

Classic Readers

Little Women

Louisa May Alcott

retold by Jenny Dooley & Virginia Evans



Express Publishing

A Merry Christmas

The four March sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy, were knitting by the fire. Snow was falling outside, and it was nearly Christmas, but the girls were not excited. This year they had no money for Christmas presents.

Jo could not help complaining.

“Christmas won’t be Christmas without presents.”

Amy, the youngest sister, was in the same mood.

“It’s not fair! Some girls have lots of pretty things, and other girls have nothing at all.”

Beth looked on the bright side of things.

“But we’ve got Father and Mother, and each other.”

For a moment, the other girls smiled, but they soon looked sad again. Jo sounded pessimistic.

“We haven’t got Father. We won’t have him for a long time.”

The sisters sat quietly for a moment, thinking of their father, who was far away fighting in the war.

After a while, Meg spoke.

“Mother suggested not having presents this Christmas because it will be a hard winter for everyone. She thinks it is wrong to spend money on pleasurable things when the men are suffering in the war. We can’t do much to help them, but we should think of them, and not of ourselves.”

Jo agreed.

“You’re right, but we do have a dollar each. Perhaps we could each buy something small for ourselves.”

The clock struck six, and Beth put a pair of old slippers by the fire. It was time for Mother to come home.

Jo picked up the slippers.

"These are very old. Mother needs a new pair."

On hearing this, Beth jumped up.

"I'm going to buy her some new slippers with my dollar!"

Amy cried out:

"No, I want to buy them!"

Beth came up with a better idea.

"I know! Let's each buy something for Mother and not buy anything for ourselves."

Jo agreed.

"You're so sweet, Beth. What a wonderful idea!"

The sisters were very happy with their plan, and decided to go shopping the next afternoon.

Mother arrived home in time for supper, with some good news for the girls. A letter had arrived from their father. After they had eaten, they gathered in front of the fire to read it. It was a cheerful, hopeful letter, with little news of the dangers and troubles of the war. Instead, Mr. March wrote of his love for his wife and his daughters.

"I am so proud of my little women," he wrote. When the girls read this, tears came to their eyes.

Amy felt she didn't deserve all this love.

"I am a selfish girl but I will try to be better."

Meg sounded determined.

"We all will. I worry too much about my looks and I hate working, but I will try to change."

Jo made a promise, too.

"I'll try to be a little woman and stop being rough and wild."

Beth said nothing, but dutifully went back to her knitting. Soon the atmosphere was lightened as the sisters sang together with their mother, until it was time for bed.

Christmas arrived a few days later, and when the sisters woke





Meg Becomes a Lady

B Find the following excerpts from Chapter 5 and discuss their meanings.

A Review

Little Women

The March sisters and their mother are struggling to make a living while Mr March is away fighting in the Civil War. Can they survive in this troubled time? More importantly, will Mr March return home safely?



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ISBN 978-1-84862-709-3



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