



Theodore Laurence's Character Development in "Little Women"

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ABSTRACT

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Theodore Laurence, affectionately known as Laurie, undergoes significant character development in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. His journey from a timid boy to a determined young man highlights the complexities of friendship, love, and personal growth within the narrative. This study explores the character growth of Theodore Laurence in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. The analysis is based on an objective approach, aiming to examine the progression of Theodore Laurence's character throughout the novel. The data for this research is drawn from the novel, focusing on Theodore Laurence's actions, dialogues from other characters about him, and direct descriptions from the author. The data is arranged chronologically based on key events in Theodore Laurence's life and analyzed using plot analysis. The study identifies four key phases that shape Theodore Laurence's character: before meeting the March family, forming a friendship with them, experiencing love and heartbreak, and his eventual marriage to Amy. Each phase reflects different aspects of his personality. Initially, Theodore is portrayed as a well-mannered, obedient boy. His friendship with the March family helps him develop into a kind, caring, and thoughtful individual. However, after being rejected by Jo, his behavior deteriorates, and he becomes aimless and lazy. Amy, however, encourages him to regain his sense of purpose, leading to a transformation where he becomes more determined, mature, and responsible. These four stages illustrate Theodore Laurence's character development throughout the novel.

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1. Introduction

Published in 1868, *Little Women* is among the most celebrated and widely read novels by Louisa May Alcott. The story revolves around four sisters—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March—who navigate their lives during the tumultuous period of the American Civil War in the nineteenth century. As Alcott's debut novel aimed at young girls, its immense popularity not only catapulted her to fame but also sparked a demand for sequels from her audience. Although Louisa obliged with follow-ups, many readers consider *Little Women* to be the most captivating of her works centered around the March family.

The novel captures the trials and triumphs of the March sisters as they grow into adulthood, highlighting their unique personalities and aspirations. Through their experiences, Alcott addresses themes of family, love, and personal growth, resonating deeply with her readers. The rich character development and relatable struggles of the March sisters have solidified *Little Women* as a timeless classic that continues to inspire generations.

The narrative of *Little Women* draws heavily from Louisa May Alcott's own childhood experiences shared with her sisters. Meg, for instance, is modeled after Louisa's sister Anna, who fell in love with her husband, John Bridge Pratt, while acting alongside him in a play. The depiction of Meg's wedding in the novel closely mirrors Anna's real-life wedding. Beth is inspired by Lizzie, who tragically passed away from scarlet fever at the age of 23. Similar to Beth's character, Lizzie contracted the illness while caring for a poor family that their mother was assisting.

Amy, the youngest March sister, is based on May Alcott, an artist who pursued her passion in Europe. Jo, the spirited and independent sister, reflects Louisa May Alcott herself, embodying many of the author's traits and aspirations. This autobiographical element enriches the narrative, making the characters' journeys resonate deeply with readers, as they navigate the challenges of adolescence, family dynamics, and personal growth during a pivotal time in American history.

The novel centers around the lives of Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy March, delving into the intricate dynamics of family and relationships. A pivotal moment occurs when Jo declines Laurie's marriage proposal, despite the widespread belief that they are destined to be together. Laurie, short for Theodore Laurence, is the affluent neighbor of the March sisters and shares a youthful exuberance with Jo, as they are roughly the same age. While the primary narrative focuses on the March girls, Laurie plays a significant role in the story as well.

Like many adolescents, Laurie grapples with differing aspirations from those of his guardian, old Mr. Laurence. While his grandfather envisions him taking over the family business and becoming a merchant, Laurie dreams of becoming a renowned composer or embarking on adventurous travels. In a bid to find a middle ground, Laurie ultimately compromises by agreeing to attend college, illustrating the common struggles of youth as they navigate the expectations imposed by family and society while striving to carve out their own paths.

They click right away and become close friends when Laurie and Jo first meet. Jo maintains that she could never fall in love with Laurie, even when Laurie's feelings eventually become amorous. They are too similar in that they both have irritable tempers, therefore that's one reason. Laurie isn't to blame, though. Jo doesn't love him, but she does like him. Fortunately, he can shift his feelings to her sister Amy, whose refined demeanor more closely aligns with his wealth and social standing. Their love triangle has a pleasant, if unsettling, conclusion.

Laurie's primary role in *Little Women* is to illustrate the redeeming influence of the March sisters. Throughout various stages of his life, including his college years and a period of aimless wandering in Europe, Laurie teeters on the edge of moral decline, potentially succumbing to behaviors deemed unacceptable by nineteenth-century society, such as gambling, drinking, or engaging in extramarital affairs. However, his strong bonds with the March girls, his desire to maintain their favorable opinion, and his inclination to adopt their moral values work together to guide him away from these destructive paths.

