

LITTLE WOMEN TOOLKIT

The movie event of the year for book lovers will be LITTLE WOMEN which opens at movie theaters on December 25, 2019!

Teachers and librarians, now is the time to plan a Little Women program for your classroom or library. Introduce a new generation to the beloved classic that resonates today just as much as ever. For those who are already *Little Women* fans, Greta Gerwig's film with its stellar cast brings an opportunity to celebrate and discuss the enduring appeal of the novel.

LITTLE WOMEN Synopsis

Writer-director Greta Gerwig (*Lady Bird*) has crafted a *Little Women* that draws on both the classic novel and the writings of Louisa May Alcott, and unfolds as the author's alter ego, Jo March, reflects back and forth on her fictional life. In Gerwig's take, the beloved story of the March sisters – four young women each determined to live life on her own terms -- is both timeless and timely. Portraying Jo, Meg, Amy, and Beth March, the film stars Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, Eliza Scanlen, with Timothee Chalamet as their neighbor Laurie, Laura Dern as Marmee, and Meryl Streep as Aunt March.

Begin your Little Women Event by showing the movie's trailer –
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AST2-4db4ic&feature=youtu.be>.



LITTLE WOMEN TOPIC OF DISCUSSION: OWN YOUR STORY

The four sisters' quest to pursue their own passions is both timeless and timely. Each is independent, has goals and dreams of her own and, in Jo's case in particular, challenges society's expectations.

“Women have minds and they have souls as well as just hearts. They've got ambition and they've got talent as well as just beauty. I am so sick of people saying that love is just all a woman is fit for. I'm so sick of it!” says Jo in the upcoming LITTLE WOMEN movie.

How successful are Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy in owning their own story?

Why does this topic continue to be so relevant to women's lives today?



This Toolkit features:

- Curriculum developed by the Great Books Foundation
 - Meets Common Core State Standards
 - Designed to be done in one class period
- Little Women study materials provided by Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House
 - Featuring excerpts from *Little Women*, these lesson plans focus on the following topics: Charity, Gratitude, Kindness to Others, Peer Pressure, Pride and Humility, and Anger and Forgiveness.
- Discussion questions for book groups and the classroom
- "Are You Meg, Jo, Beth or Amy?" Quiz
 - A fun and engaging way to discuss the four main characters
- Links to Little Women images that you can use to create displays at your library or decorate bulletin boards.
- Tea party recipes from Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House and *The Little Women Cookbook*
- Vintage games and arts-and-crafts activities from the late 1800s!



Great Books Foundation Lesson Plans

<https://www.greatbooks.org/sony-little-women/>

The Great Books Foundation K-12 education team has developed three *Little Women* classroom lesson plans for Grades 5 and up which are available exclusively through this partnership. These inquiry-focused interactive activities help students interpret and think critically about key passages from Alcott's novel. In each lesson plan, students respond to a prereading question and then read an excerpt from the novel and note their reactions. Students next develop answers to an open-ended question, support their conclusions with evidence, and respond to each other's ideas in discussion. Each lesson plan requires 40-60 minutes of class time, and may be used separately or in combination.

These lesson plans are aligned with English Language Arts Common Core State Standards, and each one includes the excerpt from the novel and focuses on the following topics:

- Introducing Characters
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas



***Little Women* study materials from Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House**

Orchard House, the home where Louisa May Alcott wrote and set *Little Women*, created these Little Women curricula that focus on the following issues: Charity, Gratitude, Kindness to Others, Peer Pressure, Pride and Humility, Anger and Forgiveness.

Please see the attached document for the Orchard House *Little Women* lesson plans.



Decorate Your Classroom or Library

Create a beautiful display using the images from LITTLE WOMEN –
<https://sonypicturesrunner.com/share/22a88aad-6c87-4c44-898c-90a07f429398>

Design a fun, interactive “Are You Meg, Jo, Beth or Amy?” Presentation

- Download an image of each March sister
- Underneath the pictures, describe the attributes of each sister:
 - Meg – Beautiful, conventional, loves acting, adores beautiful gowns
 - Jo – Wants to be a writer, independent, the original feminist, not gender conforming
 - Beth – Loves music, shy, adores animals
 - Amy – Artistic, aspires to be a great lady, vain and self-centered
- People can use post-it notes with one of the following hashtags #IamMeg, #IamJo, #IamBeth and #IamAmy and place the notes underneath each of the sisters.



***Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott Discussion Questions**

1. In the opening chapter, Marmee convinces the girls to give their Christmas breakfast to a family that is in greater need than they are. Later in the book, she says to Jo, “I’m not ambitious for a splendid fortune, a fashionable position, or a great name for my girls. If rank and money come with love and virtue, also, I should accept them gratefully, and

enjoy your good fortune; but I know, by experience, how much genuine happiness can be had in a plain little house, where the daily bread is earned, and some privations give sweetness to the few pleasures." Think about Marmee's values and compare them to others especially those in the social media spotlight today.

2. Greta Gerwig, the director of the upcoming LITTLE WOMEN movie, was struck by the ambitions of the March sisters, who grow up using each other and their quiet country life as creative inspirations. "Every single one of them took what they did very seriously," Gerwig says, pointing out that each sister has an art form. Jo writes, Meg acts, Amy paints, and Beth plays piano. Did the sisters' creative aspirations resonate with you?
3. Which sister(s) do you identify with? Or which one is your favorite and why? Is it Meg who loves fine clothes and wants to be a good wife and mother but admits being frustrated? Is it Jo who is independent, the original feminist who aspires to be a writer? Is it Beth, the sweet animal lover who is shy? Or is it Amy, the artist, who cares deeply how she looks and always seems to get what she wants?
4. In what ways are the girls pressured to act like "ladies"? Does this still apply to girls and young women today?
5. Can you relate to Meg's desire to have nice gloves to wear to the dance, and/or to Jo's desire to be a boy so that she could go to war?
6. "Meg, like so many people, just has an irrepressible desire to fit in with the fancy girls that she's so different from," Gerwig says. This is demonstrated when she attends the ball and borrows her Sallie Moffat's gown. Can you relate to her wanting to be like others?
7. Is Sallie Moffat a good friend to Meg?
8. In what ways is Laurie also expected to act like a boy or a man? What are his grandfather's expectations for him, and how does he feel about them?
9. Similarly, Gerwig points out, "Jo is a girl with a boy's name, Laurie is a boy with a girl's name. In some ways they are each other's twins." Do you think Alcott's choice of names for the two characters was intentional?
10. What are the characters' "castles in the air" and do you think they will be able to realize them or make them happen?
11. What are your "castles in the air"? In the end, how have the characters' achieved or modified what they hoped to do with their lives?
12. Meg says, "My John wouldn't marry for money, any more than I would. We are willing to work, and we mean to wait. I'm not afraid of being poor, for I've been happy so far." Yet Meg struggles with the decision of whether or not to buy the grey silk that they cannot afford. Does this make her a more realistic and relatable character?
13. Discuss the following exchange among Marmee, Meg and Jo:

“Money is a needful and precious thing, -- and, when well used, a noble thing, -- but I never want you to think it is the first or only prize to strive for. I’d rather see you poor men’s wives, if you were happy, beloved, contented, than queens on thrones, without self-respect and peace,” said Marmee.

Meg then responds: “Poor girls don’t stand any chance, Belle says, unless they put themselves forward.”

“Then we’ll be old maids,” said Jo stoutly.

“Right, Jo; better be happy old maids than unhappy wives, or unmaidenly girls, running about to find husbands,” said Mrs. March.

14. Alcott describes Beth in the following manner: “There are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully, that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping, and the sweet, sunshiny presence vanishes, leaving silence and shadow behind.” Comment on this description – do you think there are many Beths in this world? Do you have a close friend or a family member who is like Beth?
15. While Amy seems so intent on being an artist and gets her dream of going to Paris, in the end, she seems to abandon her aspirations once she marries Laurie. Were you deeply disappointed by her decision? Given women’s roles in society in the late 1800s, is Amy’s choice realistic?
16. Before Louisa May Alcott wrote the second part of *Little Women*, her publisher insisted that Jo must get married. Why do you think Alcott refused to have her marry Laurie? What do you think of her courtship with Professor Bhaer? Did that relationship make more sense for Jo’s personality? Would you have preferred that she not marry at all?
17. “I always knew who Jo March was. She was the person I wanted to be,” says Greta Gerwig. In fact, many women writers credit the character Jo as inspiring them to become a writer. “It is hard to overstate what she meant to a small, plain girl called Jo, who had a hot temper and a burning ambition to be a writer,” said Joanna Rowling, a.k.a. J.K. Rowling. Did Jo have a similar effect on you or others that you know?
18. Both Jo in *Little Women* and Louisa May Alcott in real life supported their families through their writing. “Jo enjoyed a taste of this satisfaction, and ceased to envy richer girls, taking great comfort in the knowledge that she could supply her own wants, and need ask no one for a penny.” How revolutionary was this concept in the 1860s?
19. In the beginning of her marriage, Meg has an idealized vision of married life and motherhood, but she soon becomes overwhelmed after the twins are born. “She was nervous and worn out with watching and worry, and in that unreasonable frame of mind which the best of mothers occasionally experience when domestic cares oppress them, want of exercise robs them of cheerfulness, and too much devotion to that idol of American women, -- the teapot, -- makes them feel as if they were all nerve and no muscle.” Describe other moments in *Little Women* in which Alcott presents an unvarnished look at motherhood.

