Sense and Sensibility Study Guide

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Sense and Sensibility was first published in 1811, sixteen years after Jane Austen began the first draft, titled "Elinor and Marianne." Financed by Austen's brother and attributed only to "A Lady," it was the first of her novels to be put into print.

Austen is particularly known for her sharp portraits of early-nineteenth-century upper-class English society and for her remarkable talent in creating complex, vibrant characters. *Sense and Sensibility* is no exception. It is the story of two sisters, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, who, as members of the upper class, cannot "work" for a living and must therefore make a suitable marriage to ensure their livelihood. The novel is a sharply detailed portraiture of the decorum surrounding courtship and the importance of marriage to a woman's livelihood and comfort.

The novel is also, as is most evident in its title, a comparison between the sisters' polar personalities. The eldest sister, Elinor, exemplifies the sense of the title—she is portrayed as a paragon of common sense and diplomatic behavior—while her younger sister Marianne personifies sensibility in her complete abandonment to passion and her utter lack of emotional control. In upholding Elinor's levelheaded and rational behavior and criticizing Marianne's romantic passions, Austen follows the form of the didactic novel, in which the personalities of two main characters are compared in order to find favor with one position and therefore argue against the other. Although rich in character development and wit, *Sense and Sensibility* is viewed as one of Austen's lesser works because of this formulaic approach, which Austen abandons in her more mature novels.

Author Biography

Jane Austen, a nineteenth-century English novelist, is considered one of Britain's most important writers. Her talent has been compared to that of Shakespeare, and her work remains an integral and important part of what is commonly accepted as the canon of classic English literature.

Austen was born December 16, 1775, in Steventon, Hampshire, the seventh child and second daughter of Rev. George Austen and his wife Cassandra. As a clergyman's daughter, Austen was a member of the professional class. As she lived her entire life in the country, she wrote about her society and her surroundings, and she would become famous for her insightful portrayals of upper-class English country life.

The Austens, though plagued by debt, were a learned family of book lovers. Her mother wrote light poetry, and her brothers, in early adulthood, aspired to literary endeavors while they were at college. Their delight in language, puns, and witticisms is evident in Austen's works.

Except for brief stints at boarding schools, Austen was schooled largely at home, benefitting from her father's extensive library. She and her sister Cassandra, who remained her closest friend throughout her life, were given a proper girls' education in that they learned to play the piano and draw, but unlike their brothers, who attended Oxford, they were not afforded a formal, extended education.

Austen's novels often focus on the necessity of women of her society to marry for security. Although Austen did have several suitors throughout her early adulthood, she never did marry, either because of a lack of money on both sides or because of a lack of compatibility.

As a teenager, Jane wrote plays and stories, mostly satires and parodies of contemporary work, for the amusement of her family. She began the manuscripts for her serious novels in her early twenties, but she was hard-pressed to find publishers for any of them. Sixteen years after first beginning *Sense and Sensibility* as "Elinor and Marianne," a publisher finally agreed to take the manuscript—but the printing was done at the expense of Austen's brother. To avoid developing a scandalous reputation, for it was still frowned upon for women to indulge in literary endeavors, Austen published her first book anonymously. *Sense and Sensibility* proved to be successful: Austen netted 140 pounds. Encouraged, she went on to publish three more novels: *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), and *Emma* (1816). However, even after her work gained in popularity and demand, her brother Henry did not reveal his sister's identity until after her death.

Austen died in Winchester on July 18, 1817, after a gradual illness. Henry went on to publish Austen's final novels in 1818. They were *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*.

Plot Summary

Chapters 1-2

Elinor and Marianne, the Dashwood sisters and main characters of the novel, are introduced. The novel opens with a description of the line of inheritance of the Dashwood estate. Mr. John Dashwood, the half brother of the Dashwood sisters, is left controlling virtually the entire inheritance. He promises his father that he will take care of his half sisters.Mrs. John Dashwood shrewdly convinces her husband that his promise need not include any significant financial obligation to his sisters. Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood take over the residence in Norland after inheriting the estate, leaving Mrs. Henry Dashwood and her daughters feeling like visitors in their home. Elinor, Marianne, and the younger Margaret will have to rely on their charms in securing a husband for their future comfort and security.

Chapters 3-5

Edward Ferrars, the brother of Mrs. John Dashwood and a man due to inherit a significant fortune, is introduced as a love interest of Elinor. The temperaments of Elinor and Edward suit each other perfectly. Both are practical and not inclined to passionate outbursts. Marianne is not impressed with Edward. However, Mrs. Dashwood, recognizing the necessity of her daughters to marry well, is pleased with the developing intimacy between the two. Mrs. Dashwood, accepting the offer of a relation, moves with her daughters to a cottage in Barton. The move separates Edward and Elinor.

Chapters 6-8

The Dashwoods get settled in their new home and make the acquaintance of Sir John Middleton, the relation who made the cottage available to them. The sisters are invited to the Middleton's home for a social gathering. There they meet Lady Middleton, Mrs. Jennings, who is Lady Middleton's mother, and Colonel Brandon, a friend of Sir John. Marianne plays the pianoforte and Colonel Brandon silently listens. Marianne thinks that Brandon, a man of thirty-five, is old, jaded, and has outlived his usefulness in enjoying life. Later, Mrs. Jennings, a gossip and matchmaker, believes that Brandon is interested in pursuing Marianne.

Chapters 9-10

While out walking with Margaret, Marianne falls and twists her ankle. She is rescued by the dashing John Willoughby. Later, the Dashwoods learn that Willoughby has a good reputation and is due to come into a fortune. Willoughby and Maranne have similar, romantic outlooks on life and share the same opinions on art. Marianne, in tune with her romantic notions about life, falls head-over-heels in love with Willoughby.

Chapters 11-12

Elinor believes that the relationship between Marianne and Willoughby is too intimate and that it has crossed the boundaries of decorum; they are too open with each other. The gift of a horse to Marianne is viewed as unacceptable and extravagant. Elinor, unlike her sister, finds Brandon a likeable character. The theory that humans are destined to have only one love is broached. Brandon has had his heart broken. Elinor can forgive this because she is sensible. Marianne, with her romantic notions, believes this a fatal flaw.

Chapters 13-15

Brandon gets bad news in a letter, which Mrs. Jennings conjectures must contain news about an unfortunate Miss Eliza Williams. Brandon departs, and Willoughby makes mocking comments about his serious nature. Marianne and Willoughby become more and more of an item of gossip and speculation. Willoughby shows Marianne the house he is to inherit. The assumption is that Marianne will one day be mistress of this house as the future Mrs. John Willoughby. However, there is no formal engagement announcement, and Elinor and her mother are left to speculate about the true nature of the relationship. Willoughby's dialogue further unmasks his romantic notions. He is just like Marianne. They are romantics who behave according to sensibility and not sense. Willoughby suddenly breaks the news to Marianne that he must depart for London.

Chapters 16-18

Marianne sulks over the sudden, unexpected departure of Willoughby. It is in her nature to suffer openly. Edward Ferrars appears at Barton for a short visit. The further portrayal of Edward's sensible character illustrates his suitability for Elinor. Elinor suspects that the lock of hair Edward has in a ring was stealthily taken from her during their time together in Norland.

Chapters 19-21

Elinor handles Edward's departure with stoicism, in marked contrast to Marianne pining for Willoughby. The Palmers, relatives of Mrs. Jennings, appear at a social gathering. Various allusions about the unreliability of gossip as an information source are made in these chapters; for example, Mrs. Palmer "heard" from Brandon's "look" that Maranne and Willoughby are to wed. The Steele sisters are introduced during a social gathering. Elinor does not like Lucy Steele, but her sensible diplomacy forbids her from making this apparent.

Chapters 22-24

Elinor learns that she has been grossly mistaken about Edward's sentiments. Lucy Steele admits that she, Lucy, is engaged to Edward, and that the lock of hair is hers. Elinor, who Lucy has taken into her confidence, bears this news silently for the sake of propriety.

Chapters 25-26

The daughters agree to accompany Mrs. Jennings to London. Marianne is completely self-absorbed during the journey. She wants to meet Willoughby in London. Upon arrival, she writes him a note, which remains unanswered.

Chapters 27-30

Brandon appears in London. Gossip abounds regarding the relationship between Marianne and Willoughby. However, Marianne is increasingly perturbed over Willoughby's failure to contact her. Finally, she meets him at a party. Willoughby, who is there with another woman, treats her rudely. Marianne is devastated. The next day, Marianne receives a cruelly cool letter from Willoughby and becomes hysterical with grief.

Chapters 31-32

Brandon appears and relates to Elinor the true character of Willoughby, revealing that he seduced

Eliza Williams. Brandon and Willoughby fought a duel over the incident. The reader learns, incidentally, that Willoughby has married Miss Grey, a woman of considerable circumstance. Marianne remains completely despondent.

Chapters 33-36

John Dashwood appears in London. Mrs. Ferrars, the mother of Edward, also appears. Edward finds himself in the uncomfortable position of being in a room alone with Elinor and Lucy. Maranne is still so self-absorbed that she cannot discern that there is no relationship between Edward and Elinor.

Chapters 37-41

The engagement of Lucy and Edward is unwittingly made public. Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood and Mrs. Ferrars are all greatly upset by the socially unsuitable match. Marianne finally learns that her sister, too, has a broken heart. Mrs. Ferrars disinherits

her eldest son, leaving Edward in serious financial difficulties. The good-hearted Brandon offers, in a conversation with Elinor, to provide Edward with a living. Elinor relates the offer to Edward.

Chapters 42-44

The Dashwood daughters leave for Cleveland and then home to Barton. After a long walk in the rain, where Marianne goes to look on Cum Magna (the estate in which Willoughby lives), she catches a cold and soon becomes feverish. She is quite ill and there is concern as to whether she will survive. Elinor asks Colonel Brandon to send word to the girls' mother to rush to Cleveland. Willoughby appears uninvited and makes a startling confession to Elinor: he needed to marry for money and regrets treating Marianne the way he did. The final letter jilting Marianne was actually dictated under orders of his fiancé. Marianne slowly recuperates.

Chapters 45-50

Mrs. Henry Dashwood arrives. Brandon admits to her his feelings for Marianne. Mrs. Henry Dashwood realizes that Brandon would be perfect for Marianne. Marianne realizes that her behavior has been bad and that her romantic philosophy is flawed. When Marianne learns of Willoughby's visit, she holds her composure; she has learned to behave like her sister. Elinor mistakenly believes that Edward has wed. She is truly wounded. Then, Edward appears. As in so much of the book, the gossip is wrong: Edward's brother Robert is the one who married Lucy, after Lucy changed her affection to Robert due to Edward's financial despondency. Edward now pursues his true feelings and asks Elinor to marry him. Edward's penitence towards his mother gradually allows him to get back in her good graces. Mrs. Ferrars gives grudging consent to their marriage, which occurs in the autumn. The marriage of Brandon and Marianne becomes inevitable. Elinor and Edward end up near Barton, on Brandon's estate in Delaford. The book ends with a description, alluding to life being a sensible, practical compromise.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

This chapter lays the foundation for the plot of the novel by introducing the Dashwood family. Henry Dashwood and his daughters from a second marriage have moved into Norland Estate to care for Henry's ailing uncle. Henry had hoped to provide for his wife and daughters by inheriting the Estate, but when the uncle dies it is revealed that Henry's son John from a previous marriage has a son named Harry who will eventually inherit the estate. We also learn that Harry has earned this estate by being clever and charming during a visit to Norland Estate.

When Henry falls ill, it becomes clear that he only has 10,000 pounds for his wife and daughters. He calls John to his bedside and asks him to support his stepmother and his sisters. Austen reveals to the reader that John is not a bad person but that he has married a mean spirited wife (Fanny). John decides to give each of his sisters 1,000 pounds, since this will be barely affect the income from both his great-uncle's estate and his own mother's fortune.

Fanny Dashwood moves into Norland Estate with Harry and a few servants. She immediately begins to act superior to Mrs. (Henry) Dashwood and her three daughters. Mrs. Dashwood is upset by this and wants to leave, but stays because her oldest daughter Elinor persuades her to and because she wants the three girls (Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret) to have a friendly relationship with their brother John.

Austen also gives brief sketches of each daughter. Elinor is described as having "strength of understanding" and the ability to control her feelings when needed. Marianne is described as "sensible and clever," but impulsive. Thirteen-year-old Margaret is described as having much of Margaret's romantic nature, but "without having much of her sense."

Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter introduces the turn of fortune that forms the basis for the book; instead of being well to do, the Dashwood sisters are forced to rely on the hospitality of John and Fanny. The story is thus based on a fundamental injustice: instead of being rewarded for caring for their uncle, the Dashwoods are left out of the will and are treated badly.

We also learn about the characters involved, each of who seems to be governed by either their brain (sense) or their emotions (sensibility). Because of her sense we learn that Elinor will make the right decisions for the Dashwoods, while her mother and the other sister will probably be ruled by their emotions (which may result in negative consequences). A third class of character consists of those who are influenced by others. The chapter makes clear that John, for example, is ruled by his wife's mean and greedy wishes, while the old uncle is tricked and charmed by four-year-old Harry.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

In this chapter Austen develops the character of Fanny, showing her to be greedy, sneaky, and mean-spirited. She treats Mrs. Dashwood and the three sisters like houseguests, and the only reason the four stay is because John is civil and welcoming to all of them all. They also cannot afford to move. Fanny persuades John to rethink his gift to his sisters, and so he cuts it down to only 500 pounds each. Fanny then proceeds to talk John out of providing anything for Mrs. Dashwood, and by the end of the chapter he resolves to give neither his sisters nor his stepmother any financial assistance whatsoever.

Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter is basically a development of Fanny's character as well as a description of a long conversation between John and Fanny. This conversation is a good example of how malleable John really is; his wife uses both logic and emotion to convince John that the sisters are already well cared for, that his father did not mean for him to give money to his sisters, and that any monetary gifts may impoverish their son Harry at some point in the future.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter further introduces the character of Mrs. Dashwood, who Austen tells the reader had complete confidence that John would provide her daughters with monetary assistance. She is contemptuous of Fanny, but has not yet been able to find a house that Elinor says will fit their budget. She is also happy that Elinor and Fanny's brother Edward Ferrars have become friendly and attached. Austen notes that Mrs. Dashwood should be happy because Edward might receive a large inheritance, but that she is motivated only by his apparent devotion to Elinor.

When Marianne hears that Elinor and Edward may marry, she expresses concern that he not dashing and "striking" enough for her sister. She notes that she would be heartbroken to be loved by Edward because he is not romantic enough for her tastes. Her mother chides her for being too passionate about the subject, and expresses hope that she, too, could find a sensitive and loving (if not very expressive) man like Edward.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Austen develops the character of Mrs. Dashwood in this chapter, showing her to be a loving mother who is fairly patient (despite her dislike of Fanny). We also learn about Edward, who will become an important figure in the novel. Despite being related to the mean and selfish Fanny, Edward is portrayed as a nice young man with good manners and sensitivity. Marianne, who is more passionate than her sister, dislikes Edward because he is not the typical romantic leading man.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

In this chapter we see Marianne and Elinor discussing Edward. Marianne tries to persuade her sister that Edward is too reserved for her, but Elinor defends him by noting that he has good taste and is a good and sensitive person. Marianne tells her sister that she will try to love Edward as a brother. Elinor becomes worried; however, that Edward might be forced by his mother and sister to marry a woman "of higher standing" and takes these concerns to her mother.

Her worries prove true, and Elinor and Edward's relationship is virtually stopped by this interference. Mrs. Dashwood receives an offer of a cottage for rent in a distant county and so the sisters and their mother decide to leave Norland to investigate, in part to remove Mrs. Dashwood from Fanny's constant meanness and uncivil behavior. Elinor agrees with the logic of the plan despite her feelings for Edward.

Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter develops further the difference between logic and emotion, as Elinor considers Edward's qualities objectively as opposed to Marianne's more romantic consideration. Because of their shared objectivity and logic, Edward and Elinor seem like a good match, but Fanny is determined to keep them apart. Fanny's interference foreshadows future unhappiness for the two. Perhaps the clearest demonstration of Elinor's logic and rationality comes when she considers the good of her mother and sisters in moving away from Norland, even though it means she will have less of a chance of forming a lasting relationship with Edward.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

In this chapter Mrs. Dashwood informs John and Fanny that they will be moving, and John expresses his sorrow that the new house is so far away that he will have to send his gifts of furniture (which he and Fanny had decided were enough of a gift) by boat rather than by road. She invites John and Fanny, and particularly Edward, to visit.

Mrs. Dashwood and the three sisters rent their new cottage for a year, and Elinor advises her mother to sell the family's carriage and keep only three servants. These servants go ahead to get the house ready, and Mrs. Dashwood briefly hopes that John will now give the girls some money to fulfill his promise to his father. He does not do so and the women sadly leave Norland to move to their new cottage home.

Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter continues the theme of emotion versus sensibility, as we see both Elinor and John considering practical solutions while Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood are engrossed by emotion. John's worries about the added trouble of having to transport his "gifts" serves as an ironic comment on the way Fanny has reduced him to being little more than a selfish miser. At the same time, Mrs. Dashwood's joy at telling Fanny and John they are leaving shows that she has not been completely persuaded by her daughter's practicality. Elinor is thinking about their new and limited financial status by disposing of any luxuries, while Marianne waxes poetic about how happy the family was at Norland for many years.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Though they are at first sad at having to leave Norland the Dashwoods are soon happy about moving to Barton Cottage, which is described as small but comfortable. The family resolves to appear happy for each other's sakes. Mrs. Dashwood is also happy, and wants to make changes to the cottage when the weather improves.

This chapter also introduces Sir John Middleton, who is described as being older and very generous. The ladies also meet Lady Middleton, who is in her twenties, and their eldest child who is six. The Middletons leave after inviting the Dashwoods to dinner at Barton Park the next day.

Chapter 6 Analysis

In this chapter Austen shows further irony in the Dashwoods' situation. This irony stems from the fact that in a familiar setting like Norland they were treated like strangers by a family member (John), who had promised Henry Dashwood that he would care for them. Barton, however, is an unfamiliar setting but it sees them being treated warmly by a virtual stranger (Sir John, who is only distantly related to Mrs. Dashwood) who is under no obligation to help them.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

This chapter describes the Dashwoods' visit to Barton Park. Austen takes the opportunity to describe Sir John as a "sportsman," and Lady Middleton as a devoted mother who loved to spoil her children. Sir John is also described as a friend to all the children and young adults in the area, whom he often feeds and plans parties for. Sir John welcomes the Dashwoods and notes that Lady Middleton's mother (Mrs. Jennings) and his friend Colonel Brandon are also there for dinner.

