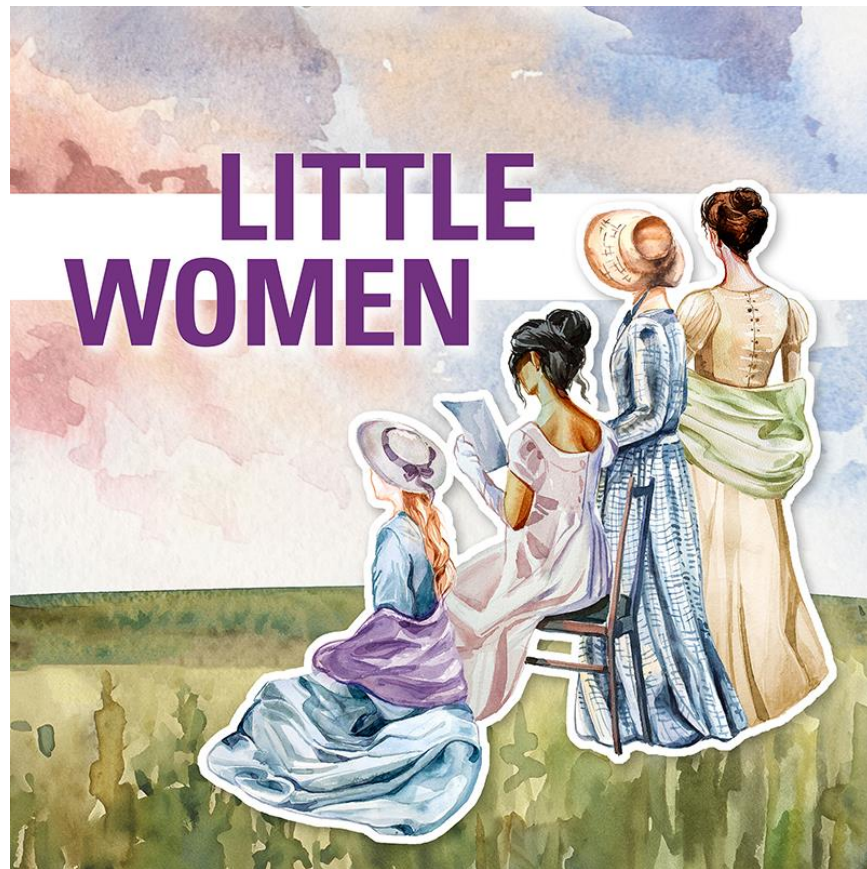


LITTLE WOMEN

ENRICHMENT GUIDE

with contributions from Tala Gammon and Ksenia Broda-Milian for the Royal Manitoba
Theatre Centre



Based on the books *Little Women* & *Good Wives* by Louisa May Alcott

Adapted for the stage by Jordi Mand

Directed by Jenna Rodgers

SEASON SPONSOR CAPITAL POWER

We wish to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty No. 6 territory and a traditional meeting ground and home of the First Nations, including both the treaty signatories – Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Stony and Cree-Iroquois – as well as other Indigenous peoples, such as the Blackfoot and Métis, who occupied this land. We extend our appreciation for the opportunity to live, create and perform on this territory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Theatre Etiquette	Page 3
Characters	Page 4
Synopsis	Page 4
Terms at a Glance	Page 5
Themes	Page 6
“Woman’s Work” and the Effects of Class in the 1860’s	Page 6
Production Elements	Page 7
Proscenium Stage	Page 7
Interview with <i>Little Women</i> Director, Jenna Rodgers	Page 7
History & Context	Page 9
The American Civil War and the Civil War Veteran’s Experience	Page 9
Curriculum Alignment	Page 10
References	Page 11
Further Reading & Resources	Page 11
Government and Foundation Funders	Page 12

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Going to the theatre is an engaging and interactive experience. We want you to be an active participant when you see our shows; laugh when it's funny, cry when it's sad, gasp when it's shocking, and enjoy the experience as much as possible. But we want you to do this in the most respectful way possible, for both the performers and your fellow audience members. To ensure the most positive experience, please review the following information prior to arriving.

