



Movie

*Little Women*

Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> 2-4 pm

Discussion

*Little Women*

Dec 10<sup>th</sup> 1-3 pm



Discussion Questions courtesy of  
Bedford/St. Martin's publishers

Discussion Guide designed by  
Sandy Smith, Lodi Public Library

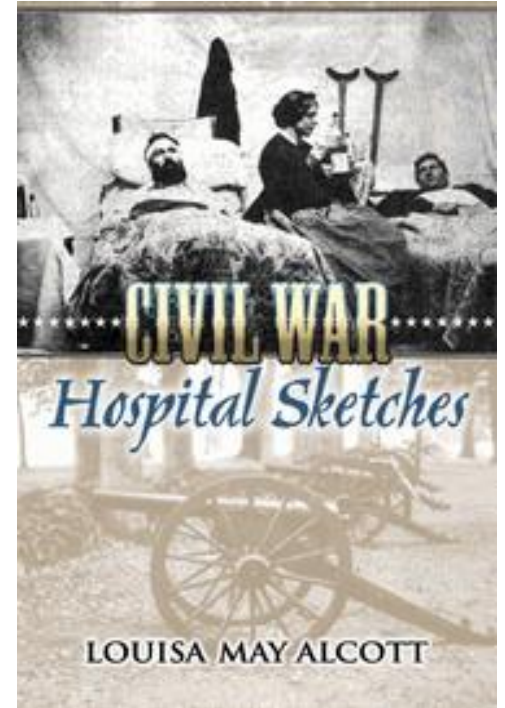
Books courtesy of  
Friends of Lodi Public Library



Brown Bag Book Club

Discusses

*Louisa May Alcott*



November 19, 2011

Noon - 2pm

Community Room  
Lodi Public Library  
201 W. Locust St.

Call 333-5503 for details

## Discussion Questions

1. Why did Alcott fictionalize her experiences as a nurse? How would *Hospital Sketches* be different if it consisted of her letters and journal entries?
2. What do we learn about the expected private and public roles of women in the mid-nineteenth century? Of men?
3. At the time of the Civil War, women could not vote nor fight as soldiers. Why then does Alcott want to contribute to the war effort?
4. Assess the state of mid-nineteenth-century medicine based on Alcott's depiction of medical practices. Consider too that at that time hospitals were for the poor. Were soldiers fortunate to be in the hospital or was medical care hazardous to their health?
5. At the start of the war, there were no nurses' training programs; neither was there a generally accepted understanding of the duties of neither a nurse nor who could claim to be a nurse. How did Alcott justify her presence? How did these conditions affect Alcott's ability to be effective?
6. Society of the time propriety demanded that women refrain from prolonged contact with unfamiliar men (much less intimate physical contact.) How would this affect the nurses' effectiveness? How did female nurses overcome this?
7. The hospital staff and patients are a diverse group? How does Alcott view her fellow workers? Her patients? The civilian visitors?
8. Alcott wrote and published *Hospital Sketches* in the midst of war. Are there signs in the text that she may have censored her account for the sake of Union morale?
9. What role does humor play in *Hospital Sketches*? Does it undercut sentimentalism or is it part of a sentimental approach? Does it allow Alcott to be more critical of her surroundings?
10. The chapter "A Night" closes with the death of the soldier John. What makes him an emblem of ideal man? Of nationhood? How does her relationship with John shift?
11. The Alcotts were strong abolitionists. Louisa was also a "woman's rights woman." How are her beliefs evident in the narrative? In what ways is she like other people? What can happen when idealism runs up against realism?
12. What does Alcott tell us about the soldiers' commitment to the Union cause? What do they think that cause to be? Why do they fight?
13. What do we learn about the personality and character of Louisa?