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Plot Overview

ALCOTT PREFACES Little Women with an excerpt from John Bunyan’s seventeenth-century work The Pilgrim’s Progress, an allegorical novel about leading a Christian life. Alcott’s story begins with the four March girls—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy—sitting in their living room, lamenting their poverty. The girls decide that they will each buy themselves a present in order to brighten their Christmas. Soon, however, they change their minds and decide that instead of buying presents for themselves, they will buy presents for their mother, Marmee. Marmee comes home with a letter from Mr. March, the girls’ father, who is serving as a Union chaplain in the Civil War. The letter inspires the girls to bear their burdens more cheerfully and not to complain about their poverty.

On Christmas morning, the girls wake up to find books, probably copies of The Pilgrim’s Progress, under their pillows. Later that day, Marmee encourages them to give away their breakfast to a poor family, the Hummels. Their elderly neighbor, Mr. Laurence, whom the girls have never met, rewards their charitable activities by sending over a feast. Soon, Meg and Jo are invited to attend a New Year’s Party at the home of Meg’s wealthy friend, Sally Gardiner. At the party, Jo retrets to an alcove, and there meets Laurie, the boy who lives with Mr. Laurence. While dancing, Meg sprains her ankle. Laurie escorts the sisters home. The Marches regret having to return to their daily routine after the holiday festivities.

Jo visits Laurie when he is sick, and meets his grandfather, Mr. Laurence. She inadvertently insults a painting of Mr. Laurence in front of the man himself. Luckily, Laurie’s grandfather admires Jo’s spunk, and they become friends. Soon, Mr. Laurence meets all the sisters, and Beth becomes his special favorite. Mr. Laurence gives her his deceased granddaughter’s piano.

The girls have various adventures. Amy is caught trading limes at school, and the teacher hits her as punishment. As a result, Mrs. March withdraws her daughter from school. Jo refuses to let Amy go with her to the theater. In retaliation, Amy burns Jo’s manuscript, and Jo, in her anger, nearly lets Amy drown while ice-skating. Pretty Meg attends her friend Annie Moffat’s party and, after allowing the other girls to dress her up in high style, learns that appearances are not everything. While at the party, she hears that people think she intends to marry Laurie for his money.

That year, the Marches form the Pickwick Club, in which they write a family newspaper. In the spring, Jo smuggles Laurie into one of the club meetings, and he becomes a member, presenting his new circle with a postbox. At the beginning of June, the Marches decide to neglect their housework. At the end of a lazy week, Marmee takes a day off too. The girls spoil a dinner, but everyone ends up laughing over it. One day, Laurie has English friends over, and the Marches go on a picnic with them. Later, Jo gets a story published for the first time.

One dark day, the family receives a telegram saying that Mr. March is sick in the hospital in Washington, D.C. Marmee goes to tend to him, and Jo sells her hair to help finance
the trip. Chaos ensues in Marmee’s wake, for the girls neglect their chores again. Only Beth goes to visit the Hummels, and after one of her visits, she contracts scarlet fever from the Hummel baby. Beth teeters on the brink of death until Marmee returns. Meanwhile, Amy spends time at Aunt March’s house in order to escape the disease. Beth recovers, though not completely, and Mr. Brooke, Laurie’s tutor, falls in love with Meg, much to Jo’s dismay. Mr. Brooke and Meg are engaged by the end of Part One.

Three years pass before Part Two begins. Mr. March is home from the war, and Laurie is nearly done with school. Soon, Meg marries and moves into a new home with Mr. Brooke. One day, Amy decides to have a lunch for her art school classmates, but poor weather ruins the festivities. Jo gets a novel published, but she must cut it down in order to please her publishers. Meanwhile, Meg struggles with the duties of keeping house, and she soon gives birth to twins, Demi and Daisy. Amy gets to go to Paris instead of Jo, who counted on the trip, because their Aunt Carroll prefers Amy’s ladylike behavior in a companion.

Jo begins to think that Beth loves Laurie. In order to escape Laurie’s affections for her, Jo moves to New York so as to give Beth a chance to win his affections. There Jo meets Professor Bhaer, a poor German language instructor. Professor Bhaer discourages Jo from writing sensationalist stories, and she takes his advice and finds a simpler writing style. When Jo returns home, Laurie proposes to her, but she turns him down. Beth soon dies.

