

# Inter\*Act Performances with Jan Turnquist: *Louisa May Alcott: Dynamic Author* Grade Levels: 3-5

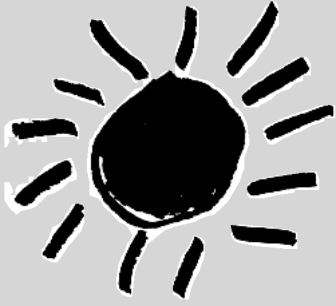
## PRE-PERFORMANCE REQUIRED PREPARATION

**TEACHERS: THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WILL ENABLE STUDENTS TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PERFORMANCE.**

The information in the "TO THE STUDENT" paragraph is important. Please read or reprint it for your students prior to Louisa's visit. For younger students, the same information may be conveyed in language appropriate to them. In either case, it is suggested that the teacher discuss with the class the meaning of the phrase "willing suspension of disbelief."

### **TO THE STUDENT:**

Louisa May Alcott will visit us in a living history program on \_\_\_\_\_. Like a play, living history requires the willing suspension of disbelief by its viewers. Unlike a regular play, however, living history allows the audience to be a part of the performance, if it wishes. You are invited to respond to Miss Alcott's conversation, but you need not feel pressed to do so. You do not need to be an expert on the 1800s, but need only to be yourself. Miss Alcott will have experienced a minor carriage accident, which has left her temporarily stranded. She will have been led to this room to rest and await her carriage repair. She will, of course, know nothing of modern life, but will be looking for someone to keep her company while she waits for her carriage to be fixed. This is the role you may play today. Your own willing suspension of disbelief during this performance will lead you to the magic of meeting a woman who lived over 100 years ago, and by simply making her welcome, you will have a chance to travel back in time yourself. Miss Alcott looks forward to meeting you.



# Young Audiences of Massachusetts

## *Educational Materials*

Please forward to teachers

### **ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE**

#### **Inter\*Act Performances with Jan Turnquist:**

*Louisa May Alcott: Dynamic Author*

**Grade levels: 3-5**

In this living history portrayal, students meet Louisa May Alcott -- prolific author, tireless reformer, proud and independent spinster, and Civil War nurse. Miss Alcott (1832 - 1888) created Jo March, the heroine of the classic Little Women, from her own life. Travel back in time with Louisa and learn about life in the 19th century! Louisa introduces important issues of the day, such as suffrage, abolition, the Underground Railroad, and the treatment of women.

### **LEARNING GOALS:**

1. To explore life in turn-of-the-century America from the perspective of a colorful historical figure.
2. To experience the writings of Louisa May Alcott, particularly Little Women.

### **PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Life in the 1800s Versus Life Today***

Compare life in the 1800s to life today. Divide the class into groups and assign each group an aspect of life (i.e., food, home, transportation, school, entertainment, etc.). Have each group create a chart that illustrates the differences between one particular aspect of life in the 1800s and the present day. Have each group present their chart to the rest of the class.

### **POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Writing a Short Story***

Discuss the word "author" and the process of writing a short story. Have students simulate this experience by writing short stories about an event in their lives. Then, have students exchange papers and act as editors. Finally, have them transcribe their stories onto good paper and "bind" their books with colored card stock and yarn.

### **CURRICULUM LINKS:**

English Language Arts, Theater, Women's Studies, History and Social Science, African-American Studies

## PRE-ACTIVITY: LIFE IN THE 1800s VERSUS LIFE TODAY

**LEARNING GOAL:**

To reflect on the comparisons of life in the 1800s with life today.

**TIME:**

60 minutes

**STEP 1:**

**Discuss** the 1800s. What was life like? How was it different from today?

**STEP 2:**

**Write** the following list on the board: food, homes, transportation, school, clothing, entertainment, medical care. Divide the class into groups. Assign each group one of the topics. Ask the group to create a chart that compares the differences between the 1800s and today.

**STEP 3:**

**Have** the groups present their comparison charts to the class and discuss their findings.

**STEP 4:**

**Ask** students to write short paragraphs entitled, "If I Lived in the 1800s..." Ask volunteers to share their paragraphs with the rest of the class.

**EXTENSIONS:**

- 1) **Read** a few pages from Little Women aloud each day. Make sure students know that *Little Women* is an autobiographical novel. Keep a running list of elements from the story that surprise the students.
- 2) **Have** students think of relevant questions to ask Louisa May Alcott.



## POST-ACTIVITY: WRITING A BOOK

### LEARNING GOAL:

To write a personal story and discover the book-making process.

### MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

4" x 5" pieces of lined paper, 4" x 5" pieces of colored card stock, hole punch, yarn

### TIME:

Three 45-minute classes

### TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

\* This activity can be tailored to meet time constraints.

