

LITTLE  
WOMEN

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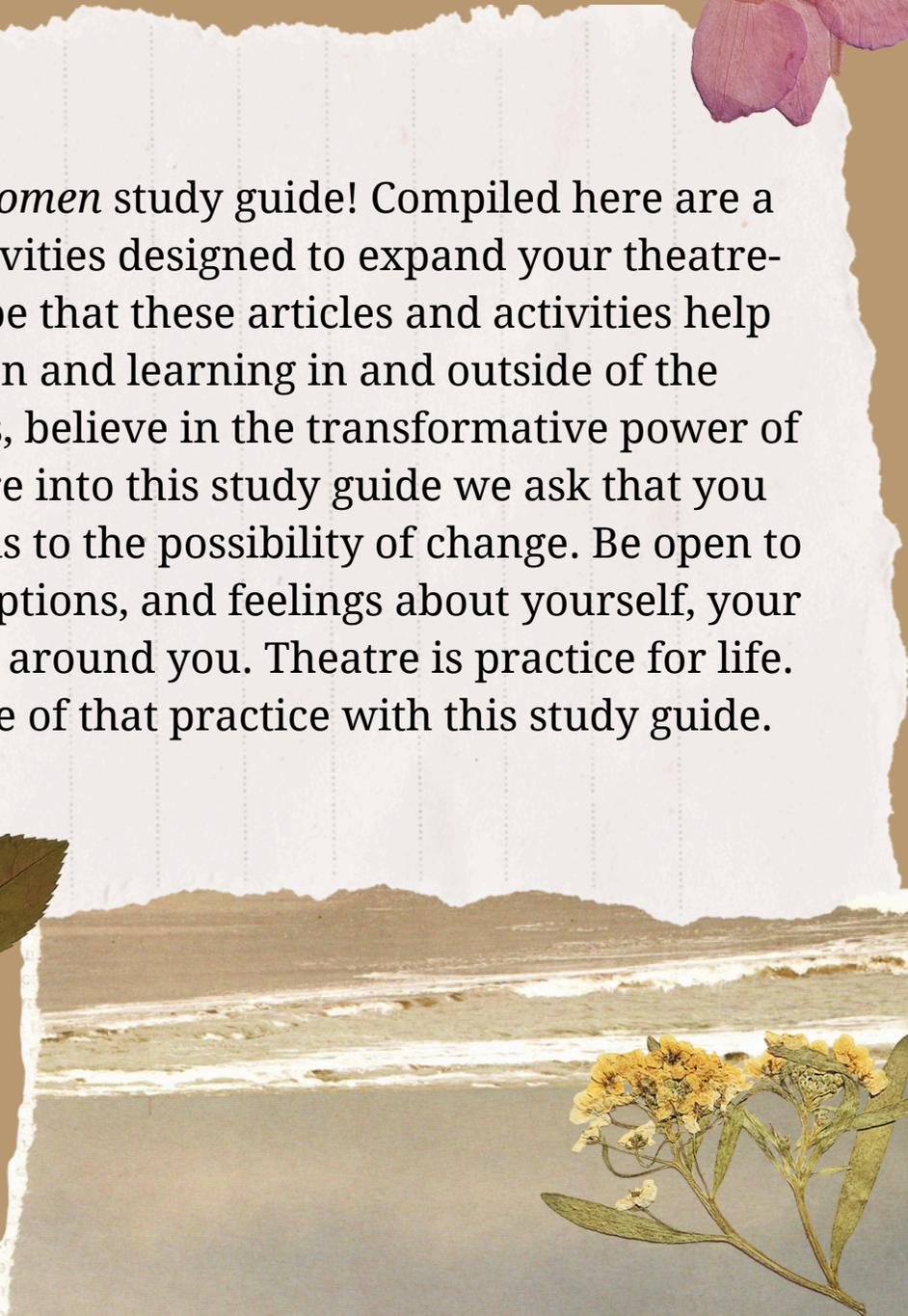
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# WELCOME!



Welcome to your *Little Women* study guide! Compiled here are a variety of articles and activities designed to expand your theatre-going experience. We hope that these articles and activities help spark further discussion and learning in and outside of the classroom. We, the authors, believe in the transformative power of theatre. So, as you venture into this study guide we ask that you open your hearts and minds to the possibility of change. Be open to changing your ideas, perceptions, and feelings about yourself, your community, and the world around you. Theatre is practice for life. Start taking full advantage of that practice with this study guide.



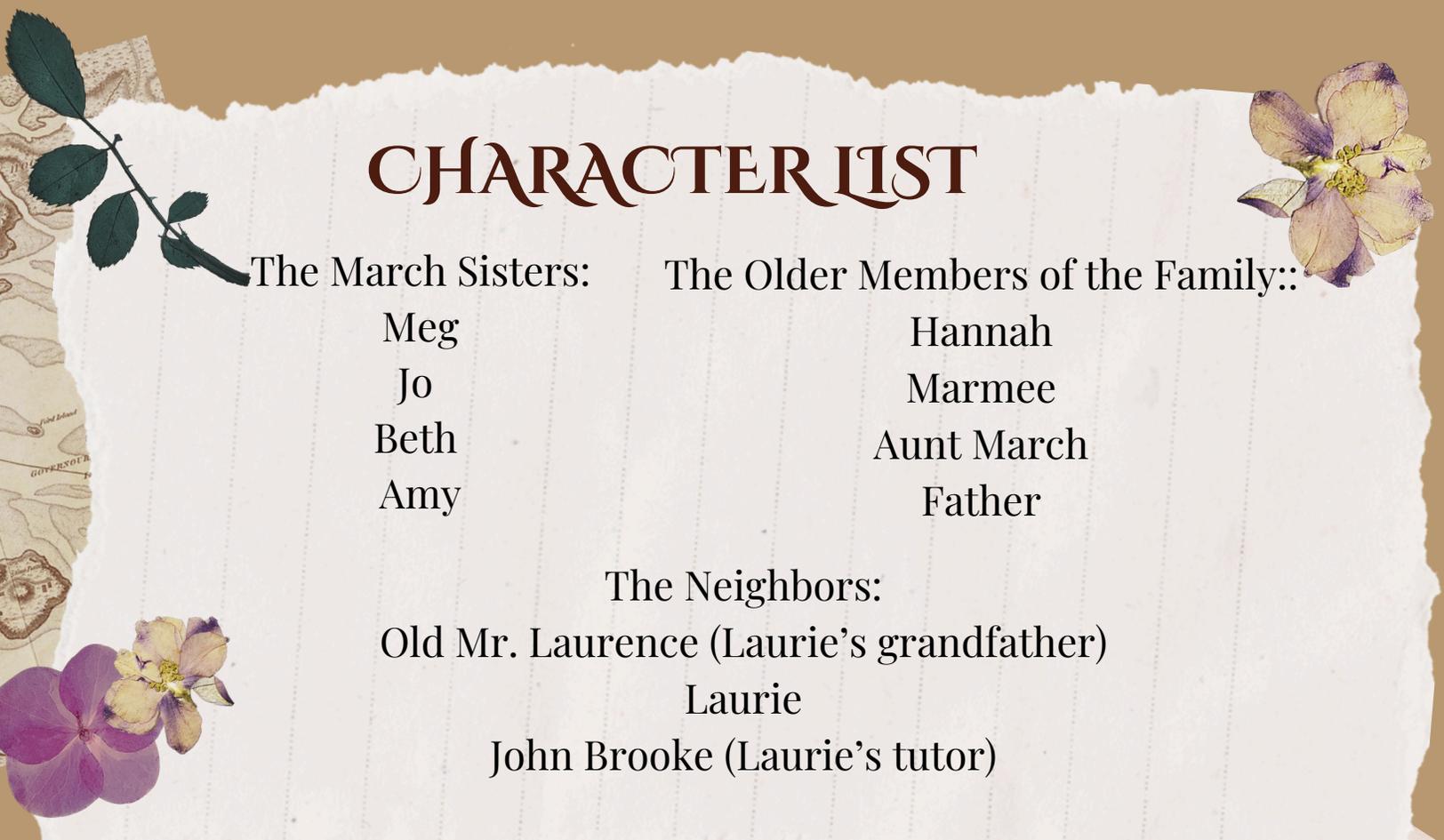
# STUDY GUIDE CREATOR BIOS

**Katherine Shuert is a third year undergraduate student at DePaul University studying Dramaturgy and Criticism and minoring in dance. She is a dancer and choreographer who is interested in the dramaturgy of physically based performances. She is a born and raised Illinois native who believes that theatre, as a live and embodied artform, is a powerful tool capable of relaying deep truths.**