Mrs. Jennings is described as friendly and funny, while Colonel Brandon is quiet and gentleman-like. The party is described as being fairly dull, and Marianne plays the piano. Colonel Brandon's reaction to her piano playing is described in detail, as he pays close attention to the music. Marianne is touched by his politeness in contrast to the Middletons and decides to forgive him for not going wild with applause because he is older (about 35 or so) and may be too old to get excited about anything.

Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter is important because it describes how different the Middletons are from one another and from the Dashwoods. Austen again uses irony though, because although Sir John and his wife have different interests they are united in the fact that they both have no taste and no talent. Although he is generous and kind, we find out that Sir John can sometimes be rude and oafish, while his wife is basically a well-bred simpleton. By describing her characters this way, Austen is providing her readers with an ironic commentary on the English country gentry, who lead a life of idle pursuits.

Mrs. Jennings is also introduced in this chapter as a joking old woman, while Brandon is introduced as a more thoughtful character. This reinforces the twin themes of emotion and logic that have been introduced in earlier chapters.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Austen continues to develop the character of Mrs. Jennings as a well-meaning meddler in this chapter, as she proposes a match between Colonel Brandon and Marianne. Mrs. Jennings suggests the possibility to Brandon and Marianne. Brandon ignores her, while Marianne is shocked at the idea of marrying a man more than twice her age. Mrs. Dashwood also does not approve, but Elinor argues that he could make a good husband. After Elinor leaves the room, Marianne and her mother discuss why Edward has not yet visited them at their new home.

Chapter 8 Analysis

While Mrs. Jennings is partly joking in her suggestion of a match, it does cause the group to consider what makes a good husband. While Marianne argues in favor of passion and youth, Elinor presents the merits of security and argues that age 35 is not that old. Marianne wonders at her sister's apparent lack of feelings, especially where Edward is concerned, and marvels that the two were not more upset when they were forced to part.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

In this chapter the Dashwoods become more comfortable in their new home, although they do not mingle much with the people around because Mrs. Dashwood does not want the girls to have to walk too far or have to borrow Sir John's carriage. Margaret and Marianne go for a walk in the wilderness one day, and during a sudden rainstorm she falls and twists her ankle. A charming gentleman named Willoughby rescues her and gives her a ride home.

Marianne is very happy to have met Willoughby, and the whole family is impressed with his manners and appearance. Later that day they ask Sir John about him. He reports that Willoughby is a good man who stands to inherit a home and a fortune from the old lady who lives at Allenham, a nearby home similar to Norland.

Chapter 9 Analysis

In this chapter Marianne gets what she was wishing for: a "knight in shining armor" who rescues her in breathtaking fashion. She is entirely smitten by him, and is intrigued by the possibility. Sir John says that he would be a good "catch" for one of the girls, and Mrs. Dashwood objects to his characterization of her daughters as predators. Elinor is true to her character and asks about Willoughby's financial stability. In the chapter Austen is putting forth Willoughby and Colonel Brandon as two contrasting symbols: Marianne is swept away by Willoughby's charming demeanor, while Sir John notes that the stable Colonel Brandon is also a great choice.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Willoughby soon calls on the Dashwoods and is received warmly. Austen describes how compatible he and Marianne are and how they quickly make a connection. After he leaves, Elinor acts somewhat waspish and wonders how long the two will be able to sustain a conversation, since they discussed several issues during his visit. The chapter goes on to describe the courtship, and notes how Marianne feels she has found her ideal man.

Elinor becomes aware of Colonel Brandon's love for her sister, and notes that she likes him. Willoughby and Marianne, however, have a conversation in which they say that Brandon is too quiet and is only liked by widows and married women. Elinor and the two engage in a debate about Brandon's character, with the end result that both Marianne and Willoughby have their dislike of him strengthened.

Chapter 10 Analysis

In this chapter Austen develops the character of Willoughby and shows through Elinor's perceptions of him that he is superficial. Marianne is completely fooled by him, however, as are the other women in the family. Elinor is also shown to be very mature since she carefully assesses both men based on their stability and genuineness. Her dislike of Willoughby foreshadows the eventual unhappy ending to Marianne's courtship with him.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

This chapter discusses the many balls and parties the Dashwoods find themselves attending, and how Marianne revels in the attention that Willoughby gives her. Elinor, on the other hand, is unhappy because she finds herself with no one to talk to, since Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings are fairly boring. She does find that Colonel Brandon is a pleasant companion, although she pities him because he is fixated on Marianne. In a revealing discussion at the end of the chapter Brandon asks Elinor whether she thinks Marianne would consider him even while she is pursuing a romance with Willoughby. Elinor replies that this will not be possible, and Brandon reveals that he had an unhappy love affair with a woman just like Marianne at some time in his past.

Chapter 11 Analysis

In this chapter Austen discusses how eighteenth century society revolves around socializing, and how Marianne and her mother love this ideal because Marianne is "following the rules" by having a young man devoted to her. Elinor, on the other hand, refuses to be pushed into anything and is not willing to conform to society's expectations. Austen also explores the differences between the two sisters; Marianne is entirely charmed by Willoughby without examining his character, while Elinor looks beyond the surface by dismissing Willoughby as a mere "lover," choosing instead to focus on the many qualities that Brandon possesses.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Early in the chapter Marianne reveals to Elinor that Willoughby has offered her a horse as a present, which she has accepted. Elinor is surprised and urges her to change her mind since keeping a horse would cost too much. Marianne relents and tells Willoughby that she does not want the horse, and he insists that he will keep it for her until she is ready to accept it. Elinor overhears and suspects the two are engaged. Her sister Margaret shares this suspicion and tells Elinor that Marianne has given Willoughby a lock of her hair (a traditional symbol of engagement). Later Mrs. Jennings gets Margaret to tell about Elinor's courtship with Edward. An embarrassed Elinor is glad when the subject changes to a proposed trip to Whitwell, a nearby manor, which is planned for the next day.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Austen develops several themes in this chapter. One is the gullible nature of Marianne, who is constantly impressed by Willoughby's superficial gestures. Austen also chooses to reinforce the idea that the Dashwoods are living in poverty and that Elinor is the one who is basically supervising the family's finances. The contrast to this practicality is the bubbly nature of the teenaged Margaret, who is eager to reveal secrets such as Marianne's engagement and Elinor's relationship with Edward.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The chapter starts with the whole group excited about their outing to Whitwell. Before they leave, though, Colonel Brandon receives a letter, which causes him to become upset. He announces his plan to leave for town, which will mean the cancellation of the outing to Whitwell. After he leaves, Mrs. Jennings gossips that he has gone to town to visit his illegitimate daughter Miss Williams. The group decides to go on a carriage ride through the countryside, and Marianne and Willoughby end up together in a separate coach. While the rest of the group tours they visit Willoughby's home. Later Elinor chastises her for entering a house alone with Willoughby, and Marianne responds by describing many of the rooms in the house and what she and Willoughby plan to do with them.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Austen introduces a bit of mystery to the character of Colonel Brandon through the letter and the speculation that follows his departure. Rather than being a placid and boring character, Brandon becomes interesting and even holds the possibility of having a checkered past. Marianne and Willoughby belittle him for leaving, which irritates Elinor. The incident where Marianne and Willoughby spend time alone together shows that Marianne's emotional approach to life has caused her to ignore the possibility that her honor may be called into question. Elinor on the other hand shows that she has a sense of decorum in her concern for propriety. The differences between the two sisters are paralleled by the differences between the men. Elinor considers what is right and moral while Marianne is impulsive; Brandon proves discrete by not revealing his secret past, while Willoughby does not consider the possible damage he may be causing to Marianne's reputation by taking her to a stranger's house without a chaperone.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The chapter begins with Mrs. Jennings worrying about Colonel Brandon's sudden departure for the city and her concern that he should have a wife. She speculates that he may have gone because of his small income of around 2,000 pounds a year or because of his daughter. Elinor is more concerned about Marianne's welfare, since she is unwilling to reveal their engagement to her mother. She speculates about Willoughby's money. Willoughby visits the Dashwoods often and expresses his warm feelings for Barton Cottage, even going so far as to wish that the cottage was uninhabited so that he could live there. He gets upset when Mrs. Dashwood suggests that she may change the cottage and argues strenuously that she should not do so.

Chapter 14 Analysis

In this chapter Austen reveals some more details about Colonel Brandon, who has a modest income, a sick sister, and an illegitimate daughter. Elinor wonders about Willoughby, about whom the reader knows very little by this point in the book. The reader is left to wonder why Willoughby seems so attached to a cottage, and why he begs them to think kindly of him forever as the chapter ends.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

The chapter starts with the Dashwoods going to visit Lady Middleton. Marianne stays behind, and when her mother and sisters return they find her upset and crying and Willoughby preparing to leave. He tells the ladies he is leaving for London, and that he cannot return to Mrs. Smith's house. Elinor urges him to return to someone else's house or to the cottage, and he makes a brief comment about not being able to enjoy their company any longer before he rushes out. Elinor suspects something serious has bothered him, but her mother assures her that it is probably just that the aged Mrs. Smith does not approve of his relationship with Marianne. Elinor asks for proof of their engagement, and her mother remains unflappable in her belief that Willoughby will return soon. Elinor hopes this will happen, and agrees that her suspicions may just have been caused by Willoughby's reaction to Marianne's tears. Marianne appears at the end of the chapter and is clearly upset.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Elinor's skepticism is again highlighted in this chapter as she speculates about Willoughby's motives for leaving. Her logical approach as she considers every possible alternative is contrasted with her mother's faith that Willoughby's love for Marianne will cause him to return to her, and with Marianne's wild emotional outbursts. In spite of her skepticism, however, Elinor harbors a secret hope that things will turn out all right for Willoughby and Marianne.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

As the chapter begins we see Marianne extremely upset, but she finds a few activities to keep herself busy. Later on the ladies unexpectedly encounter Edward Ferrars on a walk in the countryside. Although she initially mistakes him for Willoughby, Marianne is particularly happy for her sister and welcomes Edward to Barton. Edward and Elinor resume their fairly logical conversations, which baffles Marianne.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Edward's visit represents an important turning point for the Dashwood family. His presence offers new hope after the disappointment of Willoughby's departure, and it also cheers up Marianne because she finds out about Norland, their previous home. Both Edward and Elinor are strangely remote with one another, and Elinor is curious as to why he is so cold and distant. She vows to keep her good humor, however, in the hopes that he will soon give her a sign that he still thinks fondly of her.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

At the beginning of the chapter Edward's reserve fades quickly when Mrs. Dashwood greets him. He is comfortable visiting with the family, but Austen lets the reader know that he is "not in spirits" (i.e. not happy). The girls draw him into a discussion about money and Elinor and Marianne differ on how much money is necessary to lead a "normal" life, with Elinor arguing that Edward's income of 1,800-2,000 pounds a year is more than adequate. Edward notes that Marianne is more serious than before, but becomes upset when she calls him "reserved."

Chapter 17 Analysis

Edward's arrival at Barton Cottage cheers up both Marianne and him self. The discussion the group embarks on, although it is presented in a witty manner, reveals something about the character of each participant. Marianne shows her slavish adherence to what society expects by wishing for a fortune, while Elinor is content with enough money to live a happy life with a family. Mrs. Dashwood expresses her wish that her children be well provided for, while Margaret is unsure of what she would do with a fortune. Edward's reaction to Marianne's characterization of him shows that he does have feelings, and that these feelings occasionally break through his outward show of calm and logic.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Elinor is concerned about Edward becoming upset, and is confused by the fact that his reserve seems to change from moment to moment. Edward goes for a walk and then returns to discuss his somewhat unromantic impressions of the countryside. Marianne notices a lock of hair under Edward's ring and asks him about it. Edward says that it is Fanny's. Elinor is embarrassed to realize it could be hers, and is upset because he did not ask her for it. Sir John and Mrs. Jennings visit to meet Edward, whom they soon realize is the young man Margaret had told them about. They invite the group to tea and to a dinner the next night. Sir John refers to Willoughby and Edward figures out that Marianne was enamored with Willoughby.

Chapter 18 Analysis

A possible cause for Edward's coldness is revealed in this chapter, as he may be concealing another love or concealing the fact that he has really missed Elinor. Elinor is suspicious about the change in Edward's behavior since their last interaction at Norland, but she conceals her concern by behaving as normally as she can. Sir John is introduced into the chapter both as a way to create a new situation for the group to socialize and as a way for Edward to be brought up to date on the Willoughby/Marianne love affair.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Edward stays a week, during which time his "spirits" improve. He is glad to be there and says that he is reluctant to leave because he will have to return to either town or Norland, both of which he dislikes. Mrs. Dashwood urges him to take a job (a "profession") so that he will not be forced to spend time with people he dislikes. Edward discloses how he had been unable to choose a profession when he was younger, and had ended up in an idle life almost by default.

He leaves, and Elinor feels sad and upset. She keeps her feelings to herself, and busies herself with housework to avoid her sisters and mother. She finds that she is spending a lot of time thinking about Edward. One day the Middletons and Mrs. Jennings bring a new couple, the Palmers, for a visit. Mrs. Palmer is Mrs. Jennings' daughter and she is pregnant. Mr. Palmer is cold and distant and makes a remark that the cottage roof is low and crooked, while Mrs. Palmer is cheerful and friendly. Sir John invites the family to his house the next day, and although Mrs. Dashwood refuses the sisters agree to go.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Mrs. Dashwood's discussion with Edward reveals the fact that he feels trapped by obligations to his family and friends, and does not hold out hope that anything will change soon. It is interesting that although many of the Dashwoods speculate about Edward's feelings for Elinor, Edward himself never even seems to approach the subject – this is Austen's way of sustaining suspense and making sure that Elinor is forced to be sad. Her reaction to Edward leaving (becoming quiet and withdrawn) stands in direct contrast to Marianne's reaction to Willoughby's departure, once again reinforcing the contrast between logic (sense) and emotion (sensibility).

Sir John's introduction of the Palmers keeps the plot moving, and introduces the idea that Marianne is beginning to resent the frequent invitations to his house for dinner. Her resentment stems in parts from her feelings of frustration around her perception that because her family is poor they are obliged to visit their landlords, the Middletons, whenever they are asked.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

In this chapter, Elinor and Marianne visit with the Palmers, Middletons, and Mrs. Jennings at Barton Park. Mrs. Palmer talks a great deal about her husband's political aspirations, and invites the girls to come and stay at her country home, Cleveland. Mr. Palmer turns out to be a grumpy man, which contrasts starkly with his wife's assertion that he is "droll" and spends most of his time trying "to make every body like him." Mrs. Palmer also mentions the fact that she and her husband know quite a bit about Willoughby, and that Colonel Brandon has recently told her that Marianne and Willoughby were to be married. The girls question her about this information and learn that Willoughby lives near Cleveland and is well regarded by families and in particular young women in the area.

Chapter 20 Analysis

This chapter introduces some background information about Willoughby and Brandon, including the fact Mrs. Jennings does not consider Brandon a suitable match for Charlotte (Mrs. Palmer). But Austen also introduces yet another contrast between an emotional and expressive character and a more reserved one: Mrs. Palmer is bubbly and talks a lot, while Mr. Palmer is a bit more reserved and shows a sarcastic wit. Like Elinor does for her family, Mr. Palmer frequently keeps Mrs. Palmer's wilder ideas and statements under control with his remarks and warnings.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

The visit of the Palmers causes Elinor to think about how some people end up in marriages with people they are not very compatible with. In this chapter Sir John brings yet another pair of guests to Barton Park, the Steele sisters. Anne and Lucy are introduced to the Dashwoods during one of their visits to Barton Park, and the sisters do not find them to be good companions. In particular they find that the girls are not very refined, even if they are good looking. The Steeles do win over Lady Middleton by being friendly to her children. Near the end of the chapter Anne tells Elinor that she knows Edward Ferrars, which makes Elinor very curious.

Chapter 21 Analysis

This chapter puts Sir John's frequent invitations into a different perspective from that put forward by Marianne. Far from being confined to the Dashwoods, Sir John seems to invite everyone he meets to come to Barton Park. Austen's ironic presentation of this behavior makes it clear that he symbolizes the worst of the upper class life of the time – instead of doing something useful, he seems determined to bring everyone he knows together for social occasions. The other irony present in the chapter is that while Sir John persuades the Dashwoods to come because he says the Steeles will be interesting, while in fact they are dull and coarse.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

In this chapter Elinor starts to cultivate a friendship with Lucy, whom she finds is charming for short periods of time. While on a walk, Lucy asks Elinor about Edward's mother. When Elinor answers cautiously, Lucy tells her that she has been secretly engaged to Edward for the past four years. She shows Elinor that she has a picture of Edward in her locket, and tells her that Edward had been visiting the Steeles before he came to Barton Cottage. Lucy asks Elinor for advice, and the stunned Elinor manages to avoid the question until Lucy returns to Barton Park.

Chapter 22 Analysis

This chapter reveals the true reason why Edward has a lock of hair under his ring, and explains why he seemed uncomfortable and out of sorts during his visit with the Dashwoods. Austen again uses irony by having Lucy confide in Elinor, since Elinor herself is interested in Edward. She intensifies this irony by having Lucy ask Elinor for advice, and Elinor shows her prudence and tact by not reacting with shock and horror or anger.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Although Elinor is disturbed by Lucy's confession, she decides to approach the problem logically and try to determine whether Lucy is telling the truth. She is worried that Lucy might be telling the truth, but feels that since everyone (including Fanny) thought that Edward was in love with her it must be so. She sets out to spend more time with Lucy to ask her about Edward, but is unable to get her alone for a private discussion. She finally gets a chance when Sir John invites the ladies to his house for the day. While the group is chatting, Lucy and Elinor decide to make a basket. As the chapter ends, Elinor feels that it is now quiet and private enough to discuss the matter with Lucy.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Austen shows again in this chapter that Elinor is logical and does not allow her emotions to affect her judgment. Rather than falling to pieces like Marianne, Elinor carefully examines all of her experiences with Edward to see if she can detect anything strange. She also decides on a course of action and then sets out to quite deliberately carry it out.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

The chapter begins with Elinor asking Lucy about her engagement with Edward. Lucy tells her many things, including her concern that Edward does not make enough money to support a wife. She also tells her that she is sure Edward loves her. After a bit more discussion, she tells Elinor that she wants Edward to "take orders" in the church (to become a minister). She asks Elinor if she will help her to make this happen by asking John Dashwood to give the Norland Parish to Edward. She again asks Elinor for advice, and Elinor notes that she will not give her advice because Lucy would only listen if Elinor told her what she wanted to hear. Lucy asks Elinor if she is coming to London in the winter, since she and her sister will be there (in part to meet secretly with Edward).

