

Introductory Lesson

Before Reading

① *Look at the cover of the book. Bearing in mind that “Good Wives” is the follow-up to “Little Women”, describe the picture.*

- 1 Who are the four girls? What do you think the occasion is?
- 2 Can you remember an event from *Little Women* related to each one of the sisters?
- 3 How do you think the sisters develop as characters in *Good Wives*?

② *Judging from the title of the novel, what do you think the story is about? Is it how you had expected it to continue? Why (not)?*

③ *Look at the blurb on the back cover of the book. Do you think that life will be more pleasant for the Marches in this novel than it was in “Little Women”? Why (not)? Can you guess the outcome of the story?*

Louisa May Alcott



Louisa May Alcott was born on 29 November 1832, in Germantown, Pennsylvania, USA. Her family was poor. She had one older sister, Anna, and two younger sisters, Elizabeth and May. In 1834 or 1835, the Alcott family moved to Boston, where Louisa's father started a school. Unfortunately, the school did not do well, and the Alcott family had to move several times during Louisa's childhood. Louisa did not attend school, but she had lessons from her father and from friends of the family.

Because her family was poor, Louisa started working from an early age. She worked as a teacher, a seamstress, a governess and a writer. Her first book, "Flower Fables", was a collection of short stories published in 1854.

In 1860, Louisa began writing for the "Atlantic Monthly" magazine. From 1862 to 1863, she worked as a nurse in the Union Hospital at Georgetown, in Washington, D.C. and wrote several letters home to her family. These letters were collected and published under the title "Hospital Sketches", and were very popular with readers.

However, Louisa only became truly successful as a writer in 1868, when the first part of "Little Women" or "Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy" was published and the world first read about the March sisters. The second part of the story, also known as "Good Wives", soon followed in 1869, and the tale of the March family continued with the publication of "Little Men" in 1871 and "Jo's Boys" in 1886.

Although Louisa suffered from poor health, she continued to write for the rest of her life and produced several more successful novels. She fought against slavery and also worked hard to obtain equal rights for women. Louisa was determined for women to have the right to vote, and she was the first woman to register to vote in Concord, Massachusetts.

Louisa May Alcott died in Boston on 6 March 1888. She was 55 years old.

4 Read about Louisa May Alcott and circle the correct answers.

1 Louisa May Alcott was born in ...

- a England. b Germany. c the USA.

2 Louisa had ...

- a three sisters. b two sisters. c one sister.

3 Louisa had lessons ...

- a from her father. b at school. c from relatives.

4 Louisa's first book was a collection of ...

- a letters to her family. b novels. c short stories.

5 Good Wives is the follow-up to ...

- a Little Men. b Jo's Boys. c Little Women.



Jo



Meg



Beth



Amy



Aunt Carrol



Aunt March



Mrs March



John Brooke



Mr March



Mr Laurence



Friedrich Bhaer



Laurie (Theodore)

The Wedding

Meg March was the happiest she had ever been. The war was over and her father had returned home. Her sister Jo was concentrating on her career as a writer, and her stories were being regularly published in the local newspaper. Their younger sister, Beth, who had been very ill, was now much better, although she was still rather weak. Amy, the youngest of Meg's three sisters, was now a well-behaved young lady and was studying art, which was her greatest talent. The thing that made Meg happiest of all, however, was the fact that she was about to marry Mr. John Brooke.

Mr. Brooke had also been in the war, but had been wounded and sent home. He no longer worked as Laurie's tutor, because Laurie was now studying at college. Instead, Mr. Brooke had found a job as an accountant. He made a small salary, but he worked hard and was determined to provide Meg with a home to be proud of. At last he had been able to buy a little brown house just a short walk away. Meg sometimes wished that she could have a big house, a carriage, and fashionable clothes, but when she thought of the love and hard work that Mr. Brooke had put into the little brown house, she forgot all her dreams of riches. In fact, when she and John sat together and talked about their plans for the future, Meg felt like the richest and happiest girl in the world.

Meg's mother and sisters helped Meg to turn the little house into a comfortable home. Even Aunt March, who had threatened to leave Meg penniless if she married Mr. Brooke, secretly sent Meg a generous supply of house and table linen. Laurie, who had a mischievous sense of humor, bought many strange and silly items for the house, which made everyone laugh. He bought a knife cleaner which ruined all the knives, soap which took the

skin off people's hands and a carpet sweeper that refused to pick up any dirt. Nevertheless, soon everything was done and Meg felt that she would be very happy in her new home.

Amy thought that it would be easier for Meg if she had a servant or two to help her. However, Meg and her mother agreed that she should learn to take care of the house herself first and then one day, when they had more money to afford servants, she would know exactly what she wanted them to do. Besides, there was no room in the little house for servants.

As the wedding day approached, Meg worked hard to finish her wedding dress, which she was making herself. Everyone was busy preparing for the special day because, although the wedding was going to be very simple, there was a lot of work to do.