**Eva Strazek is a dramaturg, writer, and actress from Cleveland, Ohio. She is a third-year student at DePaul University studying Dramaturgy and Criticism, with a minor in Journalism. She is passionate about culture and sociology, and how it manifests in the plays we write and see onstage. She will be doing dramaturgy on *Ride the Cyclone* in the Healy Theater this winter, and *Chronicles of the Kaleidoscope Visitors* in the spring!**

**Liv Queen Majestic is a dramaturg, writer, musician, and film enthusiast from Orange County, California! She is a third year undergraduate student at DePaul University pursuing a double major of Dramaturgy & Criticism and Creative Writing. They are interested in immersive, site-specific theatre that invites audiences to directly become a part of the worlds created through theatre, as well as bringing theatre to communities that do not have much access to and funding for it. She will be a dramaturg for *Little Women* at the Merle Reskin in autumn, and for *Ride the Cyclone* in the winter.**

**Steph Heinz is a theater artist, educator, director, and wig technician from Crystal Lake, Illinois. She is a third year Theatre Arts major with a concentration in Theatre for Young Audiences. She is passionate about theatre as a healing force for trauma, and how it can build crucial life skills far beyond the stage. Steph is looking forward to being the Assistant Director on *Little Women* this Fall.**



# CHARACTER LIST

## The March Sisters:

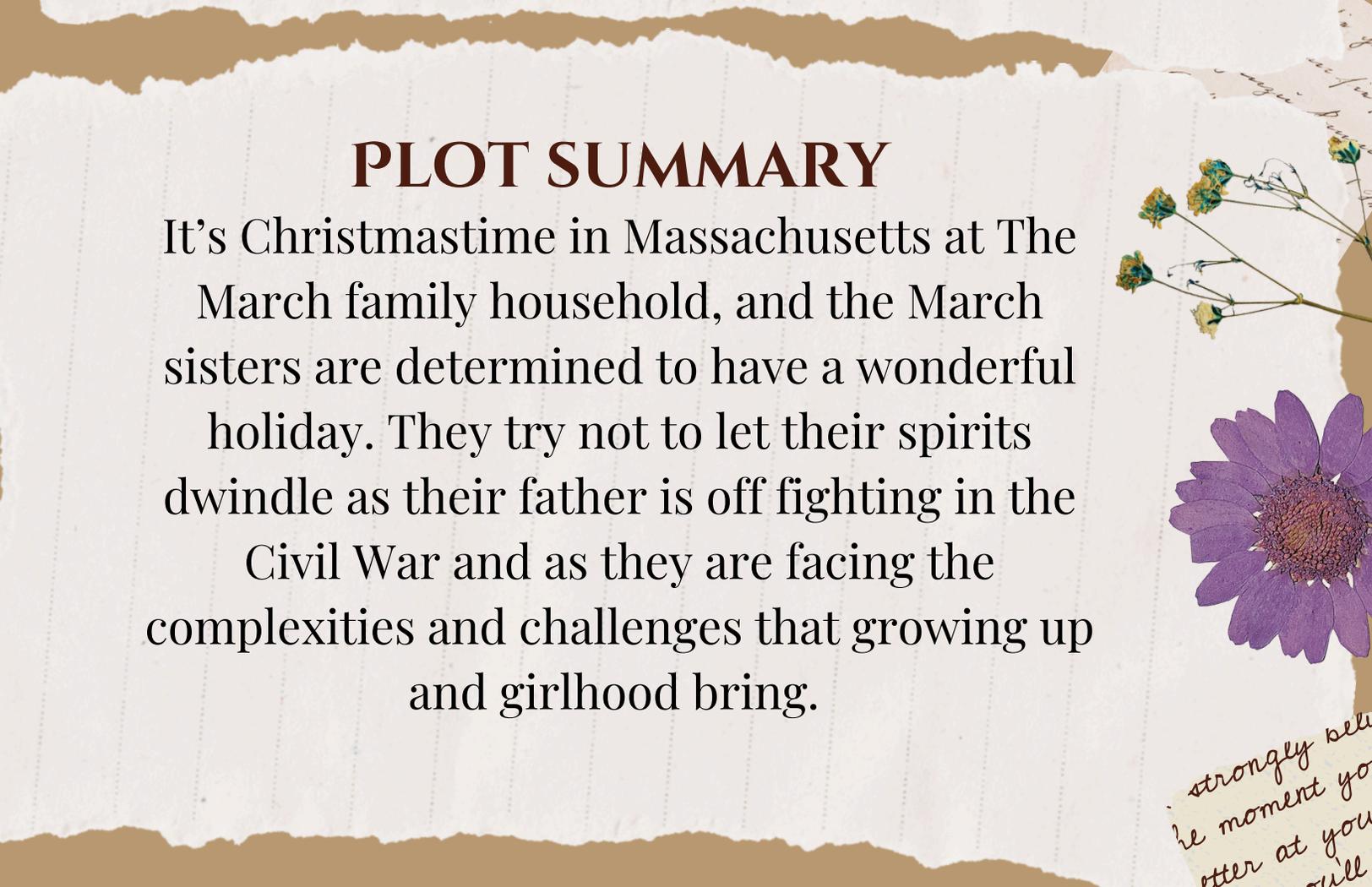
Meg  
Jo  
Beth  
Amy

## The Older Members of the Family::

Hannah  
Marmee  
Aunt March  
Father

## The Neighbors:

Old Mr. Laurence (Laurie's grandfather)  
Laurie  
John Brooke (Laurie's tutor)



## PLOT SUMMARY

It's Christmastime in Massachusetts at The March family household, and the March sisters are determined to have a wonderful holiday. They try not to let their spirits dwindle as their father is off fighting in the Civil War and as they are facing the complexities and challenges that growing up and girlhood bring.

*strongly believe  
the moment you  
better at you  
will*



## PLAYWRIGHT BIO:

Marisha Chamberlain writes poems, novel-length fiction, plays, and texts for music such as song cycle lyrics and opera libretti. Her debut novel, *The Rose Variations*, was published by Soho Press (February, 2009). Her plays have been staged all over the world: in South Africa, Germany, Australia, Turkey, Britain, and Canada as well as in the United States. *Scheherazade*, a stage play, won the Dramatists Guild/CBS Regional and National Awards and in its teleplay version was broadcast across the United States and screened at the British Film Institute Festival. Her stage adaptation of *Little Women* was premiered by the Children's Theater Company of Minneapolis and subsequently produced by the Stratford Ontario Festival Theater, Stage One of Louisville, KY, and Kansas City Repertory Theater. Her ballet, *The Worn-Out Dancing Shoes*, was toured nationally by the Children's Theater Company. *Powers*, her book of poems, was published by New Rivers Press. She has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller, Bush, McKnight, and Jerome Foundations and has been artist in residence the Anderson Center and the Rockefeller Foundation Center at Bellagio.

