

NEW STAGE
Theatre

Season 59 | 2024 - 2025



**LITTLE
WOMEN**
the
broadway
musical

Study Guide

Directed by
Malaika Quarterman



NEW STAGE
Theatre

newstagetheatre.com/educate

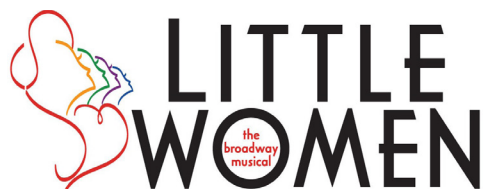


1100 Carlisle
Jackson, Mississippi 39202



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Book by Allan Knee. Music by Jason Howland. Lyrics by Mindi Dickstein.
Based on the novel by Louisa May Alcott.

Audience Etiquette



For many of your students, *Little Women* may be their first theatre experience. It may be helpful to discuss with them the expected behavior of an audience. New Stage asks that prior to the performance, students are made aware of the following:

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Be sure to go to the bathroom before the performance begins. It is hard to leave once the performance begins.
- Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Please do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
- Absolutely no gum chewing, eating or drinking in the theatre.

Noise

Live theatre means live actors who can hear not only what is happening on the stage, but in the audience as well. While laughter and applause at appropriate time are appreciated by the actors, excessive noise and talking is not. Even whispering voices can be distracting to the actors and others in the audience.

- Do not talk during the performance.
- Cell phones are prohibited in the theatre. If you have one, turn it off, put it away, and do not bring it out during the performance.

Applause

Applause is used to acknowledge the performers and to voice appreciation or approval. Traditionally, applause comes before intermission and during curtain call which happens at the end of a performance when the cast returns to the stage for bows.



Cast of *Little Women*



Michaela Lin
Meg March



Kristina Swearingen
Jo March



Mary Frances Dean
Beth March



Sarah Pigott
Amy March



Jennifer Smith
Marmee March



Viola Dacus
Aunt March/Mrs. Kirk



Tyler Bellmon*
Professor Bhaer



Ward Emling
Mr. Lawrence



Hosea Griffith
Mr. John Brooke



Alex Burnette
Laurie Lawrence



Cameron Viperman
Clarissa



Jacob Tate Heuer
Braxton



Slade Haney
Rodrigo



Jamie Shannon Ferguson
Hag



Tatiana Grace
Rodrigo 2



Keith Allen Davis
Knight



Hannah Beth Rollman
Troll

Understudies: For Marmee – Jamie Shannon Ferguson; For Jo March and Meg March – Cameron Viperman, For Beth March – Tatiana Grace, For Amy – Hannah Beth Rollman; For Professor Bhaer – Keith Davis; For Laurie – Slade Haney; For Mr. John Brooke and Mr. Lawrence – Jacob Heuer; For Mrs. Kirk and Clarissa – Ashlyn Pinkerton; For Hag – Jennifer Smith, For Rodrigo 2- Mary Frances Dean, For Troll – Sarah Pigott; For Knight – Ward Emling; For Braxton – Hosea Griffith; For Rodrigo – Alex Burnette



Creative Team

Costume Designer

Lighting Designer

Scenic Designer

Production Manager

Production Stage Manager

Technical Director

**Sound Designer and Engineer/
Projections Engineer**

Director

Music Director

Assistant Director

Artistic Director

Aryana Gaines

Matt Webb

Sam Sparks

Casey Nelms

Mattea Pierce

Richard Lawrence

Alberto Meza

Malaika Quarterman

Tim Moak

Ashlyn Pinkerton

Francine Reynolds

Production Team

Sound

Costumes

Wig Designer

Lead Electrician

Properties Designer

Painting

Callie Jackson

Nina Frost

Stephanie Gall

Sarah Proctor

Matthew McMurty

Joey Ford

Michael Montgomery

About the Play

*Louisa May Alcott's story **Little Women** is timeless – and timely. The story written in 1868 relates a fictionalized account of its author's young life with her sisters. While certain aspects of the story have been altered in this musical adaptation, the heart of the tale remains untouched.*

Four sisters of the March family: Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy come of age during the U.S. Civil War, while their father is away with the Union Army. Their mother, whom they affectionately call "Marmee," nurtures and encourages these four strong-spirited young women to achieve their dreams. While this approach to raising children may be "conventional," there is little "conventional" about her daughters. Jo, a tom-boyish writer, disregards social standards of how women should behave. Her spirit and drive are the main focus of both Alcott's original novel and Allan Knee's book for the musical.

Throughout the musical, you'll notice certain themes.

