

Louisa May Alcott

Born: November 29, 1832 in Germantown (near Philadelphia) Pennsylvania

Died: March 6, 1888 in Roxbury (near Boston) Massachusetts

Time Period	Sampling of Notable Life Experiences	Related Writing	Additional Notes
1843-1844	Louisa's family follows Bronson Alcott to Fruitlands, his wildly impractical Utopian community. After six months, hungry, cold and destitute, the Alcotts abandon the experiment in communal living. [Chapt.. 6, p 69-86]	Louisa's childhood journal, 1843 "Transcendental Wild Oats," 1873	The young USA's first cultural movement is Transcendentalism; Louisa grows up in its inner circle. Its members find God in nature, and trust in instinct, intuition, conscience, and experience to find truth. They stress self-reliance and form small utopian communities, Most support abolition of slavery and women's rights.
1844-1848	Back in Concord, MA, Louisa is home-schooled and learns about literature and nature from Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. She writes constantly- poetry, her journal, and plays she performs with her sisters. [Chapt 7, p.87-106]	Louisa's novel <i>Moods</i> (1864) features characters based on Emerson, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and herself. <i>Flower Fables</i> , her first book, published at twenty-one, is based on stories inspired by Thoreau and told by Louisa to Ellen Emerson and other local children.	Incidents in "Little Women" were based on Louisa's life in Concord between the ages of twelve and sixteen, and lived at Hillside. The physical setting described in the book is Orchard House, where the family moved when Louisa was in her mid-twenties. They had sold Hillside to Nathaniel Hawthorne and his family, who renovated and renamed it Wayside.
1848-1858	The Alcotts move to a Boston slum to find work sewing, teaching, doing laundry, etc. and are frequently separated. Louisa begins to earn five or ten dollars for her stories. [Chapt. 8, p 107-125]	"How I Went Out to Service" <i>Work: a Story of Experience</i>	Because of her family's struggles, Alcott is forced to move more than 30 times before she is age 25. She loves the feeling of independence that comes when she is able to support herself and help her family with her writing.
1862-1863	Louisa works as a nurse in Washington D.C. tending wounded soldiers wounded in the bloody Civil War Battle of Fredricksburg. She contracts Typhoid Fever and returns home gravely ill. [Chapt.11, p 159-176]	<i>Hospital Sketches</i> (first bestseller, 1862)	Alcott recognizes from the success of <i>Hospital Sketches</i> that realism and truth give her writing power. She learns to tailor her writing for different publications and audiences to support her family. She enjoys most writing sensational thrillers anonymously or as A.M. Barnard.