From: [macdowell.org](http://macdowell.org)

## WHAT IS PLAYWORKS?

Founded as the Goodman Children's Theatre in 1925 and recognized as a pioneer of theatre for families, Chicago Playworks welcomes more than 25,000 students and families to our highly celebrated productions each season. Today we are dedicated to reflecting our audience's experience in an urban, contemporary, and multi-racial environment.

strongly believe  
the moment you  
offer at you  
will

# Adaptations of Little Women



1933 film

--The Hays Code\* hadn't quite existed yet but even still, some censorship took place, pushing a more "wholesome" agenda rather than really exploring the difficulties these characters faced

--There slightly existed an acceptance from Jo that there were limitations in place against a woman's freedom

--However, for 1933, this film was still progressive especially in the ways that it focuses on Jo and how she denies her gender and the expectations placed upon her, she also acts like a "tomboy" and isn't forced to indulge in traditional femininity

\*The Hays Code was a production code in place between 1934-68 which limited the kind of content that filmmakers could explore and include, in order to promote a more "innocent" and "wholesome" Hollywood. Of course, a lot of films found subtle ways around it, but it still restricted a lot of what could be explored. Want to know more? Check out the sources!

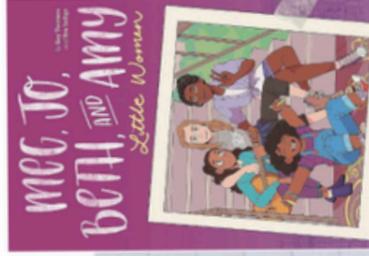


1994 film

--Quote from producer Denise Di Novi: "At that time, it was almost impossible to get female-driven movies made. They called them "needle in the eye" movies, where a guy would say to his wife, "I would rather have a needle in my eye than go to that movie." --The last LW film before this was made in 1949

--This version focuses more on Jo following her dreams instead of grappling with the difficulties of being a woman

--However, Jo and Professor Bhaer's relationship was explored more in-depth here, depicted as an intellectual match, therefore suiting Jo's dreams even still



2019 graphic novel

--Sets *Little Women* in a truly modern setting (there are phones, it is really modern day) in order to bring modern readers into it

--Examines *Little Women* in a queer lens, which has been previously speculated about by fans and critics, making Jo a lesbian

--All of the sisters except for Jo are women of color

--By having some of the sisters be women of color and Jo being queer, it allows for more readers to see themselves in this story

--The letters in the story are now emails, and we also get proficient sized snippets of Jo's journal entries



2019 film

--There are flashbacks between the past and present, not in chronological order

--More nuanced representations of the characters: delves into their psyches, explores their strengths and flaws and what influenced them to do what they did (i.e. Book Amy is known to be pretty spoiled throughout the whole book, but this film explores how she grows from it and puts reasons behind how she behaves/thinks)

--Professor Bhaer and Jo's relationship here is more up in the air; unclear if Jo ends up with him, most interpret that s he had to include this in the book to please her editor and that it did not really happen

--Amy's relationship with Laurie is developed sooner

--"Just because my dreams are different than yours doesn't make them any less important" Meg says when Jo expresses concerns for her getting married, each of the sisters uplift one another's ambitions

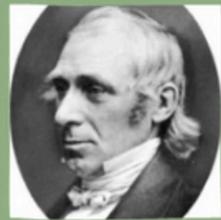
--Much like our play, this film explores how Jo may not necessarily want a romantic love, but still craves a different type of love

# ALCOTT/MARCH FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Did you know that each member of the March family was inspired by Louisa May Alcott's real-life family, herself included?

## ALCOTT FAMILY TREE

AMOS  
BRONSON  
ALCOTT  
(FATHER)



ABBY MAY  
ALCOTT  
(MARMEE)



ANNA  
ALCOTT  
PRATT  
(MEG)



LOUISA  
MAY  
ALCOTT  
(JO)



ELIZABETH  
SEWALL  
ALCOTT  
(BETH)



ABIGAIL  
MAY  
ALCOTT  
(AMY)



PORTRAIT  
OF  
ABIGAIL  
BY ROSE  
PECKMAN



# TRANSCENDENTALISM:

## A GUIDE

### WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy is the study of knowledge, reality, and the nature and meaning of life. Philosophy can also be an individual's personal beliefs, that they adopt as guiding principles for life.

### WHAT IS TRANSCENDENTALISM?

Transcendentalism is a philosophical, spiritual, and literary movement that emerged in the 1830s in New England. It was one of the first philosophical movements that began in America.



### WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?

Transcendentalists believe that humans and nature are inherently good. They believe in the power of the individual and are committed to personal freedom. Rather than believing in the divine beauty of Heaven, they saw beauty and the divine in everyday life. Transcendentalists believe that society and institutions, like organized religion and politics, were corrupting the spirit of the individual. Nature is a key element of transcendentalism, and believers feel a deep gratitude and connection to the natural world.

Nature is seen as a tool to observe and study the inner workings of life. Transcendentalists developed multiple outdoor living experiments and communities as a way to become closer to the natural world, most notably Henry David Thoreau, who described his experience in the book *Walden*. Transcendentalists believe that the natural world should be undisturbed, and are skeptical of industrialization and capitalism.

# TRANSCENDENTALISM

## A GUIDE

### TRANSCENDENTAL CLUB & KEY FIGURES

Transcendentalism was developed and fostered through meetings of the Transcendental Club. The Transcendental Club was a group of New England authors, philosophers, and intellectuals that met to discuss their similar beliefs. The first meeting occurred in 1836. Ralph Waldo Emerson was a founding member and in 1837 published "*Nature*", an essay that laid out the foundational beliefs of the movement. At the time of the publication, the group called themselves "Hedge's Club", after founder Frederic Henry Hedge. A review of Emerson's "*Nature*" first dubbed them the Transcendental Club, which was meant as an insult. Other key figures of the movement include Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Peabody, Amos Bronson Alcott and his daughter, Louisa May Alcott.

### LITTLE WOMEN & TRANSCENDENTALISM

*Little Women* was written during a second-wave of Transcendentalism in 1868. The setting of the novel—Concord, Massachusetts—was a major hub for transcendentalists. It was also the hometown of its author, Louisa May Alcott. Louisa May Alcott was raised by Transcendentalist parents, and grew up surrounded by many prominent figures of the movement. The Alcotts were non-traditional, aligning themselves with various social movements like vegetarianism, abolition, and women's rights. Louisa May Alcott idolized Ralph Waldo Emerson; Her journals illustrate her love for his philosophies, calling him "the man who has helped me most by his life, his books, his society". We see Transcendentalist values in the March sisters, who were modeled after Alcott and her sisters. Time and time again, the sisters are independent and socially progressive. They are self-reliant individuals with careers, dreams, and a belief that the world is a place of good.

Amos



the moment you  
better at you  
learn. They

# INDIVIDUALISM: TRANSCENDENTALISM CONT.

The idea of individualism was especially significant to a transcendentalist's belief, and something that the Alcotts strongly believed in. This manifests in *Little Women* as well--each of the sisters have their own unique dreams and ideas of how they wish for their adult lives to look like, and Marmee and Father encourage them to be themselves, as well as celebrate them and their individual identities. Amos Bronson Alcott, the real-life inspiration for Father even set out to built various schools, and prioritized his daughters' educations in order for them to become free thinkers and break apart from societal expectations and ideas for how a woman especially should live her life.

Individualism also consists of setting out to embark on your own personal discoveries to discover truths about the world instead of being influenced by others' opinions, or even allowing their views to govern you. To be individual, as a transcendentalist, is to be self-reliant. It is the belief that one cannot be authentically and fully happy unless they are pursuing the life and career they truly wish to do.