One of the major understated themes is that of revision: From the initial curtain covering the stage, you'll notice many handwritten letters from Jo – many of these pages contain revisions. The pages are seemingly blowing across a great expanse, suggesting the immense life force and vision our main character embodies. While Jo has no specific agenda to change minds or alter social expectations, she lives her life as she sees it – free-spirited, intelligent, caring, and not at all like the "ideal" Victorian woman of the late 1800s. She revises others' ideas of how a young woman should behave and dream with such grace and verve the viewer forgets she is from a poor family living in the midst of one of the bloodiest wars in history.

Throughout the story, Jo's enthusiasm and imaginative creativity invigorate the action: in the beginning of the tale, the four sisters eagerly accept and expand Jo's unique approach to having no Christmas presents as they dream of fantastic tales on the high seas. While living together in Concord, MA, the sisters grow from co-existence with a cranky neighbor, Mr. Laurence to developing solid friendships with him and his grandson, Theodore "Teddy" Laurence (Laurie). They experience first crushes and love– and balance the ideals of Victorian companionate marriage with that of candid enjoyment of sharing another's life. They rally together to support each other: Jo sells her hair to facilitate Marmee's trip to be with her ill husband, Jo chooses her sisters over a potential suitor only to learn to accept Meg's engagement to Laurie's tutor John Brooke, the sisters all accept Amy's eccentricities, Jo moves to New York City to begin a life as a writer (where she meets Professor Fritz Bhaer who becomes her mentor and dear friend), and even through the death of their sister Beth, the family's unwavering friendship and loyalty allow each other to fulfill their dreams and achieve great happiness.



About Louisa May Alcott



My book [Little Women] came out; and people began to think that topsy-turvy Louisa would amount to something after all . . .

~Louisa May Alcott, 1855 Journal

Louisa May Alcott was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania on November 29, 1832. She and her three sisters -- Anna, Elizabeth, and [Abba] May -- were educated by their father, teacher/philosopher A. Bronson Alcott, and raised on the practical Christianity of their mother, Abigail May.

Louisa spent her childhood in Boston and in Concord, Massachusetts, where her days were enlightened by visits to Ralph Waldo Emerson's library, excursions into nature with Henry David Thoreau, and theatricals in the barn at "Hillside" (now "The Wayside"). Like the character of "Jo March" in

Little Women, young Louisa was a tomboy. "No boy could be my friend till I had beaten him in a race," she claimed, "and no girl if she refused to climb trees, leap fences . . ."

For Louisa, writing was an early passion. She had a rich imagination and her stories often became the basis of melodramas she and her sisters would act out for friends. Louisa preferred to play the "lurid" parts in these plays -- "the villains, ghosts, bandits, and disdainful queens," as she put it.

At age 15, troubled by the poverty plaguing her family, she vowed, "I will do something by and by. Don't care what, teach, sew, act, write, anything to help the family; and I'll be rich and famous and happy before I die, see if I won't!" Confronting a society that offered little opportunity to women seeking employment, Louisa nonetheless persisted: ". . . I will make a battering-ram of my head and make my way through this rough and tumble world." Whether as a teacher, seamstress, governess, or household servant, for many years Louisa did any work she could find.

Louisa's career as an author began at the age of eight with poetry, and later short stories that appeared in popular magazines. In 1854, when she was 22, her first book, *Flower Fables*, was published. A major critical milestone along her literary path was *Hospital*



About **LOUISA MAY ALCOTT** continued...

Sketches (1863), a truthful and poignant account of her service as a Civil War nurse in Washington, DC inspired by the letters she wrote home to her family in Concord.

In 1868, when Louisa was 35 years old, her publisher, Thomas Niles, asked her to write “a girls’ story.” The 492 pages of *Little Women*, Part I were dashed off within three months at the desk Louisa’s father built for her in her Orchard House bedchamber. The novel is largely based on the coming of age stories of Louisa and her sisters, with many of the domestic experiences inspired by events that actually took place at Orchard House.

Virtually overnight, *Little Women* was a phenomenal success, primarily due to its timeless storytelling about the first American juvenile heroine, “Jo March,” who acted from her own individuality -- a free-thinking, flawed person, rather than the idealized stereotype of feminine perfection then prevalent in children’s fiction.

In all, Louisa published over 30 books and collections of short stories and poems. She died on 6 March 1888, only two days after her father, and is buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord.