The narrative chronicles the lives of the March sisters and Laurie as they transition from childhood to adulthood, with significant changes occurring for each character. Laurie's marriage proposal to Jo comes off as impulsive, revealing his immaturity regarding relationships. While Laurie encourages Jo's tomboyish spirit, Professor Bhaer fosters her development into a more refined lady. His patient approach to courting allows Jo to gradually fall in love with him—something Laurie struggled to achieve in his earlier pursuits. This contrast highlights the evolution of Jo's character and underscores the importance of maturity and genuine connection in romantic relationships.

The researcher is particularly interested in examining the character development of Theodore Laurence in *Little Women* and the factors that contribute to this evolution. Given the compelling aspects of Laurie's character arc, the researcher has decided to undertake a comprehensive analysis of his development using an objective approach. This methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of the narrative elements and external influences that shape Laurie's personality, relationships, and choices throughout the novel. By focusing on objective criteria, the researcher aims to uncover the underlying themes and dynamics that define Theodore Laurence as a pivotal character in the story.

The objectives of this study are designed to address the research questions outlined in the analysis of Theodore Laurence's character in *Little Women*. Specifically, the study aims to examine how Theodore Laurence is characterized throughout the novel, exploring the traits and nuances that define

him. Additionally, the research seeks to investigate the development of his character, analyzing the pivotal events and interactions that contribute to his growth and transformation over the course of the narrative. By achieving these objectives, the study will provide a comprehensive understanding of Laurie's role in the story and the factors influencing his character evolution.

2. Method

This paper employs a qualitative research approach, which focuses on non-numeric data to provide insights into the subject matter. In this context, the data is expressed in words rather than numerical values, allowing for a deeper exploration of themes and character nuances (Creswell, 2014). The methodology utilized is library research, wherein information is gathered from a variety of sources, including books, academic articles, and reputable online resources. These materials are relevant to the study of character, characterization, plot development, and character evolution, and they will serve to support the primary data extracted from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

Additionally, the researcher employs a descriptive method, as supported by Suharsini's assertion that descriptive research is designed to gather information regarding the current state of phenomena (Suharsini, 2014). This analytical approach begins by detailing the physical and technical aspects of the novel, gradually progressing to more complex analyses of character development and interactions within the narrative. By structuring the research in this manner, the study aims to create a comprehensive understanding of Theodore Laurence's character development throughout *Little Women*.

In analyzing Theodore Laurence's character in *Little Women*, the researcher employs an objective approach. This methodology is chosen specifically because it allows for an examination of the character's development independently from the influences of the author, the readers, and the surrounding environment. As a result, extrinsic elements of the novel are not considered in this analysis. The objective approach enables the researcher to focus exclusively on the intrinsic aspects of the narrative, particularly the plot and character development, in order to provide a detailed understanding of Theodore Laurence's evolution throughout the story. This approach is particularly well-suited for this study, as it facilitates a targeted examination of how the intrinsic elements shape and define Theodore Laurence's character within the context of *Little Women*.

3. Result and Discussion

Theodore Laurence, commonly known as Laurie, is a 17-year-old boy who lives with his grandfather and is a neighbor to the March family. Coming from a well-established family, Laurie is portrayed as sensitive, caring, kind, and diligent, with a deep passion for music. His relationship with the March family, particularly with Jo, is significant, although he ultimately marries Amy.

In this study, the primary focus will be on the character of Theodore Laurence, who is identified as a dynamic character. Dynamic characters undergo significant internal changes throughout the narrative, often playing a crucial role in the story's progression. Laurie exemplifies this complexity, as his character development surprises and engages readers, reflecting the intricacies of real-life personalities. In contrast, static characters remain fundamentally unchanged from the beginning to the end of the story, often characterized by a calm and consistent demeanor. This distinction highlights the importance of Laurie's character arc in *Little Women*, illustrating his growth and evolution in response to the experiences and relationships he encounters. **Theodore Laurence's characterization.** The followings are the description of Theodore Laurence's characterization based on the phase elaborated implicitly and explicitly in the novel.

Discipline, Laurie is portrayed as a submissive young man who adheres to the discipline imposed by his grandfather. He often sets aside his personal desires, such as playing and socializing, in deference to his grandfather's expectations. For instance, when Laurie wishes to venture out to play, he consistently seeks his grandfather's permission, illustrating his compliance with the rules established within his household. This behavior reflects Laurie's respect for his grandfather's authority and highlights the sense of duty that permeates his character. Despite his youthful inclinations and longing for adventure, Laurie prioritizes maintaining harmony in his home, demonstrating a disciplined nature that shapes his interactions and decisions throughout the narrative.