# DESIGNING LITTLE WOMEN

AN INTERVIEW WITH COSTUME DESIGNER  
MICHELLE ESCOBEDO

## WHAT DOES YOUR DESIGN PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

“After reading the play, the design and production team have a meeting. The director tells us their dream for the world, we brainstorm and talk about things in the play that excite us. After that meeting, I take all that info and I start to imagine what this world *feels* like. For this play, we talked about how it felt very watercolored and joyful. Next, I think about what the script requires. For example, in this show, there's a mention of Jo's *red boots*. Then, I pull together some images of what the characters feel like to me. My next step is some sketching, getting a feel for the characters in their personalities. Here, I start thinking about how my designs will fit in with the world that we're designing through set, lighting, and sound. This is where I start to think about how time-period accurate we want the show to be.”

“I do preliminary designs for each character and the director will give their opinion from their and so will the rest of the team. After that it's fine-tuning the “prelims” into final designs. We get our cast list a few weeks before final designs, so I finally get to know who I'm drawing in the clothes! We move the show into the Costume Shop and my wonderful team of drapers (*think of them like the engineers to an architect*) and stitchers help me make alterations to clothes we have in our stock, ones we've rented, bought, and those we get to custom-build. We have fittings with the actors, where we try on the costumes and adjust them, and then we move into tech rehearsals. Throughout the last few stages, the Director, Actors, Drapers and anyone else working on the show can bring up problems, issues or new ideas that we can incorporate into the show before it gets to be seen by the audience at the Reskin.”

# DESIGNING LITTLE WOMEN

AN INTERVIEW WITH COSTUME DESIGNER  
MICHELLE ESCOBEDO

## WHAT DREW YOU TO LITTLE WOMEN?

“I never actually read *Little Women* growing up, but I was a kid that got bussed in to see Reskin shows in Middle school and High school. I have been wanting to do a show in the space for a while, but it being *Little Women* is really special. For one, I get to work with Megan Pirtle, a professional here to help us learn and be our wig, hair and makeup designer. She went to DePaul when I was seeing shows, and designed a lot of the shows I remember loving. I also think that *Little Women* is such a fun show to do when you are a little woman yourself! I have one sister and two cousins who are basically my sisters, so we, as many sisters do, fight over which March sister we are. I argue that since I'm a painter and the youngest I should be Amy, but they argue I am Beth. I love Beth, so I'm not mad at it. I also love the little world I'm building with the other designers; it's all so intentional and it feels amazing to build a world about youthfulness with your friends.”

## -DO OTHER ADAPTATIONS (MUSICAL, FILMS, ETC.) HAVE AN IMPACT ON YOUR VISION? IF NOT, HOW DO YOU AVOID THEM?

“I have seen almost every version of *Little Women*. I may have *read* it late, but I loved it before that because of the movie with Winona Ryder. I tried not to use any reference images from any of the movies or other productions, but some things are very iconic. These girls have been loved by so many people for so many generations, people can look at an outfit on a hanger and say, “That is so Amy!” or “That is so Jo!” All that to say, I try to avoid it in the drawing stages of design. Though if a costume piece feels like a character and I can't deny it, I am not going to fight it. I had a professor once say, “Costume Design is stylized and credited borrowing for inspiration.” Keyword here is *credited*.”

# DESIGNING LITTLE WOMEN

AN INTERVIEW WITH COSTUME DESIGNER  
MICHELLE ESCOBEDO

## WHAT INSPIRED YOUR DESIGN PROCESS?

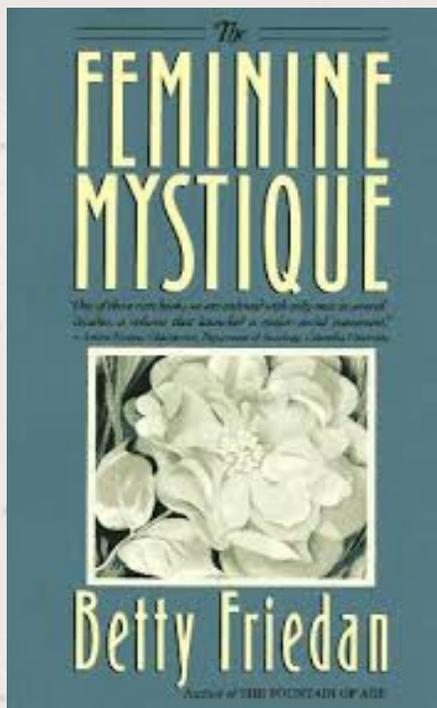
“A big idea we had early on was how each character is their own person, and that doesn't take away from their relationship with the other characters. With that came the conversation of the transcendentalist movement that was happening in that time period, and is making a bit of a comeback! Everything and everyone should feel like they belong *together*, it's *all* connected and *all* intentional. But that doesn't mean that they aren't individuals. So, a big inspiration and question was making sure these girls felt like *real* people, a *real* family. And this world, as painted and whimsical as we've designed it, should feel whole, natural, and linked. Each character and design choice is a force, and they should be a unit moving together to tell the story we all have created.”

## HOW DO THINGS LIKE COLOR, FABRICS AND STYLE HELP TO TELL A STORY ON STAGE ?

“You can tell so much about people by how they dress. In this show for example, the March sisters all have their own color pallets, but there are moments where the sisters wear each other's colors. This is because the girls aren't the richest, so the younger girls have the older girls hand-me-downs. They, like any other sisters who share sizes, are going to borrow each other's clothes. So, the game I get to play is “How do we balance our belief of something being from Meg's closet, but on Beth's body?” Similarly, I use color to associate family and friendship relationships. Mr. Laurence and Laurie, though not very close in the first few scenes, are both in shade of green. That green is Laurie's color for most of the play, along with some orangey-pinks. Mr. Laurence is an older man and is mourning the loss of his daughter, so he has some subtle blues. He is also more closed off, so he's in more intimidating and defined styles of coats. As he gets closer and learns to mourn from Beth, who reminds him of his daughter, he opens up and we get to see the colors brighten up and his styles become softer.”



Betty Friedan



Ida B. Wells



Elizabeth Cady Stanton



RIOTT GRRRLS!



Kinberle Crenshaw

*you  
yourself  
for you  
& with  
behind  
Lida*

*Jan  
Gren  
B a  
m  
w  
ly b*

*Jan  
Hof  
Hof  
the  
acid  
hosen  
come me  
My jo  
an*

# LITTLE WOMEN & WAVES OF FEMINISM

## INTRO:

**Feminism** is one of the biggest themes in *Little Women*. Onstage, you see a family of women with many different views of the world, and what it is like to exist as a woman, in a world built around the achievements of men.

Like the girls in the play, each woman in the world has their views on feminism as a concept. Every woman in the world views feminism through a different lens. This has a lot to do with the culture, status quo, and period of the world these feminists lived in. **Feminist theory** can be separated into four distinct waves throughout history. *Little Women* is set in the time of first-wave feminism, but many of the play's key themes are ahead of their time— especially Jo, with her second-wave ideas a century before they were advocated for in the US.

As you read through the timeline of waves of feminism, allow yourself to think about:

*How Little Women could look if it took place during a different wave?*

*What aspects of first-wave feminism do we see in Little Women?*

*Are first, second, and third-wave feminism outdated in today's cultural context? If so, why?*

*What wave of feminism do you personally identify with?*

*Are there aspects of Little Women that fit into different waves?*

## FIRST WAVE FEMINISM:

The first wave of feminism has core ideas focused on certain equal rights for privileged men and women, the most pressing being the issue of voting. This wave of feminism focused on white, wealthy women, and excluded women of color, poor women, disabled women, and other marginalized women. First-wave activists believed that once women were given the right to vote, they could use that power to push other gender reforms, including a right to property ownership, a right to equal education, and a right to equal employment opportunities. This wave of feminism has loose starting and ending dates— many believe that this wave of feminism ended with American women's suffrage being granted— others argue it proceeded on into the 1960s.