Amos Bronson Alcott

“Mr. March” in *Little Women*.
Educator, Transcendental philosopher, writer, and social reformer



Abigail May Alcott

“Marmee” in *Little Women*.
A strong, independent woman who was one of the first paid social workers in Boston



Anna Alcott Pratt

“Meg” in *Little Women*.
A wife and mother who exhibited a flair for acting and was a nurturing caregiver



May Alcott Nieriker

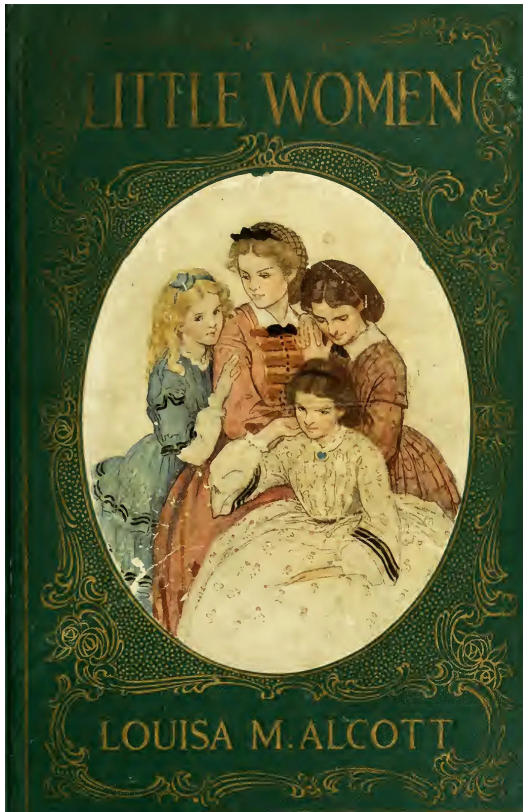
“Amy” in *Little Women*.
A talented artist and early teacher of noted sculptor Daniel Chester French



Elizabeth Sewell Alcott

“Beth” in *Little Women*.
The “Angel in the House,” who passed away just prior to the Alcotts’ move into Orchard House

History of *Little Women*



Little Women is one of the most cherished and enduring works in American literature, written by Louisa May Alcott. First published in two volumes in 1868 and 1869, the novel tells the story of the March sisters—Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy—growing up during the Civil War in Massachusetts.

With its universal themes of family, love, personal growth, and social change, *Little Women* quickly became beloved by readers around the world and remains one of the most widely read novels in the English language.

Alcott based the characters of the March sisters on her own experiences growing up with her three sisters, and her deeply personal connection to the story has resonated with generations of readers. The novel is both a coming-of-age story and a social commentary on the roles women played in 19th-century society, touching on themes like ambition, independence, and sacrifice.

Today, *Little Women* continues to be adapted and performed in theatres around the world, and the Broadway musical remains an essential part of its legacy. Its messages of love, family, and resilience speak as powerfully today as they did in the 19th century, and its characters continue to inspire people of all ages. With its rich history and timeless appeal, *Little Women* holds a special place in both literary and theatrical tradition, and this musical production brings a fresh, captivating interpretation to a classic story.



HISTORY of the Late 1800'S

Hmmm. Why should we be concerned with these ideas of genre, history and context? How is that important to our understanding of *Little Women*? The story of *Little Women* is important to American history because it challenges stereotypical (at that time, Victorian) ideals of how women should live. Throughout the story, there is a tension between Aunt March and Jo regarding this very issue. Should women be quiet and bite their tongue so they may attract an appropriate suitor? Or, should women be bold and chase their dreams – even if others think they are crazy dreams?

What was happening in the 1860s that could have influenced this work of art, anyhow? It is crucial to remind your students of how different life in the 1860s was – although most students can quickly agree that life must have been different, few can truly state how it was different. Young Americans have not lived through a civil war in their own country, they may be unable to conceive of a time when women could not vote, or even that “popular culture” revolved around things like reading and theater (instead of T.V., concerts, and radio stations playing their favorite songs). Since the aspect of historical contextualization is so critical to our understanding of not only *Little Women*, but of any piece of literature, any song, any musical or any other text, we now turn our attention to contextualizing this very important aspect.

UNITED STATES HISTORY OF THE LATE 1800s - Recap of 1840-1860 -Westward expansion/battles over territory

POLITICAL SITUATION OF THE LATE 1800s - North/South/beginning of Civil War - Lincoln's presidency (domestic/foreign)

ECONOMY OF THE LATE 1800s - Industrializing North balances issues like child labor, 14 hour-work days, irregular wages. 1873, J.S. Mill dies (the official “end of capitalism”) and Karl Marx publishes *Das Kapital*. Trade unions form at that time, however the resentment of the working classes is mounting during the 1860s. - The depression of 1839 has crippled many of the working class even in the 1860s, with limited mobility to recover from devastating losses. - The South's plantation economy is also buckling under the decreased value in the market of tobacco prices. - Trade matters in relation to RR and the whiff of unionization.