This commitment to discipline is not merely a reflection of obedience; it also reveals Laurie's internal struggle between adhering to societal expectations and pursuing his own passions. While he shows diligence in meeting his grandfather's desires, this submission also stifles his aspirations, such as his dream of becoming a composer or exploring the world beyond his immediate surroundings. As he grapples with this conflict, Laurie's character becomes a poignant representation of the challenges faced by young individuals navigating familial obligations. Ultimately, his disciplined demeanor serves as both a protective mechanism and a limitation, influencing the trajectory of his character development in *Little Women*.

Charming, Laurie is characterized as a charming young man whose presence captivates those around him, particularly the March family. From the moment he becomes acquainted with the March sisters, his charisma and vivacity immediately draw their attention and affection. His charming demeanor is complemented by his playful personality, which fosters a sense of warmth and camaraderie among the girls. Laurie's ability to effortlessly engage with Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy highlights his social skills and endears him to the entire family. His charm not only makes him a beloved companion but also positions him as a pivotal figure within their close-knit circle.

This charm extends beyond mere social interaction; it also reflects Laurie's capacity to navigate complex emotional landscapes. His ability to connect with the March sisters on various levels—whether through lighthearted banter, shared experiences, or deep conversations—demonstrates his emotional intelligence. Laurie's charm plays a significant role in solidifying his place within the family, as he becomes an integral part of their lives and experiences. As the narrative unfolds, this captivating quality continues to influence his relationships, revealing both the strengths and vulnerabilities of his character as he seeks to maintain his connections with the March family while grappling with his own identity and aspirations.

Fun & Friendly, Laurie is depicted as a fun and friendly young man whose approachable nature makes him a beloved figure among his peers, especially the March sisters. His friendly demeanor allows him to form strong bonds with Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy, creating a sense of camaraderie that is central to the narrative. Laurie's playful spirit and lighthearted interactions invite laughter and joy into the lives of those around him, as he often engages in games, impromptu performances, and shared adventures. This vibrant personality not only enhances his relationships with the March family but also helps to alleviate the challenges they face, as his presence brings a refreshing energy to their everyday lives.

Moreover, Laurie's friendliness serves as a bridge between his upper-class background and the March family's more modest lifestyle. His ability to connect with the sisters on a personal level transcends social boundaries, illustrating his genuine nature and openness. This quality enables him to navigate the complexities of friendship and love with ease, as he approaches his relationships with sincerity and warmth. Throughout the novel, Laurie's fun-loving spirit and friendly attitude contribute significantly to the development of the plot, as he becomes a catalyst for growth and change in both himself and the March sisters, ultimately shaping their collective journey.

Character Development Of Theodore Laurence, Laurie's character development in *Little Women* can be delineated through four significant events that serve as pivotal moments in his growth and transformation. These events are: his life before meeting the March family, the friendship he forms with them, the experience of love and subsequent heartbreak, and finally, his marriage to Amy. Each of these stages reflects a different aspect of Laurie's personality and illustrates how his interactions and experiences shape him into the man he becomes. The theory of plot provides a framework for understanding this character progression. According to DiYanni (1986:43), plot refers to the arrangement of events that comprise a story, creating a narrative that engages readers and compels them to continue exploring the unfolding drama. A well-structured plot involves a sequence of incidents that are causally related, meaning that one event leads to another in a coherent manner.

The first event, Laurie's life prior to meeting the March family, establishes the foundation of his character. He is portrayed as a young man living under the constraints of his grandfather's expectations, leading to a somewhat sheltered and submissive existence. However, his encounter with the March sisters marks a turning point that opens up new dimensions of friendship and emotional connection. As Laurie develops a deep bond with the March family, particularly Jo, he begins to embrace a more dynamic and expressive side of himself. This friendship serves as a catalyst for his

growth, as he learns the value of companionship and the importance of being true to one's desires. The subsequent experience of love and heartbreak—specifically, his unreciprocated feelings for Jo—introduces complexity to Laurie's character. This painful episode propels him into a period of introspection and wanderlust, prompting him to seek solace in travel and reflection. Ultimately, Laurie's marriage to Amy signifies not just the culmination of his romantic journey but also a maturation process in which he learns to balance his passions with the realities of adult life. Thus, these four events are interconnected, illustrating the profound impact of relationships and experiences on Laurie's character development within the narrative arc of *Little Women*. In examining the four key events that signify Laurie's character development, the researcher categorizes them according to their narrative function within the story's structure. The initial event, *Before He Met the March Family*, is classified as the rising action. This phase establishes Laurie's background and introduces the constraints of his sheltered upbringing, setting the stage for the transformative experiences that follow. It is during this period that Laurie's character begins to take shape, influenced by his environment and familial expectations.

