

Little Women

Part One, Chapters 9–15

by Louisa May Alcott

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: castles in the air, chagrin, condescension, despondency, destitute, frivolous, mortification, prodigious, talisman, wistful

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

Vocabulary Sections for this Book:

Section 1 · Part One, Chapters 1–8 · The March sisters at Christmas

Section 2 · Part One, Chapters 9–15 · Meg visits her fashionable friends

Section 3 · Part One, Chapters 16–23 · The sisters keep house alone

Section 4 · Part Two, Chapters 24–31 · The sisters, three years later

Section 5 · Part Two, Chapters 32–39 · Jo longs for a change

Section 6 · Part Two, Chapters 40–47 · Quiet days at the March home

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com
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Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. Lying in the grass, they made **castles in the air** about their futures.

- A. bold, public promises
- B. careful, workable plans
- C. fanciful, unlikely dreams

2. Much to his **chagrin**, he forgot his lines on stage.

- A. distress at failure
- B. surprise at the news
- C. anger at others

3. She thanked the new clerk with cool **condescension**.

- A. snobbish superiority
- B. cautious unease
- C. stiff formality

4. A week of cold rain filled him with **despondency**.

- A. bitter anger
- B. deep low spirits
- C. restless boredom

5. A long illness and heavy debts left her **destitute**.

- A. extremely poor
- B. deeply in mourning
- C. weak and ailing

6. She spent her whole allowance on **frivolous** little trinkets.

- A. showy and expensive
- B. silly and unimportant
- C. old and worn-out

7. To her **mortification**, she tripped on stage in front of everyone.

- A. deep shame
- B. open anger
- C. great alarm

8. The weightlifter showed **prodigious** strength, hoisting the beam alone.

- A. swift and sudden
- B. huge and powerful
- C. steady and reliable

9. She wore the carved **talisman** on a cord around her neck.

- A. a costly jewel
- B. an old keepsake
- C. a protective charm

10. She gave a **wistful** sigh as the train pulled away.

- A. annoyed and bitter
- B. tired and bored
- C. longing and sad

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

needful — necessary or genuinely needed; here, an older use describing money as important but not life's highest good

ennui — weary boredom and dissatisfaction

telegraph — a written message sent quickly over wires; the fastest form of long-distance communication at the time

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	C
2	A
3	A
4	B
5	A
6	B
7	A
8	B
9	C
10	C

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 “But they were kindly people, in spite of the frivolous life they led, and soon put their guest at her ease.”

As it is used in the passage, the word ‘frivolous’ most nearly suggests that the Moffatts...

- A. were serious and hardworking people
- B. cared mainly about trifling pleasures
- C. disliked having visitors stay

2 “Home now looked bare and dismal as she thought of it, work grew harder than ever, and she felt that she was a very destitute and much-injured girl, in spite of the new gloves and silk stockings.”

The word ‘destitute’ is used ironically to suggest that Meg...

- A. has lost all her money
- B. feels deprived though she has plenty
- C. owns nothing of any value

3 “... as Meg slipped the note into her pocket as a sort of talisman against envy, vanity, and false pride, for the few loving words had done her good, and the flowers cheered her up by their beauty.”

The author most likely calls the note a ‘talisman’ in order to...

- A. explain the flowers’ beauty
- B. hint that Meg believes in magic
- C. show it guards Meg from envy and pride

4 “Somehow the kind act finished her despondency, and when all the rest went to show themselves to Mrs. Moffat, she saw a happy, bright-eyed face in the mirror ...”

Which detail best supports the idea that Meg’s despondency lifted?

- A. the ferns laid against her hair
- B. the rest left for Mrs. Moffat’s room
- C. her happy, bright-eyed face

5 “She was proud, and her pride was useful just then, for it helped her hide her mortification, anger, and disgust at what she had just heard.”

In the passage, Meg is characterized as...

- A. openly angry and confrontational
- B. calm and untroubled by the talk
- C. proud but inwardly humiliated

6 “Many were the complaints below, and great the chagrin of the head cook at her failures.”

The passage most strongly suggests that the head cook...

- A. was upset by how badly things went
- B. was proud of the meal she made
- C. blamed the guests for complaining

7 “... by a trifling exertion of his prodigious strength, he smashed in the door ...”

In context, the word ‘prodigious’ emphasizes the hero’s...

- A. enormous physical strength
- B. clever battle tactics
- C. remarkable good luck

8 “Miss Kate put up her glass, and, having taken a survey of the little tableau before her, shut her sketch book, saying with condescension ...”

Which choice best describes Miss Kate’s attitude toward Meg?

- A. patronizing and superior
- B. warm and admiring
- C. shy and uncertain

9 “... Beth looked up, espied the wistful face behind the birches, and beckoned with a reassuring smile.”

The passage most strongly suggests that Laurie...

- A. is angry at being left out
- B. longs to join the sisters
- C. would rather be left alone

10 “Wouldn’t it be fun if all the castles in the air which we make could come true, and we could live in them?”

Which choice best describes how Jo’s question functions in the scene?

- A. it invites each to share a dream
- B. it plans a real house to build
- C. it asks where each person wants to live

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	B	Meg is not truly destitute; the irony marks her envy-fed self-pity.
3	C	
4	C	
5	C	
6	A	
7	A	
8	A	
9	B	Character comprehension. Laurie is the lonely boy next door who longs to share in the sisters' warmth.
10	A	Event comprehension. Jo's question opens the friends' sharing of their hopes for the future.

Teacher Context: Part One, Chapters 9–15

Meg tastes high society at the Moffats', the sisters launch a family newspaper, and a summer of camp games and confidences deepens their friendship with Laurie. The section builds toward news from the war front. It ends at Chapter 15, where a telegram brings word that Mr. March is gravely ill – a deliberate cliffhanger before the home crisis that follows.