



Louisa May Alcott: her life, her times and her literature

Curriculum Unit 99.01.06

by Jean Gallogly

She was raised in poverty. Her mother made her clothes. The family moved around a lot. They often depended on the kindness of friends and relatives to survive. Her father, an impossible dreamer, was frequently away from home and her mother was the practical parent, the one who often took menial jobs to feed the family. She and her sisters were put to work as soon as they were of age to help support the family.

Yet she was brought up with the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne as neighbors, teachers, role models and close family friends.

She is Louisa May Alcott and this unit explores her life and her works –specifically *Little Women* (published in 1868).

Objectives of this unit

To encourage teachers and students to explore one of America's favorite classic novels, *Little Women* and at the same time, develop an interest in classics. Concurrently, students will learn about the author's life and discover which elements of her family history she incorporates into her work.

To show how Alcott's works relate to family life as portrayed by women authors. It is part of a larger unit comprised of teachers at the L.W. Beecher School in New Haven, Connecticut. We are exploring the families of different cultures as represented by women's voices in fiction. As part of our team approach, some of our activities will be integrated with other team classrooms.

To achieve balanced literacy, by providing opportunities for students to read, listen, view and write through guided and independent activities.

To incorporate Library Media Standards for grades K - 4. Content standard 1.0 is "READ, READ, READ: The student will demonstrate an appreciation and enjoyment of reading." The key words included in this standard will be met as students view, listen or read and describe their reactions to literature. When they produce journals of their own, they will meet content standard 1.4a, as they create a product related to the material heard, viewed and/or read. They will also meet

Content Standard 1.3g, as they participate in group discussions and activities and express opinions about materials heard, viewed or read.

Louisa May Alcott and her writing

To introduce the author, I will use the Newbery award winning biography *Invincible Louisa* by Cornelia Meigs. Because it is an older book (1968) and the language may be stilted, the teacher could read it with the class or use it as a reference book. There are other biographies about Louisa May Alcott that are suitable for children, including *The Story of Louisa May Alcott*, determined writer by Marci Ridlon McGill. It has illustrations, big print and the paperback version is only 89 pages long. It is written on a 3.5 grade level and simply tells the story of the author's life. Older students can use Amy Ruth's *Louisa May Alcott* by Lerner Publications. It is written for a higher reading level and goes into more depth with biographical details.

Louisa May Alcott was the product of two remarkable parents. They were such strong influences on her writing that they need to be discussed. In order to better instruct the students, teachers using this unit should know something about where Louisa May Alcott came from and how she "came to be." Her family was a major part of her life: both parents encouraged her to write and her fictional characters are often based on her family.

Bronson Alcott, her father, was eventually to become the first Superintendent of Public Schools in Boston and to be acknowledged as an educational visionary, but this fame came only after he had wandered down several career paths. He was a thinker, a philosopher and an eccentric - but he had trouble bringing home the bacon, so to speak. He lost many teaching jobs because he advocated well-lit, heated and comfortable classrooms as well as recess and sex-education. He also purchased textbooks for his poorer students. On the grounds of The Orchard House in Concord, Massachusetts stands the school that he eventually founded, where for a time Louisa May Alcott taught. He often came home empty handed from lecture tours, because he hated to charge people.

Abba Bronson believed in her husband and often picked up the slack. She protected her daughters from the hard realities of life when they all lived at Fruitlands, a Transcendental commune that was a miserable failure. The family was allowed to eat only what the land provided - no meat, milk or eggs. They could wear only linen, as the cotton industry exploited the slaves in the South. Louisa and her sisters were encouraged to spend their time at the commune playing, picnicking and roaming the fields. Louisa later wrote a gentle satire about this time in her life, called *Transcendental Wild Oats*. At one point when her husband was unable to produce an income, Abba went to work in Boston as one of the country's first social workers, at thirty dollars a month. She also was in charge of an employment agency for women in domestic service and once ran a boarding house. She did these things at a time when genteel women did not work.

Both parents encouraged their daughters' intellectual development and provided whatever stimulation they could. Abba established a post office in her home so that family members could communicate with each other every day. Bronson kept a day by day diary recording the growth and development of each his four daughters

from the day they were born. They encouraged their children to write in their own journals every day and would then critique them or answer any written concerns for them. Her father also built the desk on which Louisa May wrote *Little Women* (in her room at the Orchard House).

