LITTLE WOMEN

Summer 2020

**Second Class: July 16**

*“More than a rousing coming-of age saga, Alcott’s rendering of four sisters making their way in the turbulent Civil War year addresses tensions equally relevant today—social responsibility vs. self-absorption, for example; money, gender and power; independent vs. prescribed thinking, and, of course, the right of women to live autonomous lives.”*

**Agenda for the Day**

* 1. Assignment for next week (on the theme of Money, Women, Power, Autonomy, Imagination, Aesthetic)
  2. Website Review *(and a volunteer to monitor chat for comments and questions).*
  3. Recap of last week’s joint observations
  4. Break Out Groups and general discussion re character and setting. (carry over from last week)
  5. Discussion of Chapters 9-23: Dilemmas, Decisions, Repercussions, Individuation
  6. Additional Literary Considerations: Voice and Language
  7. Questions or Concerns or Suggestions?

1. **Assignment for Next week**
   1. Watch *Little Women (2019)*, Written and Directed by Greta Gerwig. (available to stream on Amazon, Itunes, Netflix, Vudu, Disney plus et al. or purchase as DVD at SONY pictures.)
   2. Optional: Read Screenplay, *Little Women,* by Greta Gerwig
   3. Consider (especially those who love prior films) what you want to bring to group discussion
   4. Optional: For the fun of it, either before or after watching the film, review what you’ve read and discussed so far and think about what incidents you would choose to render if you were asked to write/direct a film.
2. **Website Review**
3. **Recap:**
   1. In first conversation, we got a sense of:
      1. who each of the sisters is and what each is trying to do as individual: 1) “conquer” herself, 2) be “good,” 3) mature into a woman within terms she accepts or rejects,
      2. how difficult the times are for the country, the region, and the family, including the absence of the accepted authority figure,
      3. how the ideas of transcendentalism, and democracy family infuse assumptions,
      4. how literary traditions influence writing,
      5. how complex it is to discern how the lives of Louisa May Alcott and of Jo March intersect—and diverge,
      6. how the characters relate to one another—the conflicts, the affinities, methods of resolution of conflicts, and the art of living together.
      7. I will use a look at Wet Plate Photographs for enhance sense of time .
4. **Character and Setting (Breakout rooms and general conversation continued from last week)** 
   1. **Group One Marmee, Father, Laurie and Hannah:**
   2. **Group Two Meg, Amy, and Aunt March;**
   3. **Group Three: Jo, Beth, and Mr. Laurence**
      1. What is your “take” on characters? March sisters, Marmee, Laurie, Mr. L, Aunt March?
      2. What do you want to be sure everyone in seminar understands about them?
      3. What questions do you have about them?
      4. Include chapters 7 & 8 in the conversations

Amy and the limes, including Marmee’s response

Jo, the burnt manuscript, the near disaster, including Marmee’s response

1. **Additional Literary considerations**
   1. Voice: Third Person, Omniscient Narrator (knows inner life of characters as well as outer).
      1. Voice “Shifts” (Occasionally “intrusive” or out of character, e.g. I/we).
      2. Narrator as commentator
      3. Philosophy often in speeches rather than direct narrator commentary
      4. Character revealed by interaction/conversation, so deliberate pairing for layers.
   2. Language:
      1. Dialogue as central means of portraying character, with adverbs for clarity and directness.
      2. Editorial commentary as way to lay out layers of character.
      3. Figurative language (infrequently used) as way to heighten moments.
      4. Language, when beyond “young adult reader,” often clarified by synonym, context, or conversation.
2. **Dilemmas, Choices, and Growing Individuation (Chapters 9-23) Small and full group discussion**
   1. What dilemmas do the individuals face?
      1. Can you generalize about those dilemmas?
   2. What choices do they have?
      1. What messages do they get--From home and the world about the choices?
   3. In what way does their personal nature interpret the choices they have?
   4. What choices do they make?
   5. What happens when they make mistakes?
   6. How much does the support they offer one another matter in their decision-making and their recovery from mistakes?
   7. If we have focused on the March sisters, what would we do if we turned the questions to Laurie? What choices does Laurie face? What support does he receive? (Laurie faces parallel dilemmas and choices, for this is a story about adolescence and the choices one will make about what one is to become and what one is to do.
   8. What conflicts has Marmee faced, and what conflicts does she face at the mid point?
3. **OPTIONAL ENTERTAINMENT: Given what you have already read, IMAGINE that you have been given funding to develop a film of Little Women in 2021. What scenes would you choose to write into a screenplay? What scenes would you leave on out? Why?**
4. Are people asking you about what Relevance the book brings now?