

Little Women

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

4

OXFORD BOOKWORMS

www.ZabanBook.com

زبان بوک

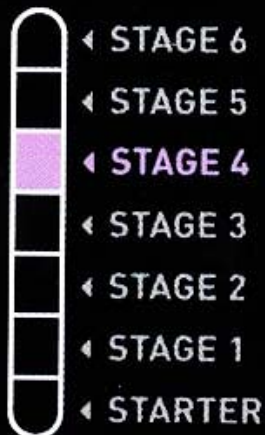
Little Women



When Christmas comes for the four March girls, there is no money for expensive presents and they give away their Christmas breakfast to a poor family. But there are no happier girls in America

than Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy. They miss their father, of course, who is away at the Civil War, but they try hard to be good so that he will be proud of his 'little women' when he comes home.

This heart-warming story of family life has been popular for more than a hundred years. (Word count 14,920)



◀ STAGE 6

◀ STAGE 5

◀ **STAGE 4**

◀ STAGE 3

◀ STAGE 2

◀ STAGE 1

◀ STARTER



**HUMAN
INTEREST**



**AUDIO
AVAILABLE**

Text adaptation by John Escott

Cover image by Marius Bartholoty (fl.1904)/Musée
Petiet, Limoux, France, Patrice Cartier courtesy of
Bridgeman Art Library

STAGE 4 1400 Headwords

www.ZabanBook.com



Little Women

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

MP3-CD

LEVEL 4



LITTLE WOMEN

At Christmas the four March girls decide that they will all try hard to be good, and never to be cross, or lazy, or selfish again. Meg, the oldest, won't complain about her job or not having pretty dresses. Jo won't argue and get angry and run wild like a boy. Shy Beth will try hard to be braver, and little Amy will think less of herself and more of other people.

They don't always succeed, of course, and sometimes there are arguments and secrets and angry tears. But there is also laughter and fun, and soon a new friend – Laurie, the rich and lonely boy next door.

Many troubles and difficulties lie in the year ahead – and the girls are growing up. Wild Jo hates the idea of being a polite young lady, but Meg will soon be seventeen, and ready to fall in love . . .

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

OXFORD and OXFORD ENGLISH are registered trade marks of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

This simplified edition © Oxford University Press 2008

Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published in Oxford Bookworms 1995

4 6 8 10 9 7 5

No unauthorized photocopying

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the ELT Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Any websites referred to in this publication are in the public domain and
their addresses are provided by Oxford University Press for information only.
Oxford University Press disclaims any responsibility for the content

ISBN 978 0 19 479175 5

A complete recording of this Bookworms edition of
Little Women is available on audio CD ISBN 978 0 19 479152 6

Typeset by Wyvern Typesetting Ltd, Bristol

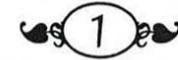
Printed in Hong Kong

Word count (main text): 14,920 words

For more information on the Oxford Bookworms Library,
visit www.oup.com/bookworms

CONTENTS

STORY INTRODUCTION	i
1 Four sisters	1
2 A Happy Christmas	6
3 The Laurence boy	10
4 The house next door	16
5 A surprise for Beth	24
6 Amy in trouble	27
7 Meg hears some gossip	32
8 All play and no work	38
9 Secrets	44
10 A telegram	48
11 Beth	51
12 Love and Mr Brooke	55
13 Laurie makes trouble and Jo makes peace	59
14 Happier days	65
GLOSSARY	74
ACTIVITIES: Before Reading	76
ACTIVITIES: While Reading	77
ACTIVITIES: After Reading	80
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	84
ABOUT THE BOOKWORMS LIBRARY	85



Four sisters

'Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents,' said Jo crossly.

'It's so awful to be poor!' agreed Meg, looking at her old dress.

'It's not right for some girls to have pretty things, and others to have nothing at all,' said little Amy.

'We've got Father and Mother, and each other,' said Beth gently.