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* was her first and biggest success. It was based on her experience with her sisters and was written in response to a publisher who asked her to write a story for girls. It took her two and a half months to write and was an immediate success, selling 2000 copies. In 1868, this was a great sum. *Little Women* was originally published as two volumes. Part Two, *Good Wives*, came out in 1869. Nowadays, both volumes are published together and in every language.

Ironically, she did not want to write this story and only did it for the money. She preferred to write for boys and is often quoted as saying "never liked girls or knew many, except my sisters." Borrowing from life, she used her former home, Hillside, as the setting for her novel and patterned the March girls after her sisters.

Jo, the tomboy, is most definitely Louisa. Louisa and Jo are both spirited souls who love to read and write. Like Jo, Louisa wasn't interested in marriage. Writing was her biggest passion, as was Jo's. Like Jo and her sisters, the Alcott girls used their vivid imaginations to write and produce adventure plays. In fact, visitors to The Orchard House in Concord today can still see the trunk of clothing the Alcott girls used when acting out their plays. Like Beth, Elizabeth Alcott died young. Anna, the oldest sister, married and became a teacher, as does Meg, the oldest March girl. And May Alcott, who achieved her own fame as an artist, is the model for Amy March. In fact, May even illustrated the first edition of *Little Women*.

Marmee and Abba Alcott are basically the same person - the Alcott girls even called their mother "Marmee." Marmee is patient and kind, strong and supportive. While father March is away at war, she takes care of the family. Bronson Alcott, the model for Mr. March, traveled throughout the country on lecture tours. Louisa's Great-Aunt Hancock, widow of the famous John Hancock, served as the inspiration for Aunt March.

When she described the poverty in *Little Women*, Alcott was speaking from experience. Once, when family finances were low, Louisa almost sold her hair, just as Jo March later did to send Marmee to visit her wounded husband. Eventually, Louisa supported her family with her writings.

Her other children's novels include: *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, *Little Men* (based on a school her widowed sister ran), *Eight Cousins*, *Rose in Bloom*, *Under the Lilacs*, *Jack and Jill*, *Jo's Boys* and *A Garland for Girls*. Her books portray nineteenth century domestic middle class life realistically, since so much of her work is based on her own family life, which was however sometimes unconventional. Common themes include self-reliance, duty, charity, self-sacrifice and patience. She incorporated some of her father's educational theories into *Little Men* and *Eight Cousins*.

Louisa, like Jo March, was a versatile author and wrote plays, poetry, reviews, short stories and novels. Her first novel was *The Inheritance*, but this was unpublished until 1997, when it was first discovered at Harvard. Her first poem, *Sunlight*, was published in "Peterson's Magazine" in 1852 under the pen name "Flora Fairfield." Under another pseudonym, "A. M. Barnard", she wrote gothic thrillers or, as they were also called, the "Blood and Thunder" tales. It would have been unladylike and too embarrassing for a woman of good breeding to be published as a writer of these gory stories, so she assumed pen names to write such titles as *Doctor Dorn's Revenge* or *Revenge of the Buckle*. Other pen names that she used to publish her works included "Aunt Weedy," "Oranthy Bluggage" and "Minerva Moody."

Louisa ventured into several other careers besides writing. She was a seamstress, a companion, a teacher,

and even a Civil War nurse. In 1862, wanting to do her part, she went to Washington, D.C. to serve in the war effort. Unfortunately, she contracted typhoid fever and almost died. She left Washington to recuperate at home in Massachusetts, but not before Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. At that time typhoid was treated with calomel, which gave her mercury poisoning. It was an illness that was to affect her health for the rest of her life. Though her nursing career was short, she wrote a book called *Hospital Sketches*, based on her experiences. Her pen name for this work, was appropriately enough, "Tribulation Periwinkle."

Unlike Jo March, Louisa never married, although she did once receive a marriage proposal. But her sister May did marry and later died, leaving express wishes that her daughter Lulu be raised by her Aunt Louisa.

Though she lived with her parents for the bulk of her life, she also at times lived alone in Boston so she could write undisturbed. She wanted to be a dutiful daughter but sometimes needed to be by herself.

Among her other accomplishments, Louisa was involved with the suffragette movement. In 1879, she became the first woman to register to vote in Concord in a school committee election. She wrote for the "Woman's Journal" and was known to go from door to door encouraging women to vote.

In 1888, on March 4th, Bronson Alcott died. Two days later, Louisa succumbed to the mercury poisoning that had affected her since the Civil War. Abba had died several years earlier.

