

Introduction

露意莎·梅·奧爾柯特

Louisa May Alcott
(1832–1888)



Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888), the author of *Little Women*, and her three sisters were born in Boston, a seaport and the capital of the American state of Massachusetts.

At the age of eight, she moved to nearby Concord with her family. There she spent the happiest years of her youth, even though she experienced the constant threat of poverty. The Alcotts had only a modest cottage, but the girls used a neighboring barn to perform plays that Louisa wrote.

She was educated at home and became a schoolteacher in Boston. Her first story was sold when she was twenty years old, and two years later her first full-length book was published. What pleased her the most about her writing, as she became more and more famous, was the sales of her books made her family's life more comfortable and less of a struggle. *Little Women*, published in 1869, has become one of America's classics.

About the story

Little Women is the story of the March family, a family that is used to hard work and suffering. Although Mr. March is away with the Union Army, the four sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy and their mother keep their spirits high. Mrs. March is involved in local charity affairs, and under her influence, the girls always generously offer their help to people in need.



At a big party during the Christmas season, the March sisters meet a young man named Laurie and have a wonderful time. Because of Mr. March's injury, the sisters must face the real challenge of being independent. Things get worse when Beth contracts scarlet fever and struggles with the illness.

With the strains of separation and reunion with loved ones, plus the adventure to the outside world pursuing their careers, the March sisters become mature, gain wisdom, and find the happiness through their family life.



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Before You Read

Mr. and Mrs. March

are parents of four lovely daughters. Mrs. March takes care of the family while Mr. March serves in the Union Army during the American Civil War.

Meg

the oldest daughter, is thoughtful and considerate. She devotes herself to the family.

Jo

the second oldest daughter, is outspoken and straightforward. She enjoys writing very much.

Beth

the third oldest daughter, is quiet and tender. Beth likes to play the piano.

Amy

the youngest daughter, is a little naughty but adorable. Amy has a talent for painting.

Aunt March

Mr. March's aunt, owns a large fortune but lives a lonely life.

Laurie

the Marches' neighbor, lives with his grandfather, Mr. Laurence. Laurie is the only child in a wealthy family. He is kind and attentive.

John

Laurie's tutor, falls in love with Meg.



Chapter One



1 Christmas at the Marches' Home

Everything was covered with snow. The Christmas season arrived again for the girls of the March family. They longed for nice gifts, but their family's financial¹ situation was too tight to afford any.

Meg, the oldest of the four sisters, started with a sigh, "It just doesn't seem like Christmas without presents."

Amy, the youngest sister, frowned and whispered, "I am desperate² for colored pencils."

Jo, the second sister, said, "Honestly, I wish I didn't have to work for Aunt March, that old miser³."

Beth raised her eyebrows and uttered⁴, "I'd like the war to end so Father can come home . . ."

1. **financial** [fai'nænʃəl] (a.)
財務的

2. **desperate** [ˈdespəɪt] (a.)
極度渴望的

3. **miser** [ˈmaɪzər] (n.) 守財奴

4. **utter** [ˈʌtər] (v.) 說



“Oh, sweet Beth, that’s what we all want!” the other sisters declared together.

Then Jo shared her wish of becoming a writer someday. Amy was confident that she would be very rich, because she would marry a wealthy man.

Amy amused¹ her sisters further with her philosophical² saying, “We’ll all grow up someday. We might as well know what we want.”

When Mrs. March came home, the girls happily exclaimed “Mommy” and dashed³ to the door to greet her. Mrs. March surprised the girls with a letter from their father, and they read it aloud together.



Choose the correct answer.

T F

1. The March family didn’t have enough money to buy Christmas gifts.

2. Which sister wanted to be a writer?

A Meg

B Jo

C Amy

Ans: T, B

1. **amuse** [əˈmjuːz] (v.) 使發笑

3. **dash** [dæʃ] (v.) 急奔

2. **philosophical** [ˌfɪləˈsɑːfɪkəl]

(a.) 哲學的





Jo and Meg were going to attend¹ a New Year's party.

Meg was dressing up for the party. Jo was using a hot iron stick to curl Meg's hair while chatting with the other girls. Beth was glad she didn't have to socialize² with strangers but could stay home with Amy.

Suddenly, a burning smell caught Jo's attention. She had ruined Meg's hair. That caused quite a panic³ until Amy decorated Meg's burnt hair with a ribbon, and Meg looked fantastic, as usual.

At the party, Meg was constantly occupied, since many young men invited her to dance. Unexpectedly, Jo bumped into the newcomer in their neighborhood, Laurie, the grandson of old Mr. Laurence. They had a wonderful time.

Alas, Meg twisted⁴ her ankle and had to leave early. The sisters were thankful to Laurie, the Marches' new acquaintance⁵, because he had kindly offered them a comfortable ride home in his carriage⁶.



Choose the correct answer.

T F

5. Meg bumped into Laurie at the party.

Ans: F

- attend** [ə'tend] (v.) 出席
- socialize** [ˈsəʊʃəlaɪz] (v.) 交際
- panic** [ˈpænik] (n.) 驚慌
- twist** [twɪst] (v.) 扭傷
- acquaintance** [ə'kwɛɪntəns] (n.) 相識的人
- carriage** [ˈkærɪdʒ] (n.) 馬車



Exercises

A Multiple Choice.

