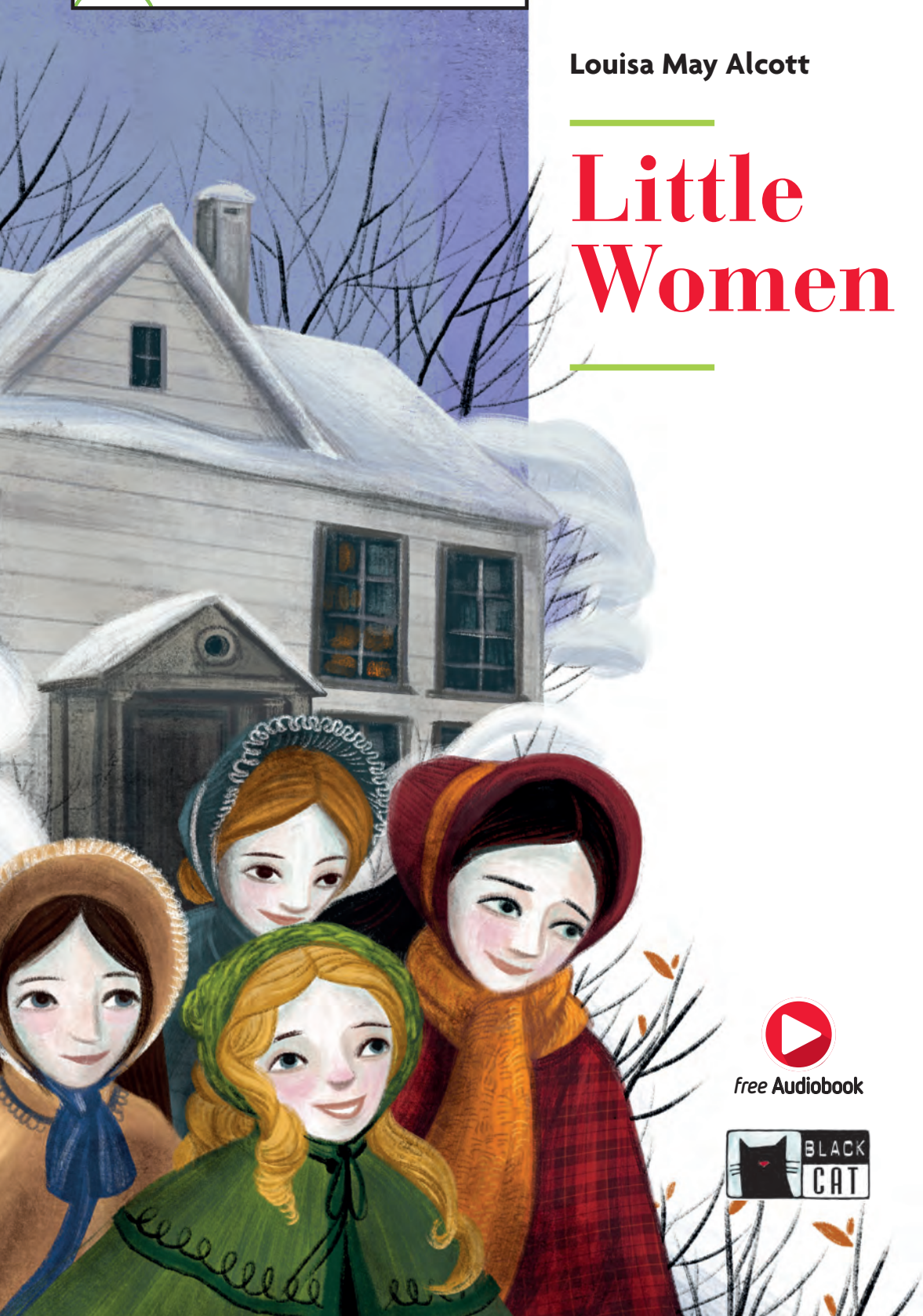


Louisa May Alcott

Little Women



free Audiobook





Louisa May Alcott

Little Women

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Member of CISQ Federation



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Contents

Louisa May Alcott 4

Before you read 6

The story

Chapter 1 Christmas presents 9

Chapter 2 The New Year's Eve party 15

Chapter 3 A new piano 21

Chapter 4 Jo's decision 27

Chapter 5 Beth 32

Chapter 6 A big surprise 37

Chapter 7 Aunt March 42

Dossiers

Abolitionists and slavery 47

Great American writers of the 19th
century 49

Activities 53



Louisa May Alcott

Louisa May Alcott is one of America's greatest writers. She wrote about the lives of girls and young women in 19th century America.