The four young faces round the fire cheered up as they thought of this, but then Jo said sadly, 'We haven't got Father, and we won't have him for a long time.' She didn't say 'perhaps never', but each silently thought it, remembering that he was away at the war in the South.



'Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents.'

'I'll get her some with my dollar,' said Beth.

'No, I shall!' cried Amy.

'I'm the oldest—' began Meg.

'I'm the man of the family now Father is away, and I shall buy them,' said Jo.

'Let's each get her something and not get anything for ourselves,' said Beth.

'That's a kind idea!' said Jo. 'What shall we get?'

Everyone thought for a moment, then Meg said, 'I'll give her a nice pair of gloves.'

'The best army slippers,' said Jo.

'Some handkerchiefs,' said Beth.

'A little bottle of perfume,' said Amy. 'It won't cost much, so I'll have some money left to buy something for me.'

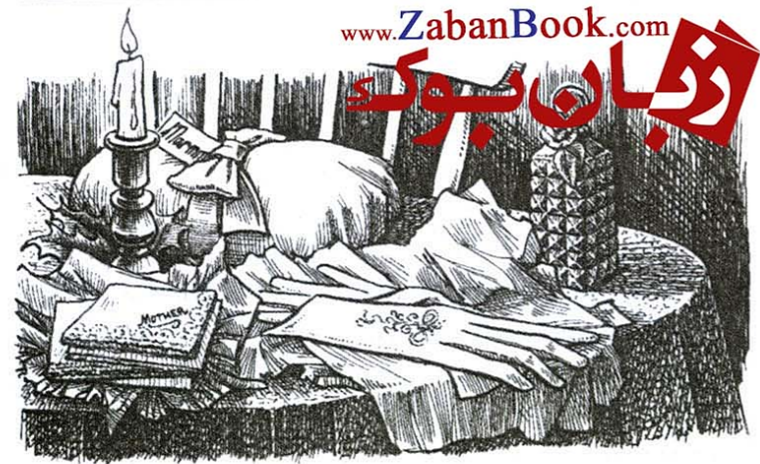
'We'll let Mother think we're getting things for ourselves, and then surprise her,' said Jo.

Mrs March arrived home soon after. She took off her wet things and put on her warm slippers. Meg made the tea, Jo brought wood for the fire, Beth was quiet and busy, and Amy gave orders.

'I've got a letter from Father!' cried Mrs March.

It was a letter to cheer them up, and the special message for the girls came at the end: *Give them all my love and a kiss. I think of them every day. I know they will be loving children to you, and that when I come back, I will be prouder than ever of my little women.*

A tear dropped off the end of Jo's nose.



'A nice pair of gloves and some handkerchiefs.'

Amy hid her face on her mother's shoulder. 'I'm selfish,' she cried, 'but I'll try to be better.'

'We all will!' cried Meg. 'I think too much about the way I look, and hate to work, but I won't any more.'

'And I'll try to be a "little woman",' said Jo, 'and not be rough and wild.'

Beth said nothing, but she began to work hard at a blue army glove she was making.

So the four girls decided that they would all try very hard to be good. They would never be cross, or lazy, or selfish – and they would all help each other. They talked over their plan that evening, while they made sheets for Aunt March. Then at nine o'clock they stopped to sing a song. Beth played the old piano, and Meg and her mother led the singing. Jo always sang in the wrong place, but the girls never got too old to sing together.



A Happy Christmas

Jo was the first to wake up on Christmas morning, but soon they were all awake and they went downstairs.

'Where's Mother?' asked Meg.

'I don't know,' said old Hannah. She had lived with the family since Meg was born, and was more like a friend than a servant. 'Some poor woman came to the door and your mother went off to see what was needed.'

'She'll be back soon,' said Meg. She looked at the presents for her mother which were in a basket under a chair, ready to bring out at the right time. 'Where is Amy's bottle of perfume?'

'She went to put some pretty paper round it, I think,' said Jo.

Suddenly, they heard the outside door close.

'Here's Mother! Hide the basket, quick!' said Jo.