Strategies

The challenge in my case is to present a white, nineteenth century middle class author to a population of inner-city children, who might not otherwise care about her. One way to do this is to show the students the similarities between their lives and that of the author, thus making the differences less glaring. The objective met would be to help promote understanding of different cultures and time periods. The work for which Louisa May Alcott is best known is, of course, *Little Women*, which portrays a loving family living in genteel poverty. The story of the March family, which so closely mirrors that of the Alcott family, has endured through many generations of readers, of all socio-economic backgrounds. When introducing this unit, some of the themes relating to family in both the book and the author's life are themes that can be related to lives of some of our students. The Alcotts and the Marches lived on the poverty level. Both mother figures are the stronger parent. Both fathers are away from the home most of the time. In both cases, the family members are all very close and mindful of each other. Both families experienced the heartbreak of losing a daughter. In both cases, the daughters went to work in menial jobs as soon as they were old enough. Many of these themes are familiar to our students and ones they can identify with, once they learn about them.

Text materials:

To demonstrate the author's continuing popularity, I will introduce a copy of "The Scrap-Baggers" newsletter. The Scrap-Baggers are a group of young people, none older than 17, dedicated to Louisa May Alcott, who publish a monthly newsletter. Their newsletters are filled with articles, reviews and discussions about Louisa May Alcott, her family and her works. Obviously, there are students who devour any trivia related to the author.

There are several books that will help ease the students into the study of the classics. These come under the headings of abridged versions, "based on" stories or adaptations. Purists may object to the use of

abridgements, but not all of our students will be able to read through the original work. My strategy is to make these shortened versions available to the students, since one of my objectives is to get them interested in the story of *Little Women*.

The most simplified adaptation is *Little Women* by Francine Hughes, published by Scholastic. It has only 32 pages and is based on the 1994 version of the movie. Recommended for ages 5 – 8, it is on a grade 2 reading level.

Another easy “close to the real thing” version is the *Little Women* adapted by Monica Kulling, as part of the “Bullseye Step into Classics” series. Only 106 pages, it features large print and condenses the story into an easy grade 2 reading level. It simplifies 13 of the more eventful chapters from the original and introduces all of the main characters. As a chapter book, this can be used as a read aloud or for independent reading.

The hardest abridgement would be the *Little Women* from the Dover Children’s Thrift Classic Series. Adapted by Bob Blaisdell, this includes some illustrations. Although it is only 108 pages long, the print is small. This version also captures more of the essence of Alcott’s original prose. Its sixteen chapters also cover the major events.

All of the above mentioned books begin with the Christmas episode, as does the original. The Christmas episode introduces the March family and sets them all up as caring and giving souls. Each of the four daughters has a dollar to spend on something for themselves. They fantasize about the things they might buy, like sheet music and pencils. But then the girls decide that they will surprise their mother and spend the money on presents for her because they love to make her happy. This chapter can initiate several discussions, such as what would the class buy if they had a ten dollar bill? What do the girls gain from helping others?

Avon Books has put out a series of books by Charlotte Emerson, featuring each of the March girls, with titles like *Beth’s Snow Dancer*, *Amy’s True Prize* and *Jo’s Troubled Heart*. These stories feature each of the sisters at the age of 10 in adventures of their own. Students can pick their favorite sister, read the featured story and then be asked to explain their choices. These questions can be posed: What is it about this sister that attracts you? Do you see any similarities to yourself? Would you be friends if you met? Why?

Other books that can be used to supplement the unit, include *An Alcott Family Christmas* by Alexandra Wallner, which takes a fictional look at the life of the Alcotts, and is based on a true episode. In this story, the Alcotts are a poor but happy family sitting down to their Christmas dinner. A neighbor comes to the door looking for Mrs. Alcott --he wants her to help his sick wife. “Marmee” quietly suggest that her daughters give their dinners to the needy family. The girls acquiesce, because they feel rich in spirit. In a similar episode in *Little Women*, the March girls give up their Christmas breakfast to a poor widow with six children.

Journals:

All of the Alcotts wrote daily journals that reveal snippets of everyday family life. In fact, Bronson Alcott kept diaries observing the day by day growth and development of each of his daughters. Students could be also encouraged to keep daily journals--perhaps chronicling the daily events of their own lives-- recording such ordinary things as the meals they eat or the television shows they watch. This will help improve their writing skills as well as develop their powers of observation. At the end of the session or school year, they can review the events of the past year and be encouraged to save the journals for future reading.

In relation to this activity, other journals not necessarily related to this unit can be introduced, such as *Dear*

Levi by Woodruff, Only Opal by Boulton, Polar the Titanic Bear by Spedden and Sally Reed's Doll by Laugaard. These are all children's books written in journal form.

