



150 Years of 'Little Women'

Do you have heroes who are fictional characters? Whether it's Harry or Hermione, Katniss or Gale, there are many boys and girls in books and movies today who are worthy of our admiration.

In 1867, there weren't so many female characters for girls to read about and admire. A wise publisher, Thomas Niles, thought girls would like to read about characters like themselves, so he wrote to a young author, Louisa May Alcott, to see if she would write a book for girls. "Never liked girls or knew many, except my sisters," Alcott wrote.

But Alcott did like to make money, so she set about writing the story of the March sisters, also known as "Little Women."

A year later, the first part of her famous book was published, with the second part following in January 1869. This week The Mini Page celebrates 150 years of "Little Women" and the author behind the classic.

Louisa's life

Louisa May Alcott was born in 1832 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. She grew up as one of four sisters. Their father, Bronson Alcott, was an educator and philosopher, and the family moved around a lot.

She and her sisters worked from an early age, as her father didn't make enough money to support the family. The girls sewed and



Image courtesy Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House

Mini Fact:

Louisa May Alcott was **ambidextrous**: She could write with both hands.

took care of children, and Louisa wrote and sold stories and articles to make money.

The sisters

In "Little Women," Alcott, her sisters and their mother are the main characters. She named the girls Meg (her sister Anna), Jo (herself), Beth (Lizzie) and Amy (May). Their mother is known as Marmee.

While there are differences between the book and Alcott's real life, many of the events in the story come from actual facts. For example, in the book, Amy is an artist. In real life, May was also an artist.

Louisa and Jo

The character Jo is different from others in the book. She is tall and sometimes clumsy, rather than small and ladylike. She likes to run and play sports. Her best friend is a neighbor boy, Laurie (short for Laurence), and as an adult, Jo is not interested in marrying. Jo thought boys were more free to be themselves than girls.

Alcott modeled Jo after herself; although Jo finally does marry in the book, Alcott herself never did. She took in her sister May's daughter after May died, and she loved her nieces and nephews, but she was not interested in having a husband.



This picture of Jo, writing at her desk, appeared in part two of "Little Women."

After 'Little Women'

In her time, Louisa May Alcott became as popular as "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling is today, according to experts. Her book made her one of the wealthiest women in the United States.

In 1933, the first of many movies was made of the famous story.

Lessons of 'Little Women'

Alcott's book is about family and how the sisters worked together to help provide for each other. Her characters are all very different, but they love and support each other, especially through terrible times or conflicts.

• "Rich or poor, we will keep together and be happy in one another." — *The Marches*

Readers also learn that there isn't just one way to be a girl ...

• "I'll try to be what Father 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* ... and that family love is strong.

• "Don't let the sun go down upon your anger; forgive each other, help each other, and begin again tomorrow." — *Marmee*



May Alcott's drawing of Jo skating on a pond.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPAlcott

At the library:

- "Louisa: The Life of Louisa May Alcott" by Yona Zeldis McDonough

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of "Little Women" are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



ALCOTT, AMY,
ARTIST, AUTHOR,
BETH, CHALLENGE,
CHARACTER, CONFLICT,
FEMALE, HEROES, JO,
LAURIE, LESSONS, LITTLE,
MARMEE, MARRY, MEG,
MOVIES, PENNSYLVANIA,
SISTERS, WOMEN.

C	A	U	R	S	R	E	T	S	I	S	F	U	A	L
H	U	E	E	M	R	A	M	B	Y	R	R	A	M	
A	W	L	T	P	C	H	A	R	A	C	T	E	R	E
L	O	C	V	H	E	L	T	T	I	L	O	J	H	G
L	M	P	S	E	O	R	E	H	E	L	A	M	E	F
E	E	T	S	I	T	R	A	S	E	I	R	U	A	L
N	N	A	L	C	O	T	T	C	S	A	F	Y	M	A
G	T	C	I	L	F	N	O	C	B	O	H	T	E	B
E	V	P	E	N	N	S	Y	L	V	A	N	I	A	F
H	A	V	S	E	I	V	O	M	O	K	I	S	T	K

Cook's Corner

Dressed-Up Broccoli

You'll need:

- 1 (10-ounce) package fresh or frozen broccoli florets
- 3 tablespoons low-fat sour cream
- 2 tablespoons low-fat milk
- 1 tablespoon low-fat mayonnaise

- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1 1/2 tablespoons sliced almonds



What to do:

1. Cook broccoli according to directions (either in microwave or on top of stove).
2. Once broccoli is tender, cut into smaller pieces.
3. Place all remaining ingredients (except almonds) in a small blender.
4. Blend until smooth. Heat in microwave for 30 seconds.
5. Pour mixture over broccoli; top with almonds. Makes 4 servings.

* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

1. Strong liking and trust between two people (10-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

2. Group of related people (6-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □

3. A show of being helpful and thoughtful; niceness (8-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

4. Something difficult, needing extra work and effort (9-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

1. Billy and Tom have a _____ and play together a lot.
2. Does that _____ take a vacation to a beach every August?
3. Emily showed _____ to Jane by giving her two books.
4. Hugo struggles to overcome the _____ of a broken arm.

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Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: friendship, family, kindness, challenge

Mini Jokes



Daisy: What did the mother buffalo say to her little boy on the first day of school?
Demi: "Bison!"

Eco Note



Frosty, dry weather in Australia has sent mobs of kangaroos hopping into town from the surrounding countryside in search of food. In Canberra, the few remaining green lawns, sports fields and schoolyards in the city have proven to be irresistible to the roos.

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Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Anne Boyd Rioux, professor at the University of New Orleans and author of "Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why It Still Matters," for help with this issue.

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