### First Wave Icon: Elizabeth Cady Stanton: (1815-1902)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was an American writer and activist who was one of the chief forces behind the first 1848 **Seneca Falls Convention**— the first-ever women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. She is credited as being one of the first women in America to fight for the right to vote.

### First Wave Icon: Ida B Wells: (1862-1931)

Ida B Wells is a local first-wave icon. She fought for Black Chicagoans during the early Civil Rights movement. She was also incredibly active in the women's suffrage movement! She was a feminist and civil rights activist during a time when the country was undergoing a lot of change-- she was a Black woman who was often excluded from the mainstream movement.

# SECOND WAVE FEMINISM:

The second wave of feminism started in the 1960s and lasted till roughly the 1980s. It is characterized by Conversations about sexuality, domestic life, workplace treatment, reproductive freedom, etc. Second-wave feminists are responsible for creating rape crisis centers and women's shelters to help women who were suffering at the hand of domestic abuse. Feminist and women-owned businesses helped give the movement more leverage and were the backbone of the second-wave era.

Ultimately, second-wave feminism still ignored differences in women's experience and promoted a white, upper-class model. Some of the main ideas of second-wave feminism are shown in *Little Women*. Jo wanting to be a writer, and get published as a woman, is indicative of second-wave feminism, and the workforce equality women yearned for. Jo's attitude toward Meg wanting to settle down and get married is also a second-wave mentality. Though most of this feminism was "pro-choice", it was still looked down upon to stay home and not enter the workforce when women were fighting for workforce equality.

## Second Wave Icon: Betty Friedan:

Betty Friedan was a leading figure in the second wave, publishing her iconic book, *The Feminine Mystique*, in 1963. She is credited with sparking the second wave of feminism. In 1966, she co-founded and became the president of NOW, the national organization for women.

# THIRD WAVE FEMINISM:

Third-wave feminism gained popularity in the 1990s, and openly advocated for diversity and individualism within the feminist movement. Part of that was the beginnings of **intersectionality**— including poor, disabled, queer women, women of color, and other types of marginalized women in feminist dialogues— but also the budding idea of **choice feminism**. Third-wave feminists would critique Jo's affliction towards Meg's desire to settle down— this wave was largely about women having the right to choose how to live their lives. Third-wave feminism focused on **equity** over equality. Third-wave feminists sought to get reparations for women who had been oppressed for generations. The second-wave feminists laid the foundation, but third-wave feminists pushed for more and more equity.

For example, **Title IX** was a law created by second-wave women's rights groups— however— the actual institution and respect of Title IX as a law was initiated during the third wave.

The third wave of feminism was where the concept of intersectionality began to flourish.

Women become more open-minded about others' struggles, and how certain women struggle in certain ways. Kimberle Crenshaw, a gender and race scholar, coined the term in

## KIMBERLE CRENSHAW AND INTERSECTIONALITY:

Intersectionality is a theory that describes how multiple different layers of oppression have different impacts on women and how they experience the world. For example, a Black woman experiences the world differently than a white woman, a disabled woman experiences the world differently from a non-disabled one, but a Black, disabled woman will experience femininity completely differently from those 4 women. Different layers of identities create different experiences for women, and intersectionality is about acknowledging those specific struggles and including them in our feminism.



## FOURTH WAVE FEMINISM: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Fourth-wave feminism is a feminist movement that began in the early 2010s and is the current wave of feminism we live under. Fourth-wave feminists use new methods of activism to address issues such as reproductive rights, equal pay, and sexual assault. They also focus on gendered norms and the marginalization of women in society.

The use of the internet defines the fourth wave of feminism. There has been a larger focus on breaking down barriers and ensuring intersectionality is integrated into any feminist movement.

Some major events in the fourth wave have been the #metoo movement, the overturning of Roe v Wade, and the challenge of white feminism.

# LITTLE WOMEN & WAVES OF FEMINISM-- CONT'D

## LET'S THINK:

*What would Little Women look like if it took place today, in a fourth-wave world?*

*Do you think intersectionality is necessary for feminism? Are there experiences in your own life that can be described by the theory of intersectionality?*

*Who would you consider a feminist icon today? has the definition changed over the years?*

## GLOSSARY:

**FEMINIST THEORY: THE IDEA OF FEMINISM, WHEN TALKED ABOUT AS A CONCEPT.**

**SENECA FALLS CONVENTION: THE FIRST-EVER WOMEN'S CONVENTION, BROUGHT ABOUT BY A GROUP OF WOMEN WHO WANTED TO DISCUSS SOCIAL, CIVIL, AND RELIGIOUS RIGHTS FOR WOMEN.**

**CHOICE FEMINISM: A TYPE OF FEMINISM THAT EMPHASIZES WOMEN'S FREEDOM TO CHOOSE THEIR PATH IN LIFE- TRADITIONAL OR NONTRADITIONAL.**

**EQUITY: CREATING EQUALITY BY ACCOUNTING FOR UNFAIR PLAYING FIELDS AND BALANCING THEM.**

**TITLE IX: A CIVIL RIGHTS LAW, PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEX.**

We invite you to cut/tear out the next few pages of this guide that are inspired by teen magazines!

# MARCH SISTER SPOTLIGHT

# GO girl

This just in:  
The Loss of  
Tweenhood



ARE THEY REALLY  
'LITTLE'?  
MEG MARCH ON 'GOING  
FROM A GIRL TO A  
WOMAN'

Quiz: Which  
March sister  
are you?

AMY MARCH ON  
BURNING SISTER  
JO'S JOURNAL: "SHE  
DESERVED IT!"

*Jo says she'll never speak to her again.*

# AMY MARCH

# INSIDE LOOK

Beth March's piano  
compositions!

\$ 2.95 FEBRUARY 1



# THE LOSS OF TWEENHOOD--GOING FROM A GIRL TO A WOMAN



One of the most enchanting and exciting parts about being a tween for me was purchasing a teen magazine. I would tag along to my mom's grocery store trips in the hopes that I would find the newest Tiger Beat, and the first friend I ever made in middle school had a cool older sister who had a subscription to Alternative Press. Their sister had gone off to college the year we met, so they would sneak me their AP magazines in between classes and I would read them front to back, returning them by the end of the day. I remember I even ended up getting to keep some of them--I would get so excited seeing Black Veil Brides, My Chemical Romance, and Fall Out Boy on the covers or even being interviewed! These bands and their music made me feel seen and heard especially through the difficult times that I was facing. Getting "insider info" on the music that healed me was so fulfilling and so much fun. Because that's what these magazines were intended for--pure fun. To encourage tweens to not have to "grow up" the second they set foot in middle school. That in between period of being a child but not really a teenager yet is one of the most confusing times in an adolescent's life, but it can also be the first time one starts to really find themselves, just like it was for me. I stopped listening to the top 40's hits--I never even *liked* those hits, I just wanted to impress my peers. My older brother who was a teenager in the 90's gave me his first generation iPod and I discovered Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nirvana, Soundgarden, Foo Fighters, and Alanis Morissette. And I loved what I heard. Even just liking these musicians is what helped me to make friends--I would wear merchandise with their logos and names and I would get compliments on them and thus, I had met my first set of true friends whom I shared these interests with and similar experiences that were being talked about in the music. I started to feel comfortable in my own skin. I felt like I was a part of something bigger than myself-, a community of like-minded people. And these teen/tween magazines helped to bring us all together.

For the March sisters, it was the plays that Jo would write and that they would all perform in. Louisa May Alcott and Anna Alcott Pratt, the real life Jo and Meg, started their own theatre troupe that still exists today, the Concord Players, their own community. We invite you to reflect upon your own experiences with tweenhood, if applicable, and also to think about how the jump from a child right into a teenager can be a jarring and even isolating experience, but mainly to use these pieces of prose and other contents of our mini-magazine to just *have fun* and tap into your inner child and/or tween!