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE THEATRE:

- No outside food or beverages. Only beverages purchased in the lobby and placed in a Citadel Sippy and bottled water will be allowed in the theatre. Unwrapped ice cream bars may be taken into the theatre. Please enjoy all other snacks in the lobby.
- Cameras and other recording devices (please note that taking photographs or other recordings in the theatre is strictly prohibited by law).

BASIC COURTESY:

- Please turn OFF and put away all electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, video game systems, etc. prior to entering the theatre.
- Do not place your feet on the seat in front of you.
- The actors onstage can see and hear the audience during the performance – it is important that audience members not talk, move around, or fidget during the performance, as this can be distracting for the actors, as well as fellow audience members.
- There is no dress code at the Citadel Theatre, but we respectfully request that patrons refrain from wearing hats in the theatre.
- For the safety of those with allergies, please refrain from using perfumes or scented products before coming to the theatre.
- Please do not place backpacks or other bags in the aisle in front of your feet, as this may impair the ability of persons to exit the row in an emergency.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR:

Citadel Theatre representatives watch carefully during performances for inappropriate behaviour, especially behaviour that could endanger an actor or audience member.

Inappropriate behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Talking in the audience
- The use of laser pointers or other light or sound-emitting devices
- Interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.)

Audience members identified as engaging in this type of behaviour will be removed from the theatre during the performance or at intermission.

CHARACTERS

MARGARET 'MEG' MARCH – Seventeen, oldest sister in the March family

JOSEPHINE 'JO' MARCH – Sixteen, second oldest sister in the March family

ELIZABETH 'BETH' MARCH – Fifteen, second youngest sister in the March family

AMY MARCH – Fourteen, youngest sister in the March family

MRS. MARGARET 'MARMEE' MARCH – Fifties, mother of the March daughters

MR. ROBERT MARCH – Fifties, father of the March daughters

AUNT MARY MARCH – Seventies, older sister of Mr. March

PARROT – Aunt March's pet

THEODORE 'LAURIE' LAURENCE – Sixteen, neighbor of the March family

MR. JAMES LAURENCE - Sixties, grandfather of Laurie

MR. JOHN BROOKE – Twenties, tutor to Laurie

PROFESSOR FRIEDRICH BHAER – Thirties, a professor from Germany

SALLIE GARDINER – Seventeen, a friend of Meg March 18, 2024

ANNIE MOFFAT – Seventeen, a friend of Sallie Gardiner

DR. BANGS – Fifties, local doctor

MRS. KIRKE - Fifties, runs a boarding house in New York

MR. DASHWOOD – Sixties, an editor of a magazine

EDWARD – Twenties, a young philosopher

FRANK – Twenties, a young philosopher

HANDSOME MAN – Twenties, a man who asks Meg to dance

YOUNG MAN – Nineteen, a man who wants to ask Jo to dance

SYNOPSIS

The March sisters, Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy, navigate childhood to adulthood while facing the trials of life in 1860s Massachusetts. Struggling to balance societal pressures and expectations with their own hopes and dreams, the sisters are united by the bonds of family, love and loyalty. This classic coming-of-age story, adapted for the stage by Canadian playwright Jordi Mand is a heartwarming tale filled with hope, adventure, heartbreak and love.

TERMS AT A GLANCE

This section defines and offers context for some of the key terms used throughout the production.

Civil War: A war that takes place within a country, in which two or more groups of citizens are fighting over matters such as governance or policy. The American Civil War took place from 1861-1865.

Concord Journal: A fictional local newspaper, likely a small, community-based paper, where Jo and other characters submit stories and poems.

Corporal punishment: A physical punishment which is intended to cause physical pain to a person.

Drafted: The practice of compulsory military service, where individuals are legally required to join the armed forces.

Hummel: A poor, immigrant family who the March sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy, help.

“Kennst du das Land”: The German song Friedrich sings is Mignon’s Song by Schubert. In English, it is known as “Do You Know the Land”.

Libel: A published false statement that is damaging to a person's reputation; a written defamation.

Pastor: The leader of a Christian congregation who also gives advice and counsel to people from the community or congregation.

Plumfield: A grand and spacious estate and Aunt March’s home.

Prowess: Skill or expertise in a particular activity or field.

Reverberate: To continue in a series of echoes.