Amy and Laurie reunite in France, and they fall in love. They marry and return home. Jo begins to hope that Professor Bhaer will come for her. He does, and they marry a year later. Amy and Laurie have a daughter named Beth, who is sickly. Jo inherits Plumfield, Aunt March’s house, and decides to turn it into a boarding school for boys. The novel ends with the family happily gathered together, each sister thankful for her blessings and for each other.

**Character List**

**Josephine March** - The protagonist of the novel, and the second-oldest March sister. Jo, who wants to be a writer, is based on Louisa May Alcott herself, which makes the story semi-autobiographical. Jo has a temper and a quick tongue, although she works hard to control both. She is a tomboy, and reacts with impatience to the many limitations placed on women and girls. She hates romance in her real life, and wants nothing more than to hold her family together.

**Meg March** - The oldest March sister, Meg battles her girlish weakness for luxury and money, and ends up marrying a poor man she loves. Meg represents the conventional and good; she is similar to her mother, for whom she was named. Meg sometimes tries to alter who she is in order to please other people, a trait that comes forth when she allows other girls to dress her up like a rich girl at her friend Annie Moffat’s house. She becomes an agreeable housewife, pretending to like politics because her husband does, and forgoing luxury because her husband is poor.

**Beth March** - The third March sister, Beth is very shy and quiet. Like Meg, she always tries to please other people, and like Jo, she is concerned with keeping the family together. Beth struggles with minor faults, such as her resentment for the housework she must do.
Beth resembles an old-fashioned heroine like those in the novels of the nineteenth-century English author Charles Dickens. Beth is a good person, but she is also a shade too angelic to survive in Alcott’s more realistic fictional world. With Beth’s death, Alcott lets an old type of heroine die off. The three surviving March sisters are strong enough to live in the changing real world.

Beth is close to Jo; outgoing Jo and quiet Beth both have antisocial tendencies. Neither of them wants to live in the world the way it is, with women forced to conform to social conventions of female behavior. Similarly, it is not surprising that Meg and Amy are particularly close to each other, since generous Meg and selfish Amy both find their places within a gendered world.

**Amy March** - The youngest March sister, Amy is an artistic beauty who is good at manipulating other people. Unlike Jo, Amy acts as a perfect lady because it pleases her and those around her. She gets what she wants in the end: popularity, the trip to Europe, and Laurie. Amy serves as a foil—a character whose attitudes or emotions contrast with, and thereby accentuate, those of another character—for Jo, who refuses to submit to the conventions of ladyhood. Both artists struggle to balance society’s expectations with their own natural inclinations. The more genuine of the two and the more generous, Jo compares favorably to Amy. Both characters, however, are more lovable and real for their flaws.

**Laurie Laurence** - The Marches’ charming, fun, and intelligent next-door neighbor, Laurie becomes particularly close to Jo but ends up marrying Amy. In between the publication of Part One and Part Two, Alcott received many letters asking her to marry Jo to Laurie. Perhaps to simultaneously please her readers and teach them a lesson, Alcott had Jo get married, but not to Laurie.

Laurie struggles with his grandfather’s expectations of him, in a similar manner to the way Jo struggles with becoming a lady. Laurie is not manly enough for his grandfather because he does not want to enter the business world. Likewise, Jo is not feminine enough for her sisters because she swears, soils her gloves, and speaks her mind at all times.

**Marmee** - The March girls’ mother. Marmee is the moral role model for her girls. She counsels them through all of their problems and works hard but happily while her husband is at war.

**Mr. March** - The March girls’ father and Marmee’s husband. He serves in the Union army as a chaplain. When he returns home, he continues acting as a minister to a nearby parish.

**Mr. Brooke** - Laurie’s tutor. Mr. Brooke is poor but virtuous.

**Frederick Bhaer** - A respected professor in Germany who becomes an impoverished language instructor in America. Mr. Bhaer lives in New York, where he meets Jo. He is kind and fatherly.

**Mr. Laurence** - Laurie’s grandfather and the Marches’ next-door neighbor. Mr. Laurence seems gruff, but he is loving and kind.
**Hannah** - The Marches’ loyal servant.

**Aunt March** - A rich widow and one of the March girls’ aunts. Although crotchety and difficult, Aunt March loves her nieces and wants the best for them.

