

Louisa May Alcott. Little Women. From Chapter One, "Playing Pilgrims"

As young readers like to know "how people look", we will take this moment to give them a little sketch of the four sisters, who sat knitting away in the twilight, while the December snow fell quietly without, and the fire crackled cheerfully within. It was a comfortable room, though the carpet was faded and the furniture very plain, for a good picture or two hung on the walls, books filled the recesses, chrysanthemums and Christmas roses bloomed in the windows, and a pleasant atmosphere of home peace pervaded it.

Margaret, the eldest of the four, was sixteen, and very pretty, being plump and fair, with large eyes, plenty of soft brown hair, a sweet mouth, and white hands, of which she was rather vain. Fifteen-year-old Jo was very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt, for she never seemed to know what to do with her long limbs, which were very much in her way. She had a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp, gray eyes, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns fierce, funny, or thoughtful. Her long, thick hair was her one beauty, but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way. Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a flyaway look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and didn't like it. Elizabeth, or Beth, as everyone called her, was a rosy, smooth-haired, bright-eyed girl of thirteen, with a shy manner, a timid voice, and a peaceful expression which was seldom disturbed. Her father called her 'Little Miss Tranquility', and the name suited her excellently, for she seemed to live in a happy world of her own, only venturing out to meet the few whom she trusted and loved. Amy, though the youngest, was a most important person, in her own opinion at least. A regular snow maiden, with blue eyes, and yellow hair curling on her shoulders, pale and slender, and always carrying herself like a young lady mindful of her manners. What the characters of the four sisters were we will leave to be found out.

The clock struck six and, having swept up the hearth, Beth put a pair of slippers down to warm. Somehow the sight of the old shoes had a good effect upon the girls, for Mother was coming, and everyone brightened to welcome her. Meg stopped lecturing, and lighted the lamp, Amy got out of the easy chair without being asked, and Jo forgot how tired she was as she sat up to hold the slippers nearer to the blaze.

Define Each Word

twilight: _____

pervade: _____

vain: _____

colt: _____

venture: _____

Write the Correct Word from the Vocabulary

1. Even though the rain pummeled her, the toddler _____ from the safety of the foyer and ran to greet and hug her father.
2. Since the football team’s three victories, a positive, upbeat attitude _____ the locker room.
3. Rebecca and David enjoy strolling along the beach during _____ because the soft glowing colors of the setting sun glisten romantically off the ocean surface.
4. The young _____ grazed peacefully alongside his mother far off in the pasture.
5. The movie star’s reflective sunglasses, perfectly coifed hair, and expensive designer suit suggested a _____ and arrogant demeanor.

Comprehension and Discussion: Answer Each Question in Complete Sentences

1. How is Elizabeth, or “Beth,” described?

2. What mood is suggested by the description of the room in paragraph one? What words help create this mood?

