



CEC READING LIBRARY • GRADE 6 • R3 CHALLENGE

Little Women

12 Chapters

Day 1-12

Q4 W29-W32

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 1: Four Different Dreams

VOCABULARY Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy

The March family lived in a small, shabby house in New England. There were four daughters, and their father was away at war. On cold winter nights, the girls gathered by the fire, mended their gloves, and shared their dreams. Meg, the eldest, wanted a warm home and a loving family of her own someday. Jo, who had short, untidy hair and ink on her fingers, wanted more than anything to be a famous writer. Beth was gentle and shy, and her greatest happiness was to sit at the old piano and play for hours. Amy, the youngest, drew pictures on every scrap of paper and dreamed of becoming a great artist. Each Christmas, they put on a play in the front room, with a blanket for a curtain and a broom for a sword. The neighbors clapped, and the girls bowed until their hair fell in their faces. Those evenings were among their happiest. Their mother, whom they called Marmee, listened to each girl and never laughed at a dream. The sisters were very different from one another in every way. Yet the author presents the four dreams as equally precious. ★ **Each sister found her own path.**

THINK *What did Marmee never do?*

Chapter 2: Quiet, Difficult Choices

VOCABULARY choices, Laurie, Meg, Amy

Each of the March sisters faced a difficult choice as she grew up. Meg chose to marry John Brooke, a kind teacher, even though he was not wealthy and her family needed money. Jo chose to turn down Laurie's proposal, because she knew she did not love him in the way he needed. Beth chose a quiet life at home, even when others urged her to want more for herself. Amy chose to work seriously at her art, even when people said she had no great natural talent. None of these choices involved a villain or a battle. They were the quieter, harder kind of choice about what sort of person you want to be. Each was made under pressure to choose differently, which is exactly what makes each one revealing. On the day of each decision, the sisters gathered afterward and talked it over, kindly and without judgment. ★ **Each sister proved her worth through her own choices.**

THINK *What kind of choices were they?*

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 3: Character, Not Convention

VOCABULARY character, convention, Meg, Jo

When Louisa May Alcott wrote *Little Women*, society had very clear ideas about what women should be. A woman was expected to marry well, keep a tidy home, and ask for nothing more. The March sisters did not all follow these expectations, and the book says this was perfectly fine. Meg married for love, not money, and built a happy home without wealth. Jo refused to marry just because it was expected, and she wrote stories that she truly believed in. Beth lived quietly and fully, and Amy worked on her art even when others doubted her. Alcott did not make speeches about this. Instead, she made her readers love the four sisters, one at a time, until the readers could see that a person's worth did not depend on following the usual rules. Convention tells us which paths are acceptable, but character tells us which paths are truly ours to walk. ★ **Each sister chose her own path — proving that a woman's worth lies in her character, not convention.**

THINK Did Alcott make speeches?

Chapter 4: The Unusual One

VOCABULARY Jo, publisher, stories, rejected

Jo March was the most unusual of the four sisters. She hated sewing and dancing and the other things that young ladies were supposed to love. She preferred running across the snowy fields, climbing apple trees with a book, and arguing about big ideas. In the evenings, she wrote plays for her sisters to perform in the parlor, with Beth as the fairy and Amy as the queen. When Laurie asked her to marry him, she said no, even though everyone around her expected a yes. One winter, she mailed her first serious stories to a publisher and waited for weeks. When the answer came back, the story had been rejected, and the disappointment felt like a blow. But Jo did not cry for long. She sat down at her desk, rewrote the story, and sent it out again without any self-pity. Her sisters sometimes teased her, but they always ended up listening to the next chapter. Marmee tucked a blanket around her when she fell asleep over her papers. She would not become the person that society said she should be. ★ **Jo refused society's expectations.**

THINK Where did Jo climb with a book?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 5: The Price of Being Herself

VOCABULARY Jo, society, world, define

The world around Jo March had clear ideas about what a young woman should want and be. She should want a husband and a home and find happiness in managing both. Jo looked at this plan and felt something inside her that she could only call absolute refusal. She did not want to be unkind about it. She simply knew, with great certainty, that it was not her life. She wanted to write, to travel, to think seriously, and to be taken seriously by the world. At parties, polite people smiled at her ambitions as if they were a charming joke. Every rejection letter seemed to confirm what they said: she was reaching too far. Yet Jo kept reaching, because she had no other honest option. She could perform the usual life and disappear inside it, or she could refuse and pay the price. She chose to pay. **★ Jo refused to let society define who she was.**

THINK How did polite people see her ambitions?

