



March

Geraldine Brooks

About The Book

Set during the American Civil War, *March* tells the story of John March, known to us as the father away from his family of girls in *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott's classic American novel. In Brooks' telling, March emerges as an abolitionist and idealistic chaplain on the front lines of a war that tests his faith in himself and in the Union cause when he learns that his side, too, is capable of barbarism and racism. As he recovers from a near-fatal illness in a Washington hospital, he must reassemble the shards of his tattered mind and body and find a way to reconnect with a wife and daughters who have no idea of the ordeals he has been through. *March* explores the passions between a man and a woman, the tenderness of parent and child and the life-changing power of an ardently held belief.

About The Author

Geraldine Brooks was born and raised in Australia. After moving to the USA she worked for eleven years on the *Wall Street Journal*. Her first novel, *Years of Wonder*, became an international bestseller. She lives in Virginia and is currently a fellow at Harvard University.

For Discussion

- How do you feel about the reworking of the classic novel *Little Women* as the basis of this book? Do you think Geraldine does justice to the original book?
- Throughout the novel, March and Marmee, although devoted to one another, seem to misunderstand each other quite a bit and often do not tell each other the complete truth. Are there times when it is best not to tell our loved ones the truth?
- The causes of the American Civil War were multiple and overlapping. What was your opinion of the war when you first came to the novel, and has it changed at all since reading *March*?
- March's relationships with both Marmee and Grace are pivotal in his life. Discuss the differences between these two relationships and how they help to shape March, his worldview, and his future. What other people and events were pivotal in shaping March's beliefs?
- "If war can ever be said to be just, then this war is so; it is action for a moral cause, with the most rigorous of intellectual underpinnings. And yet everywhere I turn, I see injustice done in the waging of it," says March. Do you think that March still believes the war is just by the end of the novel? Why or why not?
- What is your opinion of March's enlisting? Should he have stayed home with his family? How do we decide when to put our principles ahead of our personal obligations?
- *March* is very much a book about the moral dilemma of war, for those who want to make the world a better place but don't believe in fighting. Did the moral dilemma arise out of March's character or was he a vessel for that subject?
- When Marmee is speaking of her husband's enlisting in the army, she makes a very eloquent statement: "A sacrifice such as his is called noble by the world. But the world will not help me put back together what war has broken apart." Do her words have resonance in today's world? How are the people who fight our wars today perceived? Do you think we pay enough attention to the families of those in the military? Have our opinions been influenced at all by the inclusion of women in the military?
- The war raged on for several years after March's return home. How do you imagine he spent those remaining years of the war? How do you think his relationship with Marmee changed?
- *Little Women* rarely touches on the life of March and in Geraldine's novel, she barely mentions the girls. Do you feel this is the adult answer to the questions that remain after *Little Women* ends? Do you think that Geraldine successfully completes both novels?