RELIGION IN THE LATE 1800s -Protestantism (evangelicalism) reinforces the ideas that women are to raise a family in a very closed manner. - Revivals of the early 1830s have lasting impact on who was to transmit religious information to children – namely, women.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE LATE 1800s - Literature is changing dramatically from Victorian-styled “proper” and moral stories to more explorative, thanks



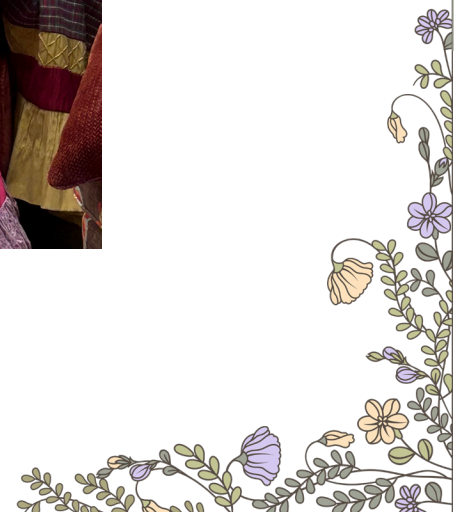
History of the Late 1800's continued...

in part to the transcendentalist movement. There are two forms of transcendentalists: (a) those who rebelled against those Victorian conventions (these authors tended to be well-educated Northern citizens who wrote prior to the Civil War – their topic revolved around the division that war created, for the most part – by doing this, they were trying to create a unique American literature rather than copying convention from Europe) AND (b) those who tried to define spirituality and religion in the face of an increasingly “materialistic” society (and to express that spirituality in more emotive terms and “less rational terms” – i.e. perhaps religion is a feeling rather than a rule book.) These influential writers included Emily Dickenson, Ralph Waldo Emerson (with whom Alcott had contact), Thomas Wentworth Higginson, James and Harriet Martineau, Theodore Parker and Margaret Fuller. These authors are contemporaries of Alcott, although Alcott is typically not considered a true “transcendentalist.”

With all of these activities, the ideas that predominated most literature and other cultural “texts” were those that impressed grander dreaming – was that because of the stifling nature of labor? Population increases and proportionately increasingly difficult and cramped living situations? The Civil War? Westward expansion? All of these issues certainly influenced individual choices – how do your students think this set of events influenced Alcott's character choices?



Cast of New Stage Theatre's production of
Little Women, The Broadway Musical



Overview of the Women's Rights Movement

A WOMAN'S RIGHTS PRE 1920

A woman's gender and marital status were the primary determinants of her legal standing in America from 1800 to 1850. By custom and law she did not enjoy all of the rights of citizenship. In the legal realm women were decidedly dependent, subservient, and unequal. National and state constitutions did not mention of women. Women were not allowed to vote or hold office. Rights for which the Revolutionary War was fought were denied women – as they were to slaves, “lunatics,” and “idiots.”

Further exacerbating the situation, rights normally enjoyed by women were often taken away when she married. A woman gave up so many civil and property rights upon marrying that she was said to be entering a state of “civil death.”



THESE THINGS NOT MY OWN

Under common law, a single woman had few special strictures placed upon her property rights. Once married, a woman's property usually went to her husband with the whispering of the “I do.” The man “assumed absolute ownership of his wife's personal property,” and for all practical purposes, her real estate as well. He also gained control of any wages or other income accrued by his wife. Technically, this meant that a man could do anything he wished with his wife's material possessions. He could sell them, give them away, or simply destroy them as was his wont. Married women were also forbidden to convey (sell, give, or will) any of their property without their husband's permission. How strictly this was adhered to depended upon the couple. Each was different and, like today, decision-making was shared to varying degrees. Legally, however, the husband had the final say.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT: THE ABOLITIONISTS AND THE SUFFRAGISTS

The campaign for women's suffrage began in earnest in the decades before the Civil War. During the 1820s and 30s, most states had extended voting rights to all white men, regardless of how much money or property they had. At the same time, all sorts of reform groups were proliferating across the United States—temperance clubs, religious movements and moral-reform societies, anti-slavery organizations—and in many of these, women played a prominent role. Meanwhile, many American women were beginning to chafe against what historians have called the “Cult of True Womanhood”: that is, the idea that the only “true” woman was a pious, submissive wife and mother concerned exclusively with home and family. Put together, all of these contributed to a new way of thinking about what it meant to be a woman and a citizen in the United States.