The next significant event, *Having Friendship with the March Family*, serves as the climax of Laurie's character arc. This friendship not only enriches his life but also challenges him to explore new emotional territories and societal interactions. Through his relationships with the March sisters, particularly Jo, Laurie begins to discover aspects of himself that had previously been suppressed. Following this pivotal moment, the event labeled *Love & Hurt* acts as the falling action. Here, Laurie grapples with the emotional turmoil stemming from his unreciprocated feelings for Jo, which leads to a period of introspection and personal struggle. Finally, the event *Having Married with Amy* is identified as the resolution of Laurie's character development. This conclusion signifies a synthesis of his experiences, representing not only the fulfillment of his romantic journey but also a matured understanding of love and commitment. Through this structured analysis, the researcher aims to illustrate how each event contributes to the overall trajectory of Laurie's growth in *Little Women*.

Before He Met March Family, Theodore Laurence, commonly known as Laurie, is a 16-year-old boy who is notably submissive to his grandfather, adhering to a strict regimen designed to instill discipline. He often suppresses his desire to play, seeking permission from his grandfather before engaging in any leisure activities. His grandfather's protective nature aims to mold him into a respectable young man, as reflected in the observation: "He keeps his grandson shut up, when he isn't riding or walking with his tutor, and makes him study very hard" (Alcott, 2014: 24).

While the education provided by his grandfather fosters obedience and diligence, it comes at the cost of Laurie's freedom. He often finds himself confined to the house, feeling isolated from the carefree experiences typical of childhood. Laurie expresses his frustration, stating, "No, it was me. He doesn't like to hear me play" (Alcott, 2014: 58). This sentiment underscores his lack of autonomy and companionship. Laurie further reveals his loneliness when he notes, "Mr. Brooke, my tutor, doesn't stay here, you know, and I have no one to go about with me, so I just stop at home and get on as I can" (Alcott, 2014: 53). These quotes illustrate his isolation, confirming that he has no friends to share in his youth, highlighting the constraints imposed by his grandfather's rigid expectations.

Laurie harbored a strong dislike for college, despite his grandfather's expectations for him to become a successful man. His frustrations are palpable when he confesses, "How I long to be attending college! You don't appear to have enjoyed it. I detest it! Nothing but skylarking or grinding. Additionally, I dislike how people in this nation behave." This sentiment reveals his disdain for the monotonous routine he associates with academic life, which he finds boring and uninspiring. Rather than conforming to societal expectations, Laurie yearns for the freedom to explore life on his own terms, expressing a desire to "live in Italy and enjoy myself in my own way" (Alcott, 1868: 32).

Laurie's aspirations extend beyond mere escape; he dreams of becoming a renowned musician, envisioning a life in Germany where he can immerse himself in music without the constraints of financial or business worries. He articulates this vision vividly, stating, "I would like to settle in Germany and have as much music as I want after seeing as much of the globe as I want to. I want to become a well-known musician, and everyone will want to hear me. Additionally, I should never worry about money or business; instead, I should enjoy myself and live my life as I see fit. My favorite castle is that one." (Alcott, 1868: 147). This aspiration highlights his longing for a fulfilling life driven

by passion and creativity, contrasting sharply with the expectations imposed by his grandfather and society.

Laurie is depicted as a fundamentally good-natured boy, striving to bring happiness to his grandfather by accommodating his wishes and fulfilling his expectations. He expresses this internal conflict when he states, "I should be happy to please Grandfather, and I try, but it's difficult and goes against the grain, you see. He wants me to follow in his footsteps and become an India merchant, but I would much rather be shot. I don't care how quickly they sink once I own them; I detest tea, silk, spices, and all the other garbage his ancient ships deliver. He should be satisfied with my going to college since he should let me leave the company after four years. However, until I break away and do what I want, like my father did, I have to do exactly what he did. I would remain with the elderly gentleman tomorrow if there was still somebody available." (Alcott, 1868:149). This poignant reflection reveals the struggle Laurie faces between familial obligations and personal aspirations, highlighting his desire for autonomy in a life defined by his own choices.

In this context, Lydon and Kohorn (2002: 7) characterize Laurie as a wealthy boy living next door to the March family, whose real name is Theodore Laurence. His friendship with the March sisters plays a pivotal role in transforming Laurie's mindset and character. Through his interactions with them, he begins to question the rigid expectations imposed by his grandfather and the societal norms surrounding him. This relationship fosters a sense of independence and encourages Laurie to pursue his passions, ultimately setting the stage for significant character development throughout the narrative. The March sisters inspire Laurie to challenge the constraints of his privileged upbringing and explore the life he truly desires.

