



Press Contacts:
Donna Williams, WNET.ORG
212.560.8030, WilliamsD@wnet.org
Donald Lee, WNET.ORG
212.560.3005, LeeD@wnet.org

THIRTEEN's *American Masters* premieres the first film biography of the beloved author Louisa May Alcott, *The Woman Behind 'Little Women,'* airing Monday, December 28 at 9 p.m. on PBS

Film stars Three-time Obie winner Elizabeth Marvel as Louisa May Alcott and Tony winner and Oscar nominee Jane Alexander as Alcott's first biographer, Ednah Dow Cheney.

The film features dialogue taken exclusively from writings or firsthand reports of conversations.

Outtakes and interview with director Nancy Porter and writer Harriet Reisen at pbs.org/americanmasters.

Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women*, is an almost universally recognized name. Her reputation as a morally upstanding New England spinster, reflecting the conventional propriety of mid-19th century Concord, is firmly established. Raised among reformers, iconoclasts and Transcendentalists, the intellectual protégé of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, Alcott was actually a free thinker, with democratic ideals and progressive values about women – a worldly careerist of sorts. Most surprising is that Alcott

led, anonymously and under the pseudonym A.M. Barnard, a literary double life not discovered until the 1940s. As Barnard, Alcott penned some thirty pulp fiction thrillers, with characters running the gamut from murderers and revolutionaries to cross-dressers and opium addicts – a far cry from her better-known works featuring fatherly mentors, courageous mothers and impish children.

American Masters' Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind 'Little Women' premiering nationally Monday, December 28, 2009 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings) is a co-production of Nancy Porter Productions and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG. The film is directed/produced by Emmy Award winner Nancy Porter and written/produced by Harriet Reisen, author of the biography of the same title published by Henry Holt and Company. The audiobook, read by Reisen, will be available from Tantor Media December 1st. Susan Lacy is the series creator and executive producer of ***American Masters***. Major funding for ***Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind 'Little Women'*** is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In ***Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind 'Little Women'***, the first film biography about the celebrated author, ***American Masters*** reveals a remarkable woman, ahead of her time, who was much more than a writer of children's books. Combining elements of documentary, drama and animation, the film stars three-time Obie winner Elizabeth Marvel as Alcott and Tony winner and Oscar nominee Jane Alexander as Alcott's first biographer Ednah Dow Cheney. The dialogue is taken exclusively from writings or firsthand reports of conversations. The HD film is shot on original locations including Orchards House in Concord, Emerson's house in Concord and Fruitlands in Harvard, site of the Alcott's utopian experiment. Interwoven with dramatic scenes are interviews with Alcott scholars Sarah Elbert, John Matteson, Joel Myerson, Daniel Shealy, Madeleine Stern, Dr. Leona Rostenberg, Jan Turnquist, and novelist Geraldine Brooks.

"Louisa May Alcott is best known as a children's author, yet her own life was much harder than *Little Women* would suggest," says Susan Lacy, series creator and executive producer of ***American Masters***, a seven-time winner of the Emmy Award for Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series. "Before Alcott became the J.K. Rowling of her time, she worked as a servant, a seamstress and Civil War nurse. She grew up in the thick of the abolition and woman suffrage movement (once signed herself "Yours for reform of all kinds," and lifted her family from dire poverty to great wealth.

American Masters is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG – one of America's most prolific and respected public media providers.

To take ***American Masters*** beyond the television broadcast and further explore the themes, stories, and personalities of masters past and present, the companion Web site (pbs.org/americanmasters) offers interviews, essays, photographs, outtakes, and other resources. ***American Masters*** is made possible by the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Additional funding for ***American Masters*** is provided by Rosalind P. Walter, The Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation, Jack Rudin, Rolf and Elizabeth Rosenthal, The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation, and public television viewers. Major funding for ***Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind 'Little Women'*** is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, with additional funding provided by The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and Audrey Simons.

About WNET.ORG

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