Their conversation ends, and Austen lets the reader know that Elinor avoided the subject of Edward for the duration of the Steeles' visit. We also learn that Lucy and Anne stay at Barton Park for nearly two months, and the reader is left to assume that this must have been a very awkward time for Elinor.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Elinor again shows her logical and cautious nature in her questioning of Lucy. Although Lucy professes to love Edward dearly, she is very concerned about his financial security and his place in society. Austen places her feelings in direct contrast with what Elinor has already said; Elinor feels that Edward's moderate income is more than sufficient and that love and compatibility are more important than any practical considerations.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

In this chapter we learn that Mrs. Jennings has a home in Portman Square in London. She invites Marianne and Elinor to go with her, and they decline at first. Their mother quickly says that they can go, so they start to prepare even though they will miss their mother. Marianne plans to see Willoughby in the city and starts to become excited about their trip. Elinor is less enthusiastic but is happy that her sister will get a chance to talk to Willoughby again. While both sisters are worried about having to spend a large block of time with Mrs. Jennings, Marianne's desire to see Willoughby, and Elinor's carefully considered desire to support her sister, overcome both of their objections.

Chapter 25 Analysis

This chapter serves as a further reminder of the differences between the two sisters. Marianne has a single purpose and is entirely motivated by emotion and impulsively says "yes," while Elinor considers all of the pluses and minuses of their stay in London before finally agreeing to the trip. Regardless of how they come to their decisions, this chapter advances the plot by taking the two heroines out of the country and putting them in a situation where they are likely to meet their suitors.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

This chapter begins with Elinor and Marianne on a three-day carriage ride to London. Elinor finds herself marveling at the sudden turn of events, but hopes she can use the time in London to learn more about Willoughby. When they finally arrive at the house Elinor writes a letter to her mother, and Marianne writes and sends a letter to Willoughby. Marianne waits excitedly for a response to this letter and is disappointed when it does not come.

Colonel Brandon comes for a visit, and Marianne quickly leaves the room. Brandon and Elinor talk, and we learn that both Willoughby and the Palmers are in town. Mrs. Jennings enters and embarrasses Brandon by talking about the competition between him and Willoughby for Marianne. The next day Mrs. Palmer comes to visit, along with some other guests. Marianne ignores all of these visitors and focuses on watching and waiting for a message from Willoughby. Elinor becomes concerned about Marianne's fixation.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Through the actions in this chapter we learn that living "in town" involves a lot of visiting and chatting. Elinor is drawn into this activity, while Marianne seems to be coming close to the depression she had exhibited at Barton Cottage. She also becomes rude and abrupt with other characters, so Elinor is forced to compensate by being polite to Mrs. Jennings and her guests. Although Colonel Brandon has come to see Marianne, it is Elinor who ends up speaking with him. Her enquiries about Willoughby apparently stir up Brandon's remembrance of the urgent business that caused him to leave Barton Park, which suggests to the reader that we may soon learn more about it.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

The chapter begins with Mrs. Jennings mentioning that the Middletons will be coming to town, and that Sir John will be disappointed to not be able to hunt in the nice weather. Marianne, who has been hoping for word for Willoughby, seizes on this as a possible reason why Willoughby has not come to visit. The women visit other people's homes and leave calling cards, and Marianne is happily expecting the return of cold weather that might bring Willoughby home from his outdoor pursuits. They return to the house and spend a week waiting for him. Colonel Brandon visits every day, mostly to look at Marianne, and Elinor notes that he seems to be falling deeply in love with her.

At last a card from Willoughby arrives while they are out, and Marianne waits for him to visit. Mrs. Jennings receives word that the Middletons have arrived in the city, and the ladies go for an evening of dancing and music at the Middleton's home. Many people that they know are there, including the Palmers and Colonel Brandon, but Marianne is disappointed that Willoughby is not. After the party Marianne writes another letter to Willoughby. Colonel Brandon visits again and discusses Marianne with Elinor, and whether he has any chance of enticing Marianne to marry him. Elinor tells him that he has no chance at all, and he leaves after wishing Marianne well.

Chapter 27 Analysis

In this chapter we see Marianne reacting at her emotional best to several different events. She journeys from renewed hope back to despair, and although Elinor tries she cannot completely cover up her sister's feelings toward Willoughby. Marianne continues to write letters to Willoughby, even though he provides no response at all, and Elinor finds it necessary to write to her mother for advice.

Austen provides an interesting contrast to Willoughby by having Colonel Brandon visit Marianne constantly. While she is fixated on Willoughby, Brandon is fixated on her and proves to be a much more reliable and attentive suitor. Like many other characters in the book he turns to Elinor for advice, and she is tactful but honest in telling him that he is not likely to find Marianne receptive to his advances.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

During the next few days Marianne becomes even more depressed, and starts to lose track of time and becomes forgetful. She and Elinor accompany Lady Middleton to a party, where Elinor sees Willoughby with a "fashionable looking young woman." Marianne sees him too and wonders why he does not come over to talk to them. When he finally does come over, he ignores Marianne and talks to Elinor. Marianne asks why he has not responded to her letters, and Willoughby hurries off. Marianne feels faint and sick, and Elinor gets Lady Middleton to help her take Marianne home. Elinor then considers what happened between Willoughby and Marianne, and reflects that her situation is somewhat better because she and Edward can at least still be friendly to one another.

Chapter 28 Analysis

The incident at the party marks the end of the relationship between Marianne and Willoughby, although the reader does not yet know why Willoughby stopped caring for her. Marianne is crushed, and by having the scene occur in a public place Austen is able to build up the maximum sympathy for the distressed girl who sits in a corner giving "way in a low voice to the misery of her feelings." The incident also allows Elinor to once more consider the mysteries of love and to contrast how her sister's passionate relationship will lead only to enmity between the two, while her more intellect-based romance with Edward will allow them to stay friendly to each other.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

The next morning Elinor finds Marianne crying and writing a letter to Willoughby. During breakfast a letter comes from Willoughby and while Marianne leaves the room to read it Mrs. Jennings asks Elinor when they will be married. Elinor tells her that she would be surprised if the two married at all, and informs Mrs. Jennings that she should stop spreading the rumor that they will be married.

Elinor goes to find Marianne, who allows her to read the letter. Willoughby's letter notes that he had not meant to offend her at the party the night before. It goes on to say that he denies ever having loved her, and that he should never have let her believe that there was ever anything between them. Willoughby returns her letters, as well as the lock of hair she had given her. Elinor is shocked by the callous tone of the letter, which she finds prompts her to hate Willoughby.

After Mrs. Jennings leaves, Marianne lets Elinor read the three letters she sent to Willoughby. Her letters express regret at Willoughby's failure to visit, and the final one reproaches him for his rude behavior at the party and asks him to confirm their engagement. Marianne tells her sister that she cannot understand his change of heart, and feels that others have conspired to break off the engagement. She feels this way because in spite of his ill treatment she believes he is a good person.

Marianne tells Elinor she feels tormented, and cannot bear to put on a happy face when she is miserable. She expresses her desire to return to Barton Cottage, but Elinor persuades her to stay so that they are not being rude to Mrs. Jennings. Marianne then goes to bed and lies still for a long time.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Willoughby's letter to Marianne is a symbol of his manipulative nature. In it, he fails to apologize or even admit that he has really done anything wrong. Austen also shows us Marianne's letters, which show the kind of emotional naiveté that allowed Willoughby to take advantage of her. The reader is left to wonder how Marianne could have been fooled by a person who is clearly so rotten, and the answer that comes through is that Marianne was in love with the *idea* of a perfect love affair, rather than with Willoughby himself.

Elinor's reaction to Willoughby's behavior is also interesting. Although she tries to rationalize his behavior, she quickly finds that there are no excuses for his deceptiveness. For once her logic fails and we see her succumb to her feelings of anger toward Willoughby. But even as she sits lost in this feeling she is able to recognize that her reaction would further upset her sister, so she keeps silent.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

The chapter begins with Mrs. Jennings bursting into Marianne's room to tell her that Willoughby has become engaged to a Miss Grey. She offers some comfort to Marianne and then leaves. Marianne is upset, but decides to come to dinner. At dinner Mrs. Jennings is very nice to Marianne. This treatment makes her upset and she runs out of the room. After she leaves, Mrs. Jennings tells Elinor that Miss Grey is very rich and that is why Willoughby left Marianne. She notes that Willoughby was in too much debt to get married to Marianne, and this is why he made her wait so long.

Elinor asks for more information, and Mrs. Jennings tells her that Miss Grey often argues with her guardians, the Ellisons. She also goes out of her way to plan activities to cheer Marianne up, which Elinor says are unnecessary. She urges Mrs. Jennings to be more discrete around her sister, and Mrs. Jennings agrees that this will upset Marianne even further. Elinor says that Willoughby and her sister were never officially engaged, but Mrs. Jennings says that his behavior was unacceptable because of the un-chaperoned visit to Allenham House. Mrs. Jennings adds that now Colonel Brandon and Marianne are sure to end up together.

Colonel Brandon visits the house soon and learns that Marianne is unwell. He tells Elinor that he heard about the incident with Willoughby while he was at a tobacco shop. He asks how Marianne is doing, and Elinor tells him that she would forgive Willoughby very quickly if he came back to her. This news makes Brandon "more serious and thoughtful than usual."

Chapter 30 Analysis

In this chapter we see Austen condemning the practice of gossip, since both Mrs. Jennings and Brandon hear about Willoughby's new engagement through women gossiping. While the news they learn advances the story, Brandon's evident distaste at having overheard two women gossiping leaves the reader in no doubt that Austen finds the practice distasteful.

Austen also develops the character of Mrs. Jennings, who genuinely cares about young people and their relationships. She wanted Marianne and Willoughby to be together, and when she learns it will not happen she is kind and generous to Marianne. However, this pity is exactly what Marianne had feared in the previous chapter so it ends up making her even more upset.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

The next morning Elinor finds Marianne just as upset as the night before. Marianne says that Mrs. Jennings is cruel and heartless, and Elinor tries to cheer her up. Later, Mrs. Jennings enters and tells Marianne she has a letter that will cheer her up. Marianne's spirits rise thinking it is from Willoughby, and she is disappointed to learn it is from her mother. Marianne hopes the letter will help her feel better, but it turns out that her mother is asking about her relationship with Willoughby and expressing happiness that Marianne will soon be happily married. Marianne again asks to return home to her mother, while Elinor urges her to wait and see how her mother will react to news of the broken engagement.

Mrs. Jennings leaves to tell the Middletons and Palmers about Willoughby's engagement. Elinor writes a letter to her mother. Colonel Brandon comes to visit, and tells Elinor that Mrs. Jennings urged him to come. He says he wants to make Marianne feel better by telling Elinor about his past. He then tells Elinor about Eliza Brandon, an orphan his family raised with him. He tells Elinor that Eliza married at 17 to his brother so that the family could access her large fortune. He relates that he and Eliza fell in love and planned to elope. When the plan was discovered, he was sent away. His brother treated Eliza badly, and she has several extra-marital affairs while Brandon is away in the East Indies.

He says he did not learn of their divorce until two years later. When he returned to England he searches for Eliza, worried that she might have become a prostitute. He learns that she had a daughter, Miss Williams as a result of the first of her affairs and that she is dying of consumption. Eliza left him Miss Williams after she died (Miss Williams is not his daughter, as Mrs. Jennings and others had speculated). He places her at school and after a few years she disappears, and this is the event that prompted him to quickly leave Barton Park.

Brandon says that Willoughby seduced Miss Williams and then left her. He hopes that his story will help Marianne to see how bad Willoughby really is. Elinor enquires after Miss Williams, and learns that she had a child as a result of their liaison. Brandon also tells Elinor that he has met Willoughby in a secret duel, which did not result in any injuries, and that the matter is now settled.

Chapter 31 Analysis

The beginning of the chapter reveals Marianne's insensitivity to others as she states her hatred of Mrs. Jennings, who is trying very hard to make her feel better. Austen again highlights her emotional response – rather than examining the situation logically, she jumps to the conclusion that Mrs. Jennings will be trying to ridicule her rather than to

help her. Elinor, on the other hand, is able to see that Mrs. Jennings is trying to help but has a remarkable ability to say and do exactly the wrong thing.

The bulk of the chapter is given over to Colonel Brandon's story. The reader is left with a feeling of sympathy for Brandon who, like Marianne, has had an unhappy love affair. His story about Eliza Brandon explains why he is a 35-year-old bachelor, and we learn that the mysterious Miss Williams is his ward and not an illegitimate daughter. Overall, the story shows that Brandon is an honorable man. It also reinforces one of the major themes in the novel, the idea that patience is rewarded; Brandon, as one of the oldest characters in the book, shows patience in trying to find his former love and in caring for her daughter. He has also been very patient in his pursuit of Marianne, and the reader is left wondering if this patience will also be rewarded.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Elinor tells her sister Colonel Brandon's story, and Marianne accepts the truth of Willoughby's guilt. Marianne also starts being friendlier to Brandon, but Elinor is still worried that she is somewhat depressed. Mrs. Dashwood writes back and urges the sisters to stay in London so that Marianne will not be reminded of Willoughby. She also hopes that they will see John and Fanny Dashwood when they visit London.

Elinor is very careful to keep her friends from ever mentioning Willoughby to Marianne, but when she is not around they express surprise at Willoughby's behavior. Mrs. Palmer tells Elinor about the upcoming wedding, and Colonel Brandon keeps visiting often. Mrs. Jennings is surprised that he is still quiet and serious, but Elinor is pleased that her sister is starting to look at him with some affection. Just a few weeks after Willoughby's letter, Elinor tells Marianne that he and Miss Grey are married, and this news causes her to become upset once more.

The Steele sisters arrive in London, and make a special point of visiting the Dashwoods and Mrs. Jennings. Lucy reminds Elinor to help her get a position for Edward at Norland. They also discuss a new suitor, Dr. Davies, in a rude and indiscrete manner. The Steeles ask to see Marianne, but Elinor tells them that they cannot.

Chapter 32 Analysis

This chapter begins the healing process for Marianne and signals a thaw in her relationship with Colonel Brandon. The twin blows of Willoughby's affair with Miss Williams and the news of his quick marriage to Miss Grey depress her, and it seems once again that nothing can bring her out of the funk she is in. However, she has given up on the romantic notion of Willoughby reappearing to resume their courtship.

The appearance of the Steele sisters serves as a way for Austen to reintroduce the Edward Ferrars storyline. It also shows the difference between the uncouth and indiscrete Steele sisters and some of the more sensitive characters in the novel.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

The chapter begins with the Dashwood sisters and Mrs. Jennings heading out for a shopping trip. While they are out they encounter their brother, John Dashwood, who promises to pay a call on them the next day. He notes that Edward has told them about how charming and small Barton Cottage is. John comes to visit them the next day, and apologizes for Fanny not coming with him. Colonel Brandon also visits, and John is curious about him. He takes Elinor with him to the Middletons, and congratulates her for finding a good mate in Brandon. Elinor expresses surprise, but John assures her that Brandon is interested in her and adds that Fanny and her mother would be happy to see her married.

Elinor asks whether Edward will be married, and John says that his mother has arranged a marriage with the wealthy Miss Morton. He notes that Mrs. Ferrars is very generous, and has even given Fanny money to help with their expenses. Elinor remarks, with tongue firmly in cheek, that he must have a lot of expenses, and John notes that he has recently bought a large farm nearby. He also complains about having to buy china and linens to replace that were given to Elinor's mother when they left Norland.

John then goes on to talk about Mrs. Jennings, and expresses the wish that she might leave Elinor and her sisters a fortune. Austen tells the reader that he expresses this hope because it would assuage some of the guilt he feels at taking away the girl's fortunes earlier in the book. He also asks after Marianne's health, and Elinor tells him she has been ill. He notes that he and Fanny always thought Marianne would marry first, but that he now feels that Elinor will marry Brandon first. They meet the Middletons, and then he notes that everyone he has met is very nice and respectable. He adds that Fanny and Mrs. Ferrars had thought that Mrs. Jennings and the Middletons would not be respectable enough to associate with, which explains why she had not come with him on his visit.

Chapter 33 Analysis

This chapter reintroduces John Dashwood and shows him to be an arrogant and pompous man who is totally concerned with money and wealth. He equates wealth with social standing but also worries about *how* a person gets their money, as evidenced by his worry that "Mrs. Jennings was the widow of a man who got all his money in a low way." Austen also uses a heavy dose of irony in the chapter by having John, who inherited a fortune; complain to the impoverished Elinor about money. Another example of irony in the chapter is when John notes that it would be a wonderful coincidence if Edward and Elinor were to "settle" at the same time, not knowing that Elinor once had feelings for Edward.

John (and Fanny) is chiefly used as a comic device. Because they exhibit a grossly exaggerated concern for money and status, they serve as a way for Austen to comment on this obsession in eighteenth century society. The reader, like Elinor in the novel, is left to chuckle and feel disgust at John's behavior

Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

Braced by her husband's confidence in them, Fanny comes to visit both Mrs. Jennings and Lady Middleton the very next day. Fanny likes Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings, but Mrs. Jennings does not particularly care for her. Elinor wants to know about Edward, but Fanny does not volunteer any information because she knows that Edward and Elinor were once close. Lucy Steele visits one day and tells Elinor that Edward is in town, and he soon leaves calling cards for the Dashwoods at Mrs. Jennings house. Fanny and John then plan a dinner part for the Middletons, Mrs. Jennings, Elinor and Marianne, Colonel Brandon, and the Steele sisters.

Elinor is interested to see if Edward will be there and, if so, dreads seeing both Lucy and Edward at the same place. She learns that he is not to be there, and is relieved. Lucy is nervous about meeting Mrs. Ferrars, who, as it turns out, treats her warmly because she arrives with Elinor (whom she does not wish to see marry Edward). Elinor muses that Mrs. Ferrars and Fanny would not be so welcoming if they know of Lucy's secret engagement.

