

Little Women

Part Two, Chapters 24–31

by Louisa May Alcott

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: ardor, assuage, audacity, expediency, magnanimity, mercenary, piques, quench, retaliate, vortex

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](https://www.verbalworkout.com).



[verbalworkout.com](https://www.verbalworkout.com)
(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

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

1. She practiced the violin with such **ardor** that she forgot to eat dinner.

- A. intense enthusiasm
- B. great care and patience
- C. natural skill and ease

2. A warm cup of tea helped **assuage** her worry while she waited for news.

- A. to hide or mask
- B. to ease or relieve
- C. to explain away

3. It took real **audacity** to raise her hand and challenge the teacher.

- A. stubborn determination
- B. clever quick thinking
- C. bold daring or nerve

4. He answered out of **expediency**, telling them whatever would settle the matter fastest.

- A. a fear of conflict
- B. convenience over what is right
- C. stubborn pride

5. Even after losing the election, he treated his opponent with surprising **magnanimity**.

- A. generous nobility of spirit
- B. cool, distant politeness
- C. sharp and biting wit

6. He had a **mercenary** streak, weighing every choice by what he stood to gain.

- A. eager for power and control
- B. hungry for fame and praise
- C. driven by money or gain

7. Old **piques** between the two neighbors flared up again over the fence line.

- A. small flashes of resentment
- B. small acts of revenge
- C. loud, open arguments

8. Firefighters worked through the night to **quench** the blaze.

- A. to put out or extinguish
- B. to keep from spreading
- C. to find the cause of

9. When the other team played dirty, our captain refused to **retaliate**.

- A. to complain to the referee
- B. to return harm for harm
- C. to lose his temper

10. The drifting raft was caught and spun around by a **vortex** in the river.

- A. a stretch of rough rapids
- B. a strong rushing current
- C. a swirling whirlpool

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

sacrifice a day to Mrs. Grundy — spend a day meeting social expectations; “Mrs. Grundy” represents worry about what respectable people will think

Nil desperandum — Latin for “never despair”; Amy’s motto amid setbacks

divine afflatus — a burst of creative inspiration, jokingly treated as heaven-sent

make calls — make brief formal social visits, considered a social duty at the time

illumination — a decorative painted design or lettering, often in bright colors or gold

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY
1	A
2	B
3	C
4	B
5	A
6	C
7	A
8	A
9	B
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 “It takes people a long time to learn the difference between talent and genius, especially ambitious young men and women. Amy was learning this distinction through much tribulation, for mistaking enthusiasm for inspiration, she attempted every branch of art with youthful audacity.”

As it is used in the passage, the word “audacity” most nearly suggests that Amy approached every art form with...

- A. shy, modest caution
- B. careful self-discipline
- C. bold, fearless daring

2 “From fire to oil was a natural transition for burned fingers, and Amy fell to painting with undiminished ardor.”

In context, the word “ardor” emphasizes...

- A. Amy’s passionate energy for art
- B. Amy’s patience with failure
- C. Amy’s skill at painting

3 “... she would shut herself up in her room, put on her scribbling suit, and ‘fall into a vortex’, as she expressed it, writing away at her novel with all her heart and soul ...”

The passage most strongly suggests that when Jo “falls into a vortex,” she...

- A. becomes wholly absorbed in writing
- B. is swept into helpless confusion
- C. is dragged down into gloom

4 “He has a temper, not like ours—one flash and then all over—but the white, still anger that is seldom stirred, but once kindled is hard to quench.”

According to the passage, John’s anger is best described as...

- A. rarely roused but quick to fade
- B. rarely roused but loudly shown
- C. rarely roused but hard to cool

5 “... be the first to ask pardon if you both err, and guard against the little piques, misunderstandings, and hasty words that often pave the way for bitter sorrow and regret.”

The author most likely has Marmee warn against “the little piques” in order to...

- A. show how small resentments grow
- B. praise Meg’s gentle patience
- C. describe a carefree marriage

6 “... she tried to assuage the pangs of remorse by spreading forth the lovely silk, but it looked less silvery now ...”

It can reasonably be inferred that Meg spreads out the silk in an effort to...

- A. admire her fine new dress
- B. hide it from her husband
- C. ease her guilty feelings

7 “... It’s merely a matter of expediency, you see, my girls will naturally take the lead, and this table is considered their proper place.”

Which best describes Mrs. Chester’s attitude when she calls the change mere “expediency”?

- A. openly admitting her jealousy
- B. coolly masking an unfair motive
- C. sincerely apologizing to Amy

8 “In spite of various very natural temptations to resent and retaliate, Amy adhered to her resolution all the next day, bent on conquering her enemy by kindness.”

The passage most strongly suggests that, though tempted to retaliate, Amy chose to...

- A. quietly avoid May from then on
- B. win her opponent over with kindness
- C. pay back the insult in kind

9 “She also discovered what Amy had done about the things in the morning, and considered her a model of magnanimity.”

Calling Amy “a model of magnanimity” primarily serves to...

- A. praise her generous, forgiving spirit
- B. mock her wounded pride
- C. excuse May’s unkindness

10 “I may be mercenary, but I hate poverty, and don’t mean to bear it a minute longer than I can help.”

Which best describes Amy’s attitude when she admits, “I may be mercenary”?

- A. shame at her own greed
- B. frankly putting wealth over romance
- C. scorn for her sisters

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	C	
2	A	
3	A	Jo coins 'vortex' for the trancelike absorption of writing; the distractors play on the literal whirlpool.
4	C	
5	A	
6	C	
7	B	Event comprehension. Mrs. Chester uses 'expediency' as a polite cover for taking Amy's table out of favoritism.
8	B	Event comprehension.
9	A	Event comprehension. 'What Amy had done' refers to her graciously giving up the table without complaint.
10	B	

Teacher Context: Part Two, Chapters 24–31

Part Two opens three years later with Meg's wedding and the start of married life, while Amy is chosen for a European tour and Jo keeps writing. Everyday joys and missteps mark the sisters' move into adulthood. Section ends after Chapter 31 to group the opening domestic chapters of Part Two before Jo's story turns.