20. “One hundred fifty years after it was first published, *Little Women* remains not only a beloved book, but also a deeply relevant one,” states Anne Boyd Rioux, the author of *Meg, Jo Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why It Matters*. Do you agree or disagree?



Little Women Movie Tie-In Books

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott: This new keepsake edition of the classic novel is illustrated throughout with gorgeous black-and-white photos from the film adaptation.

- To order: https://www.abramsbooks.com/product/little-women_9781419741203/

Little Women: The Official Movie Companion by Gina McIntyre

Go behind-the-scenes with the March sisters in this official companion to the major motion picture adaptation of *Little Women*. The insider’s guide is packed with cast and crew interviews, photos of the real-life locations that were transformed into iconic sets for the film, and recipes that bring the flavors of 19th century New England to life.

- To order: https://www.abramsbooks.com/product/little-women-the-official-movie-companion_9781419740688/



***Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why It Still Matters* by Anne Boyd Rioux Discussion Questions**

For book groups that have read *Little Women* and would like to read another book that provides greater understanding of the book, the characters and Louisa May Alcott, I highly recommend *Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why It Still Matters* by Anne Boyd Rioux (2018: Norton). It’s also interesting to read about the previous films, TV series and plays based on the book. Favorite fun fact: Amy Beth Pascal, the producer of both the upcoming LITTLE WOMEN movie and the 1994 movie, was named after two *Little Women* characters because her mother was such a fan of the book!

In *Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy*, Rioux recounts how Louisa May Alcott came to write *Little Women*, drawing inspiration for it from her own life. Alcott’s novel has moved generations of women, many of them writers: Simone de Beauvoir, J. K. Rowling, bell hooks, Cynthia Ozick, Jane Smiley, Margo Jefferson, and Ursula K. Le Guin were inspired by *Little Women*, particularly its portrait

of the iconoclastic young writer, Jo. Many have felt, as Anna Quindlen has declared, “Little Women changed my life.”

Today, Rioux sees the novel’s beating heart in Alcott’s portrayal of family resilience and her honest look at the struggles of girls growing into women. In gauging its current status, Rioux shows why *Little Women* remains a book with such power that people carry its characters and spirit throughout their lives.

“Lively and informative...*Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy* does what—ideally—books about books can do: I’ve taken *Little Women* down from my shelf and put it on top of the books I plan to read.”
- Francine Prose, *New York Times Book Review*

Discussion Guide—*Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy*

1. Did you grow up with *Little Women* or read it when you were young? If so, what is your “*Little Women* story?”
2. How do the characters in *Little Women* channel the people you know in your life?
3. Are you a Meg, Jo, Beth, or Amy? Or are you a mixture of two or more of them?
4. Have you read *Little Women* again as an adult? How did the experience compare to the first time you read it?
5. *Little Women* is often considered an enduring model for women’s stories, what are some aspects of the story that help inspire young girls?
6. Reflecting on how the story of *Little Women* was inspired by the real life of Louisa May Alcott, how does that influence your interpretation of the story?
7. *Little Women* is often considered to be more than a cozy story for girls. It is eye-opening and has a greater significance, especially considering the time period it was written in. How significant do you think the upcoming movie will be for girls of today’s generation?
8. New meanings and new tools to analyze the text of *Little Women* can be constantly pulled out of the story throughout time. For instance, it meant something different when it was written compared to a reading of it during the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Why do you think there is a revival of the story today?
9. Will the upcoming movie of *Little Women* draw people to the box office because of its star-studded cast or the story being told?
10. Much of the debate surrounding *Little Women* concerns whether it is a realistic or sentimental portrayal of life. Which do you think it is?
11. *Little Women* was a progressive novel for its time. Do you think the story may seem archaic for the modern-era? Or does the relatability of the characters break through that?
12. To what extent is this a story for boys just as much as a story for girls?
13. Though *Little Women* was written 150 years ago, Rioux points out that it was very much ahead of its time and influenced many of the TV shows with groups of four women—*Sex*

and the City, Girls, and The Golden Girls. Comment on the similarities and differences between *Little Women* and these shows.

14. Jo, in particular, has influenced many people to become writers and to create strong female characters. Discuss some of the Jo-type characters you've read about or watched on the screen.
15. Many have commented on the remarkable cast that director Greta Gerwig and producer Amy Pascal have assembled for the 2019 *Little Women* movie. What do you think of the *Little Women* "Dream Team"?
16. Have you seen any of the earlier films or stage adaptations of *Little Women*? Which was your favorite? Why do you think there have been so many versions made? What do you think might be influencing Gerwig and Pascal to reimagine the story now?



“Are You Meg, Jo, Beth or Amy?” Quiz

- Louisa May Alcott was way ahead of her time. She created four distinct female characters who struggle with the same issues that women do today. None is idealized. They are realistic. Based on the dreams and hopes of four very real young women.
- This is similar to the Sex and the City Quiz in which you discuss which of the four female characters you are most like.

This is a fun activity to do after discussing *Little Women*. If you are in a smaller group, you can have each person comment on which sister they most relate to. In a larger group, people can volunteer to talk about their choice. Note: Some people see themselves as a combination of two or more characters.

Begin by discussing each of the four sisters and their character traits.

Meg

- Dutiful oldest sister
- Beautiful
- Conventional
- Eager to make her mother proud
- Resents the family's poverty
- Yearns to own beautiful silk dresses like her wealthy friends

Jo

- Tomboy – not gender conforming, wishes she were a boy
- Strong literary ambitions, spends her spare time writing stories
- Independent
- Fiercely devoted to her family
- Struggles to control her unruly temper and be patient
- Ambivalent about marriage – how will that affect her career/life (did not want to be subservient to a man)

- The original feminist

Beth

- Loves music
- Excruciatingly shy, afraid to leave the house
- Considered the angel of the family
- Tends to her doll hospital

Amy

- Insufferably vain
- Spoiled and self-centered
- Talented artist and experiments with drawing, painting, and sculpting
- Aspires to be a great lady and a great artist

You can conclude your discussion by asking everyone to post on social media which character you are most like using the following hashtags: #IamJo, #IamMeg, #IamBeth, #IamAmy



Little Women Tea Party

Tea, sweets, and other light refreshments such as cucumber sandwiches are the perfect accompaniment to a *Little Women* discussion or event.

Authentic Alcott Family Recipes

Orchard House, the home where Louisa May Alcott wrote and set *Little Women* in 1868, has provided us with authentic Alcott recipes including Mrs. Alcott's Apple Cake and Ginger Snaps.

Please see the attached document for these recipes.

The following recipes are from *The Little Women Cookbook: Novel Takes on Classic Recipes from Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy and Friends* by Jenne Bergstrom and Miko Osada. Berkeley: Ulysses Press, 2019.

GINGERBREAD NUTS

Makes more than 100 tiny cookies

Excerpt from *Little Women*: “Dear Marmee and Beth,— I’m going to write you a regular volume, for I’ve got heaps to tell, though I’m not a fine young lady traveling on the continent. When I lost sight of father’s dear old face, I felt a trifle blue, and might have shed a briny drop or two, if an Irish lady with four small children, all crying more or less, hadn’t diverted my mind; **for I amused myself by dropping gingerbread nuts over the seat every time they opened their mouths to roar.**”

These are somewhere between *Pfeffernüsse* (which literally means “pepper-nuts” in German) and gingersnaps (which are still often called ginger nuts in the UK). Some recipes tell you to roll them

out and cut them into thin circles, which you certainly can do, but we think they're much cuter this way. Just right for distracting a grouchy child on a train trip, as Jo does on her way to New York.

- ½ cup molasses
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 ¼ cups flour
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves

1. Combine the molasses, butter, and sugar in a medium saucepan over medium heat, and warm until the molasses bubbles at the edges and the butter is mostly melted, about 5 minutes.
2. Allow to cool slightly, while you combine the rest of the ingredients in a large bowl.
3. Pour the molasses mixture into the dry ingredients and stir well to combine. You should have a fairly thick dough that will hold its shape when rolled in a small ball.
4. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
5. Roll the dough into ½-inch balls, about the size of a marble. Place them about ½ inch apart on a baking sheet, then poke the top of each one with your fingertip to flatten it slightly (boop!) and leave a little dip in the middle. They won't spread much while cooking. It's not in the original recipe, but if you like, you can roll the balls in sugar before putting them on the baking sheet. It gives them a nice crunchy crust.
6. Bake for 8-15 minutes, depending on how you like your cookies. The shorter time will give you a softer, doughier result, and the longer time will be a hard crunchy cookie with a nice roasty taste. We couldn't decide which one we preferred -- try both!

