

The Prescott Girls — Discussion Questions (Students)

1. Leaving New Sharon

Chapters 1–2: Sandy River; Leaving New Sharon

The story begins with loss and uncertainty as the family prepares to leave the only home the girls have known.

Questions:

1. Based on Beckie's words, what circumstances are forcing the family to leave?
2. How do the girls begin to wrestle with the idea of fairness in this situation?
3. In what ways do the sisters each respond differently before departure?
4. What shows how the house has changed after Father's death?
5. How do Mother and Grandfather Samuel Prescott respond differently to the situation?
6. What actions show how Mother chooses to leave the house behind?
7. How is the presence of friends and neighbors shown as the family departs?
8. What moment shows a shift toward hope or looking ahead?

2. The Road to Dresden

Chapters 3–4: The Long Road; The Wheel and the Hill

As the family travels, each girl responds differently to discomfort, danger, and the unknown ahead.

Questions:

1. How is the start of the journey and its conditions on the road described?
2. What do the girls' behavior and thoughts suggest about their emotional state during the journey?
3. What do the girls' questions reveal about what they are thinking and wondering about their new life?
4. How does the family begin to find a rhythm as they travel?
5. What shows that Sallie notices something is wrong before anyone else?
6. What events lead Uncle William to stop the wagon?
7. What shows how serious the problem with the wheel is?
8. How is the courthouse introduced as the family sees it for the first time?

3. Entering a New World

Chapters 5–8: The Pownalborough Court House; Sallie and the Old Fort; The Locked Cabinet; A Place to Call Home

The girls enter an unfamiliar space and begin to understand what it means to live there.

Questions:

1. How do the girls react upon first entering the courthouse?
2. What shows how the house begins to feel less strange to the girls?
3. How does Sallie's attention to nature shape her sense of belonging?
4. What does Sallie discover about the history of the place?
5. How does Beckie approach solving the mystery of the locked cabinet?
6. What is discovered inside the cabinet, and why is it meaningful?
7. What shows how Louisa finally begins to feel at home?

4. Work, Study, and New Ideas

Chapters 9–12: Stitches Before the Sunset; A Letter from Philadelphia; The Sugar Question; The Unexpected Guest

Daily routines begin to form, and new ideas from beyond Maine begin to influence the girls' thinking.

Questions:

1. What shows that Beckie is beginning to take her needlework seriously and wants it to have meaning?
2. What shows how each of the girls is learning and growing in different ways?
3. What happens when the letter from Philadelphia arrives, and why is it important to the girls?
4. What new ideas does Hannah introduce in her letter?
5. How do the girls begin to think differently after hearing Hannah's ideas?
6. What decision do the girls make about sugar, and what does it reveal about their character?
7. How does Mrs. Price's visit deepen the girls' understanding of courage and action?

5. Speaking and Being Heard

Chapters 13–17: Voices Raised; Three Letters to Philadelphia; The Sermon; The Tavern Below; A Visitor from Vassalboro

The girls begin to express their ideas, and their voices enter into a wider conversation.

Questions:

1. What shows Beckie's decision to speak, even though she is unsure?
2. What do the girls say when they stand and speak, and how do their voices differ?
3. How do others respond when the girls speak?
4. What shows that the girls' words are not just spoken, but shared and carried beyond that moment?
5. What happens when the girls are asked to speak again in front of the entire congregation?
6. What shows that not everyone agrees with their ideas?
7. In what ways do their voices reach beyond their immediate community?

6. Community, Custom, and Conviction

Chapters 18–20: Apple Day; A Quaker Wedding; News from Philadelphia

The girls observe how values are lived out in their community and begin to form their own convictions.

Questions:

1. How does shared work bring the family together?
2. How do the girls begin to connect their daily work to larger ideas about choices and responsibility?
3. What does Beckie begin to understand about how change happens?
4. What do the girls notice about how the Quaker wedding is different from what they are used to?
5. What values are shown in the Quaker wedding ceremony and traditions?
6. What do the girls begin to imagine about their own futures and choices?
7. What new understanding do the girls gain from Hannah's latest letter?

7. Secrets, School, and Conscience

Chapters 21–24: Louisa’s Secret; At the School House; The Classroom Reckoning; The Ribbon and the Loom
Private struggles and public discussions bring questions of fairness and responsibility into sharper focus.

Questions:

1. What does Louisa discover in the attic, and why does it disturb her?
2. What does Uncle Thomas help Louisa understand about the past and her responsibility?
3. Why does Louisa choose to keep the secret from her sisters?
4. What questions do the girls raise at school about trade and slavery?
5. How do the girls present their ideas to the class, and what do they ask others to consider?
6. How does Louisa reveal the truth about her family, and what does she learn from doing so?
7. How do the girls begin to live out their beliefs in their daily choices?

8. Winter, Memory, and Endurance

Chapters 25–29: A Letter from Father; Company for the Holidays; Christmas Day; Winter Market; The Nor'easter

The family faces hardship and reflection during the winter months, drawing strength from memory and community.

Questions:

1. What does the letter from their father reveal, and why does it matter to Beckie?
2. How does the family respond emotionally to receiving the letter?
3. What shows how the arrival of family brings warmth and life into the home?
4. How do the girls experience both joy and the absence of their father on Christmas Day?
5. What do the girls learn about work, independence, and responsibility at the winter market?
6. How does Beckie make a deliberate choice based on her beliefs at the market?
7. What does the storm reveal about endurance, community, and life during winter?

9. Memory, Loss, and Continuity

Chapter 30: Packing Winter Away

The girls reflect on their father's memory and begin to understand how loss can become part of who they are.

Questions:

1. What does the task of packing winter away reveal about the changing season and mood?
2. How does Sallie's search for matching items reflect her way of understanding the world?
3. What begins to bring their father's memory into the moment?
4. How do the girls each remember their father differently?
5. What do they learn about who their father was and how he lived?
6. What do they come to understand about how their father died and the choice he made?
7. How do the girls begin to carry their father's memory forward in their own lives?

10. Return and Belonging

Chapters 31–33: A Visit from Hannah; The Gathering; Family Ties

Relationships reconnect and deepen, bringing the story to a quiet but meaningful resolution.

Questions:

1. How does Hannah's return show both change and continuity?
2. What does Hannah help the girls understand about how people live out their values differently?
3. What confirms for Beckie that speaking from conscience matters, even without approval?
4. How does the gathering reflect shared values within the community?
5. How do others respond to the girls' choices and example?
6. What do the girls begin to understand about how ideas grow and spread?
7. How does the final gathering and Beckie's sampler show that the girls' journey is continuing?