Satirical: A satirical piece of writing would be making fun of or exposing someone or something’s mistakes, personality flaws or other negative qualities.

Scarlet Fever: A bacterial infection that develops following Group A strep infections, and includes a bright red rash and high fever. As a bacterial infection, penicillin would not be available for treatment for another 70 or so years. It spread very easily, and although the March sisters know to send Amy away, having not had it previously, the Strep infection that it developed from was not understood until the 1920s.

Shrapnel: Fragments from a projectile that may be exploded during a fight; how Mr. March is wounded.

Strap: The use of a strap as an implement of corporal punishment. It is typically a broad and heavy strip of leather, often with a hard handle, the more flexible 'blade' being applied to the offender.

THEMES

“WOMAN’S WORK” AND THE EFFECTS OF CLASS IN THE 1860’s

by Tala Gammon and Ksenia Broda-Milian for the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre

“I should be there fighting instead of staying home and cooking and cleaning or whatever else I’m expected to do because I’m a girl.” – Jo, Little Women

“Woman’s Work” In the 1860s in America, a woman’s place was in the home; although there were a few avenues of employment for women outside the home, they were usually reserved for unmarried women.

This expanded somewhat with the civil war as the men went to fight. That being said, a woman’s financial security was mostly tied to her family and then her husband. Wives in the transcendentalist movement (a philosophical/spiritual/literary movement committed to strong self-reliance and the choice of a simple life in service to others) were expected to be educated and to support their husband’s endeavours intellectually.

Many were involved in the beginnings of the women’s rights movement that would lead to the women’s suffrage movement. Aunt March and Jo both demonstrate the beginnings of women’s greater independence. Aunt March has wealth and estates that she has maintained following the loss of her husband. She is deeply concerned that the March girls marry well to return her brother’s family to financial stability and what she sees as respectability. While this indicates her allegiance to the social norms, she admits later when talking to Jo she shares a lot of Jo’s ideals.



Victorian Women
Photo credit: Rejlander

Jo is very much a product of her parents’ philosophical leanings as she is an educated young woman who has goals beyond being a wife and mother. She follows her ideals and dreams. Although she chooses an alias or anonymity in her published work in order to make her writing more accepted. She is encouraged by her mother and father to pursue her dreams, which wouldn’t be the case in all families.

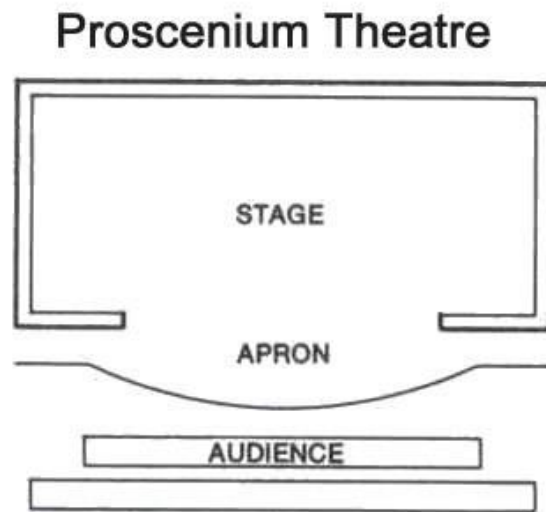
The class structure of this era closely resembled that of England, as the founding families of the region were descended from English landowners. The upper class was, however, less exclusive as the manufacturing industry took off, with folks who found wealth through business often marrying into upper class families. They were still expected to uphold proper behaviours, morals and exclusivity in social engagements, keeping distance from the lower classes. They further kept their distinction through exclusive schools and clubs. Most in this region were aligned with some iteration of Unitarian or Episcopalian Protestantism. This was particularly pronounced in Boston, whose upper class is referred to in historical literature as the “Boston Brahmins.”

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

PROSCENIUM STAGE

A proscenium theatre is a specific style of theatre. Several features define a proscenium theatre, and this particular theatre layout is extremely common; if you have ever been to see a live performance, especially in a high school auditorium, chances are high that you have seen a proscenium theatre. In addition to proscenium style theatres, it is also possible to find black box theatres, theatres with thrust stages, theatres in the round, and numerous other configurations of stage and audience.