LEMONADE

Makes 4 servings

As Mrs. S.J Hale noted in her 1839 cookbook, *The Good Housekeeper*, lemonade “is the best beverage for parties, cool, refreshing, pleasant and salubrious.” Perfect for Meg and John's strictly dry wedding! Small lemons with thinner skin tend to make better, more fragrant lemonade than the larger ones with thick, nubby rind.

- 4 cups (1 quart) water
 - 6 lemons
 - ½ to 1 cup sugar
 - plenty of ice, for serving
1. Measure the water into a pitcher.
 2. Roll the lemons under your hand on the counter, applying pressure with the heel of your hand. (This will break down the lemons and make them easier to juice.)

3. Cut and squeeze the lemons into the water.
4. Add sugar to taste, and stir thoroughly.
5. Fill 4 glasses with ice, and pour in the lemonade.

FRENCH CHOCOLATE

Makes 2 servings

This is just a fancy version of hot cocoa! Solid chocolate in bar form would have been a fairly new product at this time, and milk chocolate wasn't invented until 1875; the type of chocolate they did have apparently required a long time boiling in water in order to extract the flavor. They would then add milk or cream, and sugar to taste, much like coffee.

- 2 cups whole milk
 - 2 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
 - tiny pinch of salt
 - ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (optional)
1. Warm the milk in a small saucepan over low heat just until it starts to bubble around the edges.
 2. Add the chocolate, salt, and nutmeg, if using, and stir until the chocolate is melted.
 3. Using a whisk (or a hand mixer or stick blender if you want to be modern), whip the chocolate till frothy.
 4. Serve in small cups, with the foam on top.



Little Women Games and Crafts

Many thanks to Lois MacMillan, the children's librarian at West Florida Public Library in Pensacola, for these wonderful ideas.

Set up a series of "stations" with printed instructions so children and parents can rotate through these various activities.

- [The Game of Graces](#) – a popular game from the 1860s involving a pair of sticks and a hoop. You can tie a ribbon to the hoop to make it more festive and colorful.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKBZB2VaX8A>
- [Making Thaumatrope](#)s – a visually fun toy made with a chop stick or straw, cardboard disk, markers and double-sided tape:
https://www.whatdowedoallday.com/thaumatrope/?ck_subscriber_id=286898093

- Toy Tops – these simple spinning tops are made with cardboard, a penny and colored Sharpies. <https://frugalfun4boys.com/penny-spinners-tops-kids-can-make/>
- Making Homemade Butter – who knew you could make butter using a mason jar and heavy cream? <https://frugalfun4boys.com/penny-spinners-tops-kids-can-make/>
- Handkerchief Dolls – these dolls were made during the Civil War when there was little money for store bought toys. Note: these are more complicated to make than the other activities. <http://itssopurdy.blogspot.com/2012/10/how-to-civil-war-handkerchief-dolls.html>
- Yarn Dolls – like handkerchief dolls, these were low-cost toys. Again, they are a bit complicated to make. https://www.littlehouseliving.com/simple-toys-make-yarn-dolls.html#_a5y_p=2964640

Little Women Study Materials

Provided by Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House

www.louisamayalcott.org

TOPIC: Charity

Instructions for Teachers

- Assign parts to the students and read aloud the following scene.
- Discuss the meaning of the word "charity."
- What instances of charity do we discover in this scene?
- Mrs. March says in *Little Women*, "Cast your bread upon the waters and it will come back buttered." Discuss how this saying comes to life in this scene.

A Merry Christmas Feast

[Adapted by Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House Education Department
from *Little Women*, Chapter II, "A Merry Christmas"]

[Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy are sitting huddled together, playing a game]

Marmee. Girls, gather round. There's something you should see.

[The girls jump up to see. Marmee removes a cover hiding something on a table.

Everyone gasps with surprise, and stares at the feast and flowers on the table]

Amy. Is it fairies?

Beth. It's Santa Claus!

Meg. Mother did it.

Jo. Aunt March had a good fit, and sent the supper!

Marmee. All wrong; old Mr. Laurence sent it.

Meg. The Laurence boy's grandfather? What in the world put such a thing into his head? We don't know him.

Marmee. Hannah told one of his servants about how you gave away your breakfast, and that pleased him. He wanted to make up for the bread and milk you had for your own breakfast.

Jo. That boy put it into his head, I know he did! He's a capital fellow.

- Amy.** Mr. Laurence keeps him shut up in the big house, and makes him study very hard.
- Jo.** Our cat ran away once, and he brought her back, and we talked over the fence. I mean to know him some day, for he needs fun, I'm sure he does.
- Marmee.** He brought the flowers himself, and I should have asked him in.
- Jo.** We'll have another play some time, and maybe he'll help act. Wouldn't that be jolly?
- Meg.** *(picking up the flowers and smelling them)* I never had a bouquet before; how pretty it is.
- Marmee.** *(putting her arm around Beth)* They are lovely, but Beth's flowers are sweeter to me. *(She touches the wilted posy at her waist)*
- Beth.** I wish I could send my bunch to father. I'm afraid he isn't having such a merry Christmas as we are.

[They all gather around Marmee and hug each other]



The following monologue also contains a story about charity. Have one of the students read the story aloud, and discuss what Beth learns about Mr. Laurence. What example does he set for his young neighbors, the March sisters?

Beth's Monologue

(from Little Women, Chapter IV, "Burdens")

Beth. I saw something that I liked this morning, and I meant to tell it at dinner, but I forgot. When I went to get some oysters for Hannah, Mr. Laurence was in the fish shop; but he didn't see me, for I kept behind a barrel, and he was busy with Mr. Cutter, the fish man. A poor woman came in, with a pail and a mop, and asked Mr. Cutter if he would let her do some scrubbing for a bit of fish, because she hadn't any dinner for her children, and had been disappointed of a day's work. Mr. Cutter was in a hurry, and said "No," rather crossly; so she was going away, looking hungry and sorry, when Mr. Laurence hooked up a big fish with the crooked end of his cane, and held it out to her. She was so glad and surprised, she took it right in her arms, and thanked him over and over. He told her to "go along and cook it," and she hurried off, so happy! Wasn't it good of him? Oh, she did look so funny, hugging the big, slippery fish, and hoping Mr. Laurence's bed in heaven would be "aisy."

TOPIC: Gratitude

Instructions for Teachers

- Have a student read aloud the following monologue.
- Discuss the meaning of “gratitude,” and the examples given by Mrs. March (“Marmee”) to her daughters of the many things for which they should be grateful.

Marmee’s Monologue

(from *Little Women*, Chapter IV, “Burdens”)

Marmee. Once upon a time, there were four girls, who had enough to eat and drink and wear, a good many comforts and pleasures, kind friends and parents, who loved them dearly, and yet they were not contented. These girls were anxious to be good, and made many excellent resolutions, but they did not keep them very well, and were constantly saying, “If we only had this,” or “If we could only do that,” quite forgetting how much they already had, and how many pleasant things they actually could do. So they asked an old woman what spell they could use to make them happy, and she said, “When you feel discontented, think over your blessings, and be grateful.”

Being sensible girls, they decided to try her advice, and soon were surprised to see how well off they were. One discovered that money couldn’t keep shame and sorrow out of rich people’s houses; another that, though she was poor, she was a great deal happier, with her youth, health, and good spirits, than a certain fretful, feeble old lady, who couldn’t enjoy her comforts; a third that, disagreeable as it was to help get dinner, it was harder still to have to go begging for it; and the fourth, that even carnelian rings were not so valuable as good behavior. So they agreed to stop complaining, to enjoy the blessings already possessed, and try to deserve them, lest they should be taken away entirely, instead of increased; and I believe they were never disappointed, or sorry that they took the old woman’s advice.

TOPIC: Sacrifice and Kindness to Others

Instructions for Teachers

- Have students read the scene, “A Telegram.”
- Discuss the meaning of the word “sacrifice” as used by Beth in the scene.
- What other acts of kindness by other characters appear in the scene?

A Telegram

[Adapted by Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House Education Department from Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, Chapter XV, “A Telegram”]

CAST: Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy, Mr. Brooke

JO: (reading) “Mrs. March: Your husband is very ill. Come at once.”

Oh, hateful telegram! [*throwing it down*] How I wish I could have gone to the war instead of Father!

MEG: I’ve persuaded Mother to rest for a few minutes while we help her prepare for the journey.

MR. BROOKE: Your neighbor, Mr. Laurence, told me about your sad news. I would like to escort your Mother to Washington.

MEG: [*touching Mr. Brooke’s arm*] How kind you are. We accept. It is such a relief to know she will be taken care of.

[*She looks into his eyes and quickly drops her hand. Mr. Brooke steps back, regarding Meg with affection.*]

BETH: [*with basket*] I’ve brought generous supplies from Mr. Laurence. He even offered Father his own dressing gown.

AMY: I helped bring down the trunk, and I slipped one of my drawings into it to bring some cheer to Father.

MEG: Jo, what took you so long on your errand? We were worried.

JO: [*laying a roll of bills on the table*] Here is my contribution for Father.

BETH: Twenty-five dollars! Where did you get it? I hope you didn’t do anything rash.

[*Jo takes off her bonnet, revealing short hair. All the sisters react.*]

AMY: Oh, Jo, how could you? Your one beauty!