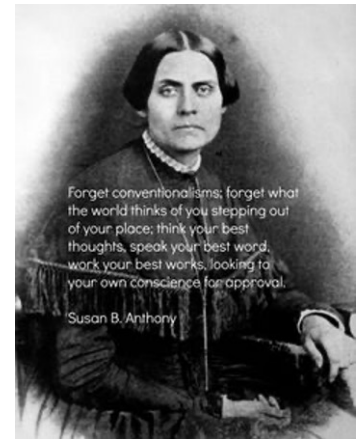
In 1848, a group of abolitionist activists—mostly women, and some men, including Frederick Douglas, gathered in Seneca Falls, New York to discuss the problem of women's rights. Most of the delegates agreed: American women were autonomous individuals who deserved their

Women's Rights Movement continued...

own political identities. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," proclaimed the Declaration of Sentiments that the delegates produced, "that all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." What this meant, among other things, was that they believed women should have the right to vote.

CIVIL WAR & WOMEN'S RIGHTS

With the onset of the American Civil War (1861-65), the suffrage movement lost some momentum, as many women turned their attention to assisting in efforts related to the conflict between the states. After the war, woman suffrage endured another setback, when the women's rights movement found itself divided over the issue of voting rights for black men. Stanton and some other suffrage leaders objected to the proposed 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would give black men the right to vote, but failed to extend the same privilege to American women of any skin color. In 1869, Stanton and Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) with their eyes on a federal constitutional amendment that would grant women the right to vote. Others argued that it was unfair to endanger black enfranchisement by tying it to the markedly less popular campaign for female suffrage. This pro-15th-Amendment faction formed a group called the American Woman Suffrage Association and fought for the franchise on a state-by-state basis.



THE PROGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN FOR SUFFRAGE

This animosity eventually faded, and in 1890 the two groups merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association. (Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the organization's first president.) By then, the suffragists' approach had changed. Instead of arguing that women deserved the same rights and responsibilities as men because women and men were "created equal," the new generation of activists argued that women deserved the vote because they were different from men. They could make their domesticity into a political virtue, using the franchise to create a purer, more moral "maternal commonwealth."

WINNING THE VOTE AT LAST

Starting in 1910, some states in the West began to extend the vote to women for the first time in almost 20 years. (Idaho and Utah had given women the right to vote at the end of the 19th century.) Still, the more established Southern and Eastern states resisted. In 1916, NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt unveiled what she called a "Winning Plan" to get the vote at last: a blitz campaign that mobilized state and local suffrage organizations all over the country, with special focus on those recalcitrant regions. (Meanwhile, a splinter group called the National Women's Party focused on more radical, militant tactics—hunger strikes and White House pickets, for instance—aimed at winning dramatic publicity for their cause.) World War I slowed the suffragists' campaign but helped them advance their argument nonetheless: Women's work on behalf of the war effort, activists pointed out, proved that they were just as patriotic and deserving of citizenship as men, and on August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was finally ratified.

Basic Etiquette and Manners



FOR LADIES

Gait and Carriage

- Walk with a modest and measured gait; avoid rushing.
- Refrain from turning your head excessively, especially in large towns.
- Do not visit a library or museum alone unless for study or work.
- Avoid walking alone after twilight; arrange for an escort or request a servant's company.

Attentions to Others

- Offer the wall (side next to buildings) to ladies or elderly persons.
- Wait your turn instead of rudely pushing past others in narrow spaces.
- Politely bow when passing acquaintances.

Raising the Dress

- Gracefully lift the dress just above the ankle with the right hand.
- Avoid using both hands to lift the dress unless absolutely necessary.

Speaking to Your Husband

- Refer to your husband by his name or as "Mr." in public, not "my husband."
- Avoid using initials when referring to people (e.g., "Mr. B.").
- Husbands should also avoid saying "my wife" in public; instead, use "Mrs. [Last Name]."

FOR GENTLEMEN

Proper Behavior Towards Ladies

- Always put women first in social situations.
- Offer gestures like opening doors, offering a seat, and assisting with coats.
- Bow to a lady after tipping your hat.
- Escort a lady to and from the dance floor and never leave her stranded.
- Always thank a lady before and after a dance.

Etiquette and Manners continued...

Glove Etiquette

- Always wear gloves in public, except when eating or drinking.
- Use white or cream gloves for evening wear, darker colors for daytime.
- Keep extra pairs of gloves to avoid staining others' clothes.

Social Conduct

- Stand up when a lady enters or leaves the room.
- Offer a lady your seat if none are available.
- Retrieve dropped items and open doors for ladies.
- Assist ladies with their coats or shawls.
- Offer refreshments if available.
- Escort a lady when walking on uneven ground.
- Remove your hat when entering a building.
- Greet ladies by lifting your hat, not just touching the brim.

