

Summary — Chapter 22: Pleasant Meadows

Christmas arrives and everyone is very merry. Laurie and Jo make a snowwoman for Beth, and everyone else gets lovely presents too. The Laurences and Mr. Brooke surprise the family by bringing Mr. March home for Christmas. They have a very joyful time, and Mr. March tells the girls how much each of them has grown up. Jo is upset, however, because she can feel Meg slipping away from the family in her preoccupation with Mr. Brooke.

Summary- Chapter 23: Aunt March Settles the Question

Meg becomes nervous and blushes whenever Mr. Brooke is mentioned. Her parents think that she is too young to be married, and in order to follow their wishes, she prepares a speech of rejection in case he makes advances. When Mr. Brooke comes over, she softens somewhat in his presence. Nevertheless, when he professes his love for her, she tells him she is too young. Aunt March arrives in the middle of this encounter. Mr. Brooke steps out, and Aunt March lectures Meg, telling her she should marry someone wealthy. Aunt March's tirade makes Meg defend her right to love and marry Mr. Brooke. After Aunt March leaves, Mr. Brooke comes back into the room, confessing that he has heard Meg's conversation. Meg says that she did not realize how much she admired Mr. Brooke until she had to defend him. He is thrilled by her realization and asks her to marry him in a few years. Meg agrees, and her parents consent. Jo is unhappy because she feels that she is losing her sister. Laurie arrives with Mr. Laurence, and they are both thrilled for the new couple. The first part of the book ends with the family gathered in the living room.

NEW SECTION

Summary — Chapter 24: Gossip

This chapter, the first in Part Two of the novel, opens after three years have passed. Meg is about to get married. The war has ended, and Mr. March has returned home. Mr. Brooke has gone to war too, and has returned with only a minor injury. In the meantime, Meg has learned more about keeping house, and Amy has taken over Jo's job caring for Aunt March. Jo has continued to write stories for the newspaper, for which she is paid one dollar a column, while Laurie has passed the years at college. Many of Laurie's college friends fall in love with Amy, who has blossomed into a lovely young woman. Sallie Gardiner has married Ned Moffat. As Meg's wedding nears, the March women all work on Meg's new little house. Laurie comes home with gifts for Meg, and Jo tells him that he spends too much money. To Jo's dismay, Laurie tells Jo that, whether she likes it or not, she will be the next one to marry.

Summary — Chapter 25: The First Wedding

Meg's wedding is casual and small. In their summer dresses, all of the March girls look beautiful and slightly different from how they appeared three years ago: Jo is a bit softened, Amy is gorgeous, and Beth is pale and fragile but good-spirited. The wedding goes smoothly. When Laurie asks what happened to the expensive wine that his grandfather sent, Meg tells him that they have put a little aside for medicinal use and have given the rest away. Meg then asks Laurie never to drink alcohol. He agrees to her request. After the celebration, Meg leaves, asking her family members to keep her in their hearts.

Summary — Chapter 26: Artistic Attempts

Amy spends much time working on her art. Though she is not a genius, she has passion. At the end of one of her art classes, she asks Marmee if she can invite her girlfriends over for a luncheon and an afternoon of sketching. She wants to make the party elaborate and lovely, and she offers to pay for all of it. Marmee consents, but only in order to teach Amy a lesson about trying to present herself as something she is not. The party ends up costing more than Amy plans. She must reschedule the picnic because it is rainy and set up everything again the next day. When she goes out to buy lobster, she runs into a friend of Laurie's. He sees the lobster, which was considered low-class food at the time, and she is very embarrassed, although she manages to recover and charm him. Finally, the party begins, but only one person shows up. During the party, Amy is delightful and merry, but she is very disappointed at the way things have turned out. Her family is very kind and tactful.

Summary — Chapter 27: Literary Lessons

Jo continues to write. Then, one night, she goes to a lecture on pyramids. While she is waiting for the lecture to begin, a boy shows her a newspaper. It has a sensationalist story that Jo finds silly. She sees that the newspaper is offering a one hundred dollar prize for the best sensationalist story. Excited, Jo writes a story, submits it, and wins. With the money, she sends Marmee and Beth to the seashore for several weeks to improve Beth's health. Jo keeps writing. She makes more money, providing for herself and the family. Finally, she decides to finish her novel, which is a romance. The publisher tells her to cut it down, and, after long consideration, she does. When the novel is published, it earns her \$300, as well as mixed reviews from critics.

Summary — Chapter 28: Domestic Experiences

Meg learns to tend house and be a good wife. She and Mr. Brooke must be careful with money because they are poor. One day, Meg tries to make jelly, which turns out to be a miserable failure. That night, John brings home unexpected company. Meg gets angry at his insensitivity, even though she has told him that he can bring home guests anytime

he wants. They have their first fight, but soon make up. The next trial comes when Meg is frivolous and spends too much money shopping with Sallie Gardiner. She buys expensive fabric, which prohibits John from getting a new coat. Meg asks Sallie to buy the fabric from her, which Sallie does, and Meg purchases a coat for John. Soon Meg becomes pregnant and gives birth to twins, John Laurence and Margaret, who are called Demi and Daisy for short.

NEW SECTION

Summary — Chapter 29: Calls

Amy and Jo go out visiting, and Amy makes Jo dress up and behave nicely. At the first house, Amy reprimands Jo for being too reserved and for hardly speaking at all. To tease her sister, Jo imitates a social butterfly named May Chester at the second house they visit. Amy grows even more mortified as Jo reveals secrets of their poverty. At the third house, after Amy tells her to stop this new behavior, Jo amuses herself by playing with a group of young boys, telling them stories. As Amy and Jo walk to Aunt March's house, Amy declares that poor young women should be pleasant because they have nothing else to give. Disagreeing, Jo says that she will probably be crotchety all of her days. Aunt Carrol is at Aunt March's house when they arrive. During the visit, Amy is charming, but Jo is curt. Alcott indicates that something good will happen to Amy because she is so delightful that day.