\* It is helpful to have a sample handmade book available as a guide.

\* If a computer is available, have students type their stories.

### STEP 1:

**Discuss** the word "author." Ask students to name authors of books they have read.

### STEP 2:

**Discuss** the process of writing a book. First, the author writes a story. An editor then reviews and comments on it. Next, the editor returns the story to the author to make changes. This step might be repeated numerous times. Finally, the story is printed and bound.

### STEP 3:

**Have** students write short stories about an event in their lives. Ask students to exchange stories. Have them act as editors for each other with an emphasis on constructive criticism.

### STEP 4:

**Pass** out 4" x 5" lined paper, and have students transcribe their revised stories onto as many pieces of paper as necessary.

### STEP 5:

**Give** students two pieces of 4" x 5" colored card stock. Ask them to decorate one for the cover, and use the other as the back. Put the book together. When students are finished, have them make three hole punches in the left margin of the book. Pass out the yarn, and have them tie the book together.

### STEP 6:

**Have** students share their books with the class.

### EXTENSIONS:

1) **Plan** a class trip to Louisa May Alcott's home, the Orchard House, in Concord, Massachusetts. (See resources section)

2) **Have** students write a letter to Louisa May Alcott to share their thoughts about her visit.



## Inter\* Act Performances with Jan Turnquist: *Louisa May Alcott: Dynamic Author*

Grade levels: 3-5

### RESOURCES:

Orchard House / Alcott Home  
P.O. Box 343  
Concord, Massachusetts 01742  
(978) 369-4118  
[www.louisamayalcott.org](http://www.louisamayalcott.org)

### VOCABULARY:

abolition	parlor	theatricals
blood and thunder tales	pot boilers	reform
trump (as slang)	typhoid pneumonia	hoop skirt
Underground Railroad	livery	spinster
utopia	pantaloons	temperance

### ABOUT THE PERFORMER:

**Jan Turnquist** is the Executive Director of Louisa May Alcott's home, Orchard House, in Concord, MA. She has presented teacher workshops at numerous sites including the Wang Center in Boston and Old Sturbridge Village and has performed internationally at sites such as Old South Meeting House in Boston, the Martin Van Buren Historical Site in Kinderhook, NY, Winter Chatauqua in Florida, and the American School in Mexico City. Jan has presented her work under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Federal Women's Council, the National Park Service, and Continental Airlines and has performed at numerous libraries, schools, and universities. She currently portrays Miss Alcott in a public service announcement which runs nationally on the FOX Network. Jan has also appeared in several BBC productions including *Blue Peter*, Britain's longest running children's television show, *Book Worm*, and the BBC's Open University programs. Jan has also appeared on "This Old House" with Norm Abrams on PBS and on "Chronicle" with Mary Richardson on WCVB. For more information on **Inter\* Act Performances**, please consult the web site: [www.janturnquist.com/index.htm](http://www.janturnquist.com/index.htm).

### ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES:

Young Audiences of Massachusetts (YA) is the oldest, largest and most utilized arts-in-education organization in the state and one of the largest in a national network of 33 chapters. For over 45 years, YA has distinguished itself as the vital link between Massachusetts schoolchildren (K-12) and more than 95 of the region's most accomplished actors, dancers, singers, musicians, and storytellers. Its 36 ensembles offer 57 interactive arts programs that represent a range of cultures, historical periods and artistic disciplines. YA is unique in its flexibility to offer interactive performances, tailor-made residencies, workshops, teacher-training, curriculum planning and multi-year projects. All programs include educational materials and satisfy local, state and/or federal arts education standards.



# Young Audiences of Massachusetts

255 Elm Street, Suite 302, Somerville, MA 02144

(617) 629-YAMA (9262)

[www.yamass.org](http://www.yamass.org)

## MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS CONNECTIONS

### **Inter\*Act Performances with Jan Turnquist:** *Louisa May Alcott: Dynamic Author*

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <i>Language Arts 9</i>  | ...identify the basic facts and essential ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed.   |
| <i>Language Arts 12</i> | ...identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.   |
| <i>History 5</i>        | Interdisciplinary Learning: Religion, Ethics, Philosophy, and Literature in History...describe and explain fundamental tenets of major world religions; basic ideals of ethics; differing conceptions of human nature; and influence over time. |
| <i>Arts-Theatre 1</i>   | Acting...develop acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes.  |
| <i>Arts-Theatre 5</i>   | Critical Response...describe and analyze their own theatrical work and the work of others using appropriate theater vocabulary.   |
| <i>Arts-Theatre 10</i>  | Interdisciplinary Connections...apply knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history, and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.                                 |