JO: I was wild to do something for Father, and I didn't have any money. I passed a barber shop and saw that he was buying hair, so I begged him to take mine.

BETH: [*hugging Jo*] We love you dearly for your sacrifice.

JO: I was getting too vain about my hair. My head feels light and cool—and boyish.

AMY: I'd sooner cut off my head, but I'm proud of you. I see you saved one lock for Mother.

MEG: Let's all go to bed and dream of brown eyes—I mean, a safe journey.
[*Meg, Beth, and Amy begin to exit*]

JO: [*face in hands, crying*] Oh, my hair!

TOPIC: Peer Pressure

Instructions for Teachers

Have students read the play, “Meg Goes to Vanity Fair.” Then discuss the following:

- Why does Meg give in to peer pressure when she visits the Moffats? What could she have done differently? How does she feel before she leaves home, and what makes her give in to her friends? What happens that makes Meg decide she has made a mistake? How does this experience change her, and what does she learn from it?
- Have the students discuss examples of peer pressure they have experienced or witnessed. How did these individuals deal with the situation? What kind of advice could they give a friend who is subject to peer pressure?
- Note: You may also want to provide a vocabulary list for some of the less familiar words in the play: e.g., “tarlatan,” “fortnight,” “dowdy,” “mortified,” etc.

Meg Goes to Vanity Fair

[Adapted by Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House Education Department
from *Little Women*, Chapter IX, “Meg Goes to Vanity Fair”]

Scene 1: Packing the “Go Abroady” Trunk

[*Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy are busily packing a trunk for Meg’s trip*]

Meg: I do think it was the most fortunate thing in the world that those children should have the measles just now.

Jo: [*folding Meg’s clothes*] And so nice of Annie Moffat not to forget her promise. A whole fortnight of fun for you will be regularly splendid!

Beth: [*sorting through some ribbons*] And such lovely weather; I’m so glad of that.

Amy: [*unhappily, fixing Meg’s sewing things*] I wish *I* was going to have a fine time, and wear all these nice things.

Meg: I wish you were *all* going; but as you can’t I shall keep my adventures to tell you when I come back. I’m sure it’s the least I can do, when you have been so kind, lending me things and helping me get ready.

Amy: What did mother give you out of the treasure box?

Meg: A pair of silk stockings, that pretty carved fan, and a lovely blue sash. I wanted the violet silk, but there isn’t time to make it over, so I must be content with my old tarlatan.

Jo: It will look nicely over my new muslin skirt and the sash will set it off beautifully. I wish I hadn't smashed my coral bracelet, for you might have had it.

Meg: There is a lovely old-fashioned pearl set in the treasure box, but mother said real flowers were the prettiest ornament for a young girl, and Laurie promised to send me all I want. Now let me see; there's my new gray walking suit—just curl the feather in the hat, Beth—then my poplin, for Sunday, and the small party. It looks heavy for spring, doesn't it? The violet silk would be so nice; oh dear! [she sighs]

Beth: Never mind; you've got the tarlatan for the big party, and you always look like an angel in white.

Meg: It isn't low-necked, and it doesn't sweep enough, but it will have to do. My silk stockings and two pair of new gloves are my comfort. You are a dear to lend me yours, Jo. Annie Moffat has blue and pink bows on her night caps; would you put some on mine?

Jo: No, I wouldn't; for the smart caps won't match the plain gowns, without any trimming on them. Poor folks shouldn't rig.

Meg: [wistfully] I wonder if I shall ever be happy enough to have real lace on my clothes and bows on my caps?

Beth: [quietly] You said the other day that you'd be perfectly happy if you could only go to Annie Moffat's.

Meg: [crosses to give Beth a hug] So I did! Well, I am happy, and I won't fret; but it does seem as if the more one gets, the more one wants, doesn't it? Well, all is in but my ball dress, which I shall leave for mother to pack. Let me see if she is too busy to do it now. [Meg exits.]

Amy: [to the audience] Now Marmee had agreed to let Meg go to the Moffats' rather reluctantly, afraid that she would come back more discontented than when she left.

Beth: [to the audience] But she begged so hard, and Sallie Moffat promised to take good care of her. And Meg had worked so hard taking care of the Kings all winter that she deserved a little pleasure.

Jo: [to the audience] So Meg set off to the Moffats on one of the loveliest days we've had in a while for a fortnight of pleasure.

Beth: [to the audience] We were so happy for her.

[Amy frowns and Jo nudges her]

Amy: Yes—we were all happy for her.

Jo: [to the audience] And we were thrilled to receive a letter from her later that week.

Scene 2: A Letter from Meg

Meg: [*writing as she speaks*]

My Dear Sisters,

The Moffats are so fashionable. I was quite taken aback by the splendor of the house. But they are very kind people, and I felt quite at ease at once. I have done nothing but enjoy myself since my arrival, with wonderful meals, carriage rides, and walks into town. Tonight is the *small* party, and I am beginning to think that my poplin won't do at all. All the other girls' dresses are so fine and new. It's so difficult not to envy them their nice things. My things look so shabby next to theirs. I know that they notice, too, but they are very kind and don't say anything, at least not in my hearing.

They have taken to calling me Daisy, and fuss about me like a bunch of mother hens. I try to imitate their manners and keep up with their conversation about the latest fashions. Annie's sisters are fine young ladies, and one of the older ones, Belle, is engaged to a young man named George. Mr. and Mrs. Moffat are quite jolly and seem to have taken a fancy to me.

I must end here, for it is time to get ready for the party, but know that although I am having a wonderful time, I miss you all terribly. Give my love to Marmee and Hannah.

Your loving sister,

Meg



Scene 3: Getting Ready for the Party

Annie: Here, Daisy, let me tie your sash for you.

Belle: You look lovely, Meg, and you have such beautiful skin.

Maid: [*entering with a box*] These flowers have just been delivered.

Sallie: [*taking them from her*] They're for Belle, of course; George always sends here some, but these are altogether ravishing.

Maid: They are for Miss March, the man said. And here's a note.

Clara: What fun! Who are they from?

Sallie: Didn't know *you* had a *lover*, Meg.

Meg: [*blushing*] The note is from Mother and the flowers from Laurie.

Sallie: Oh, indeed!

Meg: Let me make them into bouquets for us all.

Belle: Oh, Meg, you are so kind to share them with us.

Sallie: Thank you, Meg!

Clara: You are the sweetest little thing.

Annie: Come, let us show mother!

[*All the girls exit*]

Jo: [*to the audience*] Now Meg related the events of the evening to me after she had returned home, and this is what happened. My sister enjoyed herself very much. She danced to her heart's content. Everyone was kind and complimented her. Annie Moffat had her sing, and she was told she had a fine voice. Major Lincoln asked "who the fresh little girl with the beautiful eyes" was, and Mr. Moffat insisted on dancing with her because she had some spring in her. Then she overheard a bit of conversation between Mrs. Moffat and one of the guests.



Scene 4: Gossip

[*Mrs. Moffat and Belle are sitting watching the dancing, and Meg overhears their conversation, unseen*]

Belle: How old is he?

Mrs. Moffat: Sixteen or seventeen I should say.

Belle: It would be a grand thing for one of them, wouldn't it? Sallie says they are very intimate now, and the old man quite dotes on them.

Mrs. Moffat: Mrs. M has made her plans, I dare say, and will play her cards well, early as it is. The *girl* evidently doesn't think of it yet.

Belle: When the flowers came she colored up and told that fib about her mama, as if she did know. Poor thing! She'd be so nice if she was only got up in style. Do you think she'd be offended if we offered to lend her a dress for Thursday?

Mrs. Moffat: She's proud, but I don't believe she'd mind, for that dowdy tarlatan is all she has got. She may tear it tonight, and that will be a good excuse for offering a decent one.

Belle: We'll see. I shall invite young Laurence, as a compliment to her, and we'll have fun about it afterward.

[The two ladies exit, and Meg stares after them sadly, then exits.]

Jo: *[angrily]* As you can imagine, my dear sister was mortified. Ooooooh, those Moffats! Talking about my family like that! Meg almost came home after that, and I wish she had. However, she remained at the party and tried to act as happy as she could, and no one seemed to notice how troubled she was. She slept little that night, torn between her genuine fondness for the Moffats, yet not understanding why they had such ideas about her family and the Laurences. Meg rose with a heavy heart the next morning and tried her best to put the previous evening out of her mind. And a fine job she did of it, too, as she had the opportunity to tease her hosts a little the following morning.



Scene 5: Meg Gives In

[All the girls sit together doing needlework]

Belle: Daisy, dear, I have sent an invitation to your friend, Mr. Laurence, for Thursday. We should like to know him, and it's only a proper compliment to you.

Meg: You are very kind, but I'm afraid he won't come.

Belle: Why not, Cherie?

Meg: He's too old.

Sallie: Meg, what do you mean? What is his age, I beg to know?

Meg: Nearly seventy, I believe.

Belle: You sly creature! Of course we meant the young man.

Meg: There isn't any; Laurie is only a little boy.

Annie: About your age.