Summary — Chapter 30: Consequences

Amy is to work at the art table at the Chesters' upcoming fair. She works hard to put the display together. The night before the fair, Mrs. Chester hears how the March girls insulted her daughter, May, and tells Amy that she should work at the flower table instead, while May will work at the art table. Amy is insulted, but she maintains her composure, taking her art with her to the new booth. The next day, hoping to smooth things over, Amy offers her art back to May. Over the course of the day, few people go to the flower table. That night, however, the Marches send over a brigade of young men led by Laurie. These boys surround Amy and buy all her flowers. Then, to kill May with kindness, Amy sends the boys to May's booth to buy the vases that May has made. Amy returns home to find the vases filled with flowers for her. She then receives a note from Aunt Carrol, telling her that she is going to Europe and wants Amy to accompany her. Amy is thrilled, but Jo is very disappointed, having hoped that she would get to go on the trip. Before Amy sails for Europe, she asks Laurie to come comfort her if something should happen. He agrees to do so.

Summary — Chapter 31: Our Foreign Correspondent

Amy sends several letters from Europe, detailing her romps through England, France, Germany, and Switzerland. She says that she is trying to absorb every beautiful attraction. Along the way, she runs into Fred and Frank Vaughn, Laurie's English friends. She and Florence, Aunt Carrol's daughter, spend a lot of time with them, and it becomes clear that Fred is interested in courting Amy. She decides that she will accept him if he proposes. She is not madly in love with him, but she likes him and thinks that his fortune will help the whole family. But Fred finds out that Frank is very ill, and must leave abruptly. Fred asks Amy to remember him, and tells her meaningfully that he will return to her soon.

Summary — Chapter 32: Tender Troubles

Marmee asks Jo to find out if something is troubling Beth, for Beth's spirits seem low. After thinking, Jo concludes that Beth might be in love with Laurie, but Jo is afraid that Laurie is in love Jo herself. Jo asks her mother if she might go away for a while in an attempt to broaden her horizons and to escape Laurie's growing love. She hopes that Laurie will fall in love with Beth while she is gone. Marmee agrees that Jo and Laurie are unsuited for each other because they are too similar, with their strong wills and frequent quarrels. Jo decides to go to New York to live with a woman named Mrs. Kirke and to teach her children. When Jo tells Laurie of her decision to leave, he responds by telling her, teasingly but seriously, that she will not get out of his grasp so easily.

Summary — Chapter 33: Jo's Journal

Jo sends letters from New York. She reports that the children are fine and that she is enjoying her little room in the big boarding house. She also writes about another boarder, a German professor named Frederick Bhaer. Professor Bhaer does not have much money, and tutors children in order to make a living. He is not particularly good-looking, and is around forty years old. Jo watches him doing good for everyone around him and is impressed by his kindness. They become friends when she mends some of his garments for him. Soon, he begins teaching her German. At Christmas, he gives her a beloved volume of Shakespeare from which he hopes she will learn. She gives him many trinkets in return. For New Year's Eve, the boarding house has a masquerade, and Jo goes as Mrs. Malaprop, a character from a Restoration comedy by Richard Sheridan called *The Rivals*. Bhaer goes as Nick Bottom, from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Jo thoroughly enjoys herself.

NEW SECTION

Summary — Chapter 34: Friend

In New York, Jo begins to write sensationalist stories for a publication called the “Weekly Volcano.” She is not proud of these stories, as they are not moral or profound in any way. They do, however, provide her with a lot of money. Later, she witnesses Mr. Bhaer defending religion in a philosophical conversation and is more impressed with him than ever. When he finds out that she writes sensationalist fiction, she is even more ashamed, and quits writing the tales. In June, she must return home. She tells Bhaer that she will see Laurie graduate, and Bhaer looks a bit jealous. He tells himself that he cannot hope to have Jo. She goes home feeling unsuccessful in writing, but very successful in having found such a good friend.

Summary — Chapter 35: Heartache

All of the Marches except Amy go to see Laurie graduate from college. He has done well there, having spent the last year working hard, probably to impress Jo. When he returns home, he finally confesses his love to Jo. She tries to stop him from speaking his mind, but he insists on telling her how he feels. She rejects his marriage proposals, telling him she doesn’t love him in that way, which breaks his heart. He worries that she loves Professor Bhaer, and speaks scornfully of Bhaer’s old age. Jo energetically defends the professor, but says she does not love him. After the rejection, Laurie mopes for a while until Mr. Laurence, to whom Jo has told of her conversation with Laurie, suggests that he and Laurie go to Europe for a while. Laurie reluctantly agrees and sadly leaves.

Summary — Chapter 36: Beth’s Secret

Coming home from New York, Jo has been surprised to find Beth even paler and thinner than before. She proposes to take Beth to the mountains with the money that she has earned. Beth says that she does not want to go so far and asks to go to the seashore again instead. When they are on holiday, Beth confesses that she knows that she will die soon. Jo tells her that she will not, but Beth is certain that she will. Beth tells her that this realization was the reason she was melancholy the previous fall. She asks Jo to tell their parents so that she does not have to. But when they return home, Jo does not need to say anything. Their parents can see the change in Beth for themselves.