By: Liv Queen Majestic



I was a “tween ” almost ten years ago now, in the years 2015-2018. Tweenhood, to me, meant for the first time, I was able to choose what I wanted, on my own.

It wasn't like I was barred from making decisions before I turned 11– but, for the first time, I was faced with the reality that I could choose. I could buy my clothes from the Divided line at H&M, instead of going to GapKids with my mom. I decided against listening to the music popular on the radio and fell in love with early 2000s pop-punk, considering myself a post-emo “emo kid”. I realized, also, that I had the freedom to explore thoughts I had never explored before. I started thinking of what I wanted to do when I grew up– (at that time, it was to be on Broadway or a YouTube vlogger), what I wanted my style to look like, and what makeup I wanted to wear. Most importantly, I let myself explore something that had formerly been daunting– my thoughts about other girls. The ultimate hallmark of my tweenhood was having my queer realization, around age 12. It wasn't that I realized I didn't like boys– I had always liked boys. But, I realized that I liked girls and boys in the same way, and that scared me and excited me at the same time. It was the first step on a long journey of self-discovery before I had even learned the word bisexual, and what it meant for someone like me.

What scares me the most about the loss of tweenhood in young girls today is the loss of that discovery period. With every label in the world accessible on the internet, and a push by conservative culture to eradicate any mention of self-discovery, I can only remind tweens that it is okay to be curious. It is okay to have those messy thoughts, to dive deep inside yourself and asses what you are afraid of. It is okay to discover yourself during your tween years– after all, those years are about discovery.

By: Eva Strazek

# Boybands, Blogging, and Being Bold

by: Steph Heinz

In 2012, on my older sister's 15th birthday, we went to Target. I was eleven, and confused as to why my sister was running inside to buy her own birthday present. She returned with a CD. It was the debut album of the hottest band on the planet, *Up All Night* by One Direction. I liked their music, but when my sister showed me a photo of them, I didn't find any of them cute. Then, I went home and watched every single one of their music videos on the shared family computer. As Harry (Harry Styles, who is now a megastar in his own right) crooned into the camera, I felt a deep sinking feeling in my guts. It wasn't disgust or fear. It was infatuation.

At this point in our lives, my older sister and I did not get along. We would argue constantly, getting into physical fights over me stealing her clothes or hogging the TV. Even as I began liking One Direction, there was a sense of competition. Who liked them more? Seeing as she had a cell phone with internet access and I didn't, I was smart enough to concede that battle. Still, I wanted to be a part of the fandom like she was, not just a casual listener. That's when I joined Tumblr.

For the uninitiated, Tumblr is a blogging platform that allows users to make posts and "re-blog" others' posts, which meant that information and inside jokes circulated quickly. To be clear, I was definitely too young to be on Tumblr. I was eleven. At this point, Tumblr did not have any rules about posting graphic content, so I was exposed to a lot of things that I should not have been. Still, despite its inappropriate nature, I quickly found myself entangled in the One Direction fandom. I was introduced to fan-fiction, fan-art, and was finally able to keep up with things like music releases, tour, and of course, drama.

My blog became my whole world. It was curated exactly to my tastes, with a custom theme that I changed frequently. It was my way of self-expression, and I could do it completely in private. No one from school followed me there, and my sister didn't either. I didn't have to worry about people judging what I was posting. Tumblr was not a very social social media site, which was fine by me. People didn't post pictures of themselves, or their actual lives. It was almost entirely about interacting with a community of people with similar obsessions, and in doing so, I was able to explore parts of myself I wouldn't have otherwise.

Tumblr not only became a place to engage in fan culture, but also learn information I otherwise wouldn't have. I learned about the struggle for gay marriage and queer history, sex education and abortion rights, and when the Black Lives Matter movement began in 2014, I kept up with it on Tumblr. It was my first introduction to politics and social justice, and those posts lived on my blog right alongside GIFs of Niall Horan shirtless.

# Boybands, Blogging, and Being Bold

by: Steph Heinz

In real life, I was not as I presented myself on Tumblr. I grew up in poverty in an upper middle class suburb, with a single mom. We were on food stamps, and almost homeless at various points in my life. I had gap teeth and big chunky glasses, and went to middle school every day wearing leggings with holes because we couldn't afford to buy new ones. Between figuring out which poster to tear out of Tiger Beat, (Louis was on one side, and Zayn on the other! How was I supposed to choose?) I was also figuring out if we could even eat dinner that night. It was hard to make friends when you couldn't afford to do normal tween things, like go to Starbucks or the movies. Being on Tumblr, imagining that I was so beautiful that Harry Styles would see me in a crowd of thousands and instantly fall in love, it was escapism. I worry that tweens nowadays don't have that outlet.

There are no more teen heartthrobs. Not on the scale that One Direction was, and who are actually teens. This was something that I noticed even in high school (2016-2020), as One Direction went on an indefinite hiatus and no one took their place. Even the genre of teen TV shows, like The Vampire Diaries, Teen Wolf, and Pretty Little Liars, had vanished. One Direction and Tumblr offered me escapism from my tumultuous tween years and the ability to express myself without judgment. Is there a place where tweens can do that now? I'm not so sure.

As opposed to ten years ago, social media now is decidedly less tween-friendly. On TikTok, I see middle school girls posting "Get Ready With Me" videos and my stomach hurts. As social media has become more of a societal necessity, I worry for the young girls that are bombarded with online rhetoric that shames and sexualizes them. I worry that there is no place online for them to express themselves without thinking about being perceived by others and judged. I worry that the artists they idolize are becoming few and far between, replaced by influencers who are trying to sell them a lifestyle that is edited and impossible.

Being able to be "ugly" and "cringe" was an invaluable part of my tweenhood. I had glasses, braces, acne, and tiny cutouts of Harry Styles' face proudly adorned on my nails. It allowed me to explore my identity, my interests, and my style. It allowed me to make mistakes. I want tween girls today to have that same privilege. Because eventually, the braces come off. And you get contact lenses. And your skin clears up. But you are irrevocably changed by those years of freedom, and grow into someone that is confident and bold in expressing yourself.

My older sister and I's relationship was forever altered by that day in March 2012. We bonded over our mutual love of One Direction, and soon found that we had similar taste in lots of other things too. We attended two One Direction concerts together after scrounging up the money, cried in each other's arms when Zayn left the band, and have spent the last decade becoming best friends

Last year, we flew to LA to see Harry Styles at the Forum, in the coveted pit. I stood there with her, remembering how ten years ago, we hated each other and were so poor that we had to scrounge for change on the car floor for gas money. The lights went down, and we screamed just as loud as we had ten years ago. I looked down at our matching One Direction tattoos, and I thanked the universe for tweenhood.

# DEVELOPING WITH PRIVACY

BY: KATHERINE SHUERT

I actually hated being 13. Middle-school, junior-high, whatever you want to call it - genuinely some of the worst years of my life. I think it is definitely true that those are the years when you actually start developing an individual sense of self. I read somewhere at some point that you don't really start developing your own distinct taste in music till 14. So yeah, you become a real person, distinct from your parents or siblings, your friends, classmates, and the general masses. That all sounds pretty great in theory and it was for me at first. Then when I realized how different I was from a lot of the people around me, I felt really lonely. I don't want to paint some picture of myself as some total social outcast, that isn't really the truth. I liked the person I was becoming, it was hard to figure out that I did, but it's true. I was just so different from my family that it made it hard at home. All the excitement of becoming who I am kind of halted when I got off the bus.