During the party, the men leave the room and the women find themselves with little to talk about. The men return and John tries to impress Colonel Brandon with some screen Elinor had painted. The others become curious, and Mrs. Ferrars dismisses the screens without looking at them. Fanny tries to get her mother to be nicer, and Mrs. Ferrars mentions how talented Miss Morton is. Marianne breaks in to defend her sister and offends Mrs. Ferrars and Fanny, who then feel obliged to defend Miss Morton. Marianne becomes upset, and John tells Brandon that she was once as beautiful as Elinor.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Fanny's respect for Lady Middleton is just one of the ironic elements present in this chapter – especially when the reader recalls that the Dashwood sisters had quickly dismissed her as a dull woman when they first met her. What this example shows is how much value Fanny and her mother place on money and social standing; both of them are fascinated by wealthy people and disgusted by the thought of having someone poor like Elinor associated with their family.

Like Fanny, Mrs. Ferrars is presented as a kind of caricature; a grossly exaggerated example of a society matron who is more concerned with money than with personality. Her appearance, which is described as having "sourness" to it, becomes a symbol of her nastiness. Her obsession with money blinds her to the threat that Lucy poses to her son, so Austen shows the reader how Elinor is able to chuckle quietly at her expense. While Elinor is able to keep her reactions in check, Marianne is expressive and reacts emotionally.

Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Elinor starts the chapter by considering her interaction with Mrs. Ferrars. She concludes that she is glad that the end of her romance with Edward will mean that she does not have to associate with the old lady again. She also considers why Lucy is so happy about Mrs. Ferrars being nice to her, since she was only nice because Lucy was not Elinor. Lucy comes to visit Elinor and gushes about how nicely Mrs. Ferrars treated her. Elinor notes that Mrs. Ferrars would not have been so nice if she had known about Lucy's engagement, and Lucy disagrees with her. She adds that Elinor cannot say she does not like Fanny, to which Elinor is silent.

Lucy reaffirms her friendship with Elinor, and then talks about how she will be seeing Edward often now that she is friendly with Fanny and Mrs. Ferrars. Just as they are talking, Edward enters. Lucy is quiet and Edward is embarrassed, but Elinor is forced to be a good hostess. She fills up the awkward gap in the conversation with small talk, and then leaves Lucy and Edward alone to get Marianne. Marianne comes back with her and greets Edward warmly. Marianne feels badly that Edward and Elinor cannot talk freely because Lucy is there. When Edward mentions that Marianne does not look well, she directs his attention to Elinor.

Marianne asks why he was not at dinner, and he quickly leaves. Lucy is upset and leaves. Marianne wonders why she stayed so long. Elinor is quiet, knowing that she cannot betray Lucy's secret, although she would like Marianne to stop embarrassing herself and Edward.

Chapter 35 Analysis

This chapter presents a great example of how Jane Austen can create a delightfully comic situation for her characters. This particular situation is especially comic because only Elinor knows all the complexities of the relationships involved. Lucy, who is unsure of how she should react, fails to react at all, and her silence only makes the situation more awkward. Marianne reacts emotionally once again, and tries to get Edward and Elinor to spend more time together.

Elinor's reaction to seeing Edward again is very mature, which is not surprising considering her personality. She does not hold anything against him, despite his engagement to Lucy, and does everything she can to make him feel more comfortable. Her reaction is directly contrasted with that of Marianne, who does everything she can think of to make him less comfortable so that he will talk with Elinor about their relationship.

Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

At the beginning of the chapter we learn that Mrs. Palmer has had a baby boy, and that Mrs. Jennings is spending most of her time with her daughter. This means that the sisters have to spend their time with the Middletons and the Steele sisters, which they would prefer not to do. Austen goes to lengths to describe the fact that the feeling is mutual with the Steele sisters feeling jealous of them, and Lady Middleton finds them to be too logical and intelligent to be interesting companions. We also learn that Marianne has stopped taking care of herself, and is still depressed and upset.

The Dashwood sisters are invited to a musical party along with Fanny and John, much to Fanny's displeasure. Elinor meets Robert Ferrars, Fanny's brother, whom she had seen at Gray's buying a toothpick case. He turns out to be foolish, conceited, and condescending to the Dashwoods. He talks about cottages in a foolish way, and Elinor finds him to be a bore and not worthy of her conversation.

Someone at the party suggests Fanny and John should invite the Dashwood sisters to stay with them. This prompts Fanny to persuade her husband that he should invite the Steele sisters instead, and they quickly tell the Dashwood sisters that they have been invited. After a few days, Sir John tells the Dashwoods that Fanny likes Lucy and her sister very much and has given them gifts.

Chapter 36 Analysis

This chapter shows again that Elinor and Marianne are totally different from the society they live in, and that this is something that both they and the people around them are aware of. Austen lets us know that they are bored by the constant visiting, but this is one of the first opportunities for the reader to see that others resent them for their differences. Lady Middleton simply does not understand them, and in a masterful passage Austen shoes that she does not like them because they do not conform to her expectations of so called "normal" girls.

Fanny's argument in favor of the Steele sisters can be directly compared with her argument to have her husband cut the monetary gifts for the Dashwood family. While she makes her argument seem like it is backed by logic and well thought-out evidence, the reader is left with no doubt that she does not want the Dashwood girls around because she does not like them. Austen also uses the argument to reinforce the idea John Dashwood is easily henpecked and manipulated by his wife

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

This chapter begins with Mrs. Jennings rushing in to tell Elinor that Fanny has become upset. When Elinor asks why, Mrs. Jennings tells her that Fanny has learned about Lucy and Edward's engagement. When Fanny first encountered Lucy, says Mrs. Jennings, she drove her to tears and then forced her to leave their house. Mrs. Jennings notes that Mrs. Ferrars has not yet heard of the engagement, but that she is sure that Mrs. Ferrars will approve the match.

Elinor does not really know how she feels about losing Edward, but she is very curious about how both Edward and his mother will react to the engagement becoming public. She does, however, worry about how Marianne will react to the news. Her fears prove right, as Marianne cries and compares Edward directly to Willoughby. Elinor next tells her that she has known for four months, and Marianne is astonished that she was able to keep it secret. When Marianne reproaches her for being too emotionally detached, Elinor explains that she has been in extreme pain from both the engagement and other things going on. Marianne apologizes for not understanding.

John comes to visit them and tells them that Fanny is badly upset and has expressed the wish that she had invited Marianne and Elinor to visit rather than the Steeles. He also tells them that Mrs. Ferrars has offered Edward a generous fortune if he marries Miss Morton. He adds that Edward turned this fortune down in favor of his match with Lucy, and that Mrs. Ferrars has promised to make Edward's monetary situation very difficult. John says that Edward has been turned out of his mother's house, and Mrs. Jennings insists that he can stay at her house. John adds that Mrs. Ferrars will give all of her estate to Richard, leaving Edward with nothing. After John leaves, the three women are very critical of Mrs. Ferrars' conduct.

Chapter 37 Analysis

Gossip is one of the most powerful symbols in *Sense and Sensibility*, and this is clearly shown in this chapter. Gossip is the most prevalent form of communication in the novel, as shown by the fact that Mrs. Jennings learns of the engagement through gossip. How many of the details of the story Mrs. Jennings relates are true, then, cannot be determined, and her sensational description of the scene between Fanny and Lucy provides a comic interlude for the reader.

Elinor's reaction to the news reinforces the theme of reason prevailing over emotion. Because she is not sure what to feel, Elinor decides to think about every facet of the situation before deciding on a response. She also shows her sensitivity when she thinks of Marianne's feelings before her own. The only time she lets her "guard down" is when

she lectures Marianne about how she has been keeping her feelings in check – and even at this point she is tactful and sensitive.

John shows again that he is completely dominated by his wife when he presents her as the injured party in this case. Austen presents the account of her hysteria as a satire on how involved family members are in choosing the "appropriate" match for Edward.

Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

In this chapter Elinor and Marianne reflect on Edward's integrity in deciding to pursue his own course. Neither of them hears anything more about the matter for three days, when Elinor and Mrs. Jennings go for a walk in Kensington Gardens. Elinor runs into Anne Steele, and she learns that Edward has offered to break off his engagement with Lucy because of his poverty. Lucy refuses, promising that she will live with him with nothing at all. When Elinor learns that Anne was eavesdropping on a private conversation she is disgusted. Anne adds that Edward wants to go to Oxford, and that Lucy asked her to write to Dr. Davies about getting him a position.

Later in the chapter Elinor receives a letter from Lucy telling her about the situation. In the letter she mentions that she would like Elinor to ask the Middletons or Palmers if they can help get Edward a position. Elinor shows the letter to Mrs. Jennings, who promises to visit Lucy right away.

Chapter 38 Analysis

Once again gossip plays an important role in this chapter, and Elinor's disgusted reaction shows how she tries to separate herself from this type of behavior. The incident with Anne also serves to highlight the differences between the rude and uncouth Steele sisters and the more refined Dashwoods. Lucy's letter, however, is subtle and well thought out – she never directly asks for aid, but leaves it as an implied request. This letter, along with Anne's description of Lucy's unselfish and loving response to Edward's offer to cancel their engagement, shows that Lucy may be maturing.

Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

The Palmers decide to leave the city to go to their country home, Cleveland, and they invite Marianne and Elinor. Mrs. Jennings urges them to go, and then return with her to town after a visit. Marianne does not want to go, since Cleveland is near Willoughby's family home, but the girls plan to go home to Barton from their visit. Colonel Brandon visits to ask Elinor if she will inform Edward that he will give him a position as a rector in Delaford that pays 200 pounds a year. Elinor is shocked that she will now be delivering the news to Edward. Colonel Brandon thinks that the position does not pay enough for a married couple. Mrs. Jennings mistakes Elinor and Brandon's exchange for a discussion of their marriage.

Chapter 39 Analysis

This chapter shows that Marianne is still hurting from her experience with Willoughby and wants to avoid him as much as possible. Both sisters cannot wait to get back to their mother following the end of their love affairs. Mrs. Jennings shows her matchmaking skills again, which foreshadows some delightful misunderstandings later on in the book.

Colonel Brandon proves to be generous, mostly because of his regard for Elinor and Marianne. His asking Elinor to tell Edward about the position is an example of irony in the novel.

Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

Mrs. Jennings quickly congratulates Elinor for her relationship with Colonel Brandon. She asks Elinor a series of non-specific questions, and Elinor answers with statements about Brandon's generosity. Mrs. Jennings misunderstands, not knowing about Brandon's offer of a position for Edward, and thinks that Brandon has asked Elinor to immediately tell Edward about their engagement. She then thinks that Edward will be the minister at the wedding. Mrs. Jennings then leaves, and sends a surprised Edward up to talk to Elinor.

Elinor is shocked to see Edward, but quickly recovers to tell him about Brandon's offer. Edward is shocked but pleased, and thanks her for her part in making the offer possible. He asks how he can thank Brandon and sets off to his lodgings to do so. Mrs. Jennings re-enters and asks if Edward will be performing the ceremony. Elinor finally tells her that she and Brandon are not engaged, and tells her about his offer to Edward. They briefly discuss Brandon's thought that the parsonage is too small for a married couple, which Mrs. Jennings dismisses.

Chapter 40 Analysis

This chapter sees the plot involving Mrs. Jennings' misconceptions about Elinor's relationship with Colonel Brandon. Austen provides a masterfully comic scene when Mrs. Jennings is questioning Elinor. While Elinor is being discrete, Mrs. Jennings is hearing what she wants to hear, with little resemblance to what is actually happening.

Edward has the same misunderstanding as Mrs. Jennings. He believes that Brandon is only helping him because he is in love with Elinor. The scene between Edward and Elinor is also one of comic misunderstanding, but is also tragic because Elinor is giving him up and coming to terms with her own feelings about Edward's upcoming marriage.

Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary

Lucy tells Mrs. Jennings that Edward is very happy with Brandon's offer. Elinor decides to visit John and Fanny to let them know she and Marianne are heading for Cleveland. Marianne refuses to go with her, and John welcomes Elinor warmly. He expresses surprises at Brandon's generosity, but not because it goes against Fanny's wishes: he questions Brandon's sense, since he could have sold the parsonage to another applicant for much more money. He adds that Fanny has taken the news well, and Elinor reflects to herself that she would feel this way because Edward has found a source of money and will not need any from Fanny.

The two then discuss Mrs. Ferrars, with John noting that she will experience a change of heart when Edward gets married. Elinor expresses surprise, since she has cut all ties with Edward. John tells Elinor that Robert Ferrars will now be marrying Miss Morton. When Elinor says that Miss Morton may object, he replies that it makes no difference what she thinks since she will still be marrying Mrs. Ferrars' eldest son. Robert enters, and as John goes to fetch Fanny Robert and Elinor chat. Robert pities his brother for his choices, and laughs at Edward for wanting to be a clergyman. But most of all he regrets that his brother has "shut himself out for ever from all decent society!" Fanny then enters and wishes Elinor and her sister well, and expresses regret that she did not see them more while they were in town.

Chapter 41 Analysis

John again appears as a comic interlude and shows his total devotion to wealth by questioning Brandon's financial motives in giving Edward a position. Because he deems it an unsound financial decision he labels Brandon as strange, but ironically hopes that Brandon will soon marry Elinor! His argument that Miss Morton will not care which brother she marries also shows that he is totally insensitive to anyone's feelings. The only exception to this is his wife Fanny, to whom he is completely submissive and devoted. His assertion that Mrs. Ferrars will eventually reconcile with Edward is based solely on the idea that Edward will be independent, not requiring his mother to part with the family fortune.

Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Summary

Early in the chapter Elinor receives a number of visitors who urge her to visit Delaford (where Colonel Brandon lives) while staying at Cleveland. The girls prepare to leave London for the three-day journey to Cleveland, with mixed feelings about leaving London: Marianne is emotional because she is leaving the place where she lost Willoughby, while Elinor is eager to leave to escape Lucy Steele and to help her sister recover from her depression. Marianne is pleased to be at Cleveland because it is near Barton and allows her to explore the countryside. The next day it rains, however, forcing her to spend the day with Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Palmer.

When Mr. Palmer and Colonel Brandon arrive, Elinor considers Mr. Palmer carefully and decides he is a nice, ordinary man. Colonel Brandon tells her about Edward's plans for his new position, and Elinor thinks about what a fine man Colonel Brandon is. She reflects that if she did not know he liked Marianne, she might start to believe that Mrs. Jennings is right about his intentions towards her. Marianne gets a cold and Elinor eventually gets her to take some medicine to help get rid of it.

Chapter 42 Analysis

The sisters' differing reactions to leaving London show once again the contrast between "sense" and "sensibility." Marianne's reaction is highly emotional, and while Elinor's is somewhat influenced by pain at the loss of Edward she also considers several other aspects carefully in being happy to leave London. This contrast is just one more way that Austen reinforces the novel's main them of logic versus emotion – "sense and sensibility."

Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Summary

Marianne becomes very ill, as her cold deepens into a serious influenza. A doctor comes and confirms that she has an infection, and Mrs. Palmer quickly leaves the house and stays with friends so that her baby will not get sick. Mr. Palmer soon leaves to join her, and Colonel Brandon considers doing likewise until the doctor comes back and says that Marianne is getting better. Instead, Marianne starts getting sicker again, and Brandon leaves with his coach to go to Barton and bring Mrs. Dashwood. Elinor and Mrs. Jennings are very worried, until Marianne makes a sudden and miraculous recovery. After this Elinor is surprised when Willoughby appears in the drawing room.

Chapter 43 Analysis

The way each character reacts to Marianne's illness shows once again the value Austen places on calm and rational thinking. While Elinor and Brandon react calmly and do logical things such as sending for Mrs. Dashwood. Mrs. Palmer panics and rushes away from the house, while her husband stays out of a sense of duty to his guests. Mrs. Jennings experiences a wide range of emotions, from despair and "forebodings" expressed to Colonel Brandon to extreme joy when Marianne recovers. Willoughby's appearance is, of course, as shocking to the reader as it is to Elinor.

Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Summary

Elinor reacts with horror and tries to leave the room. Willoughby begs her to stay, and confesses that he has rushed to Cleveland from London. He states that he has come to apologize, and Elinor says that Marianne has already forgiven him. He then tells her that he had had every intention of Marianne, but that he needed to marry for money because Mrs. Smith (from whom he was to inherit a small fortune) had found out about his affair with Miss Williams and disowned him. He adds that Miss Grey had read Marianne's heartfelt letter and forced him to write the cold and heartless letter that made her depressed, and that he had truly loved Marianne all along. He then says that he regrets his marriage, and hopes that the Dashwoods can think better of him in the future. Elinor reflects to herself that there was no way she could ever really forgive him.

Chapter 44 Analysis

Willoughby's tale is compelling, but at each part the reader is reminded that he has behaved horribly to two innocent girls. Mrs. Smith's insistence that he marry Miss Williams reflects the societal values of the time, and nothing he says excuses him from his conduct during that affair. Worse still is his criticism of his own wife, which Elinor finds particularly offensive. When he leaves the reader feels some satisfaction that he will be suffering in his new situation.

Chapter 45

Chapter 45 Summary

After Willoughby leaves Elinor reflects that while Willoughby is horrible she can now feel some sympathy with him because of his intentions and the situation he is forced into, but that this sympathy is only possible now that she knows he will no longer have any association with their family. She does, however, consider that the sympathy he has aroused is based mostly on emotion and that she should be careful of her reaction.

Mrs. Dashwood arrives and is very worried until Elinor lets her know Marianne is recovered. Mrs. Dashwood is relieved and thanks Colonel Brandon before going to see Marianne. After a few days, Mrs. Dashwood tells Elinor that Brandon has told her of his desire and intention to marry Marianne. Her mother is pleased and plans a move to Delaford, not thinking that it would cause Elinor pain to be near Edward in his new situation.

Chapter 45 Analysis

This chapter shows that Mrs. Dashwood is ruled by her emotions, as she goes from being frantic with worry to being overjoyed at Marianne's recovery. She also embraces the idea of Marianne marrying Brandon warmly based on what she knows about Brandon, with his fortune as the last factor she thinks about when considering a match. This kind of emotional thinking, while it is not as preferable to Austen as clear thinking, sets Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne apart from other characters in the novel.

Chapter 46

Chapter 46 Summary

Marianne continues her recovery until she is well enough to see Brandon. She thanks him profusely for all his help, and Brandon is very pleased with the attention she bestows on him. He arranges a carriage for the Dashwoods to return to Barton Cottage while he prepares to go to his own home in Delaford. Marianne is glad to be home, and comes up with a plan to exercise, read, and avoid anything she might connect with Willoughby.

Elinor and Marianne go for a walk to the spot where Willoughby rescued her after her fall. Marianne notes that she is over him, but wishes that she could think more kindly of him. To set her mind at ease, Elinor tells her about his confession at Cleveland. Marianne is moved by the story and asks Elinor to tell their mother as well.