Having Friendship with March Family, Laurie's life began to transform significantly after he befriended Mrs. March and her four daughters, who welcomed him into their world with open arms. This new friendship blossomed rapidly, as illustrated when it is said that "Around that time, a lot of nice things happened since the new friendship grew like grass in the spring. Laurie told his tutor in private that "the Marches were regularly splendid girls" since everyone admired her." (Alcott, 2014: 61). Their lively and spirited companionship captivated Laurie, who had never experienced the warmth of familial love or the camaraderie of sisters. The innocence and vibrancy of the March girls starkly contrasted with his previously solitary existence, prompting him to reevaluate his own indolent lifestyle. Their enthusiastic energy inspired him to seek a more engaging life, leading him to abandon his studies in favor of spending time with them. Mr. Brooke, Laurie's tutor, found it increasingly difficult to keep him focused on his studies, as Laurie was often playing truant, eager to enjoy the company of the March family.

With the support and encouragement of the March sisters, Laurie successfully navigated his desire for independence from his grandfather's strict expectations. He was quickly embraced by the March family, who appreciated his kind nature and charm. As he adapted to their lively household, Laurie experienced a profound sense of belonging and acceptance, which was previously foreign to him. The warmth of their companionship not only enriched his life but also played a crucial role in his character development. Through his interactions with the March girls, Laurie found joy and fulfillment, ultimately transforming him from a solitary boy into a valued member of a loving family. This shift highlights the profound impact that genuine friendship and love can have on an individual's growth and identity.

Laurie's newfound friendships with the March sisters transformed his outlook on life and helped him discover his true identity. Surrounded by these four supportive women, he experienced a sense of belonging and acceptance that he had longed for. As he expressed, "Laurie spoke excitedly, and looked ready to carry his threat into execution on the slightest provocation, for he was growing up very fast and, in spite of his indolent ways, had a young man's hatred of subjection, a young man's restless longing to try the world for himself" (Alcott, 2014: 149). This newfound confidence fueled his desire to break free from the constraints of his grandfather's expectations, allowing him to embrace his emerging independence.

As Laurie evolved, he became more cheerful, friendly, and caring, exemplifying his commitment to helping his friends. An illustrative moment of this was when he exclaimed, "Now then, we must walk her home as fast as we can. Pile our things on her, while I get off these confounded skates," as he hurried to assist Amy after she fell (Alcott, 2014: 81). His readiness to prioritize Amy's needs over

his own enjoyment on the ice demonstrates not only his kind-hearted nature but also his growth into a more empathetic and responsible young man. This willingness to aid his friends signifies a significant shift in Laurie's character, showcasing the positive influence of the March family on his development. Through their friendship, Laurie learned the importance of compassion and selflessness, qualities that would shape his identity as he ventured further into adulthood.

Laurie is often portrayed as a wistful character, embodying a sense of longing and desire for deeper connections and experiences. Mrs. March observes, "If the right time arises, I have no problem with you getting to know him because I appreciate his manners and he seems like a little gentlemen. If I had been certain of what was happening upstairs, I should have asked him in before he delivered the flowers himself. As he left, he appeared to be regretful, listening to the fun and clearly lacking any of his own." (Alcott, 2014: 24). This observation highlights Laurie's yearning for companionship and joy, particularly as he witnesses the warmth and laughter of the March family from a distance. His wistfulness serves as a poignant reminder of his isolation, even in the midst of social interactions.

Supporting this characterization, Lydon and Kohorn (2002: 7) describe Laurie as "the rich boy who lives next door to the Marches," emphasizing his charm, cleverness, and good heart. Their portrayal aligns with Alcott's depiction of Laurie as a young man with a noble spirit, further underscoring the complexity of his character. Additionally, Laire (2009) notes that "Laurie is charming," yet she finds him "less than charming than Laurie," indicating the multifaceted nature of his charm. These quotes collectively affirm that while Laurie possesses an undeniable charm, his wistful disposition adds depth to his character, illustrating the internal struggles he faces as he navigates his relationships and seeks fulfillment in a world that often feels just out of reach.

Laurie exemplifies a loving and caring disposition toward his companions, demonstrating a deep sense of kindness and empathy. For instance, he expresses his affection for Meg, the eldest daughter of Mrs. March, by sending her flowers, which signifies his thoughtful nature. As noted in the text, "The note is from Mother, and the flowers from Laurie" (Alcott, 2014: 89). This gesture illustrates Laurie's attentiveness and desire to cultivate meaningful relationships with those around him.

