

MASSACHUSETTS LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE 2023

HONORS LEVEL II

Dear Louisa May Alcott,

Leah was born on January 11, 2007. Exactly 636 days later on October 8, 2008, I came along. It was a peaceful, attention filled 3 years give or take until on one brisk winter afternoon in the year of 2011, my whole life changed. It was the day I became known as the middle child. I went from everyone's favorite, adorable, lovable baby of the family to the overlooked, jealous, annoying sister all in an instant. All this to say, growing up sandwiched between two sisters was never...ever...EVER...easy.

If you asked my family, they'd tell you that I've never really been known for being a big reader, unfortunately. As I got older the magical places and ideas I was able to create in my imagination faded away. You must also note that I have always struggled with reading. It's just never come easy to me. I would always be the last one to finish a reading assignment, or standardized test, because of this deficit. Never mind reading for school! There was nothing I'd agonize more than the lengthy novels that'd bore me over for however long we read. But that wasn't the worst part. When my teacher would assign the written response questions, my heart would sink, I'd tense up like a ball, wondering how I was going to get by this one without a total flop.

I was at the prime of my worst times, a time where I would have somewhat sleepless nights stressing about one silly assignment, when we were assigned to read your book, *Little Women* in my 7th grade literature class. My sister had gone on to me about how much she had loved reading it, and referred to it as a classic, but being myself I had doubts. To be quite frank, I did nothing but skim through the first chapter, but when I began to get a deeper dive into the novel, I was immediately hooked. It took me on average at least forty-five minutes to read a chapter but your brave and outspoken words touched my heart and might as well have changed my view on "boring" school literature.

I reflected on my experiences with my sisters as a child. Seeing the bond of the March sisters, how they occasionally bicker or pick on each other, but in the end still wouldn't trade them for anything really reminded me of me and my two sisters. From Jo accidentally burning Meg's hair to Amy throwing Jo's book in the fire, all of these are very relatable incidents that I can see myself experiencing with my own sisters. Although in the end of all of those they seemed to resolve the issues and the March sisters remembered that they'd never want to do anything to hurt each other. It made me realize that my sisters and I should never take our relationships for granted. The scene where Beth passes away from scarlet fever made me tear up because I can't imagine losing one of my sisters at such a young age. Thanks to you I have learned to cherish the moments, in case it is all we have together.

Specifically, I felt personally connected to the character you portrayed yourself as, Jo. Just like her, not only am I a middle child as well but I have a very short temper, and one little thing could easily set me off. So I felt appreciated in that way. As corny as it sounds, I used to feel this burning need (or really want) for others to pity me so I felt like I was good enough. One writing assignment I can remember we did with *Little Women* was one where we analyzed a character who we felt we were most like. Obviously I chose Jo, and I can just remember reflecting on her growth throughout the book, and how I could too. Your depiction of Jo in *Little Women* inspired me to embrace my independence and quit feeling sorry for myself, which has personally boosted my self confidence. I'm still working on my confidence, but that is another story for another day. Thank you for forever changing me not only as a student, but as a sister.

Sincere Regards,

Avery