

‘Little Women’ puts a few new spins on a literary rating: 3 out of 4

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 03 January 2020 07:31



Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 134 minutes

I'll be honest and admit that I'm likely not the target audience for *Little Women*. It was not part of my school curriculum and thus remains a relatively unfamiliar story to me, as well as one that doesn't have the same kind of emotional resonance as it will to those who have grown up with it. Still, the new film adaptation is certainly well-acted and lavishly produced, with a cast and crew fully committed to delivering, and in some respects, updating the classic story for modern audiences.

The story begins with Jo Marsh (Saoirse Ronan) an aspiring writer in New York, struggling to sell her work to a publisher. Meanwhile her sisters Meg (Emma Watson), Amy (Florence Pugh) and Beth (Eliza Scanlen) are all dealing with their own issues. This adaptation does not follow a linear track, jumping back and forth in time between the characters as adults to their younger days spent together. These bits involve the girls playing and getting into scrapes, as well as interactions with their mother (Laura Dern), and a local suitor named Laurie (Timothée Chalamet).

The young women experience happiness and heartbreak as they all yearn to find their place in the world.

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Again, this review is coming from an odd perspective of someone not knowing the story. Timeline liberties are taken to spice things up, although early on they are a bit confusing to the uninitiated. There are scenes at the beginning involving acquaintances and characters; the film assumes we'll all know them and their relation to the plot at first sight. Later flashbacks do reveal important details about them, but it's a bit jarring at the start.

Those who haven't read the work will feel like they've walked into the middle of a conversation between two strangers without any sense of history. And even from this reviewer's perspective, one person's fate seems underdeveloped and predetermined from the beginning.

While some of the theatrics involving the sisters do come across as a bit forced and posed, the cast is excellent and manages to sell the material with aplomb. One can certainly see the fiery temper of Jo, Meg's stoicism and Amy's vanity, jealousy and desire for the more material things in life. The movie also allows for a few updates as the leads find themselves dealing with and complaining vocally about the societal norms and restrictions placed upon them.

The movie also benefits from impressive production design, costuming and photography. It's a very good-looking picture that captures both the homey, rustic qualities of the Marsh home (with a consistently golden and appealing candlelit glow) alongside the grand and ornate (though colder-hued) homes of the upper class and high society. And of course, the autumn-colored natural backdrops are also pretty. And the rainy, train station finale exudes a sense of warmth.

So, despite this reviewer having some trouble early on adjusting to the narrative jumps and not finding much in the way of surprises, this is a very sweet and likable adaption of the *Little Women*

story. Those who are fans of the novel who don't mind a little tinkering should enjoy refamiliarizing themselves with the trials and joys of these characters.

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