**Daisy** - Meg and Mr. Brooke’s daughter. Daisy is the twin of Demi. Her real name is Margaret.

**Demi** - Meg and Mr. Brooke’s son and Daisy’s twin. Demi’s real name is John Laurence.

**Mrs. Kirke** - The woman who runs the New York boarding house where Jo lives.

**Kate Vaughn** - One of Laurie’s British friends. At first, Kate turns up her nose at the bluntness and poverty of the Marches. She later decides that she likes them, however, showing that she is able to overcome her initial prejudice.

**Sallie Gardiner** - Meg’s rich friend. Sallie represents the good life to Meg, and Meg often covets Sallie’s possessions.

**Aunt Carrol** - One of the March girls’ aunts. Aunt Carrol is ladylike, and she takes Amy with her to Europe.

**Florence** - Aunt Carrol’s daughter. Florence accompanies her aunt and Amy to Europe.

**Fred Vaughn** - One of the Vaughn siblings. Fred is Laurie’s friend, but he soon develops a romantic interest in Amy.

**Esther** - Aunt March’s servant. Esther is a French Catholic.

**Annie Moffat** - Another wealthy friend of Meg’s. Annie is fashionable and social, and she wears stylish clothing that Meg envies.

**Ned Moffat** - The older brother of Meg’s friend Annie Moffat.

**Frank Vaughn** - One of the Vaughn siblings. Frank is sickly.

**Grace Vaughn** - The youngest sister of the Vaughn family. Grace and Amy become friends on a picnic.

**Dr. Bangs** - A doctor who tends to Beth when she is ailing.

**The Hummels** - A family that lives near the Marches. The Hummels are poor and in bad health.

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**Themes, Motifs & Symbols**

**Themes**

*Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.*
Women’s Struggle Between Familial Duty and Personal Growth
While on the surface a simple story about the four March girls’ journeys from childhood to adulthood, *Little Women* centers on the conflict between two emphases in a young woman’s life—that which she places on herself, and that which she places on her family. In the novel, an emphasis on domestic duties and family detracts from various women’s abilities to attend to their own personal growth. For Jo and, in some cases, Amy, the problem of being both a professional artist and a dutiful woman creates conflict and pushes the boundaries set by nineteenth-century American society.

Many of the characters in *Little Women* are teachers, reinforcing the idea that the novel is didactic and that we are supposed to learn from the novel’s lessons. Mr. March, for example, is a minister, and he instructs his congregation. Marmee, a good transcendentalist mother, reinforces the teaching of her husband. Mr. Brooke and Professor Bhaer, two men whom March girls marry, are teachers by profession. In the end, Jo inherits Plumfield, Aunt March’s house, and she and Bhaer turn it into a school for boys. The frequent interaction that the novel’s characters have with teaching—both giving and learning lessons—reflects the structured society in which they live.

Differing Uses of Language
Language appears throughout the novel in an interesting inverse relationship with creativity: the more proper the language one of the March girls uses, the less creative and independent she is. Beth does not talk much, for example, and Meg uses proper language; both are typically feminine women, and their relationship to language reflects their alignment with what society expects of them. In contrast, Jo swears and Amy mispronounces words. These two, the independent artists of the family, resist conforming to the behavior that society expects of them, including the use of proper and delicate speech.

Symbols
*Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.*

Umbrellas
In *Little Women*, umbrellas symbolize the protection a man offers a woman. Before Meg and John Brooke get married, Jo gets angry at Mr. Brooke’s umbrella. It seems Jo is angry that Mr. Brooke is going to take care of her sister. At the end of the novel, Professor Bhaer extends his umbrella over Jo, and her acceptance of its coverage symbolizes that she is ready to accept not only his love and protection, but also the idea that men are supposed to offer women love and protection.

Burning
*Little Women* is filled with images of burning that simultaneously represent writing, genius, and anger. At a party, Jo wears a dress with a burn mark on the back, which symbolizes her resistance to having to play a conventional female role. In anger, Amy burns Jo’s manuscript after Jo will not let her come to a play. Whenever Jo writes, her family describes her inspiration as genius burning. At the end of the novel, Jo burns her sensationalist stories after Professor Bhaer criticizes that style of writing. This fire seems to destroy her earlier self as well, as it marks the end of the fiery Jo of the novel’s beginning.
Important Quotations Explained

1. I'll try and be what he loves to call me, “a little woman,” and not be rough and wild; but do my duty here instead of wanting to be somewhere else.

