

“What Can a Woman Do?
A Woman’s Role in the late 1800s and early 1900s”

Sally Jo Behrenwald

Bibliography List

1. Alcott, Louisa May. *A Garland for Girls*. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1900 (originally published in 1887).

A collection of short stories about young women in the 1880s. Some wish to be writers, some embark on a course of self-improvement, and others try to brighten the lives of those around them.

2. Alcott, Louisa May. *Rose in Bloom*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1888.

A novel describing the experiences of Rose Campbell, a wealthy young woman who wishes to be a philanthropist. Rose wishes to be sure that she is loved and courted for who she is as opposed to how much money she has. Some of her social reforms include a home for “decayed gentlewomen” and the adoption of a sickly orphan.

3. Burleson, Elizabeth. *Middl’un*. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1968 (first printing).

Thirteen-year-old tomboy Hannah Worth spends a summer on her family’s Texas ranch learning to be a “lady,” much to her distress. It takes cattle rustlers, her sister’s wedding, and the attentions of a neighbor boy to help her discover the balance between running wild on the prairie and being a helpless female. Set in pioneer days.

4. Cary, Alice. *Clovernook, or Recollections of our Neighborhood in the West, Second Series*. New York: John W. Lovell Company, 1884 (date of reprint?)

A collection of short stories by a woman who participated in the women’s suffrage movement and who was the first president of the Sorosis, a New York literary club started due to the fact that women were not allowed in men’s clubs. (She is possibly also a distant relative of mine, which added to my interest in her.) The stories tend to run towards the maudlin and highly sentimental, in several cases ending in tragic deaths.

5. Garfield, James and Lucretia. Edited by John Shaw. *Crete and James: Personal Letters of James and Lucretia Garfield*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994.

A collection of letters exchanged between James Garfield, President of the United States (1881), and his wife Lucretia beginning with their courtship and continuing almost until the day of his assassination. Besides the details of their day-to-day life, James and Lucretia also discuss current issues such as the role of women.

6. Gordon, Anna A. *The Beautiful Life of Frances E. Willard*. Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, 1898 (Memorial Edition).

I have not had the chance as yet to read this book, but it appears to be a biography of Frances Willard, who was extremely active in the Women's Christian Temperance Movement, which strove for social and moral reform.

7. Hoiem, Ruth Strahm. *No Need of Sun*. Cincinnati: Revivalist Press, 1967 (third edition).

This novel about a conservative Holiness woman missionary in 1930s Africa sets forth the belief that women are called to ministry no less than men are. Although this novel is set slightly after the time period that I was attempting to cover, I felt that its inclusion was important from the standpoint that it makes a good case for the God-given right of women to preach.

8. Liliuokalani. *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*. Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1990 (reprint, paperback).

The last queen of Hawaii's autobiography of her reign, forced abdication, and fight to regain her country. I actually have not had a chance to finish reading this book yet, so I can't say much about what happens. I chose it for inclusion because it adds another facet to the picture of women during this time period—that of royalty caught between Polynesian tradition and the influx of American culture.

9. Melendy, Dr. Mary R. *The Ideal Woman*. Chicago: W. S. Reeve Publishing Co., 1901.

This book is described on the title page as "A book giving full information on all the mysterious and complex matters pertaining to women," and while today we might question the "full information," this volume deals with "creative science; bearing, nursing, and rearing children; hints on courtship and marriage; limitation of offspring; health, mental, and physical beauty," as well as various diseases peculiar to women. An excellent look at what the role of women was in the home and the medical beliefs of the time.

10. Montgomery, L. M. *Emily's Quest*. Toronto: Bantam, 1983 (originally published 1927).

Emily Starr is an aspiring writer in a small Canadian farming village. Her struggles with love and literature are the subject of the book. This book is notable for the fact that both Emily and her eventual husband (who is an artist) develop their separate careers independent of one another and their relationship.

11. Porter, Eleanor H. *Sister Sue*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921.

A tale of a gifted pianist who sacrifices her dreams of glory to take care of her father and siblings after they go bankrupt. This book sets forth the idea, “brighten the corner where you are”.

12. Rayne, Mrs. M. L. *What Can A Woman Do?* Detroit: F. B. Dickerson & Co., 1884.

A substantial book detailing what careers were open to women at the time and including what sort of wages could be expected, what skills were required, etc. Includes, among other things, information about women lawyers, beekeepers, writers, and elocutionists, as well as how to run a boarding house.

13. Sayers, Dorothy L. *Gaudy Night*. New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1995 (originally published 1936).

Another book that falls slightly outside of the time parameters but is worth including. Harriet Vane is an author of mysteries. On a visit back to the women’s college she attended at Oxford, she finds herself in the middle of a mystery—someone appears to hold a grudge against the dons of the college, and it appears to be in part because they are female. As the story progresses, Harriet finds herself rethinking her earlier opinions on marriage, coming to view it more as an equal partnership.

14. Warner, Susan. *The Wide, Wide World*. New York: A. L. Burt, year of printing unknown.

A young girl holds fast to her Christian beliefs in the midst of oppression from friends and family.

15. Webster, Jean. *When Patty Went to College*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1915 (copyright 1901).

A lighthearted look at life in a women’s college around the turn of the century. Patty Wyatt is perpetually getting into scrapes, but a chat with the visiting bishop about what sort of a girl she wishes to be remembered as helps her set her priorities in order.

16. Wiggin, Kate Douglas, Mary Findlater, Jane Findlater, and Allan McAulay (real name Charlotte Stewart). *Robinetta*. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911.

A young widow finds a second chance at happiness on a trip to England despite an unpleasant relative. Although this book does not deal with the role of women as its main focus, I felt that one book from this time period that simply deals with romance and marriage should be included. I also found it interesting that the book had four authors, but have not been able to discover much about them.