Meg: Nearer my sister Jo's. I am seventeen in August.

Sallie: It's very nice of him to send you flowers, isn't it?

Meg: Yes, he often does, to all of us; for their house is full, and we are so fond of them. My mother and old Mr. Laurence are friends, you know, so it is quite natural that we children should play together.

Clara: *[to Belle]* It's evident that Daisy isn't out yet.

Belle: [*to Clara*] Quite a pastoral state of innocence all around.

Mrs. Moffat: I'm going out to get some little matters for my girls; can I do anything for you young ladies?

Sallie: No, thank you, ma'am. I've got my new pink silk for Thursday and don't want a thing.

Nor I.

Annie: What shall you wear, Daisy?

Meg: My old white one again, if I can mend it fit to be seen; it got sadly torn last night.

Sallie: Why don't you send home for another?

Meg: I haven't got any other.

Sallie: Only that? How funny...

Belle: Not at all; where is the use of having a whole lot of dresses when she isn't out?

There's no need of sending home, Daisy, even if you had a dozen, for I've got a sweet blue silk laid away which I've outgrown, and you shall wear it to please me, won't you, dear?

Meg: [*hesitating*] You are very kind, but I don't mind my old dress, if you don't. It does well enough for a little girl like me.

Belle: Now do let me please myself by dressing you up in style. I shan't let anyone see you till you are done, and then we'll burst upon them like Cinderella and her godmother, going to the ball.

Meg: Thank you, Belle. How can I refuse such a kind offer?

[*Laurie steps into the scene to narrate*]

Laurie: [*to audience*] When I arrived at the party on Thursday night, I hardly recognized Meg when I saw her. She had on a blue dress that was quite tight and rather low cut. It looked as if the Moffats had turned her into their own life-sized doll! Her hair was curled and her lips colored. They had adorned her with jewelry, flowers, and a fan. She looked not at all like the Meg that I knew.



Scene 6: The Ball

[*Meg sees Laurie and crosses over to him*]

Meg: I'm glad you came, I was afraid you wouldn't.

Laurie: Jo wanted me to come and tell her how you looked, so I did.

Meg: What shall you tell her?

Laurie: I shall say I didn't know you; for you look so grown up and unlike yourself, I'm quite afraid of you.

How absurd of you! The girls dressed me up for fun, and I rather like it. Wouldn't Jo stare if she saw me?

Laurie: Yes, I think she would.

Meg: Don't you like me so?

Laurie: No, I don't.

Meg: Why not?

Laurie: I don't like fuss and feathers.

Meg: [*flustered*] You are the rudest boy I ever saw. [*to herself, as she walks away*]

Oh dear! I wish I'd been sensible, and worn my own things; then I should not have disgusted other people, or felt so uncomfortable or ashamed of myself.

[*Laurie approaches Meg*]

Laurie: Please forgive my rudeness, and come dance with me.

Meg: I'm afraid it will be too disagreeable to you.

Laurie: Not a bit. Come, I'll be good. I don't like your gown, but I do think you are—just splendid.

Meg: [*giving in*] Take care my skirt doesn't trip you up; it's the plague of my life and I was a goose to wear it.

Laurie: Pin it round your neck and then it will be useful!

[*Laurie and Meg begin to dance*]

Meg: Laurie, I want you to do me a favor; will you?

Laurie: Won't I!

Meg: Please don't tell them at home about my dress tonight. They won't understand the joke, and it will worry Mother.

Laurie: Then why did you do it?

Meg: I shall tell them myself all about it, and 'fess to Mother how silly I've been. But I'd rather do it myself; so you'll not tell, will you?

Laurie: I give you my word, I won't; only what shall I say when they ask me?

Meg: Just say I looked pretty well, and was having a good time.

Laurie: I'll say the first, with all my heart; but how about the other? You don't look as if you were having a good time, are you?

No, not just now. Don't think I'm horrid. I just wanted a little fun, but this sort doesn't pay, I find, and I'm getting tired of it. Tomorrow I shall put away my fuss and feathers and be *desperately* good again.

[*Meg exits*]

Laurie: [*to audience*] Meg danced and flirted and drank champagne for the rest of the evening. And I tried to watch over her as best I could, as I feel a brotherly duty towards all the March girls. I know that I was scandalized by some of her behavior and couldn't imagine what Mrs. March would say. I kept my word, however, and didn't let on what I had witnessed when I returned to report to the Marches. Meg came home two days later, and I believe she was quite happy to do so.

[*Laurie exits*]



Scene 7: Home Again

[*Meg, Jo, and Marmee sitting in the parlor*]

Meg: It does seem pleasant to be quiet, and not have company manners on all the time. Home is a *nice* place, though it isn't splendid.

Marmee: I'm glad to hear you say so, dear, for I was afraid home would seem dull and poor to you, after your fine quarters.

Meg: Marmee, I want to 'fess.

Marmee: I thought so; what is it, dear?

Jo: Shall I go away?

Meg: Of course not; don't I always tell you everything? I was ashamed to speak of it before Beth and Amy, but I want you to know all the dreadful things I did at the Moffats.

Marmee: We are prepared.

Meg: I told you they rigged me up, but I didn't tell you that they powdered and squeezed and frizzled, and made me look like a fashion plate. Laurie thought I wasn't proper; I know he did, though he didn't say so. And one man called me a doll. I knew it was silly, but they flattered me, and said I was a beauty, and quantities of nonsense, so I let them make a fool of me.

Jo: Is that all?

Meg: No; I drank champagne and romped and tried to flirt, and was altogether abominable.

Marmee: There is something more, I think.

Meg: Yes. It's very silly, but I want to tell it, because I hate to have people say and think such things about us and Laurie. I overheard Mrs. Moffat and Belle talking about how grand it would be for one of us to end up marrying Laurie. She thought you must be hoping for such a match and that you were making plans.

Jo: Well, if that isn't the greatest rubbish I've ever heard. Why didn't you pop out and tell them so?

Meg: I couldn't, it was so embarrassing for me.

Jo: [*all wound up*] Just wait 'til I see Annie Moffat, and I'll show you how to settle such ridiculous stuff. The idea of having "plans" and being kind to Laurie because he's rich, and may marry us by and by! Won't he shout when I tell him what those silly things say about us poor children!

Meg: If you tell Laurie, I'll never forgive you! You *mustn't*, must she, Mother?

Marmee: No, never repeat that foolish gossip, and forget it as soon as you can. I was very unwise to let you go among people of whom I knew so little. I am more sorry than I can express for the mischief this visit may have done you, Meg.

Meg: Don't be sorry; I won't let it hurt me. I'll forget all the *bad* and only remember the *good*, for I did enjoy a great deal. Thank you for letting me go, Marmee. I know I'm a silly little girl, but it is nice to be praised and admired, and I can't help saying I like it.

Marmee: That is perfectly natural, and quite harmless, if the liking does not become a passion and lead one to do foolish and unmaidenly things. Learn to know and value the praise which is worth having, and to excite the admiration of excellent people by being *modest* as well as pretty, Meg.

Meg: Do you have "plans" for us, as Mrs. Moffat says?

Marmee: Yes, my dear, I have a great many as all mothers do, but mine differ somewhat from Mrs. Moffat's, I suspect. I want my daughters to be beautiful, accomplished, and good, to be admired, loved, and respected; to have a happy youth, to be well and wisely married, and to lead useful, pleasant lives. Money is a needful and precious thing—and, when well used, a noble thing. But I'd rather see you poor men's wives, if you were happy, beloved, and contented, than queens on thrones without self-respect and peace.

Meg: Poor girls don't stand any chance, Belle says, unless they put themselves forward.

Jo: [*firmly*] Then *we'll* be old maids.

Marmee: Right, Jo, better be happy old maids than unhappy wives, or unmaidenly girls, running about to find husbands. One thing remember, my girls: mother is always ready

to be your confidante, father to be your friend; and both of us trust and hope that our daughters, whether married or single, will be the pride and comfort of our lives.

Meg & Jo: We will, Marmee, we will!

Marmee: Now off to bed with you, and dream sweet dreams.

Meg & Jo: Good night, Marmee.

The End

TOPIC: Pride and Humility

Instructions for Teachers

- Assign parts for students in the following play, “Amy’s Valley of Humiliation,” and read aloud.
- Discuss what happens in the scene. How does Amy’s pride get her into trouble in the classroom? What could she have done differently?
- Make a vocabulary list for the students for unfamiliar words or terms, e.g. “humiliation,” “conceit,” “corporal punishment,” “ferrule,” etc. What is the difference in meaning between the words “humiliation” and “humility,” and how are these words important in the play?

Amy’s Valley of Humiliation

[Adapted by Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House Education Department from *Little Women*, Chapter VII, “Amy’s Valley of Humiliation”]

Characters:

Amy March
Jo March
Meg March
Mr. Davis
Katy Brown
Mary Kingsley
Leonard Limelover
Jenny Snow
Miss Jones
Mrs. March
Laurie Laurence
Beth March

Scene 1: Amy Borrows Money

Amy: That boy is a perfect Cyclops, isn’t he?