But it was Amy. She came in quickly.

'Where have you been, and what's that behind you?' asked Meg.

'I ran to the shop and changed the little bottle of perfume for a big one,' said Amy. 'I spent *all* my money to get it, and I'm not going to be selfish any more!'

Meg smiled proudly and put her arms around her sister. Then there was another bang from the outside door, and the basket was pushed back under the chair. The girls ran

to the table, ready for their breakfast.

'Happy Christmas, Mother!' they shouted.

'Happy Christmas, little daughters!' said Mrs March.

Then the smile disappeared from her face. 'Girls, listen. Not far away is a poor woman, Mrs Hummel, with a new baby. Her six children are in one bed, trying to keep warm, as they have no wood for a fire. There is nothing to eat and they are hungry and cold. Will you give them your breakfast as a Christmas present?'

For a minute no one spoke. Then Jo said, 'Mother, I'm so glad you came back before we began to eat!' And the girls quickly began to put their breakfast in a basket.

'I knew you would do it,' said Mrs March, smiling.

She took the girls and Hannah to a cold, miserable little room in an old building, where they found a sick mother, a crying baby, and a group of children with white, frightened faces. The children were on the bed under a blanket, trying to keep warm.

The woman almost cried with happiness when she saw the girls. Hannah, who had brought wood, made a fire. Mrs March gave the mother tea and hot food, then she dressed the little baby gently. The girls put the children round the fire and fed them like hungry birds.

It was a very happy meal, although the girls ate none of it. But no one was happier than those hungry young ladies who gave away their breakfast on Christmas morning.

Mrs March was surprised and pleased when she saw her presents later. There was a lot of laughing and kissing

and explaining. Then, for the rest of the day, the girls were busy. Jo liked to write plays, and the four of them were going to act one that evening. They had learned their words, and had worked hard to make strange and wonderful clothes for all the different characters in the play.

On Christmas night, some other girls came to watch. At first, there was a lot of whispering and laughing from the four sisters behind the curtains. Then the curtains were opened and the play began.

It was an exciting story about Hugo (acted by Jo wearing a black beard!), beautiful Zara and brave Roderigo. There were also two ghosts, a cruel king, and a tall castle made of paper and wood – which unfortunately fell down just as Roderigo and Zara were escaping from it. There were screams of laughter from everyone, but the actors picked themselves up and carried on through more dangers and mysteries until the happy ending was reached.

All the visitors loved the play, and after the excitement and fun came a surprise for everyone.

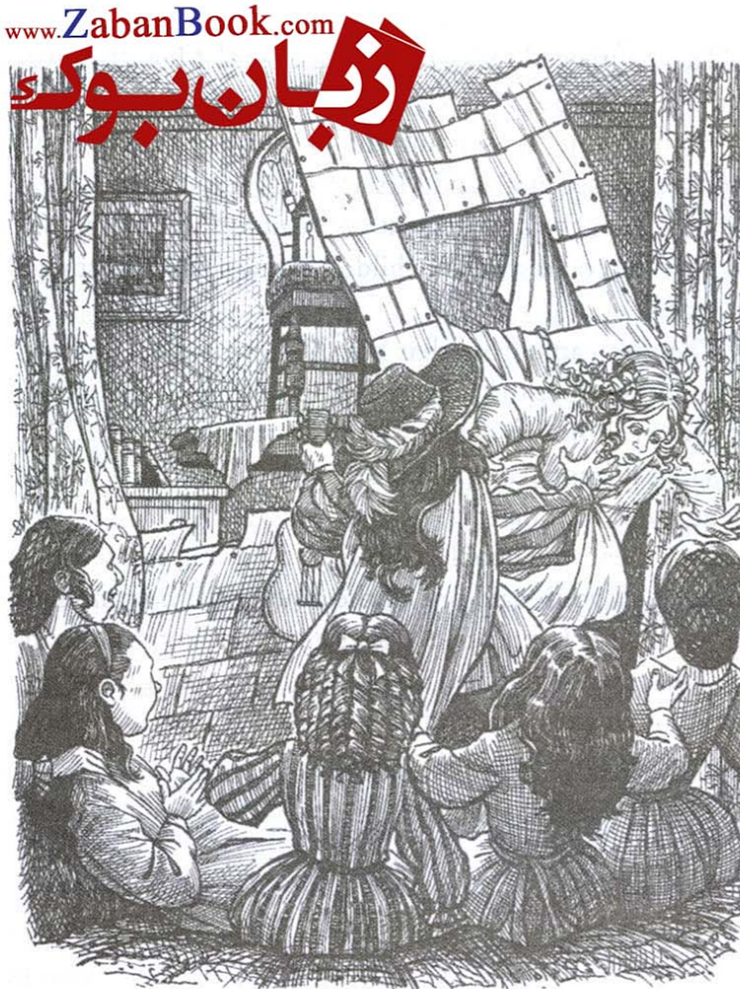
‘Would the young ladies like to stay for supper?’ asked Hannah.

And when the girls saw the supper table, they could not believe their eyes! There was ice-cream, cake, fruit, and French chocolate! And in the middle of the table were flowers for each of the four actors.

‘Where did it all come from?’ asked Amy.

‘From Father Christmas, perhaps?’ said Beth.

‘Mother did it,’ said Meg.



The castle fell down as Roderigo and Zara were escaping from it.

‘Aunt March sent it,’ said Jo.

‘You’re all wrong,’ laughed Mrs March. ‘Old Mr Laurence sent it!’

ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

- 1 Read the story introduction on the first page of the book, and the back cover. How much do you know now about the story? Complete each sentence with the right name.

Meg / Jo / Beth / Amy

- 1 ____ is afraid of talking to people she doesn't know.
 - 2 ____ sometimes gets into fights when she is angry.
 - 3 ____ is unhappy because she hasn't got any nice clothes.
 - 4 ____ is often selfish.
 - 5 ____ will try in future to enjoy her work.
 - 6 ____ would rather be a boy than a girl.
 - 7 ____ is the youngest of the March girls.
 - 8 ____ is a quiet girl who likes being by herself.
- 2 What are the 'troubles and difficulties' that are waiting for the girls? Can you guess? Choose some of these ideas.
 - 1 One of the girls gets a dangerous illness and nearly dies.
 - 2 Two of the girls have a fight and one of them is hurt.
 - 3 Their father dies in the war and never comes home.
 - 4 Their mother has to go away to look after their father.
 - 5 One of the girls burns something belonging to her sister.
 - 6 Two of the girls fall in love with the boy next door.
 - 7 One of the girls makes some very unsuitable friends.
 - 8 One of the girls wants to stop her sister getting married.

ACTIVITIES

While Reading

Read Chapters 1 to 3. Choose the best question-word for these questions, and then answer them.

How / What / Where

- 1 ... was the girls' father?
- 2 ... had the family become poor?
- 3 ... did the girls decide to do about Christmas presents?
- 4 ... did the girls help the Hummel family?
- 5 ... happened in the middle of the Christmas play?
- 6 ... did old Mr Laurence do for the girls, and why?
- 7 ... disasters happened to Jo and Meg on New Year's Eve?
- 8 ... did the party end for Jo and Meg?

Read Chapters 4 to 6. Here are some untrue sentences about these chapters. Change them into true sentences.

- 1 Meg and Jo had jobs because they wanted money to spend.
- 2 Jo visited Laurie because he was ill and needed nursing.
- 3 Mr Laurence was annoyed by Laurie's friendship with the Marches, and thought he should work hard at his studies.
- 4 Mr Laurence gave Beth a piano because he liked her playing so much.
- 5 Amy was so angry with Jo that she threw Jo's skates away.
- 6 When Amy begged for forgiveness, Jo forgave her.
- 7 Jo warned Amy about the thin ice, but Amy didn't listen.