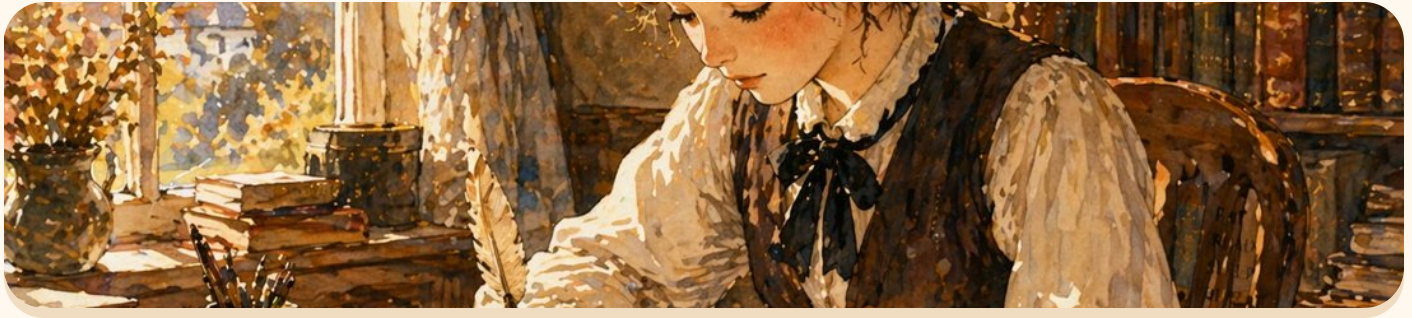
Chapter 6: Her Hair for the Family

VOCABULARY Jo, writing, expectations, purpose

Jo loved writing more than almost anything else. At night she climbed to the attic, wrapped herself in a blanket, and wrote by candlelight while the rest of the house slept. Her pen scratched across the paper, and her stories came alive in the quiet. Sometimes a publisher accepted one, and those days felt like the best of her life. Sometimes it came back rejected, and those days were hard, but they never stopped her. When the family needed money for Marmee's train fare, she quietly sold her long chestnut hair, the one thing she was truly vain about, and did not hesitate for a second. She was more alive at her desk, with a pen in her hand, than in any parlor at any party. When her first story appeared in a newspaper, she ran all the way home and waved the paper over her head. Her sisters crowded around, and Beth read it aloud twice. Writing was not just a hobby for Jo. It was who she was. **★ Jo refused to be defined by society's expectations — writing was her true identity and purpose.**

THINK What did Jo wear while writing?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 7: The Professor

VOCABULARY Jo, Bhaer, love, conventional

Professor Bhaer was not the romantic hero that readers might have expected for Jo, and certainly not a conventional one. He was older, German, not handsome, and not wealthy. His coat had a missing button, and his shoes were scuffed. But he talked to Jo about books and ideas with the seriousness that she had always needed. He did not try to change her or soften her or make her more acceptable to society. Instead, he respected her mind, questioned her gently, and encouraged her to write what she truly believed. Once, he read her silly adventure stories and told her kindly that she could do better. Jo was surprised to find that she wanted to. With him she felt that she was growing every day into a better and more complete version of herself. When he left the room, the house felt quieter. Jo noticed that she had begun to look forward to his visits, and she smiled when she heard his heavy boots on the stairs. She did not love him despite his lack of charm. She loved him because of the qualities that were truly his. ★ **True love means growing together.**

THINK What was missing from his coat?

