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## Before Reading

- 1 Look at the picture of the four March sisters. Match the names to the descriptions.



- a) ..... has brown hair and eyes and she's very pretty.
- b) ..... has blonde hair and blue eyes.
- c) ..... is 13 years old. She's very shy.
- d) ..... is tall and thin. She isn't very pretty but she has lovely hair.

- 2 Look at the picture of Laurie. Circle the adjectives that describe him.



- 3 Work with a friend. Look at each other. Then describe your friend to the class.

**4 Listen and write the correct names below.**

**A** I don't care about clothes or hairstyles.

**B** I'm very shy.

**C** I love beautiful things.

**D** I love pretty clothes.

**5 Write the correct heading for each group of words below.**

	means of communication	war	hobbies	jobs
a) .....			servant doctor tutor	
b) .....			telegram note letter	
c) .....		army men soldiers		
d) .....			knitting sewing reading	

**6 Use some of the words from Exercise 5 to complete the sentences below.**

- a) In the 1860s in America some families had a ..... who cooked, cleaned or cared for them.
- b) Some richer families also had a ....., a private teacher usually employed to educate their children.
- c) A ..... was a means of fast communication invented in the 19th century.
- d) The ..... fighting in the army were usually all men.
- e) Knitting, ..... and reading were all popular hobbies in the 1860s.

## 1 THE MARCH SISTERS

4 It was December and the snow was falling quietly outside. The four March sisters were sitting around the fire in the parlor. They were knitting socks for soldiers. There was a war and everyone had to help.

Meg was the oldest of the four sisters. She was sixteen. She was very pretty and she loved pretty clothes. Jo was fifteen. She was very tall and thin. She was different from Meg. She didn't care about dresses or hairstyles. She was a tomboy. Beth was thirteen. She was very shy and quiet and she seemed to live in a happy world of her own. The youngest, Amy, looked like a snow princess with her blue eyes and blonde hair. She loved beautiful things and she was a little vain. She also thought that she was a very important person.

'Christmas isn't Christmas without any presents,' Jo said sadly.

'I hate being poor!' Meg said, looking at her old dress.

'Some girls have lots of nice things, and other girls have nothing at all,' said Amy. 'I don't think it's fair.'

'But we've got Father and Mother, and each other,' said Beth.

The four sisters looked happy for a moment when they remembered this.

Then Jo said, 'But we haven't got Father'.

Their smiles suddenly disappeared. Mr March was far away with the soldiers.

'Mother says our men are suffering and we mustn't spend money for pleasure,' Meg said. 'That's why we can't have presents this year.'

### Glossary

- **didn't care about:** they were not important to her
- **fair:** when people are treated equally
- **pleasure:** when you are pleased
- **suffering:** experiencing something unpleasant
- **tomboy:** girl who likes boys' games and activities
- **vain:** proud of her good looks

‘Well, each of us has a dollar to spend,’ said Jo. ‘What can the army do with four dollars? Nothing! I don’t expect anything from Mother but I’d like to buy a book for myself.’ Jo loved reading and she had a passion • for books.

‘I want to spend mine on some new music,’ said Beth. She played the piano and she loved singing.

‘I’m going to buy a box of drawing pencils. I really need them,’ said Amy. She wanted to be an artist.

‘Mother didn’t say anything about spending our own money,’ cried Jo. ‘We work hard for it so let’s buy what we want and have a little fun.’

It was true. The two older sisters had jobs. Meg worked as a teacher for the King family and Jo looked after Aunt March, their father’s rich, bad-tempered • old aunt. Beth and Amy helped with the housework.

Just then the clock struck • six. Beth got up and put her mother’s slippers near the fire to warm.

‘Those slippers are very old,’ said Jo. ‘Mother needs some new ones.’

‘I can buy a pair for her with my dollar,’ said Beth.

‘No, I’m the oldest,’ Meg said. ‘I want to buy the slippers for her.’

‘No, it’s my job,’ said Jo. ‘Father told *me* to take care of Mother while he was away.’

‘I have an idea,’ said Beth. ‘Let’s not spend our money on ourselves. Let’s get some presents for Mother.’

Her sisters thought that this was a very good idea.

## Glossary

- **bad-tempered:** describes a person who gets angry easily
- **passion:** (here) great love
- **struck:** made a sound like a bell

‘I’m going to give her a pair of gloves,’ said Meg looking at her own pretty hands. They were small and white. ‘And you, Jo?’

‘Some new slippers!’ cried Jo.

‘I’m going to make her some handkerchiefs,’ said Beth quietly.

‘And I’m going to give her a bottle of perfume,’ said Amy.

They all agreed to go shopping for the presents the next day.

## PRESENTS

 **Work with a partner.**

**Ask and answer the questions.**

**Which do you like more – giving presents or receiving them?**

**What kind of presents do you give your family and friends?**

**What kind of presents do you like receiving?**

At that moment a happy voice called, ‘Hello, my dears!’ It was Mrs March. The girls jumped up and ran to the front door.

While she was taking off her wet cloak and shoes and putting on the warm slippers, Mrs March talked to her daughters about their day.

‘How is your cold, Meg? Jo, you look tired. Did anyone call today, Beth? Amy, baby, come and give me a kiss.’


Then the girls quickly prepared the table for the evening meal and they all sat down to eat. There was a happy smile on Mrs March’s face.

‘I’ve got a surprise for you after supper,’ she said.

‘Hooray!’ shouted Beth. ‘A letter from Father!’

‘Yes!’ said Mrs March. ‘A nice long letter.’

The letter was very cheerful and full of interesting descriptions of life in the army. At the end of the letter there was a special message for the girls. He told them to be good to their mother and to work hard. He wanted to be proud of them when he came back. The girls cried when their mother read the last part because they loved and missed their father a lot. They wanted to make him happy so each one made a promise to be a better person in the future.

Before they went to bed, Beth played some songs on the old  piano in the parlor and they all sang.

