

Title:	Little Women
Author:	Greta Gerwig
Type/pp:	SP/122
Genre:	Historical Fiction
Locale:	New York City, Paris, Concord
Circa:	1861, 1868
Budget:	Medium

Logline:

A 19th century author must navigate the social expectations placed on women as she comes of age.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Premise			X	
Storyline		X		
Characterizations	X			
Dialogue		X		
Plot/Structure			X	
Production Values		X		

RECOMMENDATION:	Project: CONSIDER
	Writer: PASS

Summary:

JO MARCH is visibly nervous as she attempts to sell her writing to New York City publisher MR. DASHWOOD in the year 1868 AKA her present. She does so, though her work is heavily edited. Meanwhile, her three sisters live their lives. AMY MARCH is in Paris trying to

make it as an artist as she waits for the rich FRED VAUGHN to propose to her. She runs into LAURIE, the girls' childhood neighbor and friend. MEG MARCH is married to a poor husband. BETH MARCH is deathly sick. Jo travels back home to help take care of Beth.

Flashbacks to the March sister's childhood (starting in 1861) occur throughout the script as the family meets Laurie and enjoys Christmas. They feel their father's absence, as he's fighting in the Civil War, and their mother MARMEE asks them to give their Christmas breakfast to a poor family, which they do. Laurie's family, who're well off, gifts them a feast after seeing them do the good deed. While working for her AUNT, Jo is lectured on how the only way for a woman to make her way in the world is to marry rich.

Amy is disciplined in school and goes to Laurie's house instead of facing her mother. Jo and Meg are called over. Meg and the tutor MR. BROOKE hits it off and Laurie becomes fast friends with the girls. Jo, Meg, and Laurie go to the theatre. Amy isn't invited and in anger, she burns Jo's novel that she's just finished working on. Jo and Amy fight. Laurie and Jo go ice skating the next day. Amy follows along while Jo gives her the silent treatment. Amy falls through the ice and almost dies. Jo saves her life and forgives her.

In the present, Beth refuses to send for Amy because she doesn't want to ruin her trip. Beth convinces Jo to read and write for her and Jo begins writing about their lives growing up. In Paris, Laurie confesses his love for Amy and asks her to not marry Fred Vaughn. She still plans to marry Fred because she's loved Laurie all her life and doesn't want him to marry her just because Jo turned Laurie down.

In the past (now 1862), Beth comes down with scarlet fever. She is nursed back to health by Jo and Marmee. In the present, Beth dies.

In the past, Meg is married to her poor husband, Mr. Brooke. Jo begs Meg to forget marriage and run away to New York City with her, but Meg wants to marry. Aunt March goes on and on about how Meg is ruining her life by marrying poor. Aunt March will go to Europe and invites Amy to come along. Laurie admits to Jo that he loves her and Jo, loving her independence, turns him down.

In the present, everyone mourns Beth. Amy and Laurie decide to marry and Jo pretends to be happy for them. Jo sends what she wrote for Beth to Mr. Dashwood. He wants her character to marry by the end of the novel. Jo makes the edit so that her character marries Friedrich, a man Jo associated with in New York. It's unclear if this happens in real life or just in fiction.

Comments:

Though it's a bit hard to keep track of the multitude of characters at first, Greta Gerwig's adaptation of Little Women does a good job of making the characters and time period come to life. The time jumps are made clear in the script, but might not be to an audience if they aren't made obvious. It's the kind of story that makes more sense on the second readthrough when distinguishing characters would be easier. A lot of the dialogue is written to be spoken on top of each other and while I understand that it characterizes the tone of the family, it should be used more sparingly than it's written for clarity's sake.

The script hits home when it comes to the interpersonal aspects of being a woman in the 18th century with pieces of it still ringing true today. Women don't need men to be happy and even though the story ends with Jo finding a man, the audience gets the sense that it ends that way only because of the social pressures Jo faces when it comes to publishing. It's likely that Jo the author remains unmarried. There's also a theme of choosing happiness over security as Meg marries a poor man, Amy chooses Laurie over her rich boyfriend, and Jo chooses her independence over Laurie.

At the beginning of the present storyline, Jo is unsure of herself when it comes to writing and is willing to sell her soul for money in order to help her family. She's on the verge of giving up her writing career as the editing of her work has killed her spirit. With Beth's help, Jo renews her passion and goes back to writing for the joy of it. When selling her book, she turns down the extra money selling the copyright would give her in order to be the owner of her work. She gives in to the publisher when it comes to altering the story's ending. This shows that she's learned when to stand her ground and when to compromise in order to succeed in her society.

Though the script is a bit confusing, the characters are compelling and carry the story. I don't have it in me to pass up this script, but it does drag a bit in some places. The ambiguous ending, which leaves the audience uncertain of whether or not Jo actually marries, makes the story.

CONSIDER