Jo speaks these words in Chapter 1 after hearing the letter from Mr. March, who is serving in the Civil War. Jo says that she would like to be doing something exciting, such as being in the Civil War like her father, instead of sitting at home. Jo points out that women cannot fight in the Civil War, and generally lead less adventurous lives than do men. In this statement, Jo also demonstrates a wish to make her father happy by acting stereotypically female. Jo struggles throughout the novel because she wants both to lead an adventurous, independent life and to help and please her family. In other words, the struggle for individual success conflicts with the duty and affection she feels for her family and with the domestic sphere that most women of the time accept.

Mr. March’s letter comes immediately after all the March girls say that they want more out of life than what they have. After hearing his letter, they each decide to be content with what they have, demonstrating that the renunciation of their material dreams is learned, rather than natural, behavior.

2. I am angry nearly every day of my life.

Marmee makes this statement in Chapter 8 when she tells Jo that she too struggles with a quick temper. Throughout the novel, however, Marmee seems serene and composed, which suggests that the appearance of a docile woman may hide turmoil underneath.

Marmee’s admission makes Jo feel better, because she realizes that she is not the only one with a temper. At the same time, though, Marmee’s words suggest that there is no hope for Jo—Marmee is still angry after forty years, and perhaps Jo will be too. Many feminist critics have noted this sentence as an expression of anger about nineteenth-century society’s demand that women be domestic.

3. 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.

Marmee speaks these words in Chapter 9, after Meg has returned from a two-week stay at the Moffats’ home. Marmee tells Meg that she does not want any of her daughters to marry for material comforts, as was suggested by a guest at the Gardiners’. At a moment in history when women’s futures hinged solely on their choice of a husband, Marmee’s statement is very compassionate and unusual. After all, the other guests at the party easily assume that Meg must be intending to marry for money.

Alcott does not completely sanction Marmee’s statement. Little Women depicts marrying poor as a serious burden for a nineteenth-century woman to bear. One should not marry for money, but at the same time, quarrels and stress come about from marrying a poor man. Alcott does not depict romantic love without mentioning the practical reality of living with little money. The daughter of an improvident father, she knew firsthand the worry of having to depend on someone else for a living.
4. I’d have a stable full of Arabian steeds, rooms piled with books, and I’d write out of a magic inkstand, so that my works should be as famous as Laurie’s music. I want to do something splendid before I go into my castle—something heroic, or wonderful—that won’t be forgotten after I’m dead. I don’t know what, but I’m on the watch for it, and mean to astonish you all, some day. I think I shall write books, and get rich and famous; that would suit me, so that is my favorite dream.

Jo speaks these words in Chapter 13 when the March girls and Laurie are discussing their dreams. In contrast to the typical dreams of her sisters, Jo’s dream is startlingly big and confidently expressed. The horses Jo wants, and with which she is constantly compared, represent the wild freedom for which she yearns. Significantly, Jo does not mention a husband or children in her dream, but says she wants books and ink. This powerful statement reaches well beyond the confines of a woman’s small living room and demands lasting fame and independence in a man’s world. Jo’s sentences are very direct and begin commandingly with the word “I.” Jo also mentions the desire to have her work equal Laurie’s. The pursuit of an art is represented as an idyllic field in which men’s and women’s work are considered equal. Also, Jo aligns going into a castle—getting married and having a house—with dying, for she wants to do something great before either event happens to her.

5. Oh, my girls, however long you may live, I never can wish you a greater happiness than this!

These words from Marmee conclude the novel, at the end of Chapter 47, and also sum up the novel’s message. Through the four March sisters, Alcott presents many possible ways a woman can walk through life. Both the novel and Marmee finally decide that women must make some sacrifices for their families, in order to have the happiest life possible. Perhaps Alcott sometimes wished her life had turned out more traditionally and that she had married and had children. This ending is ambiguous at best, however, since the novel has called traditional values into question throughout.

Key Facts

FULL TITLE · Little Women

AUTHOR · Louisa May Alcott

TYPE OF WORK · Novel

GENRE · Sentimental novel; didactic novel; coming-of-age novel

LANGUAGE · English

TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN · 1868–1869, Concord and Boston, Massachusetts

DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION · 1868–1869

PUBLISHER · Roberts Brothers
NARRATOR · Omniscient. The narrator knows everything and provides analysis and commentary about the characters and their lives.

POINT OF VIEW · Third person. The narrator focuses on all the different characters in turn.

