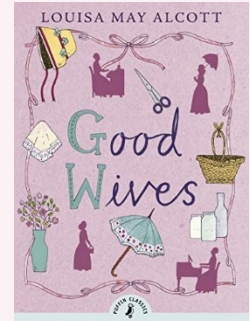




TEEN'S BOOK CLUB GUIDE

GOOD WIVES

By Louisa May Alcott



“I’d rather see you poor men’s wives, if you were happy, beloved, contented, than queens on thrones, without self-respect and peace.”- Marmee

GENRE

Classic Fiction

Family Saga

Biographical

THEMES

Family and Friendship

Womanhood

Mortality

Poverty

Duty

Ambition and Women’s Rights

CHARACTERS

Jo March

Jo March is now an independent young lady, a successful writer and holding fast to her desire to remain unmarried – despite Laurie’s longing to make her his wife. Jo, in good humour, refers to herself as the ‘man of the house’ in the March cottage, despite her father being back from the war. Jo battles with the temptation to sensationalise her writing for quick publication and financial gain. Eventually, she learns to write authentically to please herself, saying, “I want to do something splendid...something heroic or wonderful that won’t be forgotten after I’m dead. I don’t know what, but I’m on the watch for it and

mean to astonish you all someday.” Although Jo deeply desires greatness, her humble motivations are to provide and care for Beth and her dearest sister's health struggles.

Mrs Meg (March) Brooke

Meg March has married and has now become Mrs Brooke. Delighted in her small yet cozy home, she enjoys playing house with John. Meg is romantic, sweet-natured, hard-working and feminine, and she keeps her house well despite the many hiccups! Meg struggles with poverty, and within her first few years of marriage, she learns a powerful lesson about managing finances and being a good wife and mother.

Mr John Brooke

Mr Brooke is a tender and patient husband to Meg. He strives to provide for her and the children, working hard to escape the poverty he is familiar with. He is a strong father figure who disciplines the children well.

Elizabeth (Beth) March

Beth is now a young lady, and growing up for her has proved challenging. Her health ails and her hopes for the future are forsook as she knows within her heart that her cross to bear is a short life; she will never be a wife, keep her own house, or have dear children of her own. Beth is a model example of patient endurance and a sweet soul whose hope is in heaven.

Amy March

Amy has grown more beautiful and ladylike. She's learnt lessons of responding to jealousy in kindness and has pleased Aunt March so that she is rewarded with a trip abroad. Relishing her new life of luxury and travel, Amy focuses on her art, explores all manner of wealthy society, and falls in love.

Marmee

Marmee continues to be a confidant to her dear daughters, providing wisdom, encouragement and comfort throughout their days as they each blossom into womanhood in their own way.

Theodore (Laurie) Laurence

Laurie submits to his grandfather's will and attends university. However, in his typical cheeky and light-hearted fashion, he continues to overspend, delight in questionable society and flirt with girls. His love for Jo grows, and after a painful rejection, he flees overseas in an attempt to move on with his life. While falling unexpectedly in love again, Laurie strives to become the man Amy knows he's capable of being – and it takes the love of this good woman to help him along the way.

Aunt March

Aunt March has taken Amy under her wing and provides the best opportunities for her niece that money can buy.

Hannah

Hannah is the March family's loyal servant. She is more of a friend than an employee.

Professor Friedrich Bhaer

Friedrich is a German professor and a dear friend to Jo. He is steadfast in his faith and beliefs, and his kind and quiet charisma stirs something within Jo's heart.

STORYLINE

Set three years after the final events in 'Little Women', 'Good Wives' continues the story and follows the lives of the four March girls – now all Little Women.

Meg navigates married life and financial strain, Jo succeeds in getting her books published and accepts a job as a governess, and Beth struggles to maintain her health while sensing her future is short. At the same time, Amy goes abroad and blossoms from the family's baby into a thriving young lady and hopeful artist.

This is a wholesome story about four young women navigating friendship, love, marriage, duty and loss.

1 QUESTION ONE

How has time changed the March sisters? Discuss each sister's progress since their declarations of goodness in 'Little Women'.

2 QUESTION TWO

Mr and Mrs March are wise role models and mentors to those around them. Why do you think this is so? Do you have a mentor in your life?

3 QUESTION THREE

It is said about John Brooke that "Poverty made a man of him." How can our struggles sanctify and transform us? How can we hinder the process of growth through hardship?

4 QUESTION FOUR

Amy returns jealousy and rudeness with kind acts of grace, a sure sign of maturity and growth. Can you think of a time when others treated you poorly? Were you able to respond with grace? If not, what could you do differently next time?

5 QUESTION FIVE

When it's decided that Amy will go abroad and Jo is to remain home, Jo struggles with jealous feelings. Do you think Jo's feelings were valid? Discuss how this parallels Amy missing the theatre in 'Little Women'.

6 QUESTION SIX

"Hearts like flowers ought to be handled delicately." Discuss Laurie's proposal to Jo. At the time, Laurie was heartbroken, but how did things turn out for the best?

7 QUESTION SEVEN

Laurie tells Jo, "I'm glad you can't flirt." Why is modesty important, and how do the March sisters model this to us?

8 QUESTION EIGHT

The new philosophical ideas seem appealing to Jo. Still, after hearing Professor Friedrich Bhaer's rebuttal for religion, she says, "The old beliefs that had lasted so long seemed better than the new. God was not a blind force and immortality was not a pretty fable but a blessed fact." Discuss.

9 QUESTION NINE

"There are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping, and the sweet, sunshiny presence vanishes, leaving silence and shadow behind." Discuss how you felt when Beth died.
