

Plan a circle: “Little Women”

Louisa May Alcott (1868–69) · public-domain novel (Part 1 or whole) · grades 7–9 · ~2–3 weeks. Rights: Public domain.

Kit section 5 (group agreement & calendar) filled in for one text — a finished plan students see before writing their own. *Tinted italic* = sample answers.

Preview note: Preview period gender expectations, religious references, and illness/death (Beth); plan support.

Text, group, and target

Text / author / edition	<i>“Little Women” — Louisa May Alcott (1868–69). Public-domain novel (part 1 or whole).</i>
Group / period / dates	<i>Jo’s group · Period ____ · Meetings ____ & ____</i>
Grade / TEKS target (p. 3)	Grade 8 · §110.24 — 7(A): theme through characters/events; 6(C,D): support inferences, summary; 1(D): student-led discussion.
Learning intention	We are learning to explain how the March sisters’ choices reveal a theme about ambition, family, and sacrifice.
Success criteria	I bring one open question, cite two details with chapter/page, respond to a peer, and name how my thinking changed.

Reading map & calendar

Chunk	Read through	Meeting date · leader
<i>1</i>	<i>Ch. 1–11: the sisters, “playing pilgrims,” Christmas, and meeting Laurie.</i>	<i>Wk 1 · Leader: Jo</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Ch. 12–23: Beth’s scarlet fever, Meg’s romance, and Father’s return.</i>	<i>Wk 2 · Leader: Meg</i>

Members & first-meeting jobs (p. 7 roles)

Member	First job	Rotates to (next meeting)
<i>Jo</i>	<i>Questioner</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>
<i>Meg</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>
<i>Beth</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>	<i>Evidence tracker</i>
<i>Amy</i>	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Questioner</i>

Text-specific discussion questions (open — more than one answer)

- **Predict:** Four sisters vow to bear their “burdens” — which sister’s ambition will cost or reward her most?
- **Question:** Why might Alcott frame the sisters’ growth as a “pilgrim’s progress”?
- **Clarify:** What does Jo mean by wanting to “do something splendid”?
- **Summarize:** Trace one sister’s main change in Part 1, without opinion.
- **Interpret the theme:** How do the sisters’ choices reveal a theme about ambition versus duty? Use two details.

Optional Jigsaw lenses (p. 4): *Character* (Jo and her sisters) · *Theme* (ambition vs. duty) · *Structure* (the Pilgrim’s Progress frame) · *Setting* (the Civil War home front) · *Language* (the narrator’s moral asides).

Sample 3–2–1 notes: Beth, character (jo) lens

Name: *Beth* · Home group: *Jo's group* · Period ____ · Meetings ____ & ____ · Section: *"Little Women," Chunk 1* · Expert lens: *Character (Jo)*

What a finished prep looks like. Kit section 6 / Organizer A completed for one reader, so students can compare their notes to a strong model.

Questions <i>Which matters more to Jo — ambition or family?</i> <i>Is sacrifice rewarded in Part 1?</i>	3 · Important ideas <i>1. Jo wants independence and to become a writer.</i> <i>2. She sacrifices for family — selling her hair to fund Marmee's trip.</i> <i>3. Beth's illness draws the sisters closer together.</i>
Vocabulary <i>genteel = respectably refined.</i> <i>penitent = sorry for wrongdoing.</i>	2 · Supporting details <i>1. Jo cuts and sells her hair (Part 1). → Shows sacrifice over vanity.</i> <i>2. The sisters give their Christmas breakfast to the Hummels (opening). → Duty over comfort.</i>

1 · Summary in my own words

Four sisters grow up in wartime poverty, each balancing personal ambition with love and duty to family.

Bring to the circle

My interpretation: *Growing up means balancing one's own dreams with care for others.*

Synthesis (two lenses): *Jo's choices (character) carry the theme: her ambition matters, but her sacrifices define her.*

Text points: *the hair (Chunk 1) and the Hummel breakfast (Chunk 1).*

After discussion: *My thinking became clearer once the group compared evidence.*

TEKS evidence: 6(C,D) supported inference; 7(A) theme through characters/events; 1(D) response to a peer.