TONE · Sympathetic and matter-of-fact; sometimes moralizing

TENSE · Past

SETTING (TIME) · During and after the Civil War, roughly 1861–1876

SETTING (PLACE) · A small New England town

PROTAGONIST · Jo March

MAJOR CONFLICT · The March sisters struggle to improve their various flaws as they grow into adults. Jo dreams of becoming a great writer and does not want to become a conventional adult woman.

RISING ACTION · The sisters begin to mature; they meet Laurie, their next-door neighbor; Meg gets married.

CLIMAX · Jo turns down Laurie’s marriage proposal, confirming her independence.

FALLING ACTION · Beth dies, and Amy marries Laurie; Jo marries Professor Bhaer; Jo founds a school for boys and puts her writing career on hold.

THEMES · Women’s struggle between familial duty and personal growth; the danger of gender stereotyping; the necessity of work; the importance of being genuine

MOTIFS · Music, teaching, language

SYMBOLS · Umbrellas, burning

FORESHADOWING · When Laurie presents the March sisters with a postbox, the narrator hints that love letters will pass through the box in years to come. Laurie’s promise to kiss Amy before she dies foreshadows their future marriage.

Study Questions & Essay Topics

Study Questions

1. Why does Alcott alternate between stories about each of the four March sisters throughout Little Women?

On the surface, the novel presents us with four different young girls so that every reader can identify with at least one of them and learn from their mistakes. In this way, Little Women resembles a didactic novel, a work meant to teach moral lessons. Besides showcasing different kinds of heroines, the four March sisters’ stories each stand for the different options a woman had in the 1860s: she could stay at home, like Beth; she could
marry, like Meg; she could become a modern and successful woman, like Amy; or she could struggle with her professional life and her personal life, like Jo. Many readers claim Jo as their favorite, and it seems as though Alcott may have been doing more in *Little Women* than just introducing and developing four distinct possible female types. Jo is the only character whose personality most readers like more before she reforms and becomes more stereotypically feminine. With the character of Jo, Alcott creates a new sort of heroine, one who is flawed and human—and infinitely more lovable for those flaws.

2. **Discuss the term “little women.”** What does the term say about the status of American women in the 1860s?

A common term in the Victorian era, “little women” is used as a term of endearment in the novel. Mr. March calls his daughters “little women” in the letter he sends them from the war. On the surface, the term indicates the time between being a girl and being a woman, a time that the novel portrays in the lives of the March sisters. However, “little” is also a diminutive word. It is interesting that Alcott uses such a word when she seems interested in enlarging the status of women in general. The novel is also crowded with references to physical size: Jo, for example, is always described as large. She has big feet, and her hands stretch out Meg’s gloves. Additionally, Amy tells Jo that there is “more of [her]” than there is of Amy. But beyond her physical dimensions, Jo dreams big, and throughout the story she is the sister with the most individual, creative promise. Conversely, Meg is a very conventional girl; likewise, her shoes are described as too tight, and her house with John as too cramped. Alcott mirrors Meg’s limitations with the limitations of her surroundings, suggesting that, in general, women are strictly confined. Through the use of the term “little women,” Alcott may be suggesting that a woman’s role is too small and confining for Jo, as doubtless it was for many women of her day.

3. **Discuss the role of the Civil War in Little Women. Who goes to the war, and who wants to? Why does Alcott deliberately put such a big war so far in the background of her story?**

The Civil War is never even mentioned by name in *Little Women*. At the beginning of the novel, all we know is that Mr. March is “far away, where the fighting [is].” At the beginning of the novel, Jo laments that she cannot participate in the action of the war; only men, such as Mr. March, can go. From that point on, we do not hear too much about the war except when Mr. March is sick. Instead, Alcott focuses heavily on domestic issues and personal matters in the lives of the March sisters. This situation is the opposite of that found in many men’s novels of the time; in those novels, the war features prominently and matters of everyday life are de-emphasized. Since women were usually at home doing something mundane, their stories got lost in such male-dominated works. In *Little Women*, Alcott spotlights the women and the homefront; she puts the men aside in order to tell women’s stories. In one striking example, Laurie is shown as the male outsider who longs to join the all-female March circle. This situation contrasts with the beginning of the novel, when Jo wants to join the men’s circle of fighting. In her novel, Alcott documents women and their domestic lives, and shows that they are just as important and worthy of focus as men and their pursuits.
Suggested Essay Topics

1. How does Jo represent the plight of the female artist in the 1860s? Does Amy represent the plight any differently? If so, how?

