

Module One: The March Sisters – Setting the Scene



Welcome & Objectives

"Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents," grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.

-- Louisa May Alcott, Little Women

Welcome to our first week of class! To this day Little Women still captures the imagination of readers across the world and we'll be jumping right into Louisa May Alcott's novel and the wonderful world of the March family, the Lawrence Boy, and Amy's love of [pickled limes](#).

Through readings, media, and various class activities you'll learn more about the time period of the novel, the differences between the real life Alcott Family and the literary March Family (yes, I hate to tell you this but it's true, Louisa and Jo are NOT the same person). Later in the module we'll get to know one another via a virtual "Time Capsule" creation, begin to prepare for what I hope is a very fun Mix Tape activity that you'll craft over a number of weeks, and select a movie version of Little Women for your final group project. Welcome to snowy New England in the 1860s! Pull up a chair and Beth will fetch your slippers.



Weekly Objectives:

- Students will investigate the historical time period of the novel.
- Students will differentiate between the real life Alcott family and the fictional March family.
- Students will analyze the major characters portrayed in Little Women.



Readings & Media

Note: All reading assignments for our unit dealing with Little Women will be given in chapter format. Please feel free to utilize whatever copy you happen to have on hand, can check-out from a library, or you may also access the text via a [number of eBook formats](#) available on Project Gutenberg. The eBook versions can be read directly on your computer or downloaded to the eReader of your choice.

Readings for the Week:

- Chapters 1 – 5 of *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott
- [Reading the Author in Little Women: The Biography of a Book](#) by Sheryl Englund

Media to View:

- [Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House: Home of the Alcotts Part 1](#)



- [Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House: Home of the Alcotts Part 2](#)



Optional Resources:

- [A summary of Pilgrim's Progress](#)
- The [1994 Thomas Newman Soundtrack](#) to the Little Women film (in case you'd like some atmospheric music to read to)



A Note On Achievements

On the class sidebar you'll notice a link titled "Achievements Unlocked." This is simply a gamification addition to the course for (hopefully) your fun and amusement. Throughout the next 10 weeks the successful completion of certain activities, assignments, discussion submissions etc... will unlock various badges. By the end of the class, your goal will be to have collected all of the available badges. If you aren't familiar with badges and gamification, [this wiki](#) will give you an overview of the topic.

I look forward to hearing your feedback on the process at the end of our time together. **Click on the "Review" button located on this item for an example.**

Good Luck!



Welcome to Orchard House!



Welcome to class! Orchard House is the historic home of our author. Please warm up by the fire while we start our adventures with the March Family.



Getting to Know You

Please review [the provided questionnaire](#) and submit your answers **by Friday**.

Welcome Survey: The March Sisters at Christmas



What's Your Name?

Where Do You Live?

What Are You Hoping to Learn More About in Our Seminar?

Where Will the Computer Be Located That You'll Use for Our Class Work?

- At Home
- At Work
- The Local Library
- Other:





The 1868 Time Capsule



The first volume of Little Women was published in September of 1868.

Obviously to say that life back in the 1860s was extremely different from our world today is the understatement of the century. In our continued efforts to ground ourselves in Jo, Beth, Meg, and Amy's time period I would like you to put together a virtual time capsule of sorts. This activity will also serve as a creative way for us to get to know one another a bit more.

To complete this activity please gather together at least **5 images of life from the 1860s** and post them to the discussion board. If you'd like, feel free to use your favorite online or offline program to create a collage. You might consider using one of these tools.

Internet research will be your best friend for this task. **These images should fall (at least loosely) into categories or interests that you currently hold in your**

present-day life. So, for example, if I were to complete this same task and the timeframe I was given happened to be the early 1900s I might share a picture of Julia Child since she was born in 1912 and I really love to cook.

Please post your 1860 time capsule to the discussion board by Thursday and respond to at least 3 of peers' projects by Saturday.

Essentially you're trying to guess how the the images your classmate shared might pertain to them in their day-to-day life.

On Sunday, each of you should post the explanation of your collage choices and then we'll find out just how close everyone go to deducing the truth.

Note: The rubric for this activity can be found on the course sidebar.



Did it Happen to The Marches or The Alcott Family?

Please complete this activity after you've read the Sheryl England article posted above. Were you surprised by her comments on the differences between the character of Jo in Little Women versus the life of the author? It definitely seems that readers have attributed many more of Jo's adventures and personality quirks to Louisa and the two have become melded into one single literary entity. It wasn't just Louisa though. Other members of the Alcott family are also quite different (sometimes startling so) from their book personas. To learn more about the fact versus the fiction of the Alcott and March families please take this short quiz.

Don't worry about getting the answers wrong or feel as though you need to google before making your selection. This item will not be graded on correct and incorrect answers. It's simply a way to reinforce the interesting manner in which we've blurred the lines of imagination and reality. The answers will be provided at the end of the quiz. **This activity should be completed by Sunday.**

Note: Once you've submitted your quiz a bonus item will appear in the module below this are that will offer you some additional information on these two fascinating families.