In addition to his emotional warmth, Laurie exhibits commendable mental fortitude. His character is further revealed when he acknowledges his previous rudeness to Meg by saying, "Please forgive my rudeness, and come and dance with me" (Alcott, 2014: 96). Moreover, he displays a protective instinct towards the March family, feeling a "brotherly sort of right to watch over the Marches and fight their battles whenever a defender was needed" (Alcott, 2014: 97). This sentiment underscores his commitment to his friends and his willingness to stand up for them, even in challenging situations. Laurie's appreciation extends to Jo as well, despite the less-than-perfect meal she prepares. His attitude reflects his understanding and acceptance of imperfections, as evidenced by his determination to enjoy the meal: "Jo, who refused, thinking there might not be enough... glanced at Laurie, but he was eating away manfully, though there was a slight pucker about his mouth and he kept his eye fixed on his plate" (Alcott, 2014: 120).

Furthermore, Laurie's sense of sportsmanship is highlighted when he refrains from celebrating a victory over his friends. He initially throws up his hat in excitement but quickly remembers, "it wouldn't do to exult over the defeat of his guests," demonstrating his maturity and consideration for others' feelings (Alcott, 2014: 130). This combination of kindness, humility, and respect for his friends underscores Laurie's character as not only charming but also genuinely good-hearted.

Laurie gave sympathy to Beth who was sad because pet bird died. Laurie did dig the ground to bury the bird. Beth was the second daughter of Mrs. March. It is said that "Laurie excavated a tomb beneath the ferns in the grove; his loving mistress laid little Pip in, crying a lot, and covered him with moss; Jo scribbled his epitaph while she was fumbling with the meal, and hung a wreath of violets and chickweed on the stone." (Alcott, 2014:121). Besides, Laurie also has a compassionate nature. He still wanted to ask their friends for camping. He also invited Beth although Beth was always feared not enjoying the camp. Laurie said "I want you all to come, can't let Beth off at any price, and nobody shall worry her (Alcott, 2014:126). In the other side, Laurie has shown his caring on Beth's condition by telegraphing Mrs. March to come back. He said "I telegraphed to your mother yesterday, and Brooke answered she'd come at once, and she'll be here tonight, and everything will be all right. Aren't you glad I did it?" (Alcott, 2014:192).

Laurie also happy viewed Meg's twin baby. Laurie was very happy and gave names to the babies. He said "I never was more staggered in my life. Isn't it fun? Are they boys? What are you going to name them? Let's have another look. Hold me up, Jo, for upon my life it's one too many for me" returned Laurie, (Alcott, 2014:295). His caring is also shown when Beth expected him to accompany him in her quiet time. Laurie would be happy to accompany her. He said "I will, dear, I will, and if anything happens, I'll come and comfort you," whispered Laurie; little dreaming that he would be called upon to keep his word (Alcott, 2014:321).

By having a friendship with those four women, Laurie becomes an open minded man and tells everything he thinks to his friends. He said "I would like to settle in Germany and have as much music as I want after seeing as much of the globe as I want to. I want to become a well-known musician, and everyone will want to hear me. Additionally, I should never worry about money or business; instead, I should enjoy myself and live my life as I see fit. My favorite castle is that one." (Alcott, 2014:147). Basically, Laurie also has aspiration to become a reliable and well-known musician. He had a dream to live in Germany. He wanted to stay enjoying his life as it is in his own way.

Besides, Laurie turned in to be consistent with his pledge. He will seek to keep his promise. He said "Just because I wouldn't say what your mother wanted me for. I'd promised not to tell, and of course I wasn't going to break my word"(Alcott, 2014:219). In this case, he debated his grandfather who forced him to talk about what happened in Mrs. March's home. But Laurie didn't want to tell. "I'll never tell him to my dying day, wild horses shan't drag it out of me, so you'll forgive me, Meg, and I'll do anything to show how out-and-out sorry I am," he added, looking very much ashamed of him (Alcott, 2014:217). That action has shown that he promised to Meg that he won't tell Mr. John about what he did. In the other side, Laurie kept her promise. Meg said "I shall tell them myself all about it, and 'fess' to Mother how silly I've been. But I'd rather do it myself. So, you'll not tell, will you?" He replied "I give you my word I won't, only what shall I say when they ask me?"(Alcott, 2014:97). "Just because I wouldn't say what your mother wanted me for. I'd promised not to tell, and of course I wasn't going to break my word"(Alcott, 2014:219). Meg took him to compromise so that Laurie would not talk to Mrs. March about what happened and done by Meg on that night. Laurie promised not to tell anyone.

