

Call for Papers:

The Louisa May Alcott Society is sponsoring two panels at the
American Literature Association Conference
May 20-23, 2026
Chicago, Illinois.

I. Alcott and Europe

While the work of Louisa May Alcott makes an important contribution to nineteenth-century conversations about nation-building, democracy, and citizenship in America, Alcott also represents varied and complex ideas about international identities and perspectives. For this panel, we invite papers that consider Alcott and Alcott studies in a transatlantic rather than purely national context. The focus of this panel is Alcott and Europe, conceived broadly.

In *Shawl-Straps*, the lightly fictionalized account of her European travels with May Alcott and Alice Barton, Louisa May Alcott offered an enticing invitation to would-be travelers, encouraging them to try the Grand Tour for themselves: "Bring home empty trunks if you will, but heads full of new and larger ideas, hearts richer in sympathy that makes the whole world kin, hands readier to help on the great work God gives humanity, and souls elevated by the wonders of art and diviner miracles of Nature." Yet her writing at times conveys less wholesome ideas about life on the other side of the pond. Always interested in people, Alcott found in Europe a source of inspiration for her characters of both the admirable and less than admirable varieties. Papers might address Alcott's depictions of European characters and sites, Europe as the setting for genres such as sensation fiction, children's literature, and nonfiction, the ways Alcott contrasts American identities with European identities, European engagement with Alcott's texts, Alcott's engagement with European texts, and the Alcotts' travel experiences, among other approaches.

Please send one-page abstracts for 15-minute conference papers to Marlowe Daly-Galeano at hmdalygaleano@lcsc.edu by January 15, 2026.

II. Louisa May Alcott's Short Stories

Although she wrote hundreds of short stories and sketches, Louisa May Alcott's shorter narratives have received only sporadic critical attention. She used the short prose form to write to multiple audiences, children and adults, in multiple modes from fairy tales to realism, comedy to the Gothic, flash (non)fiction to novellas, and much more.

This panel will feature new scholarship on Alcott's short stories, from her earliest published stories, through her multiple collections (like *A Garland for Girls* or *Spinning-Wheel Stories*) and series (like *Lulu's Library* and *Aunt Jo's Scrap-Bag*), to the numerous uncollected and often neglected gems. We invite papers on well-known short narratives and rarely known texts, papers that focus on single texts and ones that connect multiple stories. We are interested in traditional analytical approaches, including close readings and historical contextualizations, as well as newer twenty-first-century theoretical takes on Alcott's nineteenth-century short-form narratives.

Please send 300-word abstracts by email to Gregory Eiselein eiselei@ksu.edu by Thursday, January 15, 2026. Queries and early submissions welcome.