Little Women Mixtape

This week we've begun to learn about the March family, celebrated a selfless Christmas holiday together, and made the acquaintance of young Mr. Lawrence. Over the next few weeks of class we'll continue our adventures with Jo, Beth, Meg, and Amy and encounter a host of other unique personalities as the girls go about their day-to-day lives. I'm sure you'll agree that the four March sisters are very singular individuals. As you continue reading I suspect you'll also notice that many of Alcott's characters possess extremely unique traits, habits, loves, and behaviors. This next exercise, which will take place over a span of 4 weeks, will encourage you to really get down to the heart (so-to-speak) of one person portrayed in the book.

- What makes them tick?
- What motivates them?
- What frustrates them?
- Do they have hopes and dreams?
- Have they been disappointed?
- Are they happy?
- Do they have family or are they solitary beings?
- Who are their friends etc...

These are just a few of the questions you should consider when compiling your character analysis. The following handouts can help you focus in even more on the individual you select:

- [Character Questionnaire](#)
- [The 100 Most Important Things to Know About Your Character](#)
- [Character Chart for Fiction Writers](#)

But what are you going to do with all of this nuanced analysis? Well, music plays an integral role in the March household. Singing and piano playing are a nightly occurrence. We know that Beth adores the piano and Marmee and Meg sing like angels but their respective repertoires mostly consist of period appropriate hymns and other songs we've probably never heard before. Have you ever wondered what our characters from the 1860s might think of modern music today? Here's your chance! **Your task will be to curate a 5-7 track mixtape (playlist) for your book character using the [Spotify](#) application.** Your prior character analysis will help to inform your choices and you can opt to create a playlist of songs that you think your character would:

1. Relate to or have on their own "frequently played lists" or
2. Choose songs that describe or allude to your character in some manner

Keep in mind that at the end of the activity you'll have to provide a written rationale for each of the songs you select.

What's The Twist?

Your classmates won't know who your playlist is about. They'll actually need to review and listen to your musical selections for clues as to whom you're alluding to in your collection and then submit their answer. But, before we get overwhelmed with too many details I'd like to provide you with a few links to some sample character playlists and other online resources for you to look through:

- The [Literary Mixtape Collection](#) on Flavorwire

- [The Art of the Mix](#)
- [Creating Playlists in Spotify](#)

Hopefully these examples will help you begin to get your creativity flowing.

For your information, the overarching schedule for this project will work as follows. The items due this week are highlighted in purple.

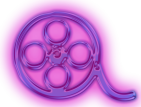
Week	Portion of the Activity Due
<p style="text-align: center;">Week One</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the recommended resources referenced in the activity description and sign-up for a Spotify account. • Make sure to practice using it if you're not familiar with the tool. • Start to begin thinking about which character in the book you'd like to base your mixtape on.
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Two</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the character you will work with via the sign-up sheet provided in the class wiki by Wednesday. Feel free to choose a character that appears later in the story. • Begin drafting your character sketch with the assistance of the character analysis handouts provided in module one. You'll submit your analysis to me for feedback via the assignment tool by Sunday.
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Three</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select, arrange, and create your mixtape on Spotify. • Prepare a short narrative to include with your project where you discuss your thinking and rationale for each of the songs you selected for your character. These items should be completed by Sunday.
<p style="text-align: center;">Week Four</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Monday, post the url or embed your completed 8-10 track playlist in the forum

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>titled with Your Name.</p> <p><i>Note: The settings of each forum are prearranged so that your classmates cannot see the guesses on the identity of your mixtape until they post a guess of their own.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the mixtapes of your classmates and attempt to identify the characters attached to at least 3 playlists by Sunday. What is it about the songs that make you think the mixtape is related to that person? Be specific.
<p>Week Five</p> <input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Monday, in your personal forum, reveal the identity of your mixtape's character. Then post the reflection/rationale you compiled explaining the reasoning behind the song choices you made. Investigate to see if the guesses you made on your classmates' mixtapes were correct and respond to the submitted reflection/rationales of at least 3 of your peers by Friday.

Note: The rubric for this activity can be found on the course sidebar.



Now Playing: The Little Women Film Project – Step One



The final project for this course will revolve around one of the many movie versions of Little Women. More details about the activity will be presented next week. For the time being though please review the options available to you and sign-up for the one that most appeals via the "Movie Project" tab on the sidebar **by Sunday**.



Checklist

- Post your Time Capsule images to the discussion board by Thursday

- Submit the "Getting to Know You" survey by Friday
- Complete the required readings by Friday
- Respond to your classmates' Time Capsule postings by Saturday
- Reveal your personal reasoning for the Time Capsule images you selected by Sunday
- Take the Alcotts vs. The March family quiz by Sunday
- Sign-up for the Little Women movie project
- Start to think about who you'd like to select for your Mix Tape activity and review the project milestones



Assignment Map

Assignment #	Assignment Name	Point Value	Due Day
Session One			
S1.1	Post your Time Capsule images to the discussion board	10	by Thursday
S1.2	Submit the "Getting to Know You" survey	1	by Friday
S1.3	Respond to your classmates' Time Capsule postings	5	by Saturday
S1.4	Reveal your personal reasoning for the Time Capsule images you selected	1	by Sunday
S1.5	Take the Alcotts vs. The	2	by Sunday

	March family quiz		
S1.6	Sign-up for the Little Women movie project	1	by Sunday

Total Score Possible for Module One: 20 Points