2. Discuss the similarities and differences between Jo and Amy. How do these differences lead to Laurie’s love for Jo but eventual marriage to Amy?

3. Why does Jo marry Professor Bhaer instead of Laurie?

4. Discuss the character of Beth, the most conforming sister. Is her death at all symbolic?

5. Discuss the role of Mr. March. Why is he hardly present in the novel?

6. What are the elements, if any, of transcendentalist philosophy in *Little Women*?

7. Discuss the characters of Meg’s twins, Daisy and Demi. How are the twins different from Jo and Laurie?
The Literature Network

Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) is primarily remembered for her children’s classics, especially for Little Women and its sequels. She was however a multi-faceted personality, possessed of a deeply independent spirit and reforming energy. Contemporary research has revealed that Louisa Alcott wrote works aimed at adult audiences also, though under a pseudonym. She was also active as a nurse and a suffragette.

Louisa May Alcott, the second daughter of Amos Bronson Alcott and Abigail “Abba” May was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania on November 29, 1832. In 1840 the family moved to Concord. Louisa enjoyed acting out plays with her sisters, which she had written, and also spent time with family friends Thoreau and Emerson. In 1843 the Alcott family took part in an experimental communal village known as the Fruitlands. Unfortunately the project failed and the family returned to Concord in 1845. Louisa later wrote of this experience in Transcendental Wild Oats.

Despite his intellectual and social standing, Bronson Alcott was not a good provider and the family moved back to Boston in 1849. Feeling more and more responsible for her family's financial needs Louisa started taking on a variety of jobs. She and her elder sister Anna taught small children and mended and washed laundry in an effort to help provide for the growing Alcott family.

In 1852 Louisa published her first poem "Sunlight” in Peterson's magazine under the pseudonym, Flora Fairfield. Her first published short story was “The Rival Painters”. Her first book, Flower Fables was published in 1855. At this point, the Alcott family moved to Walpole, New Hampshire but Louisa stayed on in Boston to further her literary career. The third Alcott daughter, Lizzie, contracted scarlet fever and her illness forced the Alcotts back to Concord where Emerson purchased Orchard House for the family. Lizzie passed away in 1856 and Anna was married soon after. Louisa returned to Concord in 1857 to keep her mother company.

She went to Washington, DC. in 1862 to serve as a Civil War Nurse. Like many other nurses, Louisa contracted typhoid fever and although she recovered, she would suffer the effects of mercury poisoning for the rest of her life. Her stay in Washington prompted Louisa to write Hospital Sketches, which was published in 1863 followed by Moods in 1864.

At this point Louisa's publisher, Thomas Niles, told her that he wanted "a girls story" from her. This was the turning point in Louisa’s literary career. She wrote furiously for two and a half months and produced Little Women based on her own experiences of growing up as a young woman with three other sisters. The novel, published on September 30, 1868, was an instant success and sold more than 2,000 copies immediately. The publisher begged for a second volume. Good Wives, the second volume of Little Women was released on April 14, 1869 and more than 13,000 copies were sold at once. Alcott's story of Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy had launched her into stardom and helped to alleviate the family's financial problems.

Louisa and her youngest sister May went to Europe in the same year for a break. The next few years saw her career prosper rapidly as book after book was published and
enjoyed by a huge audience of young readers. *An Old Fashioned Girl* was published in 1870, *Little Men* in 1871, followed by *Work* in 1873, *Eight Cousins* in 1874, and its sequel *Rose in Bloom* in 1876. Louisa Alcott was also active in the women's suffrage movement, writing for "The Woman's Journal". In 1879 she became the first woman in Concord to register to vote in the village's school committee election.

Unfortunately, her mother's health was failing and she passed away in 1877. Louisa's youngest sister May died in 1879, leaving behind a daughter Lulu named after Louisa. In 1880 Louisa took Lulu to Boston and in 1885 she moved what remained of her family to Boston.

Though she continued to produce books for younger readers, Louisa also wrote adult thrillers and novellas like *A Woman’s Power, A Modern Mephistopheles* etc. Still writing as best as she could, for the mercury poisoning she had received early in life was beginning to take its toll, Louisa published *Jo's Boys* in 1886. Her father's health finally failed and he died on March 4, 1888. Two days later, at the age of 56, Louisa May Alcott died in Boston, leaving a behind a legacy of several books which would be admired and cherished for generations to come.