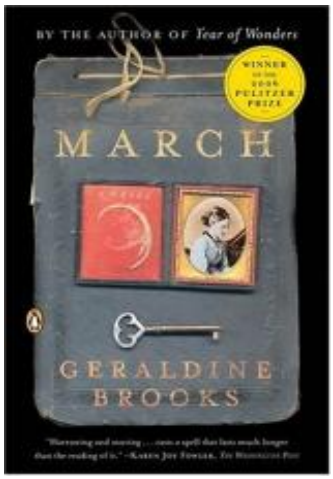
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March

by Geraldine Brooks



About the Book

As the North reels under a series of unexpected defeats during the dark first year of the war, one man leaves behind his family to aid the Union cause. His experiences will utterly change his marriage and challenge his most ardently held beliefs. Riveting and elegant as it is meticulously researched, **March** is an extraordinary novel woven out of the lore of American history.

From Louisa May Alcott's beloved classic **Little Women**, Geraldine Brooks has taken the character of the absent father, March, who has gone off to war, leaving his wife and daughters to make do in mean times. To evoke him, Brooks turned to the journals and letters of Bronson Alcott, Louisa May's father --- a friend and confidant of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. In her telling, March emerges as an idealistic chaplain in the little known backwaters of a war that will test his faith in himself and in the Union cause as he learns that his side, too, is capable of acts of barbarism and racism. As he recovers from a near mortal illness, he must reassemble his shattered 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.

Spanning the vibrant intellectual world of Concord and the sensuous antebellum South, **March** adds adult resonance to Alcott's optimistic children's tale to portray the moral complexity of war, and a marriage tested by the demands of extreme idealism --- and by a dangerous and illicit attraction. A lushly written, wholly original tale steeped in the details of another time, **March** secures Geraldine Brooks's place as an internationally renowned author of historical fiction.

Discussion Guide

1. 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. Discuss examples of where this happens and how things may have turned out differently, for better or worse, had they been completely honest. Are there times when it is best not to tell our loved ones the truth?

2. 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**?

3. 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?

4. Do you think it was the right decision for March to have supported, financially or morally, the northern abolitionist John Brown? Brown's tactics were controversial, but did the ends justify the means?

5. "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 (p. 65). Do you think that March still believes the war is just by the end of the novel? Why or why not?

6. 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?

7. 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" (p. 210). 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?

8. 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? How might it have stayed the same?

Author Bio

Geraldine Brooks is the author of six novels, including HORSE, PEOPLE OF THE BOOK, YEAR OF WONDERS and the Pulitzer Prize?winning MARCH. She has also written acclaimed works of nonfiction, including NINE PARTS OF DESIRE and FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE. Her books have been translated into more than thirty languages and have sold millions of copies around the world. Born and raised in Australia, Brooks now divides her time between Sydney and Martha?s Vineyard.

Critical Praise

"Honorable, elegant and true."

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