I did that totally cliché thing of spending all my time in my room, which was constantly redecorated to mirror my constant evolution of self. A lot of band posters, playbills, random record sleeves from Goodwill I thought looked cool. I used to lay on my floor with headphones in for hours, hiding from the loneliness of feeling different. At school I might've been a weird theatre kid who played a cello and wore way too many infinity scarves, but I had weird theatre kid friends who were also in band or orchestra and made similarly atrocious fashion choices. At home, I had to be different all by myself, and that sucked. So my room, and its constant rotation of posters, was where I could be different in private, rather than just alone.

Honestly everyone should be grateful I did a lot of my time becoming myself in private. No one needed to be witness for most of that, for my sake and theirs. I was embarrassing and cringey, and that was probably the least of my crimes. Luckily the only record of that is in my memory.

I don't want to sound like some grouchy old person who blames everything on social media. I have an instagram, I have Tiktok, I refuse to get twitter. I just know that I'm guilty of treating my instagram like my middle school bedroom - a reflection of who I think I want to be. The problem with that is that it's not private anymore and it's curated for others, not yourself.

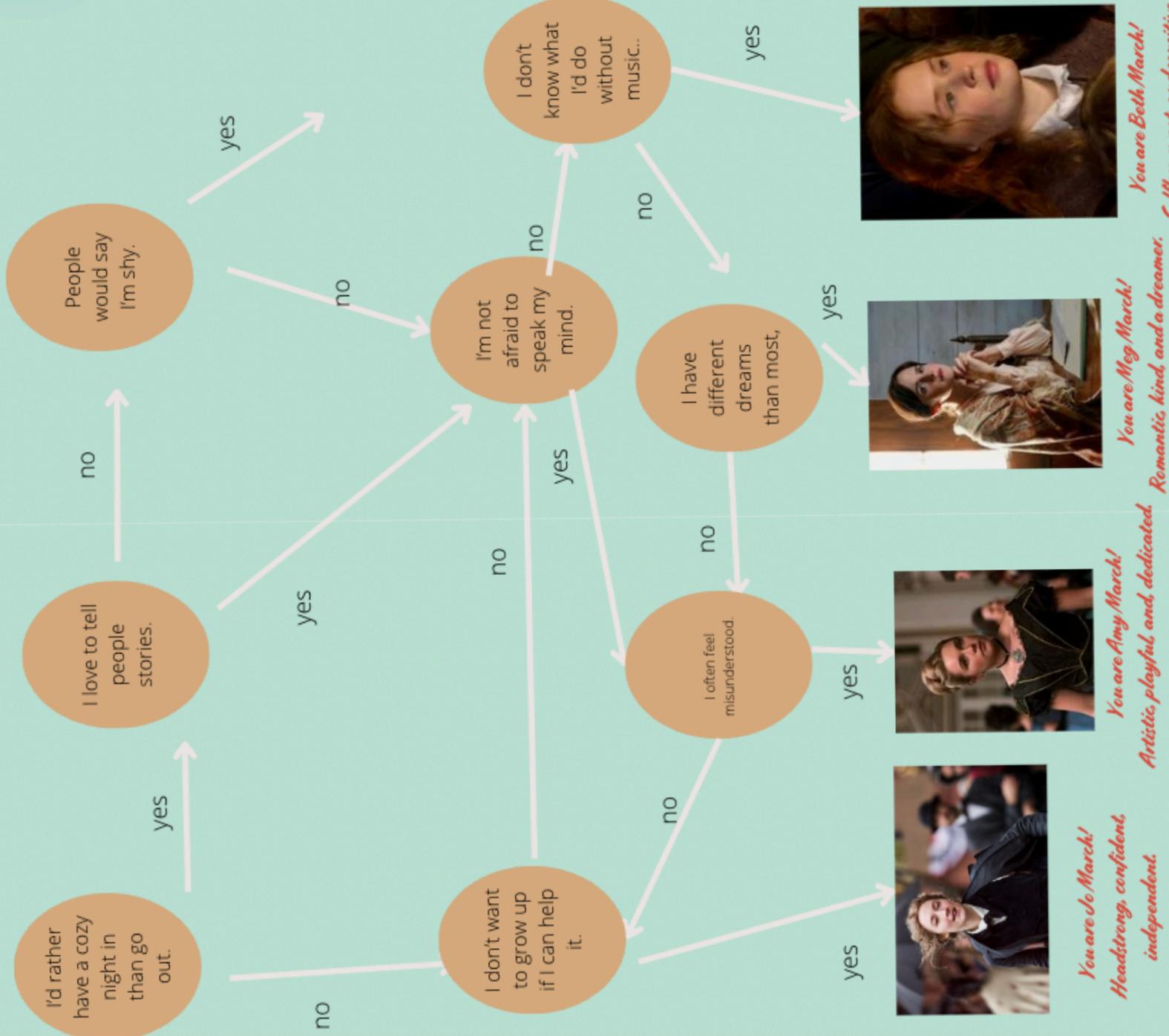
I wake up everyday thankful that I didn't get an instagram till highschool, middle-school me would have done irreconcilable damage on there. While I would not recommend my "tween" years as the model and healthy experience, I think there is something to be said for some sequestration during that time. Experimenting in private has its benefits. Those few pre-teen years were so sheltered before, now they seem less so if at all. Coming out on the other side of it, I am not convinced sheltered is the dirty word we think it is.

# WHICH OF THE MARCH SISTERS ARE YOU?!

Follow the direction of the flow chart based on your answers to find out!



*Start here!*



*You are Jo March!  
Headstrong, confident,  
independent.*

*You are Amy March!  
Artistic, playful, and dedicated.*

*You are Meg March!  
Romantic, kind, and a dreamer.*

*You are Beth March!  
Selfless, sweet, and sensitive.*

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# ACTIVITY: DESIGNING LITTLE WOMEN

IN THIS ACTIVITY, STUDENTS WILL APPLY THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS TO CREATE A CONTEMPORARY COSTUME MOODBOARD FOR A CHARACTER FROM LITTLE WOMEN.

Please encourage students to refer back to the interview with Michelle Escobedo in order to help guide their design process.

## MATERIALS:

Paper, Writing Utensil, Laptop/Phone  
Recommended Sites: Pinterest, Google Slides, Canva

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have students count off numbers 1-5. These numbers will correspond with an assigned character. (Ex: 1 - Meg, 2 - Jo, 3 - Beth, 4 - Amy, 5 - Laurie)
2. With their assigned character in mind, students will be given 5 minutes to write a brief description of the character's personality/traits/etc.
3. Using this description, students will begin to design a modern costume "moodboard" for their assigned character.
  - a. Students will be given 10-15 minutes to build their moodboard.
  - b. Students should **not** discuss their concepts with each other yet!
  - c. 5 images, including major clothing items like shirt/pants/shoes/etc.
4. Encourage students to think about color choices and style as they select images.
  - a. What do those color choices represent?
  - b. Would your character follow a certain trend? Or make their own?
5. When time is up, students will convene with their small group (Ex: The "Beth" Group) and share their concepts.
6. Discuss in small groups:
  - a. First Impressions of others' designs: What is this communicating?
  - b. How did your character analysis inform your choices?
  - c. How does your character's design differ from your own style?
7. Share Out with the Class!
  - a. What are the commonalities between your designs for [character]?
  - b. What are the differences?
  - c. How do we use fashion to communicate in our own lives?

# ACTIVITY: THINK-PAIR-SHARE

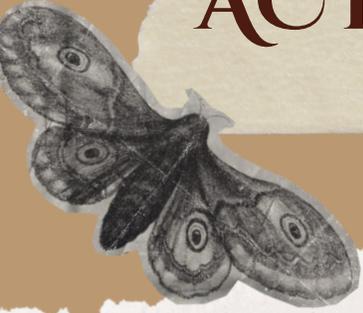
THE THINK-PAIR-SHARE ACTIVITY IS MEANT AS A WAY TO PRACTICE INTERVIEW SKILLS AND ACTIVE LISTENING FOR THE TAKE HOME ACTIVITY.