Additional Activities:

An after school program or book club can take advantage of Lucille Penner's book *The Little Women Book: Games, Recipes, Crafts and Other Homemade Pleasures*. After reading and sharing *Little Women* or any of the other related books in the units, students can participate in arts and crafts relevant to the literature.

Another project will be to adapt *An Alcott Family Christmas* into a one act play. Because it is a short picture book with easy dialogue, it would be simple to do. Because the language of the nineteenth century can be somewhat stuffy for an inner-city school, we could modify the dialogue to reflect the community in which our students live.

Another project suitable for an individual classroom would be to institute a Post Office in class. Students would write notes to each other or to the teacher. Replies would be encouraged and students would take turns being the Postmaster. This would help with writing skills and may allow shyer students to tell the teacher things that they might not say aloud.

Small class groups or whole classes will be given research lessons which will focus on the study of family life in the nineteenth century as well as familiarize students with the resources in the Library Media Center. This will be a collaborative effort between the classroom teacher and the Library Media Specialist.

Teachers will discuss with their class school days in the nineteenth century. How is it different from today? Bronson Alcott was controversial for supporting things we take for granted today--kindergarten, recess, student involvement, adult education, sex education, comfortable learning environments. What would school be like today without these "innovations"?

There are several movie versions of *Little Women*. We will watch the Winona Ryder version and see how it differs from the novel. This film could also be shared with the third grade involved with our team. With a student population that needs encouragement to read more challenging works, a film might prove a bridge to the book.

Perhaps the students could write a "Blood and Thunder" play, much like the Alcott and March girls did. The important thing would be to expose the students to an important American author and help lead them on the quest to developing literacy.

Lesson Plans

Lesson Plan #1- An American Classic

Objectives:

To introduce a classic American novel.

To stimulate discussion.

To understand and appreciate the mores of a past generation.

Strategies:

1. Read aloud the first few chapters of the original, unabridged version of *Little Women* to the class or group. This can take place over a period of two to three days.
2. Make abridged editions available for individual reading (as well as the uncut version).
3. Discuss the following:
 - a. What did families do for entertainment when there were no televisions, no malls, and no theater complexes? Before sports infiltrated society so much? The Alcott and March girls read, wrote and produced plays, and studied art and music. What do the students do with their families that are comparable?
 - b. In one chapter, Jo and Meg share a pair of white gloves when they go to a formal dance. In the nineteenth century, proper dress for women for formal occasions called for long dresses and white gloves. What are the standards of dress for today's formal occasions? Compare and contrast customs and dress for nineteenth century parties with those of today.
 - c. The Marches made charitable sacrifices, as did the Alcotts, as exemplified in *An Alcott Family Christmas*. What did the girls gain from helping others? What do today's young people do for their communities?
 - d. The first chapter shows the girls discussing what they would buy with their dollars. What would the students buy if they had 10 dollars to spend on themselves?

Lesson Plan #2 - Journal Writing

All of the Alcotts were dedicated journal writers. The class will keep their own journals.

Objectives:

- To develop writing skills.
- To develop observation skills and to learn to analyze.

Strategies:

1. Introduce a selection of children's books written in journal form. These include *Dear Levi* by Woodruff, *Only Opal* by Wheeler, *Polar the Titanic Bear* by Spedden and *Patty Reed's Doll* by Laugaard.
2. Explain to students the elements of journal writing, including putting down date headings, making daily observations and recording daily events.
3. Distribute blank journals to students - either handmade or mass-produced.
4. Ask students to name the events of their everyday life, including their meals, movies or television shows watched, books read, feelings or moods, test results, etc. List on board or overhead and use these as examples of what they can write in their journals.
5. At the end of the unit or school year, tell the students to take their journals home and put them in a safe place. They should save them for the future.

Lesson Plan #3 - A Performance

Objectives:

1. To interpret materials read.
2. To create a product related to the materials heard, viewed, or read.
3. To complete task in a timely manner with assistance.
4. To create a final group product which all group members have helped produce.

Strategies:

1. Read *An Alcott Family Christmas* to the group.
2. Generate a list of roles that can be cast in a play based on the book.
3. Discuss the sacrifices that the Marches and Alcotts made for poorer families.
4. Assign groups of students to write parts for each role. Encourage them to utilize language more relevant to their backgrounds.
5. Hold auditions for the roles.
6. Rehearse the students.
7. Produce the play one month after introducing the book.

