't care about:** they were not important to her
- **fair:** good and equal
- **pleasure:** enjoyment
- **suffering:** feeling bad and unhappy
- **tomboy:** girl who likes boys' games and activities
- **vain:** proud of her good looks

‘Well, each of us has a dollar to spend,’ said Jo. ‘What can the army do with four dollars? Nothing! I don’t expect anything from Mother, but I’d like to buy a book for myself.’ Jo loved reading, and she had a passion• for books.

‘I want to spend mine on some new music,’ said Beth. She played the piano, and she loved singing.

‘I’m going to buy a box of drawing pencils. I really need them,’ said Amy. She wanted to be an artist.

‘Mother didn’t say anything about spending our own money,’ cried Jo. ‘We work hard for it, so let’s buy what we want and have a little fun!’

It was true. The two older sisters had jobs. Meg worked as a teacher for the King family, and Jo looked after Aunt March, their father’s rich, bad-tempered• old aunt. Beth and Amy helped with the housework.

Just then, the clock struck• six. Beth got up and put her mother’s slippers near the fire to warm.

‘Those slippers are very old,’ said Jo. ‘Mother needs some new ones.’

‘I can buy a pair for her with my dollar,’ said Beth.

‘No, I’m the oldest,’ Meg said. ‘I want to buy the slippers for her.’

‘No, it’s my job,’ said Jo. ‘Father told *me* to take care of Mother while he was away.’

‘I have an idea,’ said Beth. ‘Let’s not spend our money on ourselves! Let’s get some presents for Mother!’

Her sisters thought that this was a very good idea.

GLOSSARY

- **bad-tempered:** who gets angry easily
- **struck:** made a sound like a bell
- **passion:** (here) great love

‘I’m going to give her a pair of gloves,’ said Meg, looking at her own pretty hands. They were small and white. ‘And you, Jo?’ ‘Some new slippers!’ cried Jo. ‘I’m going to make her some handkerchiefs,’ said Beth quietly. ‘And I’m going to give her a bottle of perfume,’ said Amy. They all agreed to go shopping for the presents the next day.

Presents



Work with a partner.

Ask and answer the questions.

Which do you like more – giving presents or receiving them?

What kind of presents do you give your family and friends?

What kind of presents do you like receiving?

At that moment, a happy voice called, ‘Hello, my dears!’ It was Mrs March. The girls jumped up and ran to the front door.

While she was taking off her wet cloak and shoes and putting on the warm slippers, Mrs March talked to her daughters about their day.

‘How is your cold, Meg? Jo, you look tired. Did anyone call today, Beth? Amy, baby, come and give me a kiss.’

Then the girls quickly prepared the table for the evening meal, and they all sat down to eat. There was a happy smile on Mrs March’s face.

‘I’ve got a surprise for you after supper,’ she said.

‘Hooray!’ shouted Beth. ‘A letter from Father!’

‘Yes!’ said Mrs March. ‘A nice long letter.’

1 Use five of the words in the box to complete the sentences.

heel	blanket	grateful	rug
headache	tomboy	while	handsome

- a** She was a, she didn't care about dresses or hairstyles.
- b** The children were trying to keep warm under an old
- c** Meg hurt her ankle when the of her shoe broke.
- d** Laurie says that boys are noisy and they give him a
- e** We usually use for men, and beautiful for women.

2 Write three sentences with the words left out in Exercise 1.**3 Complete the following sentences with *must*, *mustn't*, *have to*, or *don't have to*.**

- a** 'We spend money for pleasure,' Meg said.
- b** 'I'd like to come,' replied Jo. 'But Iask Mother first.'
- c** 'I'm going to Washington tomorrow, I do a few things for Mr Laurence.'
- d** 'That isn't right. Laurie, you do what your grandfather wants. He loves you.'
- e** 'It's a pity that we grow up.'
- f** 'Tell Amy not to come near me!' said Beth anxiously. 'She catch the illness, too.'
- g** You be a girl to enjoy reading *Little Women*.

K A2 Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 4

1 Read the sentences and choose the correct answer (A, B, or C).

- 1 Mrs March talked about the terrible journey through the snowstorm.
A home **B** did **C** while
- 2 'We nearly lost Beth. Now I'm going to her safe forever,' said Mr March.
A catch **B** hold **C** keep
- 3 There is a war and everybody to help.
A has **B** had **C** have
- 4 'Well, each of us a dollar to spend,' said Jo.
A must **B** have **C** has
- 5 'John is like a son us, and we like him a lot,' replied Mrs March.
A from **B** at **C** to
- 6 'It's to be happy than rich in life,' said Mrs March.
A good **B** best **C** better
- 7 Mr March took Meg's hands in
A his **B** him **C** hers
- 8 'I'm of all my wonderful little women,' said Mr March.
A happy **B** proud **C** worried
- 9 'Laurie isn't playing the piano these days,' said Mr Laurence.
A in **B** for **C** much
- 10 After that, Beth went to play the piano in the mansion every day.
A always **B** nearly **C** on