Chapter 46 Analysis

Recovered from her illness, Marianne appears to be a new woman and is almost entirely over her affair with Willoughby. Her mature approach to her recovery and her politeness to Brandon are both signs that she has "grown up" to become a more complete person. She expresses a desire to learn about the world and to get over the regret she feels over her past actions. Her newfound resolve allows Elinor to fulfill her promise to Willoughby by telling her of his confession, which she hopes will finally allow her sister to get over him.

Chapter 47

Chapter 47 Summary

Elinor immediately tells her mother about Willoughby's confession. Mrs. Dashwood feels sorry for Willoughby, but cannot forgive him entirely for his treatment of Miss Williams. Elinor notes that she would feel more sympathetic if she had heard the words from Willoughby. That evening Marianne tells her mother and sister that she is glad she knows about Willoughby, and that she could never have been happy married to him. Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood agree, and Elinor points out that he is a selfish person. She points out that he now feels regret because his actions have not made him happy, not because he wishes joy for Marianne.

Following their discussion the Dashwoods are fairly happy, although Marianne is not recovering as well as she had been. One day their servant returns from an errand and tells Elinor that Mr. Ferrars has married Lucy. He says he saw Mr. Ferrars in town and was urged to pass on his and Lucy's best wishes. Elinor is clearly upset, and her mother worries that she should have done more to help her get over Edward instead of accepting Elinor's assurances that she was fine.

Chapter 47 Analysis

Although Marianne is still somewhat emotional about Willoughby, she responds to reason by accepting her sister's explanation of what her marriage to him would have been like. This acceptance represents the victory of sense over sensibility in Marianne's case. The opposite is true of Elinor, who finds herself shocked at Edward's marriage, even though she had known it was going to happen. This is an important revelation at this point in the novel, especially since Austen has been showing her as a cool, logical person for the majority of the book. Her reaction shows that she is human too and is susceptible to emotional responses.

Chapter 48

Chapter 48 Summary

This chapter starts with Elinor reflecting on the fact that some part of her had hoped Edward would give Lucy up and marry her, and now that he was married she felt pain. She imagines that it was Lucy's impatience that prompted the quick marriage, and she also envisions their life together at Delaford. Elinor is surprised that none of their friends have told her about the marriage in their letters.

Elinor is shocked when Edward comes to the cottage, and the Dashwoods struggle to converse politely with him. Finally Elinor asks where Lucy is, and Edward informs them that his brother Robert is the one who married Lucy. Elinor leaves the room and begins to cry in joy, while Edward becomes silent and finally leaves the cottage.

Chapter 48 Analysis

Elinor's exploration of her sudden emotional response shows that her "sense" is starting to return, although she does torture herself by imagining Edward and Lucy together. When Edward arrives, Austen draws out the suspense as much as possible and highlights the fact that the entire family is upset by his coming to visit after causing Elinor so much pain. Edward on the other hand plainly believes they have heard of his brother's betrayal, and is upset when Elinor leaves the room in distress.

Chapter 49

Chapter 49 Summary

In this chapter Edward proposes to Elinor and gets her mother's consent for a marriage. He reveals that he was trapped in his engagement to Lucy, "a woman whom he had long since ceased to love." He relates the story of his relationship with Lucy and tells them all how he regretted becoming attached to her, and how she released her from his obligation by eloping with Robert while Edward was at Oxford. He adds that the two had become close when Lucy was busy seeking Robert's favor on her match with Edward, and that Lucy has told him she is now happy.

Elinor notes that Mrs. Ferrars gave Robert an income in response to Edward and Lucy's engagement and that this gave him the power to choose Lucy and made him more attractive to her. They analyze Lucy's motives in the affair, and decide that she proclaimed her undying love of Edward only with the idea that he might eventually recover his fortune.

Colonel Brandon arrives to see Marianne and is glad that Edward and Elinor will be together. Mrs. Dashwood receives letters from John Dashwood and Mrs. Jennings. Mrs. Jennings writes that she is horrified by Lucy's conduct and suggests that Marianne should "comfort" Edward. John Dashwood suggests that Edward could write a letter to his mother and be quickly forgiven. Edward at first objects to having to apologize to his mother, but Elinor urges him to visit his sister and mother to apologize in person. Edward agrees, and plans to visit Delaford with Colonel Brandon before returning to London.

Chapter 49 Analysis

Edward returns to Elinor and is quickly accepted, but the reader is left wondering why Elinor forgives him quite so easily. If there is one area of the novel that fails it is here; the critical thinking and strong Elinor accepts everything Edward says and agrees to marry him. She does this without stopping for her usual reflection, and this makes the reader wonder whether Austen has been true to her own character in this instance.

Austen does bring the reader full circle in their opinion of Lucy, however. Lucy is introduced as a shallow and rude character early in the book, but the reader starts to feel some sympathy for her when Mrs. Ferrars and Fanny turn on her. Her duplicity in transferring her love from one brother to another, as well as her cruelty in sending a message to Elinor through a servant in Chapter 47, confirms to the reader that she is in fact a bad person.

The letters that Mrs. Dashwood receives add an element of humor to the chapter, and set up the eventual happy ending. Mrs. Jennings' letter shows her emotional reaction, but also show her matchmaking kicking back into high gear, as she once again

misjudges which sister will be right for which suitor. John's letter gives Edward the chance to get his fortune back, but urges him to be as submissive as possible to him mother – being submissive to a rich woman, after all, is very true to John's character!

Chapter 50

Chapter 50 Summary

The beginning of the chapter describes how Mrs. Ferrars forgives Edward and eventually accepts his engagement with Elinor. She gives him 10,000 pounds, and Edward and Elinor get married in the fall. They are happy in Delaford and move into the parsonage when it has been fixed up to their satisfaction. Many people come to visit, including John and Fanny. John provides another amusing incident when he notes that it would be wonderful if Marianne married Colonel Brandon, especially since he has a nice home and is rich.

Mrs. Ferrars comes to visit them and is satisfied with them, but Robert remains her favorite after Lucy wins her heart with flattery. Mrs. Ferrars gives them money and a place to live, and Lucy becomes one of her favorite companions. Marianne finally agrees to marry Colonel Brandon, and soon comes to love him as much as she had loved Willoughby. Willoughby is upset by her marriage, and wishes he had married her after Mrs. Smith forgives him and he becomes independently wealthy. Elinor and Marianne live happily in their new homes in Delaford, while their mother and Margaret remain in Barton.

Chapter 50 Analysis

Austen wraps up the book with happy endings for her two heroines, as well as for the long-suffering Colonel Brandon. Edward ends up back in his family's good graces, although his mother still resents him somewhat. In what is yet another example of irony, Austen describes how Edward is still resented for his secret engagement with Lucy, while Lucy herself becomes one of Mrs. Ferrar's favorites. Both Elinor and Edward accept her reaction, however, and are just happy to be together.

Their happiness is admired by almost every other character in the novel, and the reader is left thinking that the other characters are envious because they cannot understand how true love can win out over societal expectations such as marrying for money or position. In the final victory of sense over sensibility Marianne chooses to marry Colonel Brandon because he is a good man and not because he has swept her off her feet. She quickly finds that she is as happy as she could ever have imagined, thus completing Austen's exploration of the major theme in the novel.

Characters

Colonel Brandon

Colonel Brandon is the affluent suitor and eventual husband of Marianne Dashwood. Although reserved and not passionate, he has a very good heart and helps out those in distress. His charitable behavior toward Eliza Williams and Edward Ferrars makes him the unnoticed knight in shining armor. Upon first meeting, and throughout most of the book, Marianne considers Brandon much too old (thirty-five) and sensible. He has clearly already had his heart broken, and the romantic Marianne believes that everyone is fated to only love once; she prefers the young, handsome, and spontaneous Willoughby, who eventually jilts her. Proving that patience is a virtue, Brandon remains on the perimeter until Marianne gets over being jilted. Brandon's character and temperament conform to Austen's and Elinor's idea of sense rather than sensibility.

Miss Elinor Dashwood

Elinor Dashwood is the eldest daughter of Mrs. Dashwood. At nineteen years of age, she is quite mature. She personifies the sense in the title of the work; she is practical and concerned with diplomacy. She values coolness of judgment more highly than rash surrender to emotional whims. In spite of the fact that she has strong feelings and artistic talent (she draws), a sense of prudence governs her actions. She puts the concerns and well-being of others above her own. She sees Edward Ferrars, a man who comports himself much like she does, as a future spouse. When this match briefly fails, she copes privately, never letting on to others how much she is wounded. She is the glue that holds the family together during times of stress; she often counsels her mother and sisters to behave with restraint. Throughout the book, Austen holds up Elinor as a paragon of virtue.

Mrs. Fanny Dashwood

Fanny Dashwood is the wife of John Dashwood. She is manipulative and greedy and convinces her husband that he need not concern himself with the financial comfort of his half sisters. Her arguments in chapter 2 show that she is both shrewd and selfish. Her thoughts, much like her husband's, revolve around the family wealth and social standing. Mrs. Henry Dashwood and her daughters dislike Fanny. When Fanny installs herself as mistress at Norland, Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters accept an offer to leave for Barton. Austen never gives a flattering description of Fanny, displaying a marked scorn in all depictions of her.

Mr. Henry Dashwood

Henry Dashwood is the father of Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret. His untimely death, when coupled with the provisions in his uncle's will, leaves his wife and daughters in a financial predicament. Henry Dashwood's wish that his son John provide for his half sisters is not fulfilled to the extent of his intentions.

Mrs. Henry Dashwood

Mrs. Henry Dashwood is the mother of Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret. After the death of her husband, she leaves the estate in Norland because she cannot stand Mrs. John Dashwood, her stepson's wife, who has abruptly replaced her as the lady of the estate. She accepts an invitation from a relative, Sir John Middleton, to live with her daughters in a cottage in Barton. Her temperament is closer to the sensibility, or passionate nature, of Marianne than the sense, or sensible nature, of Elinor. Elinor must often keep her mother from acting imprudently.

Mr. John Dashwood

Mr. John Dashwood is the half brother of Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret. He is coldhearted and selfish. His wife easily manipulates him and brings him around to her way of thinking. He falls prey to his wife's cunning, in chapter 2, when she convinces him that his father never intended for him to help his half sisters financially. Constantly obsessed with money and social standing, he neglects to take care of his sisters as his father had wished. He wants to see his sisters marry well so that he is not bothered by a bad conscience. Austen never describes him in flattering terms.

Margaret Dashwood

Margaret is the younger sister of Elinor and Marianne. As she is not yet old enough to court suitors, she is used mainly as a character through which other characters in the novel discern information about Elinor and Marianne.

Miss Marianne Dashwood

Marianne is the middle Dashwood sister. She is considered the "catch" of the Dashwood family by those who gather at Sir Middleton's parties. Maranne personifies the sensibility in the title of the book. Marianne is a girl whose "sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation." She is all passion and romantic notions; this is typified in her playing the piano. While living out her passions, she is totally self-absorbed and unconcerned with the poor impression that she often makes on others. It is often up to her sister, Elinor, to smooth over her behavior. Marianne believes that it is only in the nature of the human spirit to love once. Her obsession with Willoughby, a man who jilts

her, as her one true love, leads to a long period of despondency in which she must gradually reassess her values and philosophy. She ends up marrying Colonel Brandon, a man of whom she once spoke derisively. Nevertheless, she is content because she comes to respect the wisdom of sense over sensibility. The transformation of Marianne's values and behavior is a crucial theme in the book.

Dr. Davies

Dr. Davies often drives the Miss Steeles around in his coach.

Edward Ferrars

Edward Ferrars is the love interest of Elinor Dashwood. He is the eldest son of a man who died very rich. However, he must marry a woman of his mother's approval to come into his fortune. Austen writes, "He was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing." Edward is not pretentious and prefers a simpler life than the one his mother has planned for him. His practical nature and moderate character are similar to Elinor's. The two end up together as the book comes to a close.

Mrs. Ferrars

Mrs. Ferrars is a meddlesome, vindictive woman who attempts to control her sons by holding their inheritance as ransom. She wants to see Edward marry the rich and socially connected Miss Morton. When Edward makes public his plan to marry Lucy Steele, a woman of low social and financial standing, Mrs. Ferrars disowns her eldest son.

Robert Ferrars is Edward's younger brother. A coxcomb, he becomes the beneficiary of his mother's anger at Edward. When his mother disinherits Edward, she makes Robert the main beneficiary, although Robert ends up marrying the very woman, Lucy Steele, who caused the strife.

Miss Sophia Grey

Miss Grey is the woman whom Willoughby eventually marries. She forces Willoughby to write the letter that causes Marianne's despondency.

Dr. Harris

Dr. Harris is the doctor who tends to Marianne when she falls deathly ill.

Mrs. Jennings

Mrs. Jennings is the mother of Lady Middleton and Mrs. Charlotte Palmer. She is merry, fat, and rather vulgar. Obsessed with gossip and matchmaking, she is intent on marrying off the Dashwood sisters. She makes jokes often and has a good heart.

Sir John Middleton

Sir John Middleton is a relative of Mrs. Dashwood who offers her and her daughters a small cottage at Barton in Devonshire. He often gives large dinner parties to which the Dashwood daughters are always invited. John is forty years old, good-humored, and solicitous. He is, however, somewhat of a bore; his conversation is often restricted to hunting.

Lady Middleton

Lady Middleton is the wife of John Middleton. In her mid-twenties, she is handsome and elegant. However, she is somewhat cold and reserved. Obsessed with her children, she talks of virtually nothing else. The Dashwood sisters find her and her husband good-natured but boring.

Mrs. Charlotte Palmer

Charlotte Palmer is Mrs. Jennings's other daughter. She is in her early twenties, pregnant, and not quite as elegant as her sister. She is good-natured, optimistic, and happy. The Dashwood sisters consider her rather silly and boring.

Mr. Thomas Palmer

Thomas Palmer is the husband of Charlotte. He is about twenty-six, grave, and with an air of self-importance. He does not say much, is rather taciturn and brooding, and is considered rather boring by the Dashwood sisters.

Mrs. Smith

Mrs. Smith is an elderly relative of Willoughby's who controls his future wealth.

Miss Anne Steele

Miss Anne Steele is the older sister of Lucy. She is not as good-looking as her sister. Nearly thirty, she is destined to be an old maid.

Miss Lucy Steele

Lucy Steele is the girl to whom Edward Ferrars proposes during his education at Mr. Pratt's (who is her uncle). When Edward is disinherited, Lucy feels no remorse in switching her interest to Edward's brother, Robert. Lucy is not well educated. Austen includes many grammatical errors and inconsistencies in Lucy's conversations.

Miss Eliza Williams

Eliza Williams is the illegitimate daughter of the first love of Colonel Brandon. Although not her father, Brandon provides for Eliza, even after she is seduced and abandoned by Willoughby.

Mr. John Willoughby

John Willoughby is the dashing and handsome romantic interest of Marianne Dashwood. He conforms exactly to her idea of love and, at twenty-five, is much younger than Colonel Brandon. He appears out of nowhere to rescue her from distress and then proceeds to sweep her off her feet. He has impassioned views on art that conform with Marianne's exactly. However, he is also a callous womanizer who left one woman in a dire predicament and who immediately begins to see other women after separating from Marianne. He must also rely on a good marriage to procure his fortune. Willoughby jilts Marianne in a most cruel manner with a callous letter, leaving her to wallow in the misery of rejection for much of the book. He remains rather a villain until he confesses to Elinor that he resents having married for money and was forced to write the letter at his future wife's dictation.

Themes

Sense

The sense of the novel 's title refers to the rational,sensible nature of Elinor,which Austen holds up as exemplary. Elinor suffers through various trials and tribulations, particularly after being jilted by Edward. However, she never abandons herself to her emotions and never lets her own disappointments affect her behavior toward others. In fact, she strives to keep her heartbreak to herself for the sake of social propriety and for the sake of her own family's ease. She always remains sensitive to others' feelings, even if she does not particularly like them, and strives to behave with social graciousness. She keeps the secret of Lucy's engagement to Edward to herself. En route to London, while Marianne indulges her obsession with Willoughby and ignores her hostess, Elinor holds polite conversations with Mrs. Jennings. Austen, in making Elinor the heroine of the book, shows that the sensitive approach to social interactions is superior to a selfish abandon to emotions.

Sensibility, or Passion, and Romanticism

The sensibility in the novel's title can be read as passion and refers to Marianne's emotional, romantic nature. *Sense and Sensibility* is largely seen as a criticism of romanticism, of which freedom of passion and emotion is an important tenet. The romantic sensibility of Marianne is portrayed by Austen as selfish and is gradually unmasked as weak and unrealistic when compared to Elinor's diplomatic and sensible beliefs. Austen's view is that a person who lives for passion is bound to be disappointed by the harsh realities of life. Marianne falls victim to her romantic notions after Willoughby jilts her. Her hysterical, inconsolable behavior is largely a result of her romantic nature. Marianne becomes physically and emotionally weak while her sister, who has suffered a similar fate but has a more sensible philosophy, can still function on a day-to-day basis. When Marianne recovers from a near-deadly illness brought on by her hysteria, she resolves to control her emotions, abandoning her more naïve romantic philosophies and adopting an outlook more akin to Elinor's—illustrating Austen's prevailing view of the inferiority of romanticism to rationality and emotional control. Marianne's eventual marriage to Colonel Brandon is practical, based on sense, not passion.

Marriage and Courtship

Sense and Sensibility describes the courtship of Elinor and Marianne Dashwood by their suitors. The importance that many families place on the wealth of a potential partner is a significant theme that runs throughout the book, playing a major part in the characters' conversations and preoccupations. Willoughby cannot consider Marianne as a spouse because she is not wealthy enough. Mrs. Ferrars pressures her sons,

unsuccessfully, to marry wealthy women. The sisters' different attitudes toward love are contrasted in how they fall in love and deal with rejection. Romantic, passionate love, exemplified by Marianne's philosophies, is contrasted with the more sensible reasons for choosing a spouse, which are illustrated by Elinor's more rational approach.

Role of Women

Austen 's portrait of the Dashwood sisters is an excellent example of the plight of upper-class English women without an abundance of family wealth in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These women had to marry well to remain comfortable financially. Working was not a viable option; a woman's fate was largely contingent on her husband and his standing in society, or else she remained completely dependent upon the generosity of her male relatives. Lucy Steele, the most uncouthly ambitious of all the female characters, blatantly jilts her longtime fiancé, Edward Ferrars, when he loses his inheritance, and she marries his newly rich brother. Though both Elinor and Maranne are interested in their respective men not for their fortunes but for their compatibility, they are well aware that a "suitable match" not only means finding a man of compatible nature but also of enough means to support a marriage and family.