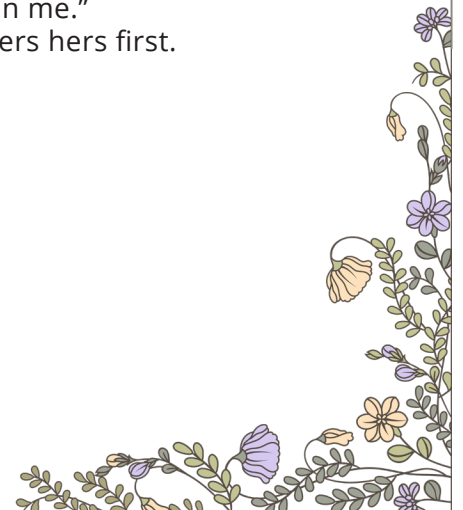
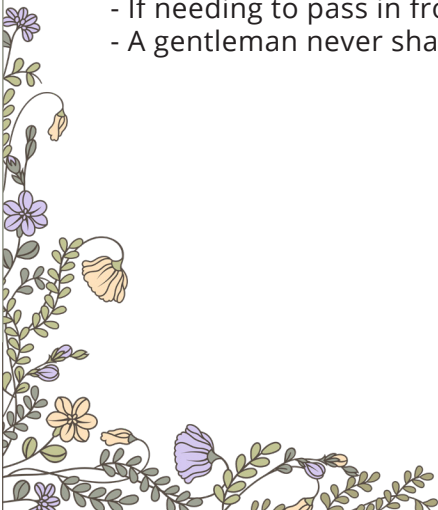


Things to Avoid

- Never refer to someone by their first name in public.
- Avoid cursing or discussing impolite subjects in front of ladies.
- Do not leave a lady unattended without permission.
- Refrain from smoking or using tobacco in front of ladies.
- Do not greet a lady in public unless she acknowledges you first.
- Never eat or drink while wearing gloves.

ADDITIONAL ETIQUETTE TIPS

- Address married women as "Mrs." and unmarried women as "Miss."
- Address military officers by rank, or as "Mr." when in doubt.
- Maintain eye contact and listen attentively when conversing.
- Always excuse yourself before leaving a conversation.
- If a lady has her veil down, respect her privacy and do not engage her.
- Offer to carry parcels for a lady, even a stranger.
- Walk ahead of a lady in a crowded space to clear her path.
- On stairways, walk in front of a lady to prevent her from falling.
- If needing to pass in front of a lady, tip your hat and say, "Pardon me."
- A gentleman never shakes a lady's hand in public unless she offers hers first.



Exploring the Themes

HOPE

Jo has just asked for comments on her story from Professor Bhaer. He tells her she could do "better." This upsets Jo, and she offers the following song called "Better":

"Better?
 Better Than What?
 Better Than This Dazzling Plot?
 Better?
 This Story Will Be My 'King Lear'.
 Each Phrase Is Better.
 Better Than Him.
 Better!
 Even My Smallest Whim Is Better!
 How Can He Miss What's So Clear?
 How Can I Do Better Than What's Already Here?
 How Can What He Said To Me Be True?
 If I Don't Succeed, What Will I Do?
 Turn Around, Go Back To Concord?
 Leave New York Behind Unconquered? No!
 How Dare He Make Me Doubt The Way I Feel?
 Doubt That Each Thrilling Page Is Who I Am?
 Aren't These Words Alive With Passion, Vivid As My Attic Where It All Began?"

Discussion Question

This song is sung after Jo has enthusiastically worked on a story. She is enamored with her story – she worked hard on it and she likes it! Then, she is told she can do "better." Has something similar ever happened to you? What have you done that you liked? What kind(s) of reactions did you receive? Would you give up if someone didn't like what you produced? Why doesn't Jo?

ACHIEVEMENT

The songs we have learned so far focus on working on your dream –there are many ways to do this. Simply hope it will happen, work toward your dream, or become someone you aren't in order to fulfill what you want. This final song is Jo's reflection on an unexpected interruption to achieving her dreams: Laurie has just proposed, and she has rejected him. She never gives up on herself, however:

"I Thought Home Was All I'd Ever Want.
 My Attic All I'd Ever Need.
 Now Nothing Feels The Way It Was Before
 And I Don't Know How To Proceed.

Themes continued...

Yet deep within me something flickers like a fire
 And makes me certain: i'll never give up and never tire.
 I do believe in all that I desire
 And most of all I yearn to be astonishing.
 There's a life that I am meant to lead, alive like nothing I have known.
 I can feel it and it's far from here.
 I've got to find it on my own.
 Even now I feel it's heat upon my skin:
 A life of passion that pulls me from within.
 A life that I am aching to begin.
 I've got to know if I can be astonishing. Astonishing.
 I'll find my way. I'll find it far away.
 I'll find it in the unexpected and unknown.
 I'll find my life in my own way - today.
 Here I go and there's no turning back.
 My great adventure has begun.
 I may be small but i've got giant plans to shine as brightly as the sun.
 I will blaze until I find my time and place,
 I will be fearless, surrendering modesty and grace.
 I will not disappear without a trace.
 I'll shout and start a riot, be anything but quiet.
 Christopher Columbus, i'll be astonishing, astonishing, astonishing at last.

