

Classic Readers

Good Wives

Louisa May Alcott

retold by Virginia Evans & Jenny Dooley



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A Perfect Young Lady

It was usual for young ladies to visit other families. These visits were very formal. It was important to wear your best clothes, to be polite and charming, and to demonstrate perfect manners. Several neighbors had visited the March house recently and it was time for the March sisters to return the visits.

Amy was willing to show that she was a proper young lady.

“Come on, Jo! We have to make six visits today.”

“I can’t make six visits, Amy! Even one upsets me for a week!”

“But you promised to come with me, Jo.”

Jo sighed. She picked up her hat and gloves reluctantly and announced that she was ready. She was in no rush to become an “upper class socialite.”

“Jo, you’re wearing your work dress! You can’t visit people in that! Please put on something nice. You look so beautiful in your best clothes.”

Jo frowned as she put on her best dress and hat.

“I’m miserable now. I hope you’re happy, Amy.”

Amy was happy and the two girls went from house to house. At each one, Amy behaved like a perfect young lady. She had excellent manners, she spoke just enough, but not too much, and was always polite and respectful. Jo, on the other hand, had a hard time pretending to be someone else. At first she refrained from talking altogether for fear she might say the wrong thing if she spoke. Then, encouraged by Amy to be talkative, she ended up overdoing it, committing one blunder after another. On another occasion, Amy found Jo sitting on the grass chatting with the boys. Fortunately, the girls’ last two visits had to be canceled, as neither family was available, sparing Amy further embarrassment and humiliation.







An Unexpected Visitor

Comprehension

Read or listen to Chapter 9 and match the actions to the people.

Jo	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 is soon made part of the March family celebration.
Mrs March	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 is jealous of Amy's modern clothes.
Meg	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 has taken Jo's place in Laurie's heart.
Laurie	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 is not with the family but it feels as if she is there watching them.
Mr March	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 is worried about Jo, who seems lonely.
Amy	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 thinks the professor is very wise.
Mr Bhaer	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 has made great progress in her work.
Beth	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 jokes and laughs with Jo like he used to.

What do you think?

A Discuss the following questions.

- 1 Why is Mrs March worried about Jo when she hears about Amy and Laurie's engagement?
- 2 How do you think Meg feels about Amy and Laurie's engagement? Explain.
- 3 How is Jo and Laurie's relationship different now? Do you think it is easy for people to leave the past behind and move on? Why (not)?

B Find the following extracts from Chapter 9 and discuss their meanings.

- 1 p. 58: "There is truth in it, Jo. You put your heart into it, and this is what makes a story alive."
- 2 p. 61: "We can never be a boy and a girl again, Laurie. The happy old times can't come back. We are a man and a woman now and have serious things to think about. Playtime is over, but we will love and help one another as brother and sister."

Language Practice

I Complete with the words/phrases in the box.

congratulate	persuade	object
have an effect	offer	be jealous

- to someone to do something
- to to something
- to of someone/something
- to something to someone
- to on someone
- to someone

II Match the words to the definitions.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1 bond | a in a way that shows you do not trust someone |
| 2 barricade | b make an activity stop temporarily |
| 3 distressed | c the state of being confused |
| 4 ruin | d something that unites people |
| 5 interrupt | e a wall or fence that prevents entrance |
| 6 handwriting | f spoil; destroy |
| 7 suspiciously | g someone's style of writing |
| 8 bewilderment | h very upset |

III Find the antonyms of the following words, referring to the chapter.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 criticise ≠ | 5 disapproval ≠ |
| 2 cruel ≠ | 6 disrespectful ≠ |
| 3 boastful ≠ | 7 delightful ≠ |
| 4 ignorant ≠ | 8 insecure ≠ |

What happens next?

Think about the following ideas and guess which one happens next in the story. Explain your choice.

Mr Bhaer leaves the town without saying goodbye.

Laurie tries to persuade Jo to forget the professor.

Jo and the professor get married.

Something Borrowed Something Blue

Marriage is a recurring theme in “Good Wives”, as all three of the March sisters eventually get married. Meg is the first one to lead the way, Amy follows and even Jo gets married in the end, despite her statements about independence. Therefore, marriage is seen as something important, an official token of two people’s love for each other.

I How is marriage viewed in your country? Have a class discussion based on your personal experiences of weddings. The following questions will help you.

- When was the most recent wedding you attended?
- What rituals were performed? What is their significance?
- How were people dressed? What does this signify?
- How was the reception hall decorated?
- What kind of food was served?
- What kind of music was played?
- What sort of presents were the married couple offered?
- Did the couple or any of the guests do anything special according to custom?
- Do you have any photographs that you could bring to class so that you can share your experience with your teacher and classmates?

Good Wives

Leaving the grim reality of the war behind, the March family relishes the prospect of a bright future.

Their struggle for survival is over. However, the new task they are faced with is not less challenging. Will they manage to fulfil their dreams and ambitions? Will they be the winners in their struggle against life?



Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6

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