Ideal Love

The romantic notion of one ideal, passionate love is critiqued and parodied through the behavior and views of Marianne. She criticizes Brandon for having already loved. However, after she is jilted by Willoughby, she must come to realize that human beings adapt to disappointment and learn to feel strong emotional attachments again. Maranne's fate in marrying the very man she initially belittled is further evidence of Austen's skepticism concerning the notion of ideal love.

Social Classes and Hierarchies

Austen's novel gives an accurate portrait of the professional class (Austen's own) and the landed gentry (the social class one above her own) in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. The landed gentry characters have estates and are idle (they do not have careers and jobs in the modern sense). Many of the women in the professional class marry upwards into the landed gentry. This happens to Marianne. Wealth is passed down through inheritance and the concept of primogeniture, where the eldest son becomes the legal heir of his parents' estate. John Dashwood inherits the Dashwood estate and is left to dole out funds to his sisters as he chooses. Edward, Mrs. Ferrars's eldest son, is to be the primary heir until the scandalous announcement of his engagement to the socially inferior Lucy Steele. None of the characters in the professional or landed gentry class worry where their next meal is coming from. The "cottage" at Barton that Mrs. Henry Dashwood moves into with her daughters has quite a few rooms. Although the Dashwoods' financial situation is not bright, they are not members of the working class.

Style

Original Conception and the Didactic Genre

Sense and Sensibility was first drafted as an epistolary novel—that is, a novel in the form of letters between characters. It is likely that Austen was imitating the format of Samuel Richardson, an author whom she grew up admiring who presented heroine-centered domestic fictions. At some point in her writing, Austen dismissed the idea of an epistolary novel and instead drafted what would eventually become the didactic novel, a form that was popular in the 1790s. Critic Marilyn Butler explains: "The didactic novel which compares the beliefs and conduct of two protagonists—with the object of finding one invariably right and the other invariably wrong—seems to have been particularly fashionable during the years 1795-1796." Seen in this light, Austen's first published novel, right down to the duality in the title, is a perfect example of the didactic novel. In fact, it is so much so that critics are apt to dismiss it as formulaic in comparison with Austen's later, more mature works. Butler asserts that *Sense and Sensibility* is "unremittingly didactic," and she adds, "All the novelists who choose the contrast format do so in order to make an explicit ideological point."

Presentation of Dichotomous Ideologies

The duality that Austen presents is the contrast between Elinor's sense and Marianne's sensibility. This duality implies much more than the mere definitions of the two words; the sisters personify conflicting philosophies and ideologies. Critics have grappled with one another to define and redefine exactly what Elinor's sense and Marianne's sensibility signify. Various critics have attributed Elinor's sense to humble Christian values and a conservative nature. Austen's portrayal of Maranne, conversely, is often viewed as an indictment against various literary and political philosophies then in style. The two most obvious targets in the negative portrayal of Marianne are romanticism and the egocentric philosophy of the revolutionaries in France. Much like German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe did in *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Austen presents a character with a weak, romantic philosophy who becomes unhinged by strictly adhering to its precepts. Seen in this light, Marianne's oversensitive, passionate nature is a criticism of the egotistical nature of romanticism (while it may not have been deliberately so, romanticism as a movement was still ill-defined, it certainly encompasses the weaknesses of the developing movement), especially when contrasted with Elinor's classical nature. Elinor's behavior also alludes to the weaknesses in the individualistic philosophy of Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose work influenced the French Revolution.

Butler feels that Austen eventually grew bored with the didactic nature of the work. The novel advances according to a strict formula. The heroines are courted and jilted by men who they see as indicative of their corresponding philosophies. However, late in the novel, after the sisters have accompanied Mrs. Jennings to London, Austen's authorial talents loosen the constrictions of the didactic novel; she presents events more

ambiguously, and minor characters like Lucy Steele play increasingly important roles, particularly after Marianne, jilted and hysterical, is removed from the central action of the novel. The categorical assumption implicit in the didactic genre that one philosophy is right and the other is wrong is weakened by Austen's allowing Marianne to live. Butler writes that "it is remarkable how the harsh outlines of the ideological scheme are softened. Often the changes are small ones, such as turning the jilted heroine's near-obligatory decline and death into a feverish cold caught, plausibly, from staying out to mope in the rain." In short, Austen's talents are too abundant and her observations too precise to be restricted by the formula she chose. Critics feel that the work is more stunted and constrained than her later writings, which were not hindered by this genre choice.

Narrative Voice

In order to portray the contrasting ideologies, Austen employs the third-person narrative technique; the narrator is not part of the action in any way. However, the tone of the narrator is closely aligned with Elinor's beliefs and value system. Elinor is constantly described in flattering terms, while Marianne's behavior is presented in an unflattering light. So, although the narrative is presented in the third person, it is not exactly neutral. There is a scathing quality to this narrative voice that, although it preaches moderation and diplomacy in behavior, is quick to describe greedy, vacuous, insipid minor characters in blunt, terribly unflattering terms. One need only look at a description of Mrs. John Dashwood (Fanny), Mrs. Ferrars, Lady Middleton, or Robert Ferrars to realize that the narrator is often not acting with the same restraint that she preaches.

Language

John F. Burrows writes, "Jane Austen's letters make it clear that she and her family were keenly

interested in the niceties of usage and amused by solecisms [grammatical mistakes] of every kind." Austen delights in conveying the dialogue of Lucy Steele verbatim, with plenty of grammatical errors alluding to her poor social standing and lack of education. However, in spite of this exception, dialogue is not an important aspect of the work. This is because, as Butler writes, "the heroine is not so much in doubt about the nature of external truth, as concerned with the knowledge of herself, her passions, and her duty." *Sense and Sensibility* is an introspective novel that need not rely on dialogue to convey Elinor and the narrator's convictions.

Historical Context

Social Classes in the English Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

Jane Austen was a member of the professional class. The men in the professional class were expected to pursue a profession, either the army, navy, clergy, law, or medicine. The women were excluded from these professions and were expected to marry. Elinor and Marianne are representative examples of young ladies of the professional class. In *Sense and Sensibility*, they socialize with and marry into the landed gentry, the next higher social class. Social assimilation and upward mobility of this sort is a major theme in many of Austen's works.

Members of the landed gentry were largely idle. They lived off the wealth of their estates. For leisure, the men hunted and the women gathered in the parlor. They lived in country estates and were completely separated from any squalor of the big city, London, and remained unaffected by economic hardships caused by the war with France. In order to ensure that a family's wealth did not diminish by being split up excessively, the concept of primogeniture was obeyed: the eldest son inherited the majority of the estate and the younger sons were left to join the professional class, in which they actually needed to earn a living in a profession. Although Colonel Brandon is not the eldest son, his brother died early, leaving him in the position of the eldest. When she learns that her son, Edward, intends to marry a woman beneath him in social rank, Mrs. Ferrars disinherits her eldest son in favor of the younger fop, rake, and coxcomb, Robert.

Austen rarely mentions aristocratic characters in her work.Members of the lower social classes are only mentioned in passing. An important exception is Eliza Williams, the unfortunate woman who is seduced by Willoughby. Otherwise, the lower classes are represented by the servants, who do not play an important role in the work.

The French Revolution

The political and social unrest in France had a major effect on England. War was declared on France in 1793, resulting in economic hardship and sacrifices among the lower classes. Ivor Brown writes that "the poverty of the masses was aggravated by the long struggle with France and the scarcity of food inevitable in wartime." The landed gentry was largely immune, living the life of leisure on country estates. Officers were chosen from the professional class.

The war with France and other conflicts are not mentioned in *Sense and Sensibility*. Although the events in the novel take place in a very specific time, Late Georgian and early Regency England, the characters and plot are free of politics. However, although the French Revolution is not explicitly mentioned, critics like Marilyn Butler have pointed

out that Marianne's "Sensibility" is an implicit criticism of the individualistic, revolutionary philosophy taking root in the era. Butler, in "Sensibility and Jacobinism" (Jacobins being the most radical French revolutionaries) writes that

Austen's version of 'sensibility'—that is, individualism, or the worship of self, in various familiar guises—is as harshly dealt with here as anywhere in the anti-Jacobin tradition. Even without the melodramatic political subplot of many anti-Jacobin novels, Mrs. Ferrars's London is recognisably a sketch of the anarchy that follows the loss of all values but self-indulgence. In the opening chapters especially, where Marianne is the target of criticism, 'sensibility' means sentimental (or revolutionary) idealism, which Elinor counters with her sceptical or pessimistic view of man's nature.

Contemporaries of Austen

Austen lived through one of the most renowned periods of English poetry, which brought us the romantics, John Keats and Lord Byron. Percy Bysshe Shelley was also a contemporary, but his work was not recognized until after his death. The poetry of these writers came to symbolize the romantic movement. Although it was not yet a movement as such in Austen's lifetime, aspects of the philosophy, including Shelley's anarchism, are criticized through the portrayal of Marianne's "sensibility."

The Position of Women

Women of Jane Austen's social class were not allowed to work, a circumstance that allowed them little economic freedom. Nor were women allowed social independence; they could not travel alone or make unchaperoned visits to men who were not their relatives. Much of *Sense and Sensibility*, as well as Austen's other novels, is centered around the household and parlor life, and indeed she wrote on the subject of domestic life because, as a woman without the economic or social freedom to venture very far from the home, it is the realm that she knew best.

When Austen was writing in the early 19th century, it was uncommon for women to write; indeed, it was still largely frowned upon in society. Austen had a great deal of trouble getting *Sense and Sensibility* published (it was her first book to see print). Its first printing was paid for by her brother, and the author was listed as "A Lady." Although the novel enjoyed success and Austen went on to publish several more novels to warm reception, her identity remained unknown to the public. Claire Tomlin, in her biography, quotes Austen, illustrating her anxiety toward public notice: "To be pointed at . . . to be suspected of literary airs—to be shunned, as literary women are . . . I would sooner exhibit as a rope dancer." She would rather not receive public credit for her talent than develop a "reputation."

Religion

Austen, like the majority of her contemporaries, belonged to the Church of England, the Anglican Church. The theology is a compromise between Roman Catholicism and non-Calvinist Protestantism. Members of Austen's social class, the professional class, and the landed gentry were likely to benefit from the status of conferred positions and patronage connections. Edward Ferrars plans to "take orders" after being disinherited by his mother. Brandon, a member of the landed gentry, then offers him a rectory. Positions within the church hierarchy are often based on who one knows rather than what one's religious convictions are.

Critical Overview

Sense and Sensibility, Austen's first published work, was initially attributed to "A Lady." Considering her desire to remain anonymous and a tendency for criticism of the age to merely include a plot summary, there were few reviews of *Sense and Sensibility* in Austen's lifetime. Although he only mentioned *Sense and Sensibility* in passing, renowned Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott wrote of his admiration for *Emma*, a later work of Austen's, a year before Austen's death in 1816. As for so many important writers, acclaim was to come slowly and posthumously. Later recognition did not single out *Sense and Sensibility*; all of Austen's works began to gain a wider audience and appreciation in the years following her death, particularly following a collected volume of her works which appeared in 1833. After Scott, critics started taking measure. As noted by editor Graham Handley in his 1992 compilation of Austen reviews, the *Edinburgh Review* in January of 1843 compared her admirably to Shakespeare, noting that her characters are "all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings." Handley also quoted G. H. Lewes's words from 1847: "[Henry] Fielding and Miss Austen are the greatest novelists in our language." However, noted Handley, Charlotte Brontë was not so impressed; she preferred George Sand to the "only shrewd and observant" Austen.

It was not until her nephew, J. E. Austen-Leah, wrote *Memoir* (1870) that Austen's reputation began to really take off. As her reputation grew, so did the need for more biographies and biographical information. The letters between Austen and her sister Cassandra appeared in 1884. Various other personal studies appeared, trying to give a broader perspective than that of her nephew in the memoir. Finally, in 1938, Elizabeth Jenkins's landmark biography, *Jane Austen: A Biography* appeared.

By the twentieth century, Austen's reputation was so well established that she could not be ignored. Henry James, G. K. Chesterton and Virginia Woolf, among many others, sang praises of Austen. Graham Handley, in *Criticism in Focus: Jane Austen*, quotes Woolf from a passage that originally appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* of May 1913, in which Woolf lauded Austen as one of the top three English novelists.

While nineteenth-century criticism tended to focus on Austen's work as a whole, by the twentieth century, criticism on Austen had become highly specialized; critical works addressing *Sense and Sensibility* apart from the other novels became the norm. Much of the criticism dealt with the portrayal of Marianne and her romantic sensibility. W. A. Craik's study of Austen's novels, as put forth by Graham Handley, include the now widely accepted view concerning Marianne: "Marianne has been found more attractive than Elinor by most readers, which Jane Austen clearly did not intend." Other studies illustrated the historical ideologies implied in the conflicting personalities of Elinor and Marianne. Marilyn Butler compared Elinor's demeanor to that of humble Christians of the era. "The most interesting feature of the character of Elinor," Butler wrote, "and a real technical achievement in *Sense and Sensibility*, is that this crucial process of Christian self-examination is realised in literary terms." Conversely, Marianne has all the characteristics of the Jacobins, a radical party who played a part in the French

Revolution. Feminist studies also appeared; for example, Claudia Johnson's work that criticizes the patriarchy that the heroines must endure. By 1994, critical editions and study guides appeared that were dedicated largely to *Sense and Sensibility*. These studies examined the minutiae of courtship in Austen's era, the influence of the French Revolution on Austen's philosophy, and feminist interpretations that regarded Austen's conformity, concerning the portrayal of Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*, with skepticism.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Partikian is a Seattle-based freelance writer and English instructor. In this essay, Partikian addresses the question of whether Jane Austen is a political writer based on the fate of her heroines.

Austen, lauded as one of England's most important writers of the nineteenth century, is known for her astute social and psychological observations of the world in which she lived: middle-to-upper-class nineteenth-century England. Her first novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, centers closely on the domestic lives of a close circle of well-to-do friends and relatives. The narrative action and dialogue in the novel, however, is completely separated from political and historical events of the era; the action appears to occur in a hermetically sealed bubble. The countryside of Barton, where the Dashwood sisters live, and the London of Mrs. Jennings and other landed gentry seems to be far removed from the poverty of slums, class disenfranchisement, and any talk of political or social reform that characterized the political climate of the England in which they lived. Thus, Austen has not been widely viewed—both to her credit and to her criticism—as a political writer.

It is evident, however, after examining the political landscape in which Austen was writing, that the intent of the novel seems to be politically motivated, even though she does not explicitly mention politics. *Sense and Sensibility* has traditionally been viewed as a largely formulaic, didactic novel—a popular format in Austen's time, in which two philosophies are pitted against each other. In *Sense and Sensibility*, as the title suggests, Austen pits romantic notions (sensibility) against rationale (sense) by comparing the socially proper Elinor Dashwood with her romantically-inclined sister Marianne. Through this comparison, and the subsequent condemnation of Marianne's romantic philosophy, Austen takes on the biggest political controversies of her day, namely, the ideologies of revolutionary France and the growing cry for the equality of women.

Although it is not apparent from the polite conversation at the Middleton's social gatherings, the action in *Sense and Sensibility* takes place in an England that is increasingly unstable. The country is fighting a war with France where the individualistic philosophy of the revolutionary Jacobins rules the day. (The Jacobins were the revolutionaries who overthrew France's monarchy to replace it with a republic; they executed many of the aristocracy, including the king and queen, by the guillotine.) This revolutionary sentiment was perceived as a threat to the status quo and economic hierarchy within the upper classes in England. Additionally, social and economic changes in the form of agrarian reforms and industrial capitalism were also gradually transforming English society; they posed a specific threat to the landed gentry, whose comfortable lifestyles were becoming less and less secure. Critic Mary Poovey writes, "By the first decades of the nineteenth century, birth into a particular class no longer exclusively determined one's future social or economic status, the vertical relationships of patronage no longer guaranteed either privileges or obedience, and the traditional authority of the gentry, and of the values associated with their life-style, was a subject

under general debate." In light of such changes, the beliefs of moralists and the gentry, who their opinions represented, were coming under increasing scrutiny. Although Austen did not outwardly confront these issues, many other writers of her era did.

Another revolution that was seeing its beginnings in England was the fight for equality of women. In the early nineteenth century, the period in which *Sense and Sensibility* takes place, women had no rights: they could own no property, they could not enter into professions, and they had to depend entirely upon men for their economic welfare. Mary Wollstonecraft, a "radical" who fought for egalitarianism, wrote her seminal *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, only a few years before Austen began her early drafts of *Sense and Sensibility*. Wollstonecraft's work called for the equal education of women and condemned the "delicacy" that women were taught to conform to for the sake of becoming proper wives and mothers. This notion of "delicacy," though not specifically mentioned by Austen, equates loosely with Elinor's "sense," or her conviction of the importance of social propriety and demureness.

Thus, the unromantic, socially proper Elinor, whom Austen makes the heroine of her novel, directly contradicts the reformist and revolutionary sentiment that was taking root in England.

The first critic to broach the subject of politics in the work of Austen was Marilyn Butler.Butler 's seminal work *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, which first appeared in the mid-1970s, compares Austen's castigation of Marianne's sensibility with Austen's own disapproval of the rabid individualism of the Jacobins, the radical group that had gained control of France during her lifetime. While some critics, as critic Robert Clark notes, blanched at this new criticism that "discovered politics in a realm naturally free of such sordid matter," it is rather difficult to read *Sense and Sensibility* without realizing that, whether intentional or not, Austen left a text rife with political sentiment. To enjoy Austen or to dismiss her because she only represents a narrow class of society in her works is to miss out on the novel's many subtle political allusions and social criticisms. The bickering between critics should not concern whether Austen's book is political, but rather just what political and social philosophy Austen may be endorsing.

Austen's championing sense over sensibility can certainly be read as her disapproval of writers espousing the Jacobin sentiment and even feminist reformers such as Wollstonecraft. While this approach is certainly valid, the fact that Elinor's sense prevails in the end should not necessarily be taken as a tacit endorsement of the society in which Austen lived. While Austen may have disagreed with those outwardly clamoring for a change in the status quo, she subtly acknowledges that the status quo does indeed have flaws. Just as it is an oversimplification to claim that Elinor's personality is bereft of sensibility—after all, the stoical Elinor is greatly affected by the false news that Edward has wed Lucy Steele—it is likewise an oversimplification to claim that Austen wholeheartedly endorses Elinor's diplomatic, prudent philosophy of sense.