He also wanted to make his grandfather felt happy. He said "I should be happy to please Grandfather, and I try, but it's difficult and goes against the grain, you see. He wants me to follow in his footsteps and become an India merchant, but I would much rather be shot. I don't care how quickly they sink once I own them; I detest tea, silk, spices, and all the other garbage his ancient ships deliver. He should be satisfied with my going to college since he should let me leave the company after four years. However, until I break away and do what I want, like my father did, I have to do exactly what he did. I would stay with the elderly man tomorrow if there was still someone left (Alcott, 2014:149). After the bustle of the morning, Mr. Laurence settled himself in his easy chair and said, "Laurie, my lad, if you ever want to indulge in this sort of thing, get one of those little girls to help you, and I shall be perfectly satisfied" (Alcott, 2014:261). "I'll do my best to gratify you, Sir," Laurie said (Alcott, 2014:261). Laurie always tried to make his grandfather felt happy by complying his grandfather needs. She would try to the best thing.

Love and Hurt, Laurie's departure for college marked a pivotal moment in his relationship with Jo, as he promised to keep his love solely for her. In a poignant farewell, he whispered, "I won't do a bit of good, Jo. My eye is on you, so mind what you do, or I'll come and bring you home" (Alcott, 2014: 344). This promise signifies not only his affection but also the depth of his commitment to her, as he was determined to remain a part of her life despite the physical distance between them. Laurie's love for Jo had developed over time, and he harbored the hope that their bond would evolve into something more profound.

However, Laurie's romantic proposal to Jo was met with rejection, as she saw him only as a brother. This heartbreak plunged Laurie into a state of distress and emotional turmoil. He expressed his feelings with vulnerability, stating, "I've loved you ever since I've known you, Jo, couldn't help it; you've been so good to me. I've tried to show it, but you wouldn't let me. Now I'm going to make you hear, and give me an answer, for I can't go on so any longer" (Alcott, 2014: 374). This heartfelt declaration emphasizes the intensity of his feelings and the frustration he felt at being unable to express them successfully. Supporting this sentiment, Laire (2009) notes that Laurie mustered the courage to

propose to Jo, only to find himself crushed and heartbroken. This moment not only highlights the complexity of their relationship but also underscores the theme of unrequited love that pervades Laurie's character development.

Laurie's unwavering devotion to Jo led him to believe that he could transform into a better person if she would only reciprocate his feelings. He expressed this sentiment poignantly, stating, "If you loved me, Jo, I should be a perfect saint, for you could make me anything you like" (Alcott, 2014: 376). Unfortunately for Laurie, Jo's lack of affection only deepened his pain. In a moment of despair, he remarked, "Anywhere. I don't care what becomes of me," (Alcott, 2014: 380), highlighting his feelings of hopelessness. Despite his attempts to downplay his emotions by saying, "It's all right, never mind," he left without another word, masking the true turmoil within him. Jo, too, was affected by their exchange; while she might have felt justified in her decision, she was acutely aware of the emotional toll it had on Laurie. The passage reveals Jo's inner conflict, as she recognized that her rejection had a lasting impact on her dearest friend: "Ah, but it wasn't all right, and Jo did mind, for while the curly head lay on her arm a minute after her hard answer, she felt as if she had stabbed her dearest friend, and when he left her without a look behind him, she knew that the boy Laurie never would come again" (Alcott, 2014: 381-382).

Laurie's heartbreak over Jo's rejection led him to resolve to leave, seeking solace and purpose elsewhere. Despite Jo's refusal, she too felt a profound sense of loss, understanding that their friendship would never be the same. The emotional gravity of the situation is palpable, as both characters grapple with the implications of their choices. Jo's sadness at Laurie's departure serves as a poignant reminder of the deep bonds they shared, while Laurie's pain underscores the complexities of love and friendship. This moment not only marks a significant turning point in their relationship but also reflects the broader themes of longing, heartache, and the inevitable changes that come with growing up.

Having Married with Amy, Indeed, Laurie's departure marked both a physical and emotional retreat from his past, especially from Jo. He sought solace in Europe, hoping to forget her, but fate intervened when he encountered Amy in Nice. Although Laurie presented himself as a gentleman, there was an undeniable void in his demeanor; "something was missing in his manners." In this unfamiliar country, both Laurie and Amy found comfort in each other's presence, as they reminded one another of home. Yet, Amy, having matured significantly during her time in Europe, could not overlook the changes in Laurie. He exhibited a sense of entitlement, expecting kind words from women after experiencing coldness from Jo, and had taken up smoking, which only added to Amy's disapproval. Laire (2009) notes that Amy retaliated against Laurie's behavior by expressing her concerns regarding his "lack of real manners, extravagance, laziness, and lack of ambitions."

