

Composition: Little Women 1

While Jo March stands out as the central character in *Little Women*, her younger sister Beth plays a pivotal role in shaping Jo's personal journey. Unlike Jo, who is outgoing and adventurous, Beth is more reserved and devoted to home and family. This quiet demeanor is what makes her so significant. Through her actions, Beth sets an example for Jo of the values of selflessness and inner strength. Though she remains in the background, her impact resonates deeply.

Beth is introduced as a nurturing presence, always ready to support those around her. Alcott describes her as "a housewifely little creature, helping Hannah keep home neat and comfortable for the workers, never thinking of any reward but to be loved" (Alcott 41). This quote portrays Beth's natural generosity as she seeks no accolades, only the joy of helping others. In contrast, Jo is a free spirit yearning for independence, but Beth provides her with an unspoken steady reminder that strength can rise in gentler forms.

The narrator further highlights Beth's importance, noting, "There are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping" (Alcott 42). This observation reveals how often Beth's contributions are overlooked until she is no longer present. Even with her soft-spoken nature, Beth fosters a sense of tranquility within the March family. The bond between Jo and Beth is particularly touching to me. Despite Jo's age and extroverted nature, it's Beth who unassumingly exerts a powerful influence over her. Alcott notes, "To Jo alone did the shy child tell her thoughts; and over her big harum-scarum sister, Beth

unconsciously exercised more influence than anyone in the family" (Alcott 43). This reveals how Beth serves as a grounding force for Jo, who both cares for her sister and learns from her quiet wisdom.

One of the more heartwarming parts so far is centered on Beth's growing friendship with Mr. Laurence. Initially intimidated by him, Beth overcomes her fear after he invites her to play the piano at his home, drawn in by her love for music. As their friendship grows, she bravely expresses her gratitude by crafting him slippers and, in a touching moment, thanking him with a kiss on the cheek. "Beth ceased to fear him from that moment... for love casts out fear, and gratitude can conquer pride" (Alcott 68). This interaction shows how Beth's kindness and warmth can dismantle barriers, even with someone as stern as Mr. Laurence.

Beth also strives for personal growth, reflecting her commitment to becoming the best version of herself. At one point, she expresses, "I'll do my lessons every day and not spend so much time with my music and dolls. I am a stupid thing, and ought to be studying, not playing" (Alcott 125). While she may be hard on herself, this moment reveals her desire to improve and honor the values she was raised with. Beth might not be the most outspoken or adventurous character, but she's one of the most important. Her timid yet kind ways help shape Jo's growth and add emotional depth to the story. Beth reminds both Jo and the reader that sometimes the people who speak the least can have the most to say through how they live.

Works Cited

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women; or, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy*. Illustrated by Jessie Willcox Smith, Little, Brown, c. 1915. *Internet Archive*, ark:/13960/t76t0kt2m, accessed 1 Sept. 2025.