SAMPLE PROMPT: WHAT STOOD OUT TO YOU MOST FROM THE WAVES OF FEMINISM READING AND WHY?  
\*FEEL FREE TO ADJUST OR CREATE YOUR OWN PROMPT BASED ON THE INTERESTS OF YOUR CLASS

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. With the class, go over standards for active listening that will be mirrored in this activity
  - a. Receiving
  - b. Understanding
  - c. Evaluating
  - d. Remembering
  - e. Responding
2. Give your class time to think about prompt (recommended 2 minutes)
  - a. Be prepared to side coach to help students understand the prompt better
3. Instruct the class to get into pairs
  - a. Once in pairs, have each partner introduce themselves if necessary and ask each other for permission to share
  - b. Instruct the pairs to decide who is person A and who is person B
4. Instruct person A to share their thoughts with person B (recommended 3 minutes)
  - a. Remind the pairs that the listener should not interrupt the speaker
  - b. Encourage the speaker to relay an organized verbal response

# ACTIVITY: THINK-PAIR-SHARE



## INSTRUCTIONS

5. Instruct person B to relay person A's thoughts back to them (recommended 2 minutes)
  - a. Person B should try to relay an organized response that captures the details of person A's response
6. Instruct person B to ask person A for further details or clarifying questions (recommended 2 minutes)
7. Repeat steps 4-6 with person B as the speaker and person A as the listener
8. (OPTIONAL) Have the pairs pair up and share
  - a. Each pair should find one other pair to group up with
  - b. Each group member will share out their original partner's thoughts (recommended 2 minutes per person)
  - c. (OPTIONAL) Give the small groups additional time to discuss after hearing everyone's thoughts (recommended 5 minutes)



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At the Island 189

gray shore. They could see the white foam of the breaking rollers, and the gray rocks below but there was no sign of motorboat or of any human being.

“We may as well stay right on this hillside, behind the rocks,” Chet suggested. “If we go roaming about the shore we're likely to run into Red and his gang.”

“Perhaps they've taken their own boats and gone after the Hardy boys.”

“They may have. But we can't take a chance on it. If any of them are prowling around it would be just as bad.”

# ACTIVITY: TAKE-HOME INTERVIEW

A decorative collage featuring various elements: a large red flower in the top right, a yellow flower with a blue center, a pink flower, and a blue flower on the left side. There are also several pieces of torn paper with faint, illegible text scattered throughout. The background is a light beige color with a subtle pattern of small dots.

THIS TAKE-HOME INTERVIEW ACTIVITY IS A WAY TO EXTEND CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE PLAY AND RELATED CONTENT. IDEALLY, THIS INTERVIEW SHOULD BE CONDUCTED WITH AN OLDER WOMAN IN YOUR LIFE, BUT IT WILL WORK FOR ANYONE.

## TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

1. When interviewing someone, the first thing you want to make sure of is the interviewee's comfort
  - a. Double-check that this is a good time for them to talk
  - b. Ask permission to record or take notes (although neither is necessary for this activity)
  - c. Start with easier or more casual questions
2. Come prepared
  - a. Come with some pre-prepared questions
  - b. Do some background research on who you're talking to
3. Ask open-ended questions
  - a. Open-ended questions don't have yes or no answers
  - b. They allow for longer, more reflective answers that relay feelings, opinion, ideas, and stories
4. Ask follow-up questions
  - a. Follow-up questions ask the interviewee to elaborate, provide further details, or clarify details you've already heard
5. Give your interviewee space to say what they want to say
  - a. After you've finished asking all your questions, ask your interviewee if there's anything they want to add that they haven't been asked or gotten the chance to say yet
6. Be gracious
  - a. It's important to always thank your interviewee for their time and attention



# ACTIVITY: TAKE-HOME INTERVIEW

## TAKE ACTION:

*Little Women* is a story that has captivated audiences for generations. Themes around womanhood and feminism appear persistently relevant. Now is the chance to continue your conversations around these topics with an older woman in your life.

We have provided some sample questions to get your interview started, but it's up to you to curate and develop questions based on your interests and the person you're talking to.

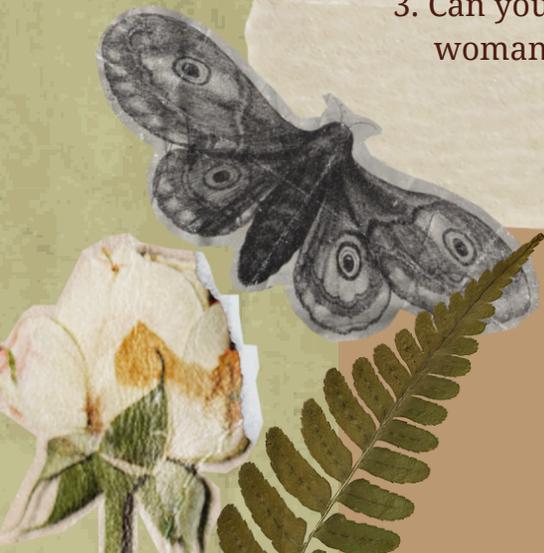


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## SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about a time when you felt you struggled because of your gender? How did you deal with that?
2. What was your conception of feminism when you were in your teens vs. your 20s/30s, vs. when you became older?
3. Can you tell me about a meaningful relationship you've had with another woman in your life? How did it impact you?



# ACTIVITY: LOVELY LETTER WRITING



So much love and care goes into the act of letter writing—to feel inclined to grab the nearest piece of paper and decorate it however you’d wish, maybe even splurge a bit on stationery and stickers, and write your heart out! Perhaps even your hands will get tired, but you won’t care because of the joy it will bring your recipient, and the joy it will bring you to write it. Letter writing is one of the most thoughtful acts of love that there is—letters hold words and sentiments that you can easily hold onto for eternity and that often outlive us. Letters hold explorations of deep and private thoughts that someone deliberately chooses to share with a certain person.

Letter writing is a great way to let someone know that you are thinking of them and sending good fortune and thoughts their way. It is a great way to show that you care, especially since at this time, letter writing is a rare art form and practice. It is an effective way for people to articulate thoughts more properly than speaking aloud, and can even be easier than having a face to face conversation at times. Letters can serve as a reminder of a person that you can hold dear to you—you know that the writer’s hands touched the paper and spent much time, effort, and energy in creating something for you, in sharing something with you, sharing themselves with you. They are a great relic to carry when you want to remember someone. The anticipation of waiting for a letter is also truly an exhilarating experience—it gives you something to look forward to.

Before diving into this activity, think about Father’s letters in *Little Women*. Why is it that his letters mean so much to his daughters and his wife? Are letters an effective way to hold onto care and affection, and to be reminded of it? Are letters a good way to show someone that you care about them?

Once you have pinpointed someone you want to write your letter to, feel free to either write or type your letter on the next few pages! You can write about anything you want to tell them, and you can give this letter to them if you want to, keep it for yourself, rip it up, throw it away, whatever you would like to do. Think about how much the person you picked means to you. Talk about some things that have happened since you last saw them that you want to tell them, think about how they make you feel, think about things you love about them, things that reminded you of them, etc.

**IF WRITING BY HAND YOU WILL NEED:**

**STATIONARY (STICKERS, WASHI TAPE, SCRAPBOOK PAPER, ETC)  
WRITING UTENSIL (PENCIL, PEN, MARKER, OR COLORED PENCIL)  
THE NEXT FEW PAGES OF THIS PACKET**









**THANK YOU!**

**We hope you enjoyed (or will enjoy) your showing of *Little Women*  
and the time you spent with it after and/or before!**