

Little Women

Part Two, Chapters 40–47

by Louisa May Alcott

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: benediction, circumspection, desultory, fastidious, intractable, penitent, rapture, renounced, self-abnegation, vehement

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
(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. The old priest ended the service with a **benediction**.
 - A. a stern warning
 - B. a blessing
 - C. a short sermon
2. She entered the dark alley with great **circumspection**.
 - A. cautious watchfulness
 - B. sudden anger
 - C. growing excitement
3. After graduation he fell into a **desultory** routine.
 - A. dull and tiring
 - B. lonely and dreary
 - C. aimless and unfocused
4. The **fastidious** chef ran the finest kitchen in the city.
 - A. fussy and very picky
 - B. bold and daring
 - C. warm and generous
5. The **intractable** mule had a reputation all across the farm.
 - A. stubborn and unruly
 - B. swift and strong
 - C. old and weary
6. He wrote a **penitent** letter after the argument.
 - A. angry and bitter
 - B. cool and formal
 - C. sorry and regretful
7. She gazed at the fireworks in pure **rapture**.
 - A. intense joy
 - B. intense fear
 - C. complete shock
8. He **renounced** his citizenship and moved to another country.
 - A. quietly questioned
 - B. gave up willingly
 - C. loudly announced
9. The monk's life was one of strict **self-abnegation**.
 - A. deep religious study
 - B. self-denial for others
 - C. quiet daily prayer
10. She gave a **vehement** reply to the unfair accusation.
 - A. long and detailed
 - B. witty and clever
 - C. forceful and intense

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

mourning weeds — black clothes worn after someone's death (an older expression that is unrelated to plants)

tares — an old word for weeds

ad libitum — Latin for "as much as one likes"

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	B
2	A
3	C
4	A
5	A
6	C
7	A
8	B
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 “‘I’ll try, Beth.’ And then and there Jo renounced her old ambition, pledged herself to a new and better one, acknowledging the poverty of other desires, and feeling the blessed solace of a belief in the immortality of love.”

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

- A. deliberately gave up her old ambition
- B. briefly set aside her ambition
- C. began to doubt her ambition

2 “When morning came, for the first time in many months the fire was out, Jo’s place was empty, and the room was very still. But a bird sang blithely on a budding bough, close by, the snowdrops blossomed freshly at the window, and the spring sunshine streamed in like a benediction over the placid face upon the pillow, a face so full of painless peace that those who loved it best smiled through their tears, and thanked God that Beth was well at last.”

The author most likely compares the sunshine to a benediction in order to...

- A. show her death as a peaceful blessing
- B. stress the family’s bitterness
- C. hint at sorrow still to come

3 “When he looked about him for another and a less intractable damsel to immortalize in melody ...”

In context, calling the imagined damsel ‘less intractable’ emphasizes that she will be...

- A. far more talented than the last
- B. far more beautiful than the last
- C. far easier to control than the last

4 “... he grew more and more discontented with his desultory life, began to long for some real and earnest work to go at, soul and body ...”

Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. Laurie wants real, earnest work
- B. Laurie wants to travel freely
- C. Laurie wants to compose again

5 “It was easy to promise self-abnegation when self was wrapped up in another, and heart and soul were purified by a sweet example.”

The passage most strongly suggests that, with Beth gone, Jo’s promise of self-abnegation will...

- A. bring her quick contentment
- B. be far harder to keep than expected
- C. soon be entirely forgotten

6 “... he went down upon his knees, with a penitent clasping of hands, and a face full of mischief, mirth, and triumph.”

Laurie’s ‘penitent’ pose is ironic; in the passage he is really characterized as...

- A. nervous and uncertain
- B. gleeful and unrepentant
- C. ashamed and remorseful

7 “... a faint twinge, not of jealousy, but something like suspicion, caused that gentleman to stand aloof at first, and observe the newcomer with brotherly circumspection.”

It can reasonably be inferred that Laurie observes Mr. Bhaer with ‘brotherly circumspection’ because...

- A. he is warily watching over Jo
- B. he dislikes meeting strangers
- C. he envies the Professor’s ease

8 “‘Now, Laurie, don’t be too fastidious and worldly-minded. If they love one another it doesn’t matter a particle how old they are nor how poor.’”

Which choice best describes Amy’s attitude toward Laurie’s objection?

- A. she is stung by his bluntness
- B. she shares his practical worries
- C. she dismisses it as fussy and shallow

9 “She was mortally afraid of being laughed at for surrendering, after her many and vehement declarations of independence.”

The passage most strongly suggests that Jo dreads being laughed at because...

- A. she fears she has chosen poorly
- B. she once swore never to leave home
- C. she loudly vowed to stay independent

10 “So the only way in which he could express his rapture was to look at her, with an expression which glorified his face to such a degree that there actually seemed to be little rainbows in the drops that sparkled on his beard.”

The description of the rainbows in Mr. Bhaer’s beard primarily functions to...

- A. stress the dreary weather
- B. convey his overwhelming joy
- C. show his awkward nerves

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	A	
3	C	
4	A	
5	B	Event comprehension.
6	B	Laurie kneels with clasped hands as if sorry, but his face 'full of mischief, mirth, and triumph' shows he is delighted, not contrite.
7	A	Character comprehension. Laurie, now married to Amy, watches Mr. Bhaer as a protective brother would a sister's suitor.
8	C	
9	C	
10	B	

Teacher Context: Part Two, Chapters 40–47

The Marches face sorrow and change at home as the sisters settle into their grown-up lives and loves. Long-deferred matters of the heart are at last resolved, and the family gathers for a final harvest celebration. Section runs to the end of the novel.