



Point of View and Perspective in *Little Women*



Read the following excerpt adapted from Chapter 27 of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Then answer the questions that follow.

In this excerpt, Jo March seeks advice from her family to help her finish and publish her first novel.

- 1 Wealth is certainly a most desirable thing, but poverty has its sunny side. One of the sweet uses of hardship is the genuine satisfaction that comes from hearty work of head or hand. Jo enjoyed a taste of this satisfaction. She ceased to envy richer girls, taking great comfort in knowing that she could provide for her own needs.
- 2 Little notice was taken of her stories, but they found a market. Encouraged, Jo resolved to make a bold stroke for fame and fortune. She copied her novel for the fourth time and submitted it with fear and trembling to three publishers, who wanted it on the condition that she cut it down by one-third and omit all the parts she especially admired.
- 3 Jo called a family council to decide the matter.
- 4 "Don't spoil your book, my girl, for there is more in it than you know, and the idea is well worked out. Let it wait and ripen," was her father's advice.
- 5 "It seems to me that Jo will profit more by taking the trial than by waiting," said Mrs. March. "Criticism is the best test of such work. We are too partial. The praise and blame of outsiders will prove useful."
- 6 "I wouldn't leave a word out of it. You'll spoil it if you do. The interest of the story is more in the minds than in the actions of the people. It will be all a muddle if you don't explain as you go on," said Meg, who firmly believed that this book was the most remarkable novel ever written.
- 7 "But Mr. Allen says, 'Leave out the explanations, make it brief and dramatic, and let the characters tell the story,'" interrupted Jo, turning to the publisher's note.
- 8 "Do as he tells you. He knows what will sell, and we don't. Make a good, popular book. Get as much money as you can. When you've got a name, you can afford to ramble and be philosophical," said Amy, taking a strictly practical view of the subject.
- 9 Jo turned to Beth. "Now, Beth, what do you say?"
- 10 "I hope to see it printed soon," was all Beth said, with an unconscious emphasis on the last word and a melancholy look. It chilled Jo's heart for a minute. She decided to make her little venture 'soon.'
- 11 So, with Spartan firmness, the young author chopped up her firstborn as ruthlessly as any ogre. She decided to take everyone's advice. Her father liked the philosophical streak, so that was allowed to remain. Her mother thought there was a little too much description. Out, therefore, it came. Meg admired the tragedy, so Jo piled up the agony to suit her. Amy objected to the fun, so Jo quenched the cheerful scenes that relieved the somber character of the story. Then, to complicate the ruin, she cut it down one-third, and sent the poor little romance, like a picked robin, out into the big, busy world to try its fate.
- 12 Well, it was printed. She got three hundred dollars for it, along with plenty of praise and blame, both so much greater than she expected that she was thrown into a state of bewilderment. It was a hard time for sensitive, high-spirited Jo. But it did her good, for those whose opinion had real value gave her the criticism which is an author's best education.



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Answer the following questions about point of view and perspective in the adapted excerpt from *Little Women*.

1A. Who is narrating the story?

- A. Jo March B. Louisa May Alcott C. Jo's family D. a narrator outside the story

1B. What clues in the passage tell you who is narrating the story?

2. Describe how the author reveals the different characters' perspectives. Include at least **two** ways.

3. In the table below, read the various perspectives about Jo's book as described in the excerpt on page 1. Then write the name of the character who holds that perspective.

Perspective	Character	Perspective	Character
Jo should resist the publishers' calls to change her novel.		The descriptions are necessary and enjoyable.	
The sad, tragic parts are meaningful and appealing.		The book has too much description.	
Jo could learn from objective observers' feelings about the book.		Jo should change whatever it takes to make as much money as possible.	
The story would be better without the lighthearted parts.		Whatever edits Jo makes, she should finish them quickly.	

4. Reread the first and last paragraphs of the passage, and describe the narrator's perspective on either the topic of poverty or the topic of criticism. Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.
