

- 1** Observez les paratextes et complétez les boîtes avec le mot approprié : « littéraire » ou « journalistique ». Puis lisez chacun des textes et vérifiez que les informations se confirment.

Text A Fortune suddenly smiled upon Jo, and dropped a good luck penny in her path. Not a golden penny, exactly, but I doubt if half a million would have given more real happiness than did the little sum that came to her in this wise¹.

Every few weeks she would shut herself up in her room, put on her scribbling² suit, and ‘fall into a vortex’³, as she expressed it, writing away at her novel with all her heart and soul, for till that was finished she could find no peace. (...)

Well, it was printed, and she got three hundred dollars for it, likewise plenty of praise and blame, both so much greater than she expected that she was thrown into a state of bewilderment⁴ from which it took her some time to recover.

“You said, Mother, that criticism would help me. But how can it, when it’s so contradictory that I don’t know whether I’ve written a promising book or broken all the ten commandments?” cried poor Jo.

(...)

Her family and friends administered comfort and commendation⁵ liberally. Yet it was a hard time for sensitive, high-spirited Jo, who meant so well and had apparently done so ill. But it did her good, for those whose opinion had real

value gave her the criticism which is an author's best education, and when the first soreness⁶ was over, she could laugh at her poor little book, yet believe in it still, and feel herself the wiser and stronger for the buffeting⁷ she had received.

"Not being a genius, like Keats⁸, it won't kill me," she said stoutly, "and I've got the joke on my side, after all, for the parts that were taken straight out of real life are denounced as impossible and absurd, and the scenes that I made up out of my own silly head are pronounced 'charmingly natural, tender, and true'. So I'll comfort myself with that, and when I'm ready, I'll up again and take another."

Louisa May Alcott,
Little Women, 1868

1. in this wise (exp.) = in this way
2. scribble (v.) = write quickly
3. vortex (n.): *tourbillon*
4. bewilderment (n.): *confusion*
5. commendation (n.) = praise
6. soreness (n.): *douleur*
7. buffeting (n.) = beating
8. John Keats is an English Romantic poet (1795-1821)

Text B **Sister Act: How *Little Women* has Come of Age on the Big Screen**

Greta Gerwig's new big-screen adaptation of *Little Women*, the sixth about the March sisters to be made so far, starts with a scene taken from the middle of Louisa May Alcott's second volume. Almost all the others have begun with the girls' childhood, but in Gerwig's film, we first meet an adult Jo March in the New York offices of the *Weekly Volcano*, where she hopes to place a story – thus setting it up as a film about writing. Along with all the things we expect from this story (coming of age, sibling¹ relations, the challenge of being good), the film is about the relationship of fiction with life, and the challenges and the rewards of writing as a job. The parallels between Jo and her creator, Alcott, are also drawn out by Gerwig, and this adult Jo co-exists throughout the film with the child Jo, who is learning how to write, how to be a woman and, often, how similar these processes can be.

Published in the late 1860s, *Little Women*, for those for whom mentions of Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy do not instantly evoke scenes known since childhood (a book-burning, the shearing of a head of long hair), tells the story of four girls whose father is away, working as a chaplain² in the US civil war³. They used to be well off⁴, but he was too trusting with his money, and now they are poor; the famed first lines – “Christmas won't

be Christmas without any presents,' grumbled Jo, lying on the rug" establish how they feel about it, and some of the ways in which they will be tested. (...)

We may these days (...) be surrounded by books containing extraordinary girls – Lyra, Hermione, Katniss – but it is striking that they are exceptions, and often alone; groups of girls in, say, the Gossip Girl books are toxic and destructive. Little Women is about “a world of women, of value in and of itself”. It is also, Gerwig has said, “one of the few books about childhood that isn’t about escape. There is bravery, but it’s a hero’s journey contained inside the home.” And one whose male characters are peripheral. In the first volume Jo, furious that Meg is thinking of getting married, thus breaking up the cosy family, rages that “buds will be roses, and kittens cats – more’s the pity”. In Gerwig’s film Meg replies to a similar outburst⁵ with: “Just because my dreams are different from yours doesn’t mean they’re not important.” Perhaps the truly radical thing is that Alcott tried to make space and time for all of them.

Alder Eldermariam,
theguardian.com, December 7th, 2019

1. sibling (n.) = brother or sister
2. chaplain (n.) = military clergyman
3. US civil war = 1861-1865
4. well off (adj.) = rich
5. outburst (n.): *explosion*