

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On sale: October 27, 2009

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

***The Woman Behind Little Women* by Harriet Reisen**

ADVANCE PRAISE

“Here, finally, is Alcott whole, a trailblazing woman grasping freedom in a time of sexual inequality and war, a survivor of cruel tragedies, a quintessential American writer. Reisen’s magnificent biography will be in high demand when PBS premieres her American Masters documentary.” —***Booklist*** (starred review)

“A deliciously palatable biography of the iconic writer whose life was ‘as full of plot and character as any [she] invented.’ Reisen deftly weaves the story of Alcott’s life into the rich social, cultural and historical fabric of mid-19th-century New England. An absorbing portrait.”
—***Kirkus Reviews***

“Reisen’s rich empathy for Alcott never falters . . . heart-rending.” —***Publishers Weekly***

“Reisen’s lifelong fascination with *Little Women* and the woman who wrote it has produced an absorbing narrative, in many ways the best ever, of Alcott’s own life . . . The utterly compelling force of Alcott’s personality has never been better described. I found the book compulsively readable; I couldn’t put it down.” —**Robert Richardson, author of *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* and *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind***

“Brilliantly researched . . . Her biography will occupy an essential place on any Alcott bookshelf.” —**John Matteson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Eden’s Outcasts: The Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Father***

“A beautifully written, significant, and fascinating work. Harriet Reisen does with this biography what Alcott did with her writing—gives us a memorable and inspiring gift full of humanity, heart, and soul.” —**Winona Ryder, producer and star of *Little Women* (1994)**

***LOUISA MAY ALCOTT: The Woman Behind Little Women*, by Harriet Reisen** (A John Macrae Book/Henry Holt and Company; \$26.00; on sale October 27, 2009), portrays a writer as worthy of interest in her own right as her most famous character, Jo March, and addresses all aspects of Louisa May Alcott’s life: the effect of her father’s wildly impractical utopian schemes; her family’s chronic economic difficulties and frequent uprootings; her experience as a nurse during the Civil War; the loss of her health; and her frequent recourse to opiates in search of relief from migraines, insomnia, and symptomatic pain. Stories and details culled from Alcott’s journals; her equally rich letters to family, friends, publishers, and admiring readers; and the correspondence, journals, and recollections of her family, friends, and famous contemporaries provide the basis for this true-life rags-to-riches tale.

Reisen’s in-depth portrait explores Alcott’s life in the context of her works, many of which are to some extent autobiographical. A fresh, modern take on this remarkable and prolific writer, who secretly authored pulp fiction and harbored radical abolitionist views, ***LOUISA MAY ALCOTT*** is in the end also the story of how the all-time beloved American classic *Little Women* came to be.

Reisen presents Alcott as she was and as she has never been seen before in a vivid and energetic account of the beloved author whose work has delighted millions of readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harriet Reisen, a former fellow in screenwriting at the American Film Institute, has written dramatic and historical documentary scripts for PBS and HBO, including the forthcoming PBS documentary of Louisa May Alcott. She lives in Massachusetts with her husband, Tony Kahn, and son Andrew Kahn. This is her first book.

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***AMERICAN MASTERS: Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women*, directed by Nancy Porter and written by Harriet Reisen, will premiere on PBS at 9 PM (check local listings) on December 28, 2009**