The classically defining feature of a proscenium theatre is the proscenium arch, which frames the stage for the audience. In addition, the audience faces the stage directly, with no audience on the sides of the stage, and the stage in a proscenium theatre is typically raised, allowing the audience to see more clearly. Modern proscenium theatres sometimes lack the proscenium arch, but they are still called “proscenium theatres” because they retain the other characteristics of this style of theatre.



Proscenium theatres originated in the 1600s, and became immensely popular by the 1700s. There are certain advantages of a proscenium theatre, such as the fact that the stage doesn't have to be as open, allowing people to conceal props, sets, and orchestras in the wings or near the stage without having these things visible to the audience. A proscenium theatre also creates a sense of staged grandeur, with the proscenium arch acting almost like a picture frame, giving the audience the sense that they are looking into a scene.

INTERVIEW WITH *LITTLE WOMEN* DIRECTOR, JENNA RODGERS

1. What are the themes of *Little Women* that excite you as a Director?

The theme that most excites me is that of gender roles and how they play out as we transition from childhood to adulthood - especially in a period piece! I'm also interested in the exploration of filial responsibility versus creative or personal growth. Finally, I'm interested in the ways in which we use storytelling to explore morality; Louisa May Alcott was raised in a family that identified as transcendentalist - and we're exploring how those moral lessons make their way into the world of *Little Women*.

2. You've directed *Little Women* before at Theatre Calgary, but it was a different adaptation by Kate Hamill. What would you say are the main differences between the adaptations, and what excites you about the Jordi Mand adaptation?

Kate Hamill's adaptation focused more on "Little Women", while Jordi Mand's adaptation is of both "Little Women" and "Good Wives". So this adaptation dives a little further into the timeline of the March family and is a little closer to the novels, whereas Kate's took a few more liberties with the timeline and characters. I also think Kate Hamill's adaptation offered a more contemporary flair and a more explicit examination of gender roles. Jordi's adaptation encourages theatrical or artistic interpretation, but feels more like a typical period piece in the writing. As a dramaturg, I'm excited to dive more deeply into the story and to pull the threads that connect the novel to today from our creative approach.

3. When approaching a script as a Director, what are the steps you take to prepare for first day of rehearsal?



Jenna Rodgers
Photo credit: Mike Tan

Good question! So much happens before the first day... I've been in conversations for months with the creative team of designers, especially the set and costume designers - as the set and costumes have already started being built by the time rehearsal starts. This means I've sketched out key moments in the play, and have a clear sense of what furniture we'll be using, and what all of the entrances and exits might be. For this production, I tried to have a one-on-one meeting with every actor that I had not yet worked with before we started. Finally, I often prepare an opening statement of sorts... I think about what I want to say to the company on our first day, and how to start us off on the right foot, then put that down on paper and read it to the room. This is usually a statement of intent - about how I want to conduct the room - but it's also artistic, where I speak about the themes that interest me!

HISTORY & CONTEXT

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND THE CIVIL WAR VETERAN'S EXPERIENCE

by Tala Gammon and Ksenia Broda-Milian for the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre

According to the History Channel website, "The Civil War was America's bloodiest and most divisive conflict, pitting the Union Army against the Confederate States of America. The war resulted in the deaths of more than 620,000 people, with millions more injured and the South left in ruins."

Little Women briefly references Mr. March struggling physically and emotionally following his injury and return. In the years between his return and Meg's wedding, Jo describes not only physical weakness and hearing loss in one ear, but intermittent shaking and that he always seems "terribly sad [...] no matter what we do to try and brighten his spirits".

According to the US Department of Veterans Affairs, "accounts of psychological symptom following military trauma date back to Ancient times." It asserts that the American Civil War was one of the first wars during which people started formally documenting these symptoms in a scientific way. A second model of this condition suggested a physical injury as the cause of symptoms.



Reenactors act out the battle of Antietam

Photo credit: Carl Staub

"Soldier's heart" or "irritable heart" was marked by a rapid pulse, anxiety, and trouble breathing. U.S. doctor Jacob Mendez Da Costa studied Civil War soldiers with these "cardiac" symptoms and described it as overstimulation of the heart's nervous system, or "Da Costa's Syndrome."