Jo: How dare you say so, when he’s got both his eyes? And very handsome ones they are, too.

Amy: I didn’t say anything about his eyes, and I don’t see why you need fire up when I admire his riding.

Jo: *[laughing]* Oh, my goodness! That little goose means a centaur and she called him a Cyclops!

Amy: You needn't be so rude; it's only a "lapse of liny," as Mr. Davis says. I just wish I had a little of the money Laurie spends on that horse.

Meg: Why?

Amy: I need it so much; I'm dreadfully in debt and it won't be my turn to have the ragmoney for a month.

Meg: In debt, Amy? What do you mean?

Amy: Why, I owe at least a dozen pickled limes, and I can't pay them, you know, till I have money, for Marmee forbade my having anything charged at the shop.

Meg: Tell me about it. Are limes the fashion now? It used to be pricking bits of rubber to make balls.

Amy: Why, you see, the girls are always buying them, and unless you want to be thought mean, you must do it, too. It's nothing but limes now, for everyone is sucking them in their desks in school time, and trading them off for pencils, bead rings, or something else, at recess. If one girl likes another, she gives her a lime; if she's mad with her, she eats one before her face, and don't offer even a suck. They treat by turns; and I've had ever so many, but haven't returned them; and I ought, for they are debts of honor, you know.

Meg: *[taking out her purse]* How much will pay them off, and restore your credit?

Amy: A quarter would more than do it, and leave a few cents over for a treat for you. Don't you like limes?

Meg: Not much; you may have my share. Here's the money. Make it last as long as you can, for it isn't very plenty, you know.

Amy: Oh, thank you! It must be so nice to have pocket-money! I'll have a grand feast, for I haven't tasted a lime this week. I felt delicate about taking any, as I couldn't return them, and I'm actually suffering for one.



Scene 2: In the Schoolroom

[The scene opens as Mr. Davis writes SCHOOLHOUSE RULES on the blackboard. He reads them over out loud.]

Mr. Davis: No chewing gum.
No novels or newspapers.

No private post office.
No distortions of the face.
No nicknames.
No caricatures.
Absolutely **no** pickled limes.

[He holds his head high and clears his throat. Just then the students begin to file in. Each student curtsies or bows and says in turn]:

Girls and Boys: Good morning, Mr. Davis.

Mr. Davis: Attention, class. I shall call the roll. Katy Brown.

Katy Brown: Present.

Mr. Davis: Mary Kingsley.

Mary Kingsley: Present.

Mr. Davis: Leonard Limelover.

Leonard Limelover: Present.

Mr. Davis: Amy March.

[There is no reply. He looks up sternly]

Amy March.

[Still no reply. He looks very displeased, but continues]

Jenny Snow.

Jenny Snow: Present.

Amy: *[Sneaking in at the door, as quietly as possible]* Shhhh!

[Amy slips into her seat as Mr. Davis is tending to the fire in the classroom stove. She makes a bit of a show of her "moist brown paper bag," then puts the bag in the back corner of her desk.]

Katy Brown: *[whispering to her nearest neighbor]* Amy brought limes. Pass it on.

[This news is repeated by each child in turn until all have heard the message and it comes back around to Katy Brown.]

Katy Brown: I know! *[then, to Amy]* Amy, could you come to my party this Saturday? It will be ever so nice!

[Amy looks thoughtfully at Katy, as if trying to decide]

Mary Kingsley: Amy, here, wear my bracelet till recess.

[Amy looks interested but shakes her head “no”]

Yes, yes, wear it!

[Mary puts the bracelet in Amy’s hand. Amy smiles and puts it on]

Jenny Snow: Amy, I’ve got the answers to those sums you had trouble with yesterday.

Amy: You needn’t be so polite all of a sudden, for you won’t get any...not after the way you said, “Some person’s nose is too flat to smell other people’s limes, and she’s so stuck-up but still not too proud to ask for other people’s limes.”

[Amy does an imitation of Jenny being very nasty, and then Amy turns up her nose at Jenny. Just then a distinguished old lady comes into the room to visit. She is expected and welcomed by Mr. Davis]

Mr. Davis: Please come in, Miss Jones. Welcome. Class, continue work on your maps. Miss Jones, would you care to inspect the work?
[she nods]

Let us begin with Amy March.

[He smiles approvingly at her. It is clear she is a favorite of Mr. Davis] **Miss**

Jones: Your map is excellent, Amy! Very fine, indeed.

[Amy looks overly proud and turns her nose up at Jenny again. Jenny looks angrier than ever. Miss Jones looks over each map as she walks around the room, nodding approvingly]

Miss Jones: Thank you, Mr. Davis. *[she exits]*

Jenny: *[raising her hand and looking threateningly at Amy]*

Mr. Davis, I have an important question to ask.

Mr. Davis: Go ahead, Miss Snow.

[Jenny rises and walks to the teacher’s desk]

Jenny: Are we allowed to have pickled limes in school now? Because I thought they were banned along with chewing gum and novels and newspapers and the private post office and nicknames and caricatures and distortions of the face...and I thought that you vowed to publicly ferrule the first person who was found breaking the law. Because Amy March has pickled limes in her desk.

Katy Brown: *[whispering]* He’s as nervous as a witch and as cross as a bear.

Mary Kingley: *[whispering]* The word LIMES is like fire to powder with him!

Mr. Davis: [rapping on his desk] Young ladies and gentlemen, attention, if you please!

[Jenny skips to her seat very rapidly. All eyes are fixed on Mr. Davis]

Mr. Davis: Miss March, come to the desk.

[Amy rises]

Bring with you the limes you have in your desk.

Leonard Limelover: [whispering] Don't take all!

[Amy brings up the paper bag full of limes, after shaking out a few in her desk. Mr.

Davis inspects the bag, reacting negatively to the odor of the limes]

Mr. Davis: Is that all?

Amy: Not quite, sir.

Mr. Davis: Bring the rest immediately.

[Amy obeys]

You are sure there are no more?

Amy: I never lie, sir.

Mr. Davis: So I see. Now take these disgusting things two by two, and throw them out the window.

[Everyone sighs. Amy is angry and ashamed, but obeys, going six times to and fro.

The last two she throws cause a shout from the street by the Irish children. Their cry of delight causes everyone to look pleadingly at Mr. Davis, who is unmoved. Leonard Limelover bursts into tears]

Mr. Davis: [clearing his throat impressively] Ahem. Children, you remember what I said to you a week ago. I am sorry this has happened; but I never allow my rules to be infringed, and I **never** break my word. Miss March, hold out your hand.

[Amy starts and puts both hands behind her back, giving him an imploring look. He

looks like he might change his mind.] **Katy Brown:** [hissing] Sssssssssss!

[Mr. Davis reacts to the hiss, his face hardening again.]

Mr. Davis: Your hand, Miss March!

[Amy throws her head back and holds her hand out, palm up, and bears the blows bravely.]

You will now stand on the platform till recess.

[Amy obeys, fixing her eyes on the stove-funnel above the sea of faces, and standing perfectly motionless. The children find it hard to study, glancing up

from their work, fidgeting in their seats, etc. Mr. Davis goes on correcting papers, until finally:]

Mr. Davis: Recess.

[The children all file out quietly. Then, after all are gone:]

You may go, Miss March.

[Amy looks at him reproachfully, as if to say, "How could you?" and goes straight home without speaking to anyone. The others watch her go.]



Scene 3: In the Parlor

[As the scene opens we see Meg bathing Amy's hands very tenderly and Mrs. March comforting Amy as well. Beth looks very sad as she sits at Amy's feet and Jo paces back and forth.]

Jo: Well, I propose we have him arrested without delay.

Mrs. March: Now, Jo. You'd best set up the chess pieces. Laurie will be here for your match at any moment.

[A knock is heard at the door]

Jo: I'll answer. *[opens door]* Laurie! We could do with some of your cheer! Come, sit down!

[Everyone smiles and says hello to Laurie]

Mrs. March: Amy I think it *is* best that you have a vacation from school, but I want you to study a little every day with Beth. I don't approve of corporal punishment, especially for girls. I dislike Mr. Davis's manner of teaching, and don't think the girls you associate with are doing you any good, so I shall ask your father's advice before I send you anywhere else.

Amy: That's good! I wish all the children would leave, and spoil his old school. It's perfectly maddening to think of those lovely limes.

Mrs. March: I am not sorry you lost them, for you broke the rules, and deserved some punishment for disobedience.

Amy: Do you mean you are glad I was disgraced before the whole school?

Mrs. March: I should not have chosen that way of mending a fault, but I'm not sure that it won't do you more good than a milder method. You are getting to be rather conceited, my dear, and it is quite time you set about correcting it. You have a good many little gifts and virtues, but there is no need of parading them, for conceit spoils the finest genius. There is not much danger that real talent or goodness will be overlooked long; even if it is, the consciousness of possessing and using it well should satisfy one, and the great charm of all power is modesty.

Laurie: So it is! I knew a girl once who had a really remarkable talent for music and she didn't know it; never guessed what sweet little things she composed when she was alone, and wouldn't have believed it if anyone had told her.