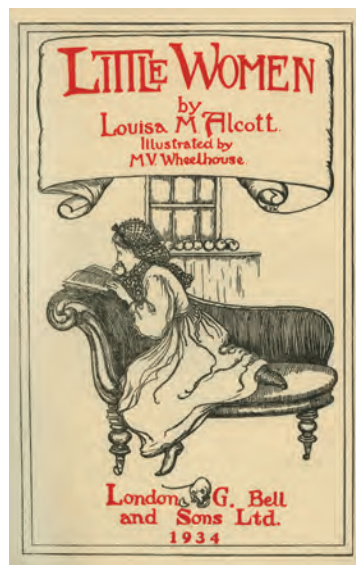
track 02

She was born on November 29, 1832, in Germantown, Pennsylvania, but she grew up in Concord, Massachusetts. She and her three sisters did not go to a normal school. Her father was a teacher and he taught his four daughters at home.

Important writers, like Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne, were the Alcott family friends.

Young Louisa worked at several different jobs to help her family. She loved writing and wrote her first book, *Flower Fables*, in 1854.

Louisa May Alcott was an abolitionist — she was against slavery¹ in the southern states of America. During the American Civil War



1. slavery : when a person can be bought and sold, and must work for free in terrible conditions.

Orchard House, home to Louisa May Alcott
in Concord, Massachusetts.

(1861-1865),² she worked as a nurse in a hospital in Washington, D.C. A lot of people in the northern states were abolitionists during this time. Her first successful book was *Little Women* (1868-1869). It became popular immediately. People liked reading about the experiences of the four sisters, their family and their friends in Concord. Young Louisa was like her character Jo March in the story. She was a tomboy³ and loved writing stories.

Other books about the March family are *Little Men* (1871) and *Jo's Boys* (1886). She also wrote *Hospital Sketches* (1863), *An Old-Fashioned Girl* (1870), *Eight Cousins* (1874), *Rose in Bloom* (1876) and collections of short stories.

Louisa May Alcott died on March 6, 1888 at the age of 55. She is buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord.



2. American Civil War : a war against slavery in the United States of America (see dossier page 47).

3. tomboy : a young girl who likes the same games and toys that boys traditionally like.

COMPREHENSION CHECK

1. Answer the following questions.

1. Where was Louisa May Alcott born?
2. Where did she grow up?
3. What important writers were friends of the family?
4. When did she write her first book?
5. What did she do during the American Civil War?
6. What was an abolitionist?
7. Why was *Little Women* immediately successful?
8. Who was Jo March?

BEFORE YOU READ

1. Match each word with the correct picture.

carriage • handkerchief • fireplace • hug • telegram •
slippers • basket • gloves • parrot



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

BEFORE YOU READ

2. Match the words (1-15) with their meaning (a-o). Use a dictionary if necessary.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. ☐ proud | 6. ☐ scarlet fever | 11. ☐ published |
| 2. ☐ shy | 7. ☐ to promise | 12. ☐ lemonade |
| 3. ☐ housekeeper | 8. ☐ ashamed | 13. ☐ battle |
| 4. ☐ immigrant | 9. ☐ to apologize | 14. ☐ soldier |
| 5. ☐ attic | 10. ☐ tutor | 15. ☐ performed |

- a When you say you are sorry for something you did.
- b An illness that gives you a high fever and red spots on your skin.
- c A cold drink made with lemon juice.
- d Very pleased with someone or something.
- e The room at the top of a house.
- f A private teacher.
- g Doesn't like to talk to other people.
- h A person who comes from another country to live and work.
- i When you feel bad because you did something wrong, you feel...
- j A person who fights in a war.
- k A person who looks after the house and cooks.
- l Presented in front of people.
- m When you say that you will really do something.
- n Printed and sold to the public.
- o A big fight between people, especially during a war.

3. Complete the following sentences with the words in exercise 1 and 2.

- 1. "My hands are cold," said the girl. "I need a pair of"
- 2. There was a lot of fruit in the
- 3. The horse pulled a heavy up the hill.
- 4. The children studied at home with a
- 5. We drink cold on a hot summer day.
- 6. The forgot to clean the kitchen.
- 7. *Little Women* was in the 19th century.
- 8. The little girl is sick. She's in bed with
- 9. He was because he broke the big window in the living room.
- 10. A lot of came to America from Europe.



THE CHARACTERS

From top left to right: **Mr Laurence, Mr Brooke, Mr March, Laurie, Beth, Amy, Jo, Mrs March, Meg, Aunt March.**



CHAPTER 1

Christmas presents

December was always a cold month in the town of Concord, Massachusetts. There was a lot of snow everywhere. Inside a small house there was a big fireplace in the corner of the living room. There were four girls sitting by the fireplace.



track 03

One of them was called Josephine, or Jo. She was tall and thin, and had long dark hair and gray eyes. She was very proud of her long hair. She was fifteen and liked climbing trees. She was a tomboy.

“Christmas won’t be Christmas without presents,” said Jo, sadly.

Her sister Meg looked at her and agreed. “You’re right, it’s terrible to be poor!”

Margaret, or Meg, was sixteen and very pretty. She had light brown hair and big brown eyes. She liked pretty clothes and nice shoes.

“Some girls have all kinds of pretty things, but we don’t have many!” said Amy, looking at the fire.

Amy was a lively girl of twelve. She felt very pretty with her blonde hair and blue eyes.

