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## How to Use This Study Guide

1. Define the words from the Vocabulary section using a dictionary. This will improve your understanding and comprehension of the text when you begin reading.
2. Now, read thoroughly and well the chapter from *Little Women*, marking the text in key places according to the method taught in “How to Mark a Book” (Appendix).
3. Return to the Study Guide and answer the Comprehension Questions and Quotations, stopping to discuss, referring back to the text when necessary.
4. Complete the Enrichment activities as time and interest allow.
5. Repeat steps 1-4 for each lesson.

## Introduction to the Author

Louisa May Alcott was born on November 29, 1832 in what is now Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Alcott's family moved from her birthplace to Boston soon after she was born. Aside from a short period of time Alcott spent in Washington, D.C., as a nurse, she spent the remainder of her life in New England. Alcott published more than twenty children's books in her lifetime, the most popular of which are *Little Women* and its sequels, *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*.

*Little Women*, published in 1868, was originally only Part I of the book that belongs with this study guide. The second part, entitled *Good Wives* in the U.K. and *Little Women Volume II* in the U.S., was published in 1869.

Alcott used her own life as a model for the characters in *Little Women*. She grew up in New England with her parents and three sisters: Anna Bronson, the eldest sister, Elizabeth DeWall, the second youngest, and Abigail May, the youngest. Their father, Amos Bronson Alcott, was a writer, philosopher, reformer, and teacher. He taught at Temple School in Boston, and spoke out against slavery during the Civil War.

Louisa May Alcott modeled Jo after herself. She described herself as boyish and often felt jealous of her youngest sister, Abigail, but was very close to Elizabeth. Elizabeth, affectionately known as Lizzie, died in 1858, and that same year her older sister, Anna, married a man named John Pratt. Louisa felt that this year of her life was a turning point, and somewhat dissolved the close relationship the sisters once had.

While spending time in Europe, Alcott met a man named Ladislav "Laddie" Wisniewski, whom she grew very close to and later modeled Laurie after.

Louisa May Alcott died on March 6, 1888, two days after her father. She is buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, New Hampshire.

Note: For this study guide, we will be using the Sterling edition of *Little Women* (ISBN 978-1-4027-1458-0).

## Vocabulary

1. If you mean **libel** I'd say so, and not talk (p. 5)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. you'll grow up an **affected** little goose if you don't take care (p. 6)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I think it was so splendid in father to go as a **chaplain** (p. 10)  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. This cave was made with a **clothes-horse** for a roof (p. 19)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. A stout little **retainer** came in with chains, and led them away (p. 21)  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. in a spasm of **rapture** he tears off his chains (p. 22)  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. cried Meg, at the foot of the **garret** stairs (p. 25)  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. here she loved to retire with half a dozen **russets** and a nice book (p. 25)  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Oh dear! what a **blunderbuss** I am! (p. 33)  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. as Jo bound up her foot with **arnica** (p. 35)  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Quotations

1. *"We can't do much, but we can make our little sacrifices, and ought to do it gladly. But I am afraid I don't;"* (p. 4)  
Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_  
Situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. *"I'm the man of the family now papa is away, and I shall provide the slippers, for he told me to take special care of mother while he was gone."* (p. 7)  
Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_  
About what? \_\_\_\_\_  
Who is "he"? \_\_\_\_\_

3. "... remind them that while we wait we may all work, so that these hard days need not be wasted." (p. 11)

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_

Situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Comprehension Questions

1. What are the ages of the four March girls? What kind of work is each person in their family assigned?

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2. Why do Amy and Jo fight? Compare their personalities.

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3. What do the girls decide to do with their Christmas money? Why do they do this?

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4. Where is Mr. March, and what does his letter say? What does it remind the girls to do?

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5. What book is referenced at the end of Chapter 1? What are the burdens of each of the girls?

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6. What does Jo do that upsets Beth? How does Meg handle the situation? How does this reflect what we know of them so far?

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7. What did Amy run out to do early in the morning? Why is she satisfied once she has done it?

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8. Who is the Laurence boy? Choose one quote from the end of Chapter 2 that describes him.

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9. Compare and contrast the state of Jo and Meg's clothing. How does this reflect their personalities?

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10. Describe Laurie. How does he act towards Jo?

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# Enrichment

1. On page 5, Beth says, "You said the other day you thought we were a deal happier than the King children, for they were fighting and fretting all the time, in spite of their money." Do you think that people are happier when they are not worried about their money? What positive and negative effects do you think wealth can have on children? How can the negative effects be prevented?

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2. Write descriptions of each of the March girls from their mother's perspective. Be sure to describe their personalities as we have learned from these first few chapters.

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3. *All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts.*

*As You Like It*, Oxford University Press publisher, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, 2009 edition.

The above passage is taken from Jaques' monologue in *As You Like It*. How does this quote compare to Mrs. March's quote on page 12: "We never are too old for this, my dear, because it is a play we are playing all the time in one way or another." Why does she say this? What do you think this means? What kind of play are you playing in?

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4. What is a play, and what does it require? Choose ONE of the following options:
  - 1) On the next page or on a separate sheet of paper, write a play of your own that includes at least 5 characters. Be sure to include stage directions and a brief set design in your description.
  - 2) Draw a picture of the set of the Marches' play, including two characters on stage, and provide a description of the scene they are acting out.