- _____ ① How did Meg meet her future husband?
- (a) A matchmaker arranged a blind date for her.
 - (b) She met him at the annual republican convention.
 - (c) He is a senior in her school who later works for her father.
 - (d) He used to be the tutor of her neighbor.
- _____ ② According to Jo, what did John steal from Meg?
- (a) Her handkerchief.
 - (b) Her digital camera.
 - (c) Her glove.
 - (d) Her rifle.
- _____ ③ What did Jo do to support her family when they were in need?
- (a) She cut her long hair and sold it when faced with financial emergency.
 - (b) She opened the tap and filled up the tub with hot water.
 - (c) She used solar power to operate a fridge.
 - (d) She decided to move to New York to live with Mr. Bhaer.

- _____ 4 Which of the following does not belong to Beth's daily routine?
- (a) Sharing food with the poor neighbors.
 - (b) Wearing her overall to do the laundry and cooking at home.
 - (c) Going to the church to do cleaning for the monks.
 - (d) Collecting memorable items for her family.
- _____ 5 Why did Hannah suggest sending Amy away when Beth had scarlet fever?
- (a) She was afraid the mineral and vitamin in the drinking water wasn't enough.
 - (b) Since Laurie wanted to take Amy on the ferry to visit Aunt March.
 - (c) So Amy wouldn't catch this infectious disease from Beth.
 - (d) To substitute for Jo who was sentenced to life in prison.
- _____ 6 Which of the following Mrs. March's statements is true?
- (a) I hope my girls will bear the hatred of money.
 - (b) Tons of happiness can be harbored in a humble cabin.
 - (c) Cultivating a well of joy is less worthwhile than having money.
 - (d) Social status and money can only be interference for love and virtue.

[第一章] 馬區家的聖誕節

p. 13 萬物都覆上了白雪。對馬區家的女孩們來說，聖誕節又來臨了。她們渴望收到精緻的禮物，但是家中的經濟狀況卻拮据得什麼也買不起。

四個姐妹中最年長的梅格，開口嘆了口氣說：「沒有禮物實在不像聖誕節。」

最年幼的妹妹艾美，皺起眉頭，喃喃自語：「我真想要彩色鉛筆。」

二姊喬說：「說實話，要是不必為馬區嬸婆工作就好了，那個吝嗇的老太婆。」

貝絲則揚起眉毛說：「我只願戰爭結束，這樣爸爸就能回家……」

p. 14 「噢，好貝絲，妳說出了我們的心聲啊！」其他三個姐妹異口同聲地說道。

接著喬抒發了有朝一日成為作家的心願。艾美則對未來穿金戴銀充滿信心，因為她打定主意要嫁給有錢人。

艾美那句充滿哲理的話，更逗笑了姐姐們：「有一天我們都會長大，也會知道自己要的是什麼。」

當馬區太太一進門，女孩們就開心地喚著「媽媽」，衝向門邊迎接她。馬區太太帶回父親的信，讓女孩們十分驚喜，於是她們一起大聲讀信。

p. 16 知道父親平安健康，女孩們感到寬心。但一想到父親必須忍受與家人分隔兩地的寂寞，她們又感到失落。

感傷的思緒及時被節日的歡愉取代；女孩們唱著聖誕禮讚直到就寢。喬照常熬夜，用筆編織著她幻想中的世界。

聖誕節當天，梅格與女傭漢娜一同準備早餐，誘人的香氣喚醒了沈睡中的喬。馬區太太則已經出門，到一個叫作惠梅爾的德國家庭幫忙。

p. 17 自從惠梅爾先生過世後，惠梅爾太太跟六個孩子就過著一貧如洗的生活。個性最為善良的貝絲，便說動姐妹們分送一些食物到惠梅爾家。

送完食物的回家途中，馬區姐妹注意到一個年輕人，正和他的祖父一起搬進附近一棟優雅的豪宅。

這位老人是羅倫斯先生，而年輕人則看來落落寡歡。出於好奇心，姐妹們整晚都在討論他的背景。

p. 18 喬和梅格準備參加新年派對。

梅格為了派對盛裝打扮。喬一邊和其他姐妹聊天，一邊用熱鐵棒替梅格燙頭髮。貝絲則對於不必周旋在陌生人中間，可以在家與艾美作伴感到快活。

突然一陣焦味傳來，喬才發現梅格的頭髮已經毀在她手上了。這個意外引發了一陣慌亂，直到艾美在梅格燙壞的頭髮上綁了一個緞帶作裝飾，讓梅格恢復往常的美麗。

派對上，向梅格邀舞的年輕人很多，梅格一支接一支地跳著。喬則不經意地與新搬來的鄰居羅倫斯先生的孫子羅利巧遇，玩得十分盡興。

不料，梅格扭傷了腳踝，不得不提早離開。馬區家的新朋友羅利，好心地用馬車送馬區姐妹一程，讓她們舒服地到家，她們因此感激在心。