Discussion Question:

How does Jo think she'll achieve her dreams? By conforming to what Aunt March wants? Laurie? Why do you think she's changed her mind? How is she so hopeful? How do you think she remains so positive? Think about a time that you kept a positive attitude during a difficult time – what did you achieve because of your positive outlook?

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

Remind students of the social expectations for women of the period. The following lyrics to "Could You," between proper Aunt March and Jo reflect many of the sentiments of the day – the way a woman should act, what a woman should expect out of life, and more specifically, the way Jo should act.

AUNT MARCH:

You could never bend your will.

You could never follow through.

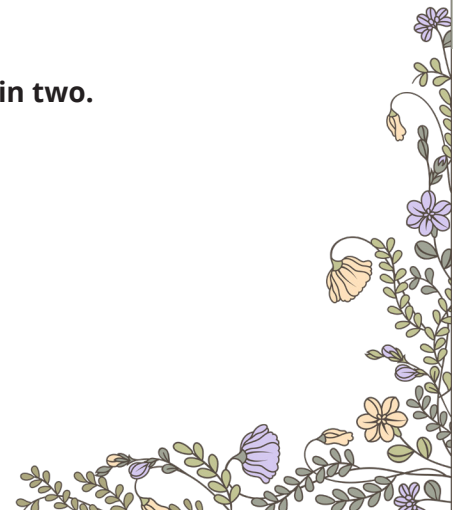
You could never bite your tongue, though your tongue may split in two.

If you want to live your dreams, these are things you have to do.

How could you change? You can't! Not you.

Could you practice self-control?

Could you possibly be shy?



Themes continued...

Could you wear a corset tight in the heat of mid-july?
These are rules you must obey, every one which you defy.
You'll never change. You won't! That's why!
Yet somewhere deep within my heart I do believe you could captivate the world.
If you could change there is so much you could achieve. In time
You could succeed and travel very far indeed.
You could be beguiling.

JO:
Charming? Me?

AUNT MARCH:
Someone well-mannered, a model of grace.
Learn the art of smiling.

JO:
That could be hard.

AUNT MARCH:
It isn't very hard
For someone full of dreams like you.
If you work you'll find there's nothing you can't do."

Discussion Question

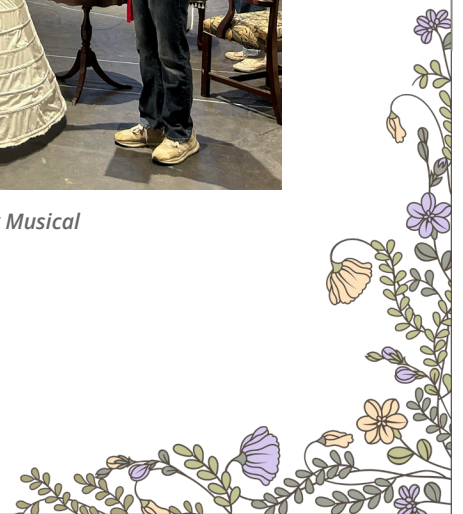
In this first part of the song "Could You," what are some of Aunt March's complaints about Jo? How does Jo react? In saying that there's "nothing [Jo] can't do," is she saying she supports Jo's dreams of being an independent writer? If not, what does she want Jo to become? Why? Has anyone ever asked you to behave differently in exchange for something you want? How did you react?



Cast of New Stage Theatre's production of Little Women, The Broadway Musical



Cast of New Stage Theatre's production of Little Women, The Broadway Musical



Discussion Topics

For Grades 6–12

1. What are some symbols in *Little Women*? How do they relate to the plot and characters?
2. Why is the novel usually considered a work of feminist literature?
3. What is the role of women in the text? How are mothers represented? What about single/independent women? What is Alcott telling us about how women function in this society? Does *Little Women* accept and/or challenge gender stereotypes? How?
4. How do these differing versions of femininity compare to one another? Is there one version that Alcott seems to favor? Look at Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy, Marmee, and Aunt March.
5. Remember that this novel was originally published as a children's novel. Is *Little Women* really a children's book? What aspects of it seem directed at or appropriate for a child audience? What aspects of it might appeal more to an adult audience?
6. Is the March family realistic? What aspects of their life seem too good to be true? What trials do they face that seem familiar to you?
7. Is Jo March still an appealing heroine for twenty-first-century audience? Do you think her problems relate to the experiences of girls today? Do you find aspects of it unrealistic or frustrating?
8. How important is the setting to this story? Could the same story take place in nineteenth-century England, or is there something particularly American about it? Could the same story take place in a different century?