In a traditional, formulaic fairy tale like those of the Grimm Brothers, the hero lives "happily ever after" while the villains are duly punished. Snow White and Cinderella both marry their perfect princes while Snow White's wicked stepmother is tortured to death

and Cinderella's sisters have their eyes pecked out by crows. *Sense and Sensibility* begins like a fairy tale; it appears to be a formulaic work, as a fairy tale is formulaic. It starts out as a didactic novel, a format that was popular during Austen's era, in which two seemingly contradictory philosophies are pitted against one another.

However, it is clear that Austen, while writing *Sense and Sensibility*, felt constrained by the formula of the didactic novel; otherwise, she would have killed off Marianne with the fever, much like German writer Johann Wolfgang Goethe, in perhaps the most famous novel of the eighteenth century, killed off his Werther, a character who adheres to "sensibility" just as stubbornly as Marianne. This would have been the fitting demise to a character who stubbornly persisted with her romantic philosophy to the very end. But Austen deviates from this didactic approach and tempers her ending; it is more ambiguous in what it signifies or endorses. Maranne lives but must modify her beliefs.

The book's ultimate "happily ever after" is rather lukewarm: the less amenable and more acquisitive and greedy characters—the "villains"—like Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood, Lucy Steele, and Robert Ferrars, escape unscathed. There are no Prince Charmings in *Sense and Sensibility*, just husbands who represent mediocre compromise. Austen, in her description of Elinor's future spouse writes, "Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person or address. He was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing." Marianne ends up marrying Major Brandon, an arthritic man eighteen years her senior who she once mocked and who, throughout the novel, does not have the forthrightness to address her directly. Thus, the ending is ambiguous in that there are no clear winners or losers. The categorical extremes of right and wrong or good and evil are less clearly delineated in Austen's work than they are in the typical didactic novels of the era.

In the much-quoted summation, Austen writes:

Between Barton and Delaford, there was that constant communication which strong family affection would naturally dictate; and among the merits and the happiness of Elinor and Marianne, let it not be ranked as the least considerable, that though sisters, and living almost within sight of each other, they could live without disagreement between themselves, or producing coolness between their husbands.

Austen's ironic tone and use of negatives in describing the happy ending and the future spouses of the sisters betray a sense of dissatisfaction with the prevailing social system. Sense is perhaps the only viable option in a world that has become vaguely distasteful. This is not exactly a glowing endorsement of the fate of the heroines. Rather, it beckons the notion of Christian tolerance and endurance in the midst of a world that is anything but the Garden of Eden. While Marianne's sensibility is refuted, her stubborn beliefs do not earn her death; Austen allows her to live. Marianne's marriage to Brandon is but a mediocre compromise in a world bereft of Prince Charmings. Meanwhile, Elinor, because she aspires to more humble goals, attains exactly what she had desired. The lukewarm fate of the heroines can, on one level, be read as an endorsement of the tenets of the Anglican Church to which Austen belonged: Elinor's philosophy is akin with traditional Christian values of prudence, modesty, and

silent endurance. However, it is difficult to read the novel today and not feel a sense of the author's discontentment with the society in which she lived.

Perhaps the Christian doctrine of modesty is just a strategy to help Austen cope with a repressive social system and a male-dominated, patriarchal hierarchy that other writers, like Wollstonecraft, shouted against. Austen's artistry and subtle prose, with all its ironic implications, make it possible for her to whisper rather than shout. And, almost two hundred years later, critics still listen carefully and debate whether or not Austen subtly weaves a radical tone in her texts.

Source: David Partikian, Critical Essay on *Sense and Sensibility*, in *Novels for Students*, Gale, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Heath discusses the ideas of "sense" and "sensibility" in the context of Austen's world and her prose.

Jane Austen's first novel to be published, *Sense and Sensibility* was developed from a sketch in letters ("Elinor and Marianne") begun some 15 years earlier. Its title seems to locate it firmly in a neoclassical, dualistic moral world where the values of reason and restraint, embodied in Elinor's good sense, will finally triumph over the impulsive, romantic sensibility of her sister Marianne. Yet even by its second chapter, any readerly security in such terms as "justice" and "good sense" is immediately put at risk as John Dashwood and his wife Fanny use rational calculation and prudent self-interest to hide their greed from themselves as they "sensibly" persuade one another that the intent behind the father's deathbed legacy of £3000 to his daughters, John's stepsisters, can be satisfied by an occasional gift of fish and game. Just as the novel's first scene shows how Sense can become a screen for coldness and cruelty, so too the novel as a whole dramatizes the gaps that occur between language and behavior, feeling and action: gaps that the unscrupulous exploit, the naive are trapped by, and the wise must use every resource of imagination to repair, or at least understand.

In this deceptively expressible world the two elder Dashwood sisters (Margaret, the youngest, is largely forgotten by the reader, and the author) try to work out their destinies, discover and narrate their own stories, by very different models. Like all of Austen's young women, both implicitly acknowledge that financial security and social stability, let alone enhancement, depend on marriage. Yet Marianne assumes that that relation should found itself on the unmediated openness of one freely expressive heart to another; her sister, that marriage is first a social contract, mediated by a language that, in turn, preserves a rational and decorous civilisation as a stay against humankind's baser instincts. Both sisters choose, and apparently are chosen by, men of appropriate character: Elinor's Edward Ferrars (brother of her stepbrother's wife) is a man all of whose works "centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life" and who is "too diffident to do justice to himself"; Marianne's Willoughby, conversely, with his "lively spirits," "open affectionate manner," and "natural ardour" is "exactly formed to engage Marianne's heart."

Each sister, however, is deceived: following Willoughby to London after his sudden and unexplained removal from Devonshire, Marianne is cruelly cut by him, in the novel's most powerfully dramatic scene (" 'Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this?' ") at a party they attend with their cousin Lady Middleton; Elinor, ministering to her distraught sister (who has been rejected in favor of an heiress), supresses her own recent and painful discovery that Edward has been secretly engaged for four years to Lucy Steele, a vulgar, scheming climber. Both sisters also soon learn that Willoughby had previously seduced and abandoned, pregnant, the 16-year-old ward of their taciturn friend Colonel Brandon. Much confusion is brought about by (among other events) Edward's being disinherited for his unsuitable engagement to Lucy, his initial refusal to break off the engagement (out of a strict sense of honor) even after Lucy wants her

freedom when she realizes he will be an impoverished clergyman, and comic confusions involving Edward's foppish brother Robert, who takes his brother's place in Lucy's affections and ambitions. Marianne, never fully recovered from the illness brought about by unrequited love, collapses again with fever en route home to Devon. Willoughby, rushing to what he assumes will be her deathbed, makes a confession and apology to Elinor, who is passionately moved by his distress, and by her sympathy for his economic impotence. After recovering, Marianne comes to see virtue in Brandon, who offers a living to Edward, and the sisters marry prudently at last: Elinor and Edward, in the Parsonage at Delaford, "had in fact nothing to wish for, but the marriage of Colonel Brandon and Marianne, and rather better pasturage for their cows," while Marianne, "born to an extraordinary fate . . . to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims . . . found herself at nineteen, submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village."

Though the novel's final paragraphs seem to celebrate happiness and power ("patroness of a village") gained through submission and accommodation to society and the taming of impulsive vitality, the narrator's sly ironies ("better pasturage," "extraordinary fate") point toward a level of awareness no character in the novel is allowed, and the author herself partly suppresses. Together, Elinor and Marianne represent the sort of disciplined imagination later found in such complex characters as Elizabeth Bennet (*Pride and Prejudice*) or Anne Elliot (*Persuasion*), but much of *Sense and Sensibility*'s depth exists in implication: in the erotic energy of Willoughby and its devastating effect on Marianne (nearly fatal) and Elinor (who decides not to tell her sister the full truth of Willoughby's confession); and in the complex representation of power relations, whereby men ruthlessly dominate and manipulate women, women have only their sexual marketability as defense, and both sexes are imprisoned in a structure that denies most people (except perhaps for clergymen and gentleman farmers) useful work as a source either of wealth or personal worth.

Source: William W. Heath, "*Sense and Sensibility*: Novel by Jane Austen, 1811," in *Reference Guide to English Literature*, 2d ed., edited by D. L. Kirkpatrick, Vol. 3, St. James Press, 1991, pp. 1841-42.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Reinstein explores how Austen renders complex and various manifestations of sense and sensibility in her characters and their situations.

In *Sense and Sensibility* Jane Austen ostensibly opposes practicality and sensitivity, praising the former and censuring the latter. Further examination of the novel, however, reveals a subtler, more significant moral opposition between selfishness and unselfishness. Although the title of the novel suggests a simplistic approach to values, Austen's characters and moral discriminations are, in fact, complex, reflecting the complexity of life itself. The qualities of sense and sensibility are embodied by characters in the novel in many gradations and with different shades of definition. Neither consistent, unmitigated sense nor thorough-going sensibility is, finally, acceptable in the novel, for both tend to lead to selfish, even destructive behavior. Moderation, the mixture of prudence and decorum with warm emotions and aesthetic enthusiasm, seems to be the ideal presented in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Austen skillfully portrays the tensions between sense and sensitivity, selfishness and selflessness through the characters she creates, both in their actions and in their patterns of speech and thought. Norman Page, in his excellent study, *The Language of Jane Austen*, suggests that this novel "evinces an alert interest in language as an aspect of social behavior," and establishes his point by analyzing the syntax of the chief characters, especially Elinor and Marianne. I would like to extend his study by utilizing the techniques of stylistic analysis to explore the language patterns of various significant characters both major and minor, and to relate the results to a thematic analysis in the tradition of what might be called the "morality school" of Austen criticism.

The most important characters to consider are the heroines, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. In the course of the novel, each grows to be less one-sided and more like her sister. On this point I disagree with Robert Garis, who asserts that *Sense and Sensibility* fails because Elinor neither learns nor changes, and is "emphatically praised for not needing to." It seems to me that one of Austen's central points is that both sisters need to change, and the novel is a comedy because both are able to. When the novel opens, Elinor is prudent, judicious, and self-controlled to the point of stiffness, whereas Marianne abandons herself to quivering passions and irrational intuitive judgments. Elinor is conscious of her duties to family and society; Maranne rejects all outside claims and lives according to her own personal standards. Neither, to be sure, is a pure caricature of sense or sensibility, even initially. Austen clearly indicates that both possess good qualities of mind and feeling, but exercise them differently. When Austen first introduces the heroines, she tells us that Elinor has "strength of understanding and coolness of judgment," but also "an excellent heart;—her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them." Marianne, in turn, "was sensible [here meaning intelligent] and clever; but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation . . . she was everything but prudent."

At the beginning of the novel, the reader learns that each sister has constructed a self-image which she tries to realize completely and use as a standard in everyday affairs. Elinor determines to be judicious; Marianne, sensitive. The girls are innocent and inexperienced, and therefore believe that they will be able to control their lives and their reactions to the lives of those around them by merely choosing to do so. Marianne expresses their complacent sense of self control: "At my time of life opinions are tolerably fixed. It is not likely that I should see or hear anything to change them." Life, however, does get in the way. A self-image is very easy to preserve under circumstances that do not challenge it beyond its limits. Elinor and Marianne are taxed beyond their control and find themselves shaken by feelings and occurrences they cannot dominate. A similar set of events happens to them, and they are both educated and matured through their experiences. Both fall in love with a man who is not able or willing to get attached, but who, despite himself, reciprocates the affection. The young women suffer a trial of waiting while their lovers' worth is tested: the men have to uphold or break a previous decision. Both seem to have lost their loves and endure intense pain. Finally all is explained, and Elinor triumphs by consummating her romantic attachment, while Marianne grows wiser, learning that love can have many manifestations. It is an ironic touch that prudent Elinor marries Edward, her first and only love, despite family opposition, on the verge of poverty, and then only by a quirk of fate□Lucy Steel's sudden shift. Maranne, on the other hand, is forced to retract her youthful, ignorant assertions about romantic first love. She makes a rational, practical match for esteem and comfort, with a man whom she learns to love slowly, in a mild and quiet way, altogether unlike her earlier images of what satisfactory love must be. At the end of the book, both young women are more mature and less one sided; Marianne makes a conscious effort toward self-control and propriety, and Elinor is so overwhelmed by emotions that she shows her feelings openly and spontaneously.

The plot gives some idea of the way in which the girls change, but language reveals far more. Austen's use of syntax is "a medium for communicating, by imitation rather than summary or analysis, the outline of a passage of experience, and the structure of the sentence forces upon the reader . . . a miming of the heroine's experience." Consider Elinor. At the beginning of the book she speaks of her regard for Edward.

"Of his sense and his goodness," continued Elinor, "no one can, I think, be in doubt, who has seen him often enough to engage him in unreserved conversation. The excellence of his understanding and his principles can be concealed only by that shyness which too often keeps him silent. You know enough of him to do justice to his solid worth. But of his minuter propensities as you call them, you have from peculiar circumstances been kept more ignorant than myself."

Elinor's prose is balanced, and sentences frequently divide neatly into two equal parts joined by a coordinating conjunction. Her use of the formal sentence reflects her sense of the importance of self control, discipline, and duty. "Her syntax is thus an index of her temperament," according to Norman Page. Elinor's sentences are heavy with nouns and substantives (participles, gerunds, and infinitives used as nouns) such as "sense," "goodness," "conversation," "excellence," "to do justice" and so on, which give the sentences a weighted, static tone. Notice her concern for judging and evaluating, which

here she expresses in terms of "solid worth." She seems deliberately hesitant to use adjectives and adverbs, and she avoids colorful phrasing. Her verbs are most often "state of being" words or passive voice or impersonal constructions or verbs of intellectual activity such as seeing, knowing, thinking. Instead of describing Edward in bold terms, Elinor uses limiting, qualifying words and negatives which repress emotional intensity and put a distance between Elinor and her own opinions: "*no one* can, *I think*, be *in doubt*, who has seen him *often enough*," and so on. She seems to put her most private feelings and thoughts into the third person, as if that were the only way to justify them.

Contrast Marianne's "autumn leaves" speech, which also appears early in the book.

"Oh!" cried Marianne, "with what transporting sensations have I formerly seen them fall! How have I delighted as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind! What feelings have they, the season, the air altogether inspired! Now there is no one to regard them. They are seen only as a nuisance, swept hastily off, and driven as much as possible from the sight."

Her sentences are asymmetrical; instead of balancing clauses, Marianne piles up phrases of increasing intensity which come to a climax. Jane Austen uses a great variety of rhetorical devices to heighten Marianne's style. In the quoted passage, an interjection sets the tone of excitement. Maranne's speeches are typically graced with rhetorical questions, apostrophe, personification, and hyperbole. Elinor speaks in a static prose of nouns and colorless verbs; not so Marianne. Marianne's verbs are active, and her adjectives, participles, and adverbs evoke lively pictures: "walked," "driven," "have inspired," "hastily swept," and so on. By assigning such a style to Marianne, Austen brings to life, rather than merely tells about, a girl of strong feelings, susceptible to beauty in her environment and prone to exaggerated modes of expression. Elinor, in contrast, keeps in abeyance all those feelings not strictly permitted by the social code. She takes an amused, mildly critical view of Marianne's excesses. After the latter concludes her nostalgic outburst, Elinor dryly remarks, "It is not every one . . . who has your passion for dead leaves."

These are the heroines at the beginning of the novel, before life steps in to overturn their self images. When Elinor first learns she has lost Edward to Lucy Steele, she is still in relative control of herself, but her balance begins to break down, in speech as well as in behavior.

"Engaged to Mr. Edward Ferrars!—I confess myself so totally surprised at what you tell me, that really—I beg your pardon; but surely there must be some mistake of person or name. We cannot mean the same Mr. Ferrars."

And yet, for all the dashes, and disjointed and fragmentary sentences, Elinor exerts herself to maintain politeness to Lucy, and by so doing, keeps herself from falling apart. She spares herself humiliation, and Lucy, triumph. Later, alone, she weeps more for Edward's mistake than for her own disappointment. Because her sense of duty sustains

her—duty to Lucy's confidence and duty to spare her mother and sister unnecessary and premature suffering—she manages to conceal the painful information for months.

Marianne's reaction to the sudden collapse of her hopes is characteristically different. When Willoughby returns her letters and informs her that he is engaged to Miss Grey, Austen contrasts Elinor's long-suffering, unselfish control with Maranne's self-centered emotionalism.

"Exert yourself, dear Marianne," she cried, "if you would not kill yourself and all who love you. Think of your mother; think of her misery while *you* suffer; for her sake you must exert yourself."

"I cannot, I cannot," cried Marianne; "leave me, leave me, if I distress you; leave me, hate me, forget me! but do not torture me so. Oh! how easy for those who have no sorrow of their own to talk of exertion! Happy, happy Elinor, *you* cannot have an idea of what I suffer."

"Do you call *me* happy, Marianne? Ah! if you knew!—And can you believe me to be so, while I see you so wretched?"

Elinor urges Marianne to fulfill her responsibility to those who love her. Her own sense of duty sustains her, but Marianne's is insufficient to the task. Marianne bursts out with intense, illogical hyperboles and exclamations. Elinor, of course, has been rejected in the same way by her beloved—indeed, in a more irritating manner, by nasty Lucy Steele in person. Elinor here almost slips and reveals her own sorrow when Marianne accuses her of being happy, but quickly covers up her momentary lapse with a credible, if self-righteous excuse. Elinor's discipline is strong to a fault, for she denies herself the sympathy of those who love her and refuses them the chance to give, which is, after all, half of the act of loving. Both young women are suffering, both are deeply touched, but one selfishly wallows in misery while the other tries to carry on her life as usual.

Thus far, the self-images hold up rather well, with only minor deviations. When life becomes more complicated, however, the over-sensitive Marianne is chastened, while the self-negating Elinor loses control and pours out repressed feelings despite herself. Illness frightens Marianne and then allows her time to meditate. She recovers, a reformed young woman, and her speech pattern reflects her new attempt to control herself and observe decorum. For the first time she concerns herself with rational judgment, moral responsibility, and propriety. Of the Willoughby affair she says, "I *can* talk of it now, I hope, as I ought to do." Austen assigns to Marianne the stylistic quirks of Elinor, such as qualifying statements with apologetic phrases, to show us Marianne's newly reflective nature. Maranne, realizing the resemblance between her own and her sister's misfortunes, is doubly humbled when she compares their reactions to pain.