Beth: I wish I'd know that nice girl; maybe she would have helped me, I'm so stupid.

Laurie: You do know her, and she helps you better than anyone else could.

[He looks at Beth so intently that she finally realizes he means HER, and she turns away shyly laughing, hiding her face in a cushion. Everyone laughs.]

Jo: *[indicating chess board]* I do believe you've beaten me. Look!

Laurie: So I have! *[he laughs]* I must be on my way.

[They all say goodbye to Laurie as he leaves. Then:]

Amy: Is Laurie an accomplished boy?

Mrs. March: Yes, he has had an excellent education, and has much talent. He will make a fine man.

Amy: And he isn't conceited, is he?

Mrs. March: Not in the least; that is why he is so charming, and we all like him so much.

Amy: *[thoughtfully]* I see. It's nice to have accomplishments and be elegant, but not to show off, or get perked up.

Mrs. March: These things are always seen and felt in a person's manner and conversation, if modestly used; but it is not necessary to display them.

Jo: Any more than it's proper to wear all your bonnets and gowns and ribbons at once, that folks may know you've got them.

[Everyone laughs.]

Jo.

At the end of the school day I took Marmee's letter to Mr. Davis and collected Amy's things. This chapter in our lives is over, but I think we've all learned something important from it.

THE END

TOPIC: Anger and Forgiveness

Instructions for Teachers

- Assign parts to the students for the following play, and have them read it aloud.
- Discuss the quarrel between the two sisters. How does anger affect their relationship, and how does it affect the entire family? How could each of them have done things differently?
- Mrs. March (“Marmee”) tells them, “Don’t let the sun go down upon your anger.” Discuss the meaning of this saying. Why does she feel this is important?
- Mrs. March confesses that she has been struggling for many years to try to conquer her temper, but has only succeeded in controlling it. How does she do this, and what advice does she give her daughters?

JO MEETS APOLLYON

[Adapted by Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House Education Department from Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, Chapter VIII, “Jo Meets Apollyon”]

Characters:

Hannah
Aunt March
Amy March
Jo March
Meg March
Beth March
Laurie Laurence
Annie
Lucy
Marmee (Mrs. March)

Scene 1: Off to the Theater

Hannah: [*to the audience*] Here is the way Louisa wrote about what can happen when you become too angry. This is a scene from her book *Little Women*, which is based on her real family.

I’m Hannah, the housemaid. I live with the Marches, so I know these girls very well and have been lucky enough to feel I’m just one of the family, like a second mother to the girls.

Aunt March: And I'm the girls' great Aunt March. I live in town, and do drop in here now and then for a visit, and of course I have Josephine come to read to me on occasion. As their aunt, I am quite interested in their many doings. Their mother told me this story.

Hannah: One Saturday afternoon Amy came upon Meg and Jo getting ready to go out.

[Aunt March and Hannah step back as the scene begins]

Amy: Girls! Where are you going?

Jo: Never mind. Little girls shouldn't ask questions.

Amy: Do tell me. I should think you might let me go, too. Beth is fussing over her piano and I haven't got anything to do. I'm so lonely!

Meg: I can't dear, because you aren't invited.

Jo: Now, Meg, be quiet or you will spoil it all. You can't go, Amy, so don't be a baby and whine about it.

Amy: You are going somewhere with Laurie and his friends. I *know* you are.

[Meg tries to slip a fan into her pocket]

Jo: Yes, we are. Now do be still and stop bothering.

Amy: I know! You're going to the theater to see "The Seven Castles"! And I *shall* go. Mother said I might see it. I've got my pocket money saved up and it was mean not to tell me in time.

Meg: Just listen to me a minute and be a good child. Mother doesn't think your eyes are well enough yet. Next week you can go with Beth and Hannah.

Beth: Oh, yes, Amy, we'll have a wonderful time. Just be patient. Next week will come sooner than you think.

Amy: No, I want to go with you and Laurie. I've been sick with this cold so long. I'm dying for some fun. *Please*, Meg. I'll be ever so good.

Meg: Suppose we take her. I don't believe Mother would mind.

Jo: If she goes I shan't, and if I don't go, Laurie won't like it, and it will be very rude after he invited only us, to go and drag in Amy. I should think she'd hate poking her nose in where she's not wanted.

Amy: *[trying to pull on her boots]* I *shall* go; Meg says I may; and I'll pay for it myself.

Jo: You weren't asked, and you're not going. So you may just stay where you are!

[Amy begins to cry as Meg and Beth try to comfort her]

Beth: Oh, Amy, don't cry!

[There is a knock at the door. Meg answers it, and Laurie enters with Annie and Lucy]

Laurie: Meg, Jo, are you almost ready?

Annie: Won't this be fun? I've been waiting forever to see this play.

Lucy: I can't wait! Some girls from school saw it last week with their parents and said it was just wonderful.

Laurie: Well, we'd better hurry. *[He bows]* Your carriage is waiting, ladies.

Annie and Lucy: Goodbye!

[They giggle as they hurry off, followed by Meg. Jos is still struggling with her gloves]

Beth: Goodbye! Have a nice time!

Amy: You'll be sorry for this, Jo March. See if you ain't!

Jo: *[as she exits]* Fiddlesticks!



Scene 2: Tempers Flare

Hannah: The play was just as wonderful as the girls had dreamed it would be—with imps, elves, and gorgeous princes and princesses. However, Jo couldn't help thinking of Amy when she saw the fairy queen's yellow curls. And she kept wondering what her sister was going to do to make her "sorry for it."

Aunt March: When Josephine got home she went straight up to her room and checked her bureau, for in their last quarrel, Amy had turned her top drawer upside down on the floor. Everything was in place, however, and Josephine decided that Amy had forgiven and forgotten her wrongs.

Hannah: You see, both Jo and Amy had quick tempers. Amy teased Jo, and Jo irritated Amy, and sometimes explosions occurred, and both girls would be ashamed about it afterward.

Aunt March: And although she was the older sister, Josephine had the hardest time curbing her fiery spirit, which was continually getting her into trouble.

Hannah: The next day Meg, Beth, and Amy were sitting together in the parlor.

[Hannah and Aunt March exit as Meg, Beth, and Amy enter. Jo bursts into the room.]

Jo: Has anyone taken my book?

Meg and Beth. No!

[Amy pokes the fire and says nothing.]

Jo: Amy, you've got it!

Amy: No, I haven't!

Jo: You know where it is then.

Amy: No, I don't!

Jo: *[taking her by the shoulders]* That's a fib!

Amy: It isn't. I haven't got it, don't know where it is, and don't care.

Jo: You know something about it, and you'd better tell me at once, or I'll make you.

Amy: Scold as much as you like, you'll never see your silly old story again.

Jo: Why not?

Amy: I burnt it up.

Jo: What! My little book I was so fond of, and worked over, and meant to finish before father got home? Have you really burnt it?

Amy: Yes, I did! I told you I'd make you pay for being so cross yesterday!

[Jo grabs her shoulders and shakes her in anger.]

Jo: You wicked, wicked girl! I can never write it again and I'll never forgive you as long as I live!

Meg: Jo, stop!

[Meg goes to rescue Amy, and Beth tries to comfort Jo.]

Beth: Oh, Jo, I'm so sorry.

[Jo rushes out of the room in tears. The rest exit slowly after.]

Aunt March: Josephine's book had been the pride of her heart. It was half a dozen little fairy tales that she had worked over patiently and hoped to make

something good enough to print. She had just copied them over with great care, and had destroyed the old manuscript, so Amy's bonfire had caused the work of several years to go up in smoke. It seemed a small loss to others, but to Jo it was a dreadful calamity, and she felt that it never could be made up to her.



Scene 3: Amy's Remorse

Hannah: Mrs. March tried to help Amy see the error of her ways.

Marmee: Do you understand that what you did was very wrong?

Amy: I only did it to punish her for treating me like a baby.

Marmee: But my dear girl, was it a very grown-up thing to do to hurt your sister by destroying the stories she worked so hard at?

Amy: No, I suppose not, but I wish she wouldn't torment me so.

Marmee: Perhaps she wasn't right to do that. Jo should learn to curb her temper. But you must learn to forgive Jo when her temper gets the best of her. And I would like you to ask your sister now to forgive you for being so naughty.

Amy: But how can I? She's so angry she won't listen to me.

Marmee: Nevertheless, you must try.

Amy: I will, Marmee. It was a terrible thing to do to Jo. And I'm very, very sorry for it.

Marmee: Then go and tell her so.

[Amy and Marmee exit.]



Scene 4: Amy Apologizes

Hannah: Jo finally appeared later that afternoon when I rang the bell for tea.

[Hannah rings bell; Marmee, Meg, and Beth enter. Jo then appears, looking gloomy. Amy enters last.]

Amy: Please forgive me, Jo. I'm very sorry.

Jo: I shall never forgive you—never.

Beth: Jo, she is terribly sorry. Marmee has made her see how much she has hurt you.

Meg: Jo, what good will it do to continue being angry? It won't bring your book back. You must try to forgive her.

Marmee: My dear, don't let the sun go down upon your anger. Forgive each other, help each other, and begin again tomorrow.