Soldiers were often returned to battle after receiving drugs to control symptoms. Following the war, most soldiers

returned home to take up their previous work. Several veterans' groups were formed to help soldiers readjust to civilian life. These groups would host reunions.

It is important to note that the United Confederate Veterans became an amalgamation of such groups in the South and were not interested in open rebellion or holding grudges, but providing support and preserving history. However, both the Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy, whose membership is based on being a descendant of a Confederate Veteran, now actively promote what is known as "Lost Cause" ideology and white supremacy, and have had huge impacts on public institutions in the American South, such as influencing public school history textbooks and public monuments. The reading one could do is extensive and scholarship spans over 150 years as the groups take on various iterations.

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

Participation as an audience member at the Citadel Theatre aligns with the Alberta Education Curriculum.

Drama (Junior High)

GOAL I- To acquire knowledge of self and others through participation in and reflection on dramatic experience.

Objectives- The Student will:

- Strengthen their powers of concentration.
- Extend the ability to think imaginatively and creatively.
- Extend the ability to explore, control and express emotions.
- Extend the ability to explore meaning through abstract concepts.
- Develop the ability to offer and accept constructive criticism.

GOAL II- To develop an appreciation for drama and theatre as a process and art form.

Objectives- The Student will:

- Develop awareness of various conventions of theatre.
- Develop awareness of drama and theatre by viewing as great a variety of theatrical presentations as possible.
- Develop the ability to analyze and assess the process and the art.
- Develop recognition of and respect for excellence in drama and theatre.

Drama (10-20-30)

GOAL I- To acquire knowledge of self and others through participation in and reflection on dramatic experience.

Objectives- The Student will:

- Extend their ability to concentrate.
- Extend understanding of, acceptance of, and empathy for others.
- Demonstrate respect for others — their rights, ideas, abilities and differences.
- Demonstrate the ability to offer, accept, and reflect upon constructive criticism.

GOAL II- To develop competency in communication skills through participation in and exploration of various dramatic disciplines.

Objectives- The Student will:

- Demonstrate understanding of integration of disciplines to enrich a theatrical presentation.

GOAL III- To develop an appreciation of drama and theatre as a process and art form.

Objectives- The Student will:

- Explore various conventions and traditions of theatre.
- Broaden knowledge of theatre by viewing as great a variety of theatrical presentations as possible.
- Demonstrate the ability to critically assess the process of art.
- Demonstrate recognition of and respect for excellence in drama and theatre.
- Develop an awareness of aesthetics in visual and performing arts.

REFERENCES

Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, *Little Women* Enrichment Guide, accessed on April 16, 2025
<[RMTC Little Women Enrichment Guide](#)>

The History Channel, accessed on April 13, 2025.
<[The American Civil War](#)>

Alexander, Edward. "[Life of the Civil War Soldier in Battle](#)" *American Battlefield Trust*, accessed on April 13, 2025

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

First 5 resources listed gathered by Tala Gammon and Ksenia Broda-Milian for the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre

PBS's *Masterpiece Theatre* gives [7 Surprising Facts About Little Women's Autor, Louisa May Alcott](#)

The Toronto Star argues that Louisa May Alcott created Jo to write about the life she wished she had; [read about Alcott's early life in this article](#).

[Learn more about Victorian American women from Google Arts and Culture](#), and view their portraits.

PBS writes about the New England Elite, [the Boston Brahmins](#).

The History Channel provides extensive articles and videos regarding the events and people who participated in and shaped [the American Civil War](#). For more context, you can also watch the twelve minute video "[The Civil War, Part 1: Crash Course in US History](#)" on YouTube.

Sarah Carswell does a book review of *Little Women* on the BTMusic Blog where she focuses on [Deconstructing Jo Marsh's Gender](#).

Little Women Assistant Director, Brett Dahl, has put together a [research dramaturgy presentation](#) on Transcendentalism, the American Civil War, and locating Queerness within the story of "Little Women" that he shared with the cast and crew of *Little Women* on the first day of rehearsal. Reference credits [here](#).

The American Battlefield Trust discusses [African American involvement in the Civil War](#).

GOVERNMENT AND FOUNDATION FUNDERS

