

Inter*Act Performances with Jan Turnquist: *Louisa May Alcott: Dynamic Author* Grade Levels: 6-12

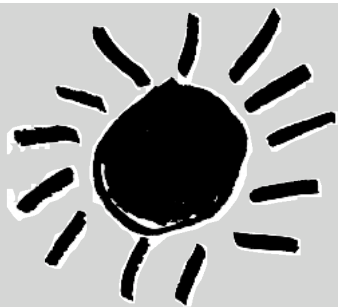
PRE-PERFORMANCE REQUIRED PREPARATION

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: *A Visit With Louisa May Alcott*

Grade levels: 6-12

In this living history portrayal, 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: *Authors of the 1800s*

Discuss Louisa May Alcott. When did she live? What did she do? What is her most famous novel? Discuss other authors from the 1800s (Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, etc.). Divide the class into groups, and assign each group an author. Ask the groups to research their author and write a brief summary about one of his/her literary works. Have the groups share their research.

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Writing Autobiographies*

How is an autobiography different from a biography? Ask students to think of an important personal event and write an autobiographical excerpt. Have students share their excerpts and discuss the different styles of writing in each.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

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

PRE-ACTIVITY: *AUTHORS OF THE 1800s*

LEARNING GOAL:

To investigate authors who lived and wrote during the 1800s.

TIME:

One hour

STEP 1:

Discuss the author Louisa May Alcott with students. When did she live? What was life like during her lifetime (1832-1888)? What is her most famous book?

STEP 2:

Discuss Alcott's literary contemporaries (i.e., Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, etc.).

STEP 3:

Divide the class into four groups and assign each one of the above mentioned authors. Have the groups research an author and write a summary of one the author's most well-known works.

STEP 4:

Have the groups share their research. How were these authors similar? How were they different? Discuss the writing styles of each of the four authors.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Discuss** life in the 1800s. Have students research the homes, clothing, entertainment, medical care, transportation, and schools of this period.
- 2) **Have** students read Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.



POST-ACTIVITY: WRITING AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

LEARNING GOAL:

To write autobiographical excerpts.

TIME:

one hour

STEP 1:

Discuss the difference between a biography and an autobiography. Why do people write autobiographies? When do they write them?

STEP 2:

Ask students to think of important events in their lives. Have them select one event and write an autobiographical excerpt. Remind students that they can write in the first person if they wish.

STEP 3:

Have students share their autobiographical excerpts.

STEP 4: OPTIONAL

Repeat and modify the writing activity for biographies. Have students share events from their lives with partners. Have students write about their partner's important event and share excerpts. Discuss the difference between writing an autobiography and writing a biography.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Discuss** life in the 1800s and compare it to life today.
- 2) **Have** students write a letter to Louisa expressing their opinions on her life and Little Women.



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RESOURCES:

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

VOCABULARY:

abolition	parlor	theatricals
blood and thunder tales	pot boilers	transcendentalism
calomel	reform	trump (as slang)
consociate family	reticule	typhoid pneumonia
hoop skirt	snood	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 Chataqua 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.

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

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MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS CONNECTIONS

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

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| <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. |