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## **Salem Press Announces a New Addition to the Critical Insights Series; *Critical Insights: Little Women***

Edited by Gregory Eiselein, professor of English and University Distinguished Teaching Scholar at Kansas State University, and Anne K. Phillips, associate professor of English at Kansas State University, *Critical Insights: Little Women* explores one of the most beloved classics in United States literary history. This novel's ability to induce such attachments to its characters and their circumstances may be at the heart of what has made Alcott's book such an important piece of American literary history and such a surprising cultural icon.

Understanding *Little Women's* unique place in literary and cultural history should begin with Alcott's unique upbringing and cultural context, aspects of which she vividly synthesized to shape a novel that absorbs and embodies the era, but also innovatively challenges certain social and cultural conventions, directly and indirectly. While the novel does provide moral lessons, about controlling one's anger or helping those who are poor and hungry, for example, *Little Women* also offers more subversive perspectives on childhood, gender, marriage, and the role of women in families and society.

The present volume examines *Little Women* from a variety of points of view. Indeed, a special focus of this volume involves the many different kinds of critical perspectives that can be—and have been—employed when examining Alcott's masterwork. In particular, the present volume emphasizes how the novel was received by many of its earlier readers and the variety of ways in which it can be interpreted by readers today.

In the **Critical Context section**, this section has been prepared to include what readers would need to know about *Little Women* and the context in which it was produced. Beginning with Daniel Shealy discussing "*Little Women* in Its Time", he positions it as a text that is both rooted in and transcendent of its era. Beverly Lyon Clark provides an overview of the critical reception of Alcott's novel from its publication to the present. Bruce Ronda has created an essay on the secularization of nineteenth-century American and the ways that Alcott "seeks to retain historical religious references and present a kind of religious 'glow' to her account of the Marches, while also rooting their lives in the material circumstances of middle-class life in Victorian America." Finally, in "Mignon's Song in America: *Willhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and *Little Women*," Christine Doyle provides insight into the ways that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel resonates throughout *Little Women*.

The essays in the **Critical Readings section** address a range of issues relevant to a twenty-first century reader's consideration of *Little Women*. This section dissects the variety of themes presented throughout this title, such as "The precious home letters:" Letter-Writing in *Little Women*" by Theresa Strouth Gaul, "Beneath the Umbrellas of Benevolent Men: Validating the Middle-Class Woman in *Little Women* and *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*" by Sandra Burr, "'dishes and dusters": Valuing Beth's Labor in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*; or Staying in for Service" by Lorinda B. Cohoon, and "Unsettling Engagements in *Moods* and *Little Women*; or Learning to Love Louisa May Alcott" by Sarah Wadsworth. Individual chapters within *Little Women* will provide researchers with a wide range of approaches to the characterization and themes that continue to resonate with the readers.

Each essay in *Critical Insights: Little Women* is 2,500 to 5,000 words in length, and all essays conclude with a list of "Works Cited," along with endnotes. Finally, the volume's appendixes offer a section of useful reference resources including a chronology of Alcott's life, a complete list of works by Louisa May Alcott's, an annotated bibliography for readers seeking to study more about the author in greater depth, and a subject index.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world's most-studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia's most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: Little Women* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

### **Free Online with Print Purchase**

In addition, *Critical Insights: Little Women* comes with complimentary online access via <http://online.salempress.com>. A single purchase of the printed version is all it takes to gain access to this important title on the web.

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