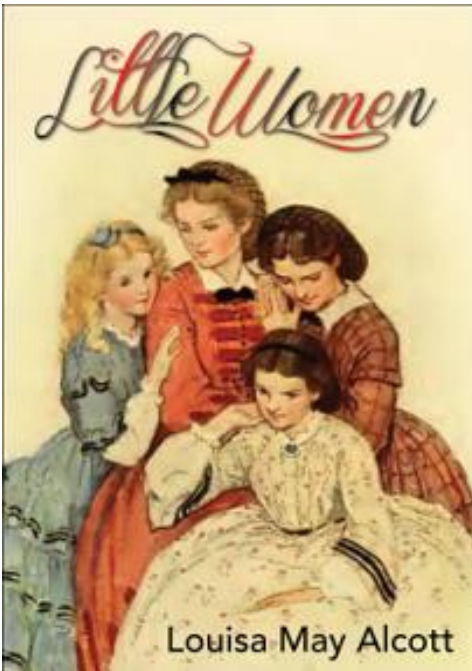


Language and Literature 8 / U.S. History 8  
Summer Reading Assignment



All incoming 8th graders are required to read *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. This novel will prepare students to engage in the first Language and Literature 8 and U.S. History unit of study. We begin the year in the 1840s with the transcendentalist movement and the “rugged individuals” who are taming the West. From there, whether in LL8 or USH8, we will examine the “spirit of the time” from 1848 to present and how it shaped what it has meant—and means—to be “American.”

Louisa May Alcott was born in 1832 and grew up in Concord, Massachusetts. Like her fictional character Jo March, she struggled against society’s expectations of young women of that era. She became a staunch feminist, someone who believes men and women are equal, and never married – unwilling to make the sacrifices to her career that marriage would entail. She was also a fervent supporter of women’s suffrage and was the first woman to register to vote in Concord. Louisa May Alcott was a prolific author, writing industriously right up until her death in 1888.

As you read, outline answers (bullet point) to the questions below. For each question, your notes should include no more than three (3) relevant, specific, and significant quotations: one from the beginning, middle, and end of the novel. Be prepared to share your answers in class discussion, as well as submit them at the start of the school year. You will also need these notes to help you complete the first writing assignment, which will be your first graded assessment of the semester.

1. What does the novel reveal about the time period? Think about the following:
  - The role of women in nineteenth-century America - are the March sisters satisfied with this?
  - Education - who can get it and what does it look like?
  - Class - to what social class do the March sisters belong? What did it mean to grow up in that social class?
2. At the end of the 19th century, *Little Women* appeared on a list of “The 20 Best Books for Boys.” Why might this have been the case?