For Grades 1–6

1. Ask students to imagine how they would feel if they were used to getting presents on holidays or other special days, and then were told that they would not get anything this year. Would they be disappointed? What if they were told they would have one dollar to spend any way they wanted. Would they use it for themselves or for a gift for someone else? What if the other part of the special day was to include an extra special meal? How would they feel about giving their part of the food away to a stranger? Would they want to do it? Would it be hard?
2. Does the story end the way you expected? How? Why?
3. What are some themes in the story? How do they relate to the plot and characters?
4. Do you find the characters likable? Are the characters persons you would want to meet?
5. What are the conflicts in *Little Women*? What types of conflict (physical, moral, intellectual, or emotional) did you notice in the play?

Evaluation Form

for Students

Name _____ Grade _____

School _____

1. What was your overall reaction to the play?
2. What was your reaction to the acting?
3. What was your reaction to the scenery, costumes, etc. of the play?
4. What was your favorite part of the play?
5. Did you learn anything from this production? If so, what?
6. What are your thoughts on the value of live theater experiences?
7. What other stories would you enjoy seeing staged by live actors?

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Send us your feedback!

Please send you feedback and thoughts to us! Return form to:
New Stage Theatre, ATTN: Education Director, 1100 Carlisle Street, Jackson, MS 39202

Evaluation Form

for Teachers/Leaders

Name _____

School _____ Grade Level _____

1. What was your overall reaction to the play?
2. What was your reaction to the acting?
3. What was your reaction to the scenery, costumes, etc. of the play?
4. Please comment on the educational value of the play.
5. What are your thoughts on the value of live theater experiences?
6. Do you feel this production was age appropriate for your students?
7. What titles or subjects would you like to see staged for student audiences?
8. Do you have other suggestions for future performances?



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About New Stage Theatre

Winner of the 2019 Governor Arts Award for Excellence in Theatre, located in the heart of Jackson.



The Theatre

New Stage Theatre is located in Jackson, Mississippi. New Stage Theatre was chartered as a nonprofit organization in 1965 and produced its initial season in the winter and spring of 1966. New Stage's first home was an adapted church at the corner of Gallatin and Hooker Streets. The theatre produced 13 seasons in the 150-seat church before moving to its present site in Belhaven in 1978.

Built in 1963 for the Jackson Little Theatre, the 12,000 square foot structure includes the 364-seat Meyer Crystal Auditorium, and a flexible, smaller performing space, the Jimmy Hewes Room. The theatre also owns the five other structures on the site, four of which are used for actors' housing and one for offices. In 1997, the theatre complex was designated as the Jane Reid Petty Theatre Center in recognition of the New Stage founder's contributions to the development of professional theatre in Mississippi.



The Mission

The mission of New Stage Theatre is to provide professional theatre of the highest quality for the people of Mississippi and the southeast. New Stage is committed to producing important contemporary works and classics, selected for their artistic merit and their power to illuminate the human condition. Challenging new works in development are included through the Eudora Welty New Play Series named for the distinguished writer who helped found New Stage. New in recent years is The Mississippi Plays Series.

More about New Stage Theatre

The theatre is dedicated to cultivating and educating a culturally diverse audience by gathering the finest available resources including playwrights, actors, directors, designers, technicians, administrators, trainees, and board members. Integral to the theatre's total effort, New Stage's Education Department maximizes its impact within our surrounding community, through artistic and technical apprenticeships, which mount touring programs facilitated by our Apprentice Company, aided with classroom materials for schools statewide, and developing curricula for and instructing youth classes.



Mainstage Productions

New Stage produces five plays each year in its subscription series, in addition to a holiday show, an annual student matinee, and a musical theatre summer camp featuring local youth. Mainstage productions range from master works to contemporary classics to new plays. All productions carry the mark of professional quality for which the theatre has long been recognized.

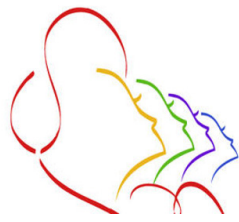
Additionally, New Stage has a second season called Unframed, overseen by Artistic Director Francine Reynolds and facilitated by our Apprentice Company and Education staff, that features contemporary works.

New plays are read and developed through the Eudora Welty New Plays Series and the Mississippi Plays Series.



The Staff

The theatre staff is comprised of seven full time administrative and artistic staff members, six full time production staff members, four acting apprentices, and three part time employees. All actors are paid and typically one to two AEA actors are hired per production.



LITTLE WOMEN

the musical