Despite her social and financial inferiority, Amy boldly confronted Laurie, delivering her lecture with a calm yet firm tone, using strong language to describe his behavior as "selfish" and "lazy." Her candid remarks had a profound effect on Laurie, prompting him to reflect on his choices. The very next morning, he wrote to her, revealing his decision to return to his grandfather and regain a sense of purpose. Laurie's transformation was evident; he began to regain the seriousness and determination he had lost. As Alcott states, "Amy's lecture did Laurie good, though, of course, he did not own it till long afterward" (Alcott, 2014: 434). Both characters learned that external attributes like beauty and wealth do not shield one from life's burdens—"care and pain, loss and sorrow, from the most blessed" (Alcott, 2014: 504).

On a deeper level, Laurie grappled with the realization that love cannot be coerced. Reflecting on Jo, he lamented, "She was kind, but not in the right way, and it's lucky for her she didn't love me, if I'm the good-for-nothing fellow you think me. It's her fault though, and you may tell her" (Alcott, 2014: 423). This acknowledgment highlights his growth, as he begins to accept that genuine affection cannot be forced, a lesson that deepens his understanding of love and self-worth. Laurie's journey through heartbreak and self-discovery ultimately shapes him into a more resilient individual, capable of facing the complexities of his emotions and relationships.

Amy's lecture served as a transformative awakening for Laurie, leading him to recognize his past mistakes. In this way, she becomes his savior, shifting the narrative dynamic where he, once the affluent young man, now finds himself in need of rescue rather than playing the role of the hero. According to Foote in Laire (2009), Amy's assertive lecture underscores her mastery over Laurie,

allowing her to create a space where emotions—desire, pain, and longing—can evolve into something more meaningful and productive.

With Laurie's reformation, he regains the qualities that make him an eligible suitor, presenting a perfect match for Amy. This relationship evolves into a more emotionally enriching connection, as their correspondence deepens and flourishes. Although Amy still perceives Laurie as a brother, she cannot ignore his earlier words about Fred Vaughn. Fred had proposed to her, but she declined his offer, a decision influenced by her interactions with Laurie. After their conversation, she begins to regret her choice, realizing that love holds greater value than wealth. In her journey, Amy aspires to embody the qualities of a true gentlewoman—not merely in status, but in mindset and conduct. She expresses this aspiration: "I want to be above the little meannesses and follies and faults that spoil so many women" (Alcott). Her rejection of Fred, along with his inheritance, signifies her choice of independence and self-respect, marking her evolution into a feminist figure.

Previously depicted as the archetypal idle and spoiled woman, Amy risks becoming a Victorian belle if she were to marry Fred Vaughn. Instead, both she and Laurie find themselves in need of redemption, complementing one another in their growth. Amy's courageous choice for independence ultimately leads her to true love and fulfillment, as she finds both emotional richness and financial security in her relationship with Laurie (Foote in Laire, 2009). Laurie and Amy's relationship blossomed into a genuine love, bringing them both immense joy. Amy expressed her feelings beautifully, saying, "It is so beautiful to be loved as Laurie loves me" (Alcott, 2014:452). For Laurie, the transition from loving Jo to cherishing Amy was profound. He acknowledged this change, stating, "Jo, dear, I want to say one thing, and then we'll put it by forever. As I told you in my letter when I wrote that Amy had been so kind to me, I never shall stop loving you, but the love is altered, and I have learned to see that it is better as it is. Amy and you changed places in my heart, that's all" (Alcott, 2014:458-459). Similarly, Amy recognized Laurie's unique ability to comfort and support her. She felt deeply that "no one could comfort and sustain her as well as Laurie" (Alcott, 2014:442). This mutual understanding and affection solidified their bond, allowing them to embrace their love fully and step into a new chapter of their lives together.

4. Conclusion

In examining Theodore Laurence's character in *Little Women*, this study highlights the defining traits and nuances that shape Laurie's identity throughout the novel. Laurie is characterized as a charming and sensitive young man, whose journey reflects the complexities of friendship, love, and self-discovery. His interactions with the March sisters, particularly Jo and Amy, reveal his deep emotional struggles and desires, showcasing his initial immaturity and eventual maturation. The study emphasizes how his relationships, along with the challenges he faces, serve as catalysts for his development, illustrating the multifaceted nature of his character. Furthermore, the research delves into the pivotal events that contribute to Laurie's transformation, underscoring the significance of his emotional growth. Through moments of heartache and realization—such as his unrequited love for Jo and subsequent relationship with Amy—Laurie learns valuable lessons about love, resilience, and self-acceptance. This evolution not only enriches his character but also reflects broader themes of personal growth and the complexities of human relationships within the narrative. By achieving these objectives, the study offers a nuanced understanding of Laurie's role in *Little Women*, emphasizing the intricate interplay between character traits and developmental arcs that define his journey.

5. References

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