Meg: We know how upset you must be. But you don't realize how upset Amy was yesterday.

Beth: Jo, you must try to mend things now. It makes me sad to see you so angry.

Meg: Please try to understand how terribly bad Amy feels about what she has done.

Jo: It was an abominable thing to do and she don't deserve to be forgiven.
[*She marches off to bed. Marmee puts her arm around Amy, and all exit.*]

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Scene 5: Stormy Weather

[*Meg, Beth and Amy sitting in parlor. Jo enters and ignores Amy.*]

Aunt March: [*to audience*] The next day was not a pleasant one. Amy was quite insulted that her offer of peace had been rejected. Josephine stormed around looking like a thundercloud. The rest of the family were just as gloomy.

Jo: Everybody is so hateful. I'll ask Laurie and the others to go skating. He is always so kind and jolly—*he'll* make me feel better.

Beth: Yes, Jo, I think that will do you good.
[*Jo exits.*]

Amy: [*resentfully*] There! She promised I could go next time, for this is the last ice we shall have this winter. But it's no use to ask such a cross-patch to take me!

Meg: Don't say that. You *were* very naughty, and it is hard to forgive the loss of her precious little book. But I think you'll find that she will forgive you if you catch her at the right time.

Amy: What should I do?

Meg: Go after them. Don't say anything until Laurie makes Jo feel better. Then take a quiet minute and just kiss her or do some kind thing, and I'm sure she'll be friends again with all her heart.

Amy: I'll really try. Thank you, Meg!
[*She grabs up her skates and goes running off after Jo.*]



Scene 6: At the River

[*At the river, Jo, Laurie, Annie, and Lucy appear with skates over their shoulders.*]

Laurie: I'm going to skate along the shore and test the ice. It was pretty warm last week, and I want to make sure that the ice is safe.

Annie: Why don't you skate on to the first bend of the river and see if it's all right before we begin to race?

Lucy: That's a good idea.

[*Laurie exits one way as Amy appears from the other direction.*]

Look, Jo, it's your little sister.

Amy: Jo!

[*Jo turns her back on Amy. Amy walks away. Annie and Lucy whisper together.*]

Annie: Didn't she see her? What was that all about?

Lucy: Maybe they're quarreling. You know what her temper is like.

Laurie: [*calling from offstage*] Girls, you'd better keep near the shore. The ice isn't safe in the middle.

Annie: Do you think Amy knows?

Lucy: I don't know. Jo, does Amy know about the ice?

Jo: I don't care whether she heard or not—let her take care of herself!

[*Suddenly we hear Amy crying "Help! Jo, help! Help!" Jo can't seem to move.*]

Annie: Isn't that Amy crying for help?

Lucy: And there goes Laurie to help her. What should we do?

Laurie: [*calling from offstage*] Jo, grab a stick. Quick! No, look a rail from that fence. Hurry, hurry! Yes, that's it. Let me have it.

[*Jo grabs a fence pole and runs off toward Laurie. Annie and Lucy stay on the shore and watch the rescue.*]

Annie: Look! Laurie is lying down on the ice. He took the stick Jo brought him.

Lucy: They're lifting her out of the water.

Annie: I do hope she's all right.

Lucy: They're putting Laurie's coat around her. Here they come!

[*Jo and Laurie lead Amy onstage, wrapped in Laurie's coat. She is crying.*]

Laurie: Now then, we must walk her home as fast as we can. Pile your things on her so she'll be as warm as possible.

[*They give Amy their scarves and hats, and all exit.*]



Scene 7: Forgiveness

[*Jo, Marmee, Meg, and Beth sit by the fire. Jo's hands are wrapped in bandages. Amy is asleep, wrapped in a blanket.*]

Hannah: [*to audience*] They got Amy home, and finally she fell asleep, rolled in blankets, before a hot fire. During the rescue, Jo had torn her dress, and her hands were cut and bruised. Mrs. March bound up Jo's wounds while the family sat by the fire.

Jo: Are you quite sure that she is safe?

Marmee: Quite safe, dear. She is not hurt and won't even catch cold. I think you were sensible in covering her and getting her home quickly.

Jo: Laurie did it all. I only let her go out to the middle of the ice. If she should die, it will be my fault. I knew it was dangerous out there, and I didn't stop her!

Meg: Jo, you can't blame yourself.

Beth: You didn't know what was going to happen.

Jo: It's my dreadful temper. I try to cure it. I think I have, and then it breaks out worse than ever! Marmee, what shall I do?

Marmee: Watch and pray, dear. Never get tired of trying and never think it's impossible to conquer your fault.

Jo: You don't know. You can't guess how bad it is! I'm afraid I shall do something dreadful some day and spoil my life and make everybody hate me! Oh, Marmee, help me, do help me!

Marmee: I will, Jo, I will. Don't cry so bitterly, but remember this day as a lesson. We all have our weaknesses and it often takes us all our lives to conquer them. You think *your* temper is the worst in the world, but mine used to be just like it.

Meg: Yours, Mother! Why, you are never angry!

Marmee: I've been trying to cure it for forty years and have only succeeded in controlling it. I am angry nearly every day of my life, but I have learned not to show it, and I still hope to learn not to feel it, though it may take me another forty years to do so.

Meg: Mother, are you angry when you fold your lips tight together and go out of the room sometimes, when Aunt March scolds, or people worry you?

Marmee: Yes, dear. I've learned to check the hasty words that rise to my lips, and when I feel that they mean to break out against my will, I just go away a minute and give myself a little shake for being so weak and wicked.

Jo: Oh, Marmee, if I'm ever half as good as you, I shall be satisfied.

Marmee: I hope you will be a good deal better, dear. You have had a warning—remember it and try with your heart and soul to master this quick temper.

Jo: I will try, Marmee, I truly will. But you must help me and remind me and keep me from letting the sharp words just fly out of my mouth.

Marmee: We must all help each other all the time, my dear girls.

Jo, Beth, and Meg: Yes, Marmee!

[*Just then Amy stirs and sighs in her sleep. Jo looks at her fondly.*]

Jo: I let the sun go down on my anger. I wouldn't forgive her, and today if it hadn't been for Laurie, it might have been too late. Oh, Amy, Amy!

[As if she hears, Amy opens her eyes and holds out her arms to Jo with a smile. The sisters hug each other.]

Aunt March: *[to audience]* And with that, all was forgiven and forgotten between the two sisters.

Hannah: The End.

Mrs. Alcott's Apple Cake

from the "Exploring the World of the Alcotts" program

Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House

www.louisamayalcott.org

Ingredients:

1 pound flour

½ pound sugar

¼ pound butter

8-10 good-sized apples

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup milk

The flour, sugar, and butter "to be well rubbed" together,* (*mix well in a big bowl). Add the baking soda to this mixture and mix well.

The apples, pared or not, "cut up without stewing into eight to ten pieces and then mixed in with the flour and other ingredients."

Add milk and mix everything together until the batter covers the apple pieces. "Mix as dry as you can" (all quotes according to Mrs. Alcott's recipe).

Spread mixture in baking pan and cover top with aluminum foil. Bake (covered) at 350 degrees for about 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until brown on top.



Mrs. Alcott's Ginger Snaps

Half pound butter, half sugar, two and one half flour,
1 pint molasses, teaspoon soda, carraway seed or ginger.
Roll very thin and bake a few minutes.

Abigail May Alcott

1/4 lb. butter	1 cup molasses
1/2 cup sugar	1/2 tsp. baking soda
3-3/4 cups flour	1/2 tsp. ginger

Mix together and refrigerate 1-2 hours. Roll out on floured board to 1/8-1/4" thickness and cut with round cookie cutter. Sprinkle with sugar. Bake at 350 for 8-10 minutes. ~ If desired, try the following tips. ~ Soften the dough for a minute or two in a microwave oven (do not overcook!). Place the dough on a table ~ this will give one leverage ~ counters tend to be too high for rolling dough. ~ Use a French rolling pin (it is a solid piece of wood), flatten the dough to a pancake shape with hands and put plastic wrap on top to avoid sticking. Roll the dough as thin as possible ~ thereby the cookies will be very crisp ~ and lift with a spatula. Finally, if the cookies are placed on baking parchment (it is sold in stores that carry kitchen utensils), browning in the oven will be even. Happy baking!

Orchard House, Concord, MA



Louisa May Alcott's Apple Slump

4 to 6 tart apples (3 cups sliced)	2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar	1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg	1/2 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon	1 egg (well beaten)
1/4 teaspoon salt	1/2 cup milk
1 1/2 cups flour	1/2 cup melted butter



Pare, core, and slice the apples. Preheat oven to 350°. Grease with butter the inside of a 1 1/2-quart baking dish. Put into the dish the sliced apples & brown sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, and 1/4 teaspoon of salt. Bake apples & uncovered until they are soft, about 20 minutes. While the apples & are baking, sift together into a bowl the flour, baking powder, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and sugar. Mix into this the beaten egg, milk, and melted butter. Stir gently. Spread this mixture over the apples and continue baking — until the top is brown and crusty (about 25 minutes). Serve with whipped cream. Serves six.