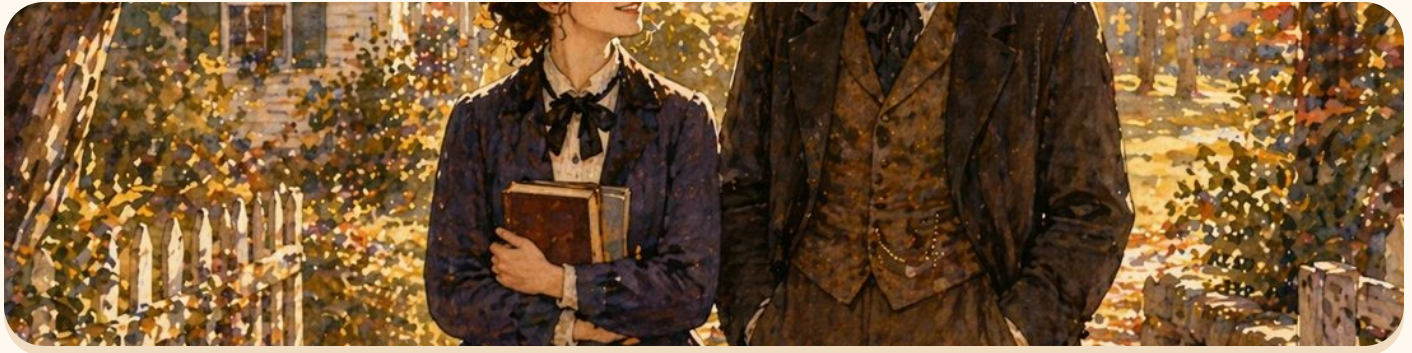
Chapter 8: A Humble Home

VOCABULARY Meg, John, love, together

Meg and John Brooke did not have an easy life after they were married. They had very little money, two young children, and many disagreements about small and large things. There were days when the little house was cold, the babies were sick, and both parents were exhausted. Meg sometimes cried over a burned loaf of bread, and John sometimes came home late and tired. But they talked through their problems honestly, helped each other, and never gave up on each other. At night, John rocked the babies while Meg sat nearby, and they planned how to save a few coins. On Sundays, they walked to the church with the babies and had tea with Marmee afterward. These small, ordinary hours became the warmest memories of Meg's life. They became better people because of the hardships they faced together, not in spite of them. Their love was not perfect, but it was real, and it was strong enough to carry them through everything. ★ **True love means growing better together through hardship.**

THINK What did Meg sometimes cry over?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 9: Love Takes Work

VOCABULARY Meg, Amy, Laurie, difficulties

None of the marriages in *Little Women* was perfect. Meg and John struggled with money and sometimes disagreed about raising their children. Jo and Professor Bhaer came from very different backgrounds and had to learn each other carefully. Amy and Laurie had to get past their early dislike of each other and find real respect. Each pair had quarrels, apologies, and long walks to cool off. But all of these couples became better people by going through difficulties together over time. In the evenings, they sat on the porch and spoke about their mistakes the way old friends do, without shame. When one of them grew angry, another made a joke, and the storm passed. Louisa May Alcott did not believe that love conquers all without any work. She showed that love is not a feeling that stays the same. It grows through effort, patience, and a willingness to listen. Alcott suggests that the work of adjusting to each other is not a failure of love. It is one of love's most important and most productive forms.

★ **True love is not about perfection but about growing wiser and kinder together through every difficulty.**

THINK *Did Alcott think love conquers all without work?*

Chapter 10: Rich in Other Ways

VOCABULARY March, money, character, wealth

The March family did not have much money, and this was a real difficulty in their daily lives. They could not buy the dresses that their wealthier neighbors wore, or attend every party in town. Amy once cried because her gloves were old, and Jo teased her gently and then helped her wash them. But Marmee taught the girls that this was not the most important thing in life. What mattered most, she said, was the kind of people they chose to be every day. One Christmas morning, the girls gave their own breakfast to a poor family, and they went home happy with only bread. Marmee herself wore a plain dress and an old shawl, yet she was the most respected woman in town. A person with good character and little money, she told them, was worth more than a person with great wealth and none. The March girls proved this by treating everyone with kindness and honesty.

★ **Character matters more than wealth.**

THINK *Why did Amy cry?*

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 11: What Cannot Be Bought

VOCABULARY family, integrity, wealth, Beth

The March family spent many years without enough money for the things they needed and wanted. But they always had one another, and they always treated one another with honesty and kindness. When their father came home from the war, thin and tired but safe, the whole family felt richer than any wealthy family they knew. Snow fell outside, and inside the little house was full of laughter. Later, when Beth passed away, they grieved together and held one another close, and they did not pretend the pain was not real. When Jo finally found her way as a writer, everyone celebrated as if the success belonged to all of them. When spring came, they planted flowers in Beth's favorite corner of the garden, and the whole family stood there quietly. The things that mattered most in the family could not be bought with any amount of money. Alcott suggests that a life built on love and honesty, however modest, is a life well lived. ★ **Family and integrity matter more than wealth or status.**

THINK *What fell outside the house?*

Chapter 12: The Quiet Gathering

VOCABULARY family, integrity, purpose, wealth

Alcott ends her novel not with a grand victory but with a quiet gathering of the family. The story of the Marches covers many years and includes great happiness and real sadness. Beth passes away, and the loss stays with the family for the rest of the story. Jo struggles, fails, tries again, and eventually finds her way as a writer she is proud of. Meg builds a modest but loving home without the wealth she once hoped for. Amy becomes a serious artist who is respected and loved by someone who respects her completely. On a bright autumn afternoon, the whole family sits together under an apple tree, with the children running in the grass. They have not all won riches or public fame. But they have all become fully themselves, people of real character who chose their lives instead of drifting into them. Through everything, their love and honesty carried them.

★ **Little Women shows that family, integrity, and purpose matter far more than wealth or social status.**

THINK *Where does the family sit at the end?*