Lesson Plan #4 - Classroom Post Office

Objectives:

- To increase writing skills
- To encourage social development

Strategies:

1. Tell the students about the Post Office the Alcotts set up in their household. Tell them your class will have its own Post Office, so that the students can communicate with anyone in the classroom without repercussion.
2. Plan an art activity around making a Classroom Post Office, using an empty refrigerator box.
3. Assign rotating Post Masters, based on class performance or by alphabetical listing.
4. Assign a mail time each day, when mail can be delivered or dropped off.
5. Establish ground rules for letter content.

Lesson Plan #5 - Film vs. Fiction

Objectives:

- To listen, view and/or read attentively for pleasure and information.
- To compare a written story to a story in another medium.
- To understand plot, characterization and sequencing.

Strategies:

1. Schedule over a 2 to 3 day period a showing of Little Women, the 1994 version starring Winona

Ryder, Kirsten Dunst and Clare Danes preferred for this age level for the star recognizability factor. Show the movie after the book has been read and discussed.

2. Ask the students to compare the events in the movie to those in the book. What was different? What was the same? Did the visual presentation echo the images they had formed in their minds? Would they have changed anything in the film?

3. Talk about “artistic license” and point out that the film version often differs from the written original for various reasons, such as length and character development. Ask the students to list some other reasons for changing the story line in a movie adapted from a novel.

4. Have the students write a movie review.

5. Have the students draw a movie poster or book cover promoting Little Women.

Lesson Plan #6 - Compare and Contrast

Objectives:

To compare and contrast literary characters.

To identify characters.

Strategies:

1. Provide biographical information about the author through research, sharing or independent reading.

2. Ask the students to make up a chart listing all the central characters.

3. Have them compare members of the March family to those in the Alcott family.

4. Ask them to tell who their favorite character is and why.

Teachers' Resources

Alcott, Louisa May. *The Journals Of Louisa May Alcott*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1989.

Who can tell it better? For a first hand look at the author's life, read her journals. Get insights into her thinking while learning all about her.

Anderson, William. *The World Of Louisa May Alcott: A First-time Glimpse Into The Life And Times Of Louisa May Alcott, Author Of Little Women*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1995.

Another biography that also includes photos. Be sure to read about her interesting family.

Clark, Beverly Lyon. *Regendering The School Story: Sassy Sissies And Tattling Tomboys*. New York: Garland Pub., 1996. This examines several authors and their works concerning girls and school stories. Among the discussions: Louisa May and the way she incorporates school into her stories. Delamar, Gloria T. *Louisa May Alcott And Little Women*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1990.

Biography, criticism, and some of her shorter works, including poems and songs

Elbert, Sarah. *A Hunger For Home: Louisa May Alcott's Place In American Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984.

Discussion about women, sex and the home in literature.

Fisher, Aileen Lucia. *We Alcotts; The Story Of Louisa M. Alcott's Family As Seen Through The Eyes Of "Marmee," Mother Of Little Women*. New York: Atheneum, 1968.

A fictional view of Louisa May Alcott's family written as her mother might have written the story of their adventures as a poor but creative family. Juvenile fiction, but a good start for teachers.

Foster, Shirley. *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings Of "Classic" Stories For Girls*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995.

History and criticism of writings by women.

McSherry, Frank, ed. *Civil War Women : American Women Shaped By Conflict In Stories By Alcott, Chopin, And Welty*. Little Rock: August House, 1988.

Includes several short stories by women about the war, including one by Louisa May.

Moses, Belle. *Louisa May Alcott: Dreamer And Worker, A Story Of Achievement*. New York: D. Appleton, 1930.

Older biography by someone who was alive in Louisa's lifetime. Interesting for historical value.

Salyer, Sandford Meddick. *Marmee, The Mother Of Little Women*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1949.

Marmee was a big influence on Louisa and deserves this book on her life. It is an older biography but full of facts that should not be overlooked.

Shephard, Odell. *Pedlar's Progress; The Life Of Bronson Alcott*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937.

Though it was published over 60 years ago, this is a comprehensive and scholarly look at a fascinating man. Bronson Alcott was a

major influence on American education and impacted his daughter's life.

Strickland, Charles. *Victorian Domesticity: Families In The Life And Art Of Louisa May Alcott*. University, Ala: University of Alabama Press, 1985.

Shows the influence of family on Alcott's family. A good resource work.

Ticknor, Caroline. *May Alcott*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1928.

Another Alcott family member who was the subject of a biographical work. May was the artistic sister who served as the model for Amy. Once again, an older reference with valuable information.