"Do not, my dearest Elinor, let your kindness defend what I know your judgment must censure. My illness has made me think—it has given me leisure and calmness for serious recollection. Long before I was enough recovered to talk, I was perfectly able to

reflect. I considered the past; I saw in my behaviour since the beginning of our acquaintance with him last autumn, nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself, and want of kindness to others."

Here her sentences are balanced and symmetrical, turning on carefully polished antitheses and parallels. Verbs are static or describe mental, rather than physical, action. The new pace of Marianne's sentences is slow and dignified, not impulsive and irregular as before. Marianne's maturation/ reformation is reflected by her use of Elinor-like sentences.

Elinor has an opposite development. She, through long tension and disappointment, begins to let emotional, bitter words escape, as her carefully guarded propriety cracks. Under stress she occasionally repeats, accumulates phrases for emphasis, and conveys the breathless, impulsive tone originally characteristic of Marianne. Speaking of Lucy's engagement to Edward, she says,

"It was told me,—it was in a manner forced on me by the very person herself, whose prior engagement ruined all my prospects; and told me, as I thought, with triumph. . . . I have had her hopes and exultations to listen to again and again."

Although here Jane Austen opens Elinor's heart and has the character show some of the turmoil it contains, Elinor is still able to express herself verbally. There is one further step in her education to womanhood: she must be so deeply moved that she is speechless and unable to depend on the polite formulas with which society usually provides her. This final chastening experience happens when Edward suddenly returns after Elinor has, presumably, lost him forever. In this scene, she is at first able to make small talk, to "rejoice in the dryness of the season," but then is forced to put her head down in "a state of such agitation as made her hardly know where she was." When the truth of Lucy's marriage to Robert Ferrars comes out, Elinor completely loses control of herself, can no longer sit in her place, but dashes out of the room and bursts "into tears of joy, which at first she thought would never cease." Elinor is overcome by sensibility.

Why do Elinor and Marianne both need to change in the novel? What is it that each has that the other must learn? Is it simply that Marianne must correct her irresponsible freedom and adopt Elinor's stifling prudence? Are warmth and sensitivity frowned upon? Are practical concerns set above personal ones? It seems to be more complicated than that. Neither sense nor sensibility by itself is attacked; neither, unqualified, is sufficient. The focus of Austen's criticism seems to be elsewhere.

The true opposition in the novel is between selfishness and selflessness. Marianne's relationship with Willoughby errs, not in its warmth, but in its self centeredness. In public they have words and glances only for each other. Their imprudent display of attachment, their lack of reserve in company and between themselves comes from belief in a personal morality which cuts them off from the rest of the world. Their relationship flourishes for their own pleasure, independent of the demands of society and family. Since they feel superior to everyone else in sensitivity and candor, they judge others without honest reflection and continually mock their friends. Their love is

exclusive and smugly self-centered; when the relationship collapses, Marianne is left with the bitter residue of those feelings. In her suffering, she believes herself to be unique and inconsolable; instead of trying to pull herself out of misery, she remains "equally ill-disposed to receive or communicate pleasure." The illness, which she cannot call up or dismiss by whim, cures her of her exclusive concern for her own pleasures and pains.

Elinor's relationship with Edward is something rather different. Although his family objects to a marriage between them, their friendship is acceptable to their society. Their behavior is decorous and inoffensive. In public they are active members of whatever group they find themselves in; to Elinor's immediate family, the friendship brings comfort and delight, because everyone is welcome to share in the affection of the couple. Their love, unlike Marianne and Willoughby's, turns outward.

Marianne is sensitive and absorbed in herself, while Elinor is practical and concerned primarily with her duty to others. Neither is a caricature of either extreme, and as the book develops, they grow toward a golden mean. To Jane Austen, neither sense nor sensibility is all-good or all-bad. Her judgment upon all the characters, including the heroines, depends on whether they use their sense or sensibility for selfish satisfaction or for the general comfort.

Austen seems to use Elinor as a voice for her own opinions, and is altogether less critical of her than of Marianne. Elinor, for example, is the ear into which Lucy, Colonel Brandon, Willoughby, and Marianne confess. Elinor advises and lectures the others how to behave properly under their difficult trials. For these reasons it seems as if Austen's principal approval lies on the side of sense rather than sensibility. This imbalance of emphasis is really caused by the fact that sensibility is inclined to individual satisfaction at the expense of general happiness, whereas sense tends toward the opposite.

As if to underscore this point, the novel includes several secondary characters who speak for greater extremes of sense or sensibility, with differing amounts of selfishness and unselfishness. The John and Fanny Dashwoods, for example, are prime instances of people abounding in hard, cold sense and very little else. Austen condemns them beautifully in the second chapter of the first volume, which contains the discussion of John's promise to his dying father. Fanny, exercising brilliant logic and playing on selfish rationalizations, pares down the aid John is to give his sisters from three thousand pounds to nothing. Their language is almost a parody of Elinor's balanced, reflective, polished sentences.

"Well, then, *let* something be done for them; but *that* something need not be three thousand pounds. Consider," she added, "that when the money is once parted with, it never can return."

The repetition of phrases, the symmetry, and the careful concern for cause and effect, is the style of sense. Or again, consider this passage:

"Indeed, to say the truth, I am convinced within myself that your father had no idea of your giving them any money at all. The assistance he thought of, I dare say, was only such as might be reasonably expected of you."

Notice the apologetic, qualifying phrases that give a weighted, judicious tone to the inexcusably greedy sentiments. Austen lets us know that these people are practical, but laughably self-centered.

Mrs. Dashwood, the girls' mother, is at the opposite extreme. She, because she is older, is fully confirmed in her imprudent, impractical ways. To be sure, she is often able to comfort her daughters in the abundance of her warmth, but she is also able to inflict pain from her want of caution. She "valued and cherished" Marianne's excesses of sensibility. She persistently pushes Marianne and Willoughby, and Elinor and Edward together, by assuming and letting it be spoken of, that the couples are about to be engaged. Her injudicious, misplaced affection is an agent of unintentional destruction; her unguarded, hasty statements or guesses cause suffering precisely where she means to soothe and strengthen. Trusting feeling, rather than thought, she blinds herself to whatever does not suit her purposes. One notable instance is the letter she sends to Marianne praising Willoughby, which reaches London after Willoughby's engagement to Miss Grey has been announced. Her letter, instead of supporting Marianne and leading her to wise self-government, cuts her so deeply that she falls apart. After Marianne's illness, Mrs. Dashwood is somewhat more sympathetic to Elinor's pleas for prudence, but she has not really learned: she is, for example, carried away by Colonel Brandon's love for Marianne, and invents and exaggerates to suit her fancy. Her impractical, sensitive self-absorption is shown to be sometimes dangerous, always foolish.

Perhaps an ideal combination of sense and sensibility on a lower level of education and refinement than that of the heroines', is Mrs. Jennings. She is a mother-substitute for them during most of the story, and therefore can be contrasted reasonably with Mrs. Dashwood. Mrs. Jennings' speech is occasionally ungrammatical and coarse, and she is addicted to gossip and teasing. Norman Page notes that, "She is exceptional in Jane Austen's gallery in being given dubious linguistic habits which nevertheless carry no overtones of moral censure." Despite her language, she functions properly in society, like Elinor, and communicates affection in her family circle, like Marianne. Most significantly, toward the end of the novel she evaluates situations more justly than any other adult.

Austen first introduces Mrs. Jennings in the role of a buffoon—fat, merry, loquacious, even boisterous and vulgar. She retains the character of a foolish jokester until the sisters accompany her to London. There, in her own home, Austen develops Mrs. Jennings into a truly worthy woman. She is genuinely kind and solicitous for the happiness of her guests, although surrounded by superficial, egotistical people. Unlike her daughter, Lady Middleton, Mrs. Jennings is not a snob. She is loyal to her "old city friends" who seem distastefully unfashionable to her elegant children. Her town house, her friends, her way of life are described as handsome and not at all insipid. Full of life, Mrs. Jennings is able to laugh at herself as well as at others, and her jokes are good-

humored, without barbs. What is possibly the most impressive of Mrs. Jennings' qualities is that, while she knows the world and understands the call of money, she holds people and their feelings to be more important. Her nature is warm like Mrs. Dashwood's, but she is neither tremulously sensitive nor blind to the realities of society. Although her mind is acute, she is neither cold nor reserved. When all the adults suddenly turn against Edward, after his engagement to Lucy is made known, she defends him and his spirit. She approves of his loyalty and willingness to sacrifice material comfort for what is, as the reader must agree, a high and unselfish end. Mrs. Jennings delights in the youth and joy of the couple although there is no question of any personal gain for her. When events turn so that Elinor wins Edward, she does not become sour or resentful that her happy predictions were mistaken. It is enough for her generous heart that a bit of happiness is advanced in the world.

Mrs. Jennings' style of speech is an amusing mixture of controlled balance and effusive disorder. At some points she speaks evenly weighted prose with parenthetical expressions to slow the pace and formalize the tone. Her words are never ponderous, because her lively mind undercuts any heavy seriousness.

"Upon my word I never saw a young woman so desperately in love in my life! *My* girls were nothing to her, and yet they used to be foolish enough; but as for Miss Marianne, she is quite an altered creature. I hope, from the bottom of my heart he won't keep her waiting much longer, for it is quite grievous to see her look so ill and forlorn. Pray, when are they to be married?"

This combination of logic (or semi-logic), of comparison and contrast, of affectionate catch phrases ("Upon my word," "from the bottom of my heart"), of unlabored, yet approximately symmetrical structure, is typical of Mrs. Jennings at her best. Much of her language, however, is fragmented, disjointed, and relatively chaotic in form. She overflows with the breathless wordiness of a fat, merry, middle-aged woman to whom meanness or hardness of any sort is foreign.

"Poor soul!" cried Mrs. Jennings, as soon as she [Marianne] was gone, "how it grieves me to see her! And I declare if she is not gone away without finishing her wine! And the dried cherries too! Lord! nothing seems to do her any good. I am sure if I knew of any thing she would like, I would send all over the town for it. Well, it is the oddest thing to me, that a man should use such a pretty girl so ill! But when there is plenty of money on one side, and next to none on the other, Lord bless you! they care no more about such things!—"

Although she sees the cruel pursuit of wealth and position around her, it does not corrupt her judgment of how things ought to be. Mrs. Jennings is free of what Jane Nardin calls "Ambition . . . the farthest extreme of mercenary 'sense' and it characterizes all the really bad people in the novel . . ." She may be an incorrigible chatterer, but she is also a faithful friend in all her attitudes and actions. She talks a lot, but she does more and does it gladly, without complaint. In a way, Jane Austen explains Mrs. Jennings by putting these words in her mouth: "And what good does talking ever do you know?" Her noisiness does little good, as she herself knows, but neither does it do any harm, for it is

always light in tone. Her actions, her steady, honest giving of warmth, encouragement, and spirit, help Elinor through the hard days, and set an example of mingled good sense and sensibility, unmarred by selfishness.

Willoughby is another character whose actions demonstrate that neither sense nor sensibility is implicitly frowned upon, but that both are evil when selfishly applied: Willoughby acts both parts, but is always consummately self-centered. His life is guided solely by what will bring him maximum pleasure at minimum expense of wealth or emotional effort. He becomes involved with Marianne mostly because she is a convenient distraction to fill the idle time he must spend in the country with Mrs. Smith. Charmed by Marianne's beauty and vivacity, he falls into her pattern of self-indulged, exclusive sensitivity. That Willoughby follows Marianne's lead, Austen makes clear by her wry, afterthought inclusion of Willoughby's beliefs.

But Marianne abhorred all concealment where no real disgrace could attend unreserve; and to aim at the restraint of sentiments which were not in themselves illaudable, appeared to her not merely an unnecessary effort, but a disgraceful subjection of reason to commonplace and mistaken notions. Willoughby thought the same....

He is a weak, drifting character, willing to change himself, if the change will assist him in his pursuit of pleasure. "He acquiesced in all her decisions, caught all her enthusiasm." Typical of his flabby morality is the way in which he excuses himself for the dreadful affair with Eliza Williams, Colonel Brandon's ward; he lays the blame on her, calling her wild and ignorant, rather than castigating himself for taking advantage of her.

A comparison of Willoughby's actions and speeches with those of his fellow-suitor, Edward, brings to light some curious parallels. Willoughby, like Marianne, superficially represents the "sensible," and Edward, like Elinor, the "sense." As the book develops, however, Willoughby acts more for selfish, practical motives, and Edward for unselfish, emotional, even romantic ones. Both men have prior attachments when they meet the Dashwood sisters, and both want only an innocent friendship, without complications. Edward is so involved with Lucy that he feels himself safe from serious emotional attachment. Willoughby, deeply in debt, has prior plans of marrying a lady with a fortune, and uses Marianne as a means to remove the summer tedium, as well as to gratify his vanity by winning her affection. Both men, contrary to their intentions, fall in love and find themselves in a dilemma. Willoughby takes the cold, mercenary way out—he chooses the selfish "sense" of Fanny and John Dashwood, of Mrs. Ferrars, of Lucy Steele. Edward, on the other hand, determines to stand by his rash, youthful promise. He refuses to compromise his honor and cannot bring himself to inflict pain where he thinks he is trusted and long loved. Elinor's extreme reserve keeps him ignorant of her love, and he has no real sense of hurting her by his loyalty to Lucy. Willoughby makes a money match and regrets it; Edward stands by one love match until free to make a second, and is rewarded for his choice.

The language of the two men is as markedly different as that of the sisters. Most of the time Willoughby speaks wittily, twisting Elinor's logically structured sentences into clever

jests by using anti-climax, surprise antithesis, and nonsensical pseudologic. Answering Elinor's defense of Colonel Brandon,

"Miss Dashwood," cried Willoughby, "you are now using me unkindly. You are endeavouring to disarm me by reason, and to convince me against my will. But it will not do. You shall find me as stubborn as you can be artful. I have three unanswerable reasons for disliking Colonel Brandon: he has threatened me with rain when I wanted it to be fine; he has found

fault with the hanging of my curricle, and I cannot persuade him to buy my brown mare."

His flippant sentences balance, turn neatly on polished constructions, and have many of the other characteristics previously attributed to Elinor's more serious prose. He does occasionally speak in the language of enthusiasm borrowed from Marianne:

"And yet this house you would spoil, Mrs. Dashwood? You would rob it of its simplicity by imaginary improvement! and this dear parlour . . . you would degrade to the condition of a common entrance, and everybody would be eager to pass through the room which has hitherto contained within itself, more real accommodation and comfort than any other apartment of the handsomest dimensions in the world could possibly afford."

The sentence structure rambles asymmetrically, accumulates phrases, uses extreme, hyperbolic words and superlatives altogether out of place with the normal amount of energy given to discussions of household improvement, and generally takes on the traits of "sensibility." Willoughby's language vacillates between the two styles, depending on whom he is with and what kind of impression he wants to make. His vacillation differs from Mrs. Jennings' in that he seems able to manipulate his style to curry favor: his fickle, insincere point of view matches his glib talk.

When he comes to confess to Elinor, that stormy night when Marianne lies deathly ill, he uses the vocabulary of a Lovelace. He scourges himself verbally, but in his melodrama, he seems as insincere as ever. He cannot simply admit to himself that he did wrong and caused pain. Instead, he must convince himself of his remorse by using high flown diction: "Oh God! what an hard-hearted rascal I was!"; "*I* was a libertine"; "Thunderbolts and daggers!," and so on.

Contrast this carrying on with Edward's more modest, but no less interesting, words. Throughout the novel, Edward's speeches are self-effacing, even mildly self-mocking. He has an excellent sense of humor, which is always directed against himself. Discussing the countryside around the Dashwood cottage, in response to Marianne's lyric excitement, he says:

"You must not inquire too far, Marianne—remember I have no knowledge in the picturesque, and I shall offend you by my ignorance and want of taste if we come to particulars. I shall call hills steep, which ought to be bold; surfaces strange and couth, which ought to be irregular and rugged; and distant objects out of sight, which ought

only to be indistinct through the soft medium of a hazy atmosphere. You must be satisfied with such admiration as I can honestly give."

His prose is smooth and even, like Elinor's, and has a similarly slow, reflective pace, because Austen uses many of the same stylistic devices for both. He judges himself by strict standards, but is not self-righteous. He maintains the same style of speech, regardless of his audience: he is consistent, unlike the hypocritical Willoughby. Edward's sense of his own worth is very small; he does not believe that anything is owed to him because of his personal merits or birth. His under-estimation of his own worth leads to a certain amount of trouble, causing him to attach himself to Lucy originally, though he was worthy of far better. That is also how he failed to see Elinor's growing love—someone who esteems himself so lightly and judges himself so sternly is unlikely to assume that a young woman is falling in love with him, especially without encouragement.

When he finally returns to Barton to explain his new freedom and express his love for Elinor, he chooses simple, characteristically modest phrases. After the few broken sentences which constitute the scene that dramatically reveals Lucy's duplicity, Edward comes back to make a full confession of his mistakes. Unlike Willoughby, he does not accuse himself of grand and dastardly deeds, but of a natural stupidity based on inexperience and insecurity. His words are halting, qualified by apologetic phrases: "I think," "what I thought at the time," "at least I thought so *then*, and I had seen so little of other women," and so on. The conclusion and climax of his speech are in negatives of reasonable self-censure, not at all hyperbolic or artificially intensified by diction or imbalanced structure—but the intensity, although suppressed, is evident:

"Considering everything, therefore, I hope, foolish as our engagement was, foolish as it has since in every way been proved, it was not at the time an unnatural, or an inexcusable piece of folly."

He concerns himself with judgment, with the standards of society, and does not exclude himself from humanity because of his guilt, as Willoughby tries to do. And yet, Edward's remorse and chagrin are clearly conveyed, and the passage is charged with restrained emotion of a more convincing sort than that professed by Willoughby.

Edward and Willoughby, Elinor and Marianne, more than extremes of sense and sensibility, represent extremes of ego-negation and ego-centrism. In the course of the novel, Edward's modesty wins him rewards after much suffering. Willoughby reveals himself to be pitifully cold and selfish under his facade of sensibility. The sisters grow to be refined, elegant young women, following the excellent moral example of Mrs. Jennings. Overwhelming sense is criticized in the persons of John and Fanny Dashwood; and overwhelming sensibility, in the character of Mrs. Dashwood. Both poles inflict pain by self-willed blindness to the feelings of others or to