"Oh, girls," said Beth softly, "we have our mother and father, and this nice, warm home." Beth was thirteen and very shy. She had brown hair and kind blue eyes. She loved playing the piano.

"But father isn't here now," said Jo. "There's a war, and who knows when he'll come back." Their father was a soldier in the Union Army during the American Civil War. The four girls were suddenly sad and quiet.

Beth looked out of the window and said, "It's snowing outside and mother will soon be home."

"I have an idea," said Jo, happily. "Let's put her slippers by the fire!" She took her mother's slippers and looked at them. "They're very old, aren't they?"



Beth, Meg and Amy looked at the old slippers and said, "She needs new slippers!"

"I can buy her new slippers with my dollar," said Beth, smiling.

"No, no! I can!" said Meg, loudly.

"No! I'm going to buy the slippers!" said Jo, excitedly.

At Christmas the four sisters had only one dollar each to spend.

"Girls," said Beth quietly, "let's each buy mother a present, but nothing for ourselves." Beth was very kind and always thought about other people.

"Beth's right," said Meg. "Now that I think about it, mother's gloves are older than mine. I can buy her a new pair of warm gloves."

"And I can buy her some handkerchiefs," said Beth.

"Mother likes perfume," said Amy. "I can buy her a little bottle of perfume."

"Alright," said Beth, "we can go out tomorrow and buy mother's Christmas presents."

A few minutes later, Mrs March came home. She was tired and took off her wet coat. She sat down by the fireplace and said, "I have a letter from father!"



The four girls sat near her and she read the letter to them. Their father's letter was full of love for his daughters. He told them to work at home and to wait for his return.

Beth looked at her mother and asked, "When will he come home?"

Mrs March was silent for a moment. Then she said, "He won't be home for many months. There's a big war and there are a lot of battles. Your father's a soldier. He must stay and fight with all the other soldiers. And we must work and help the soldiers at war." After dinner the girls made gloves and socks for the soldiers.

On December 24 it was Christmas Eve, a very special evening. Meg, Jo and Amy sang Christmas carols ¹ while Beth played the piano.

There was a lot of excitement in the air on Christmas morning.

"Merry Christmas to all!" said Jo, happily. "Let's get dressed quickly!"

The four girls got dressed and put their mother's presents in the living room. Then they ran to the kitchen. Hannah, the housekeeper, was preparing a special Christmas breakfast with a lot of good things to eat. The girls were hungry. Everyone in the family loved Hannah.

Meg smiled at Hannah and said, "Merry Christmas, Hannah! Where's mother?"

"Early this morning a poor woman came to ask for help, so your mother went to help her," said Hannah.

At that moment Mrs March came home.

"Merry Christmas!" they all said together.

Mrs March smiled at her daughters and said, "Listen, girls, there's a poor woman who lives near here. She and her family are immigrants. They come from Germany. Her name is Mrs Hummel and she has six children and a new baby. It's Christmas Day and they have no fire and no food! Can we give them our breakfast as a Christmas present?"

Beth immediately said, "Oh, yes! Let's take this food to that poor family. They're hungrier than we are."

"I'm glad we didn't start eating," said Jo, looking at all the good food on the table.

1. **carols** : special songs for Christmas.

"I'll take the cakes," said Amy. Cakes were Amy's favorite food, but she wanted to help this poor family.

"It's the right thing to do," said Meg. "I'll prepare a nice basket for them."

"I'm proud of you girls!" said Mrs March. "We can have some milk and bread when we come back."

Mrs March opened her presents later and she was happy with all of them.

Jo liked writing plays and stories. That evening the four girls performed a play in the attic. Some good friends came to see it and everyone liked it. After the play the girls and their friends went downstairs to the kitchen. The girls were very surprised, because there were all kinds of food on the table. And there were some beautiful flowers, too.

"Where did all this food come from?" asked Amy.

"And what about the flowers?" asked Jo.



“Mother probably did everything,” said Meg.

Mrs March laughed and said, “No! I didn’t do anything. Old Mr Laurence sent everything. He knows that we helped the Hummel family and he was pleased. I don’t know him, but I think he’s a very kind man.”

The four sisters looked at each other and laughed. Then one of the girls said, “Mr Laurence and his grandson live alone in that big house nearby. I don’t think they have any friends. And I think the grandson’s shy. He stays at home and studies with a tutor.”

“And I heard that he traveled to Europe,” said Amy.

“You girls know a lot of things about the Laurence family!” said Mrs March, smiling.



THINK!

When Mrs Hummel came to ask for help, Mrs March went to help her immediately. Later Mrs March asked her daughters to give the Hummel family their breakfast as a Christmas present. The four girls were kind and agreed.

It is always right to help someone who asks for help. A kind person always helps others. Kindness and giving bring happiness to everyone. What do you do when someone asks you for help?

- a ☐ You never help anyone.
- b ☐ You help the person if you know him/her.
- c ☐ You don’t know or like the person, but you help him/her anyway.
- d ☐ You ask someone else to help.

Tell the class about a time you helped someone.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT • page 54

MAPPING VALUES AND FEELINGS • page 78