Student Resources

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. Adapted by Monica Kulling. New York: Random House, 1994.

Simplification of 13 of the more eventful chapters from the original and introduction to all of the main characters.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. New York: World Pub. Co., 1969. Alcott, Louisa May. *Louisa May Alcott: Her Girlhood Diary*. Mahwah, NJ: Bridgewater Books, 1993.

Boulton, Jane. *Only Opal: The Diary Of A Young Girl*. New York: Philomel Books, 1994.

Opal lives in a lumber camp in Oregon at the turn of the century and records her daily life in her journal.

Emerson, Charlotte. *Amy's True Prize*. New York: Avon Books, 1998.

Amy must make a decision when, after two of her paintings are accepted for an art contest, she discovers that one of her entries is actually a work done by Marmee.

----- Beth's Snow Dancer. New York: Avon Books, 1997.

When a sick pony strays into her yard, Beth tries to save it from a horrible fate.

----- Jo's Troubled Heart. New York: Avon Books, 1997.

Jo must control her temper or run the risk of not getting her first story published in the newspaper.

Laugaard, Rachel. *Patty Reed's Doll - The True Story Of The Donner Party*. Sacramento: Tomato Enterprises, 1989.

A doll who travels westward records the dangerous journey she takes with her owner and her family.

McGill, Marci. *The Story Of Louisa May Alcott, Determined Writer*. Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens Pub., 1996.

Biography for children.

Meigs, Cornelia. *Invincible Louisa: The Story Of The Author Of Little Women*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1968.

Newbery Award winning biography for young people.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Amy Makes A Friend*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1998. Desperate for art lessons, Amy tries to manipulate her friendship with two other girls to get what she wants. Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Amy's Story*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1997.

Because she desperately wants to have her picture taken, ten-year-old Amy finds a way to save the necessary five dollars but then decides to spend it another way.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Beth Makes A Friend*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1998.

Beth tries to help an impoverished Irish immigrant boy and his family by stealing a silver bowl from her great aunt and giving it to his family to sell.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Beth's Story*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1997.

Relates the story of Beth's trip to New York in the days before the Civil War.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Christmas Dreams: Four Stories*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1998.

As each of the four March sisters turns ten, she is invited by Aunt March at Christmastime to discuss who will receive an heirloom, an old cameo brooch, and thus each girl contemplates her role in the family.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Jo Makes A Friend*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1998.

Great-Aunt March asks Jo to befriend a sad and lonely blind girl whom is visiting the neighborhood.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Jo's Story*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1997.

Young Jo decides to let her wealthy Aunt adopt her.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Meg Makes A Friend*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1998.

Meg plans to sing at a friend's wedding, until she meets the groom's sister and they become instant enemies.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. *Portraits Of Little Women: Meg's Story*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1998.

When ten-year-old Meg receives an invitation to a friend's picnic but Jo does not, Meg must decide whether to stay home in loyalty to her sister or to follow her heart and attend.

Ruth, Amy. *Louisa May Alcott*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 1999.

Biography for older readers.

Spedden, Daisy Corning Stone. *Polar, The Titanic Bear*. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company Canada, 1994.

The story of the Titanic as revealed from the journals of a stuffed bear who survived the fatal voyage.

Wallner, Alexandra. *An Alcott Family Christmas*. New York: Holiday House, 1996.

The Alcotts are sitting down to their holiday supper when they receive the opportunity to do some good for their neighbors.

Woodruff, Elvira. *Dear Levi: Letters From The Overland Trail*. New York: Knopf, 1998.

Something to attract male readers! Austin Ives, age 12, writes letters to his younger brother describing his long journey by wagon train from their home in Pennsylvania to Oregon in 1851.

Other Resources

Beilenson, Evelyn L., compiler. *Louisa May Alcott's Little Instruction Book*. White Plains, NY: Peter Pauper Press, 1995.

Suitable for a gift or reward for work well done, this is a compilation of sayings taking from Louisa's books.

Anderson, Gretchen. *The Louisa May Alcott Cookbook*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1985.

Recipes for young cooks based on dishes mentioned in *Little Women* and recreated from cookbooks of the times.

Penner, Lucille Recht. *The Little Women Book; Games, Recipes, Crafts And Other Homemade Pleasures*. New York: Random House, 1995.

As the title suggests, this is full of activities to be enjoyed by Alcott's fans.

"The Scrap-Baggers", Orchard House, P.O. 343, Concord, Massachusetts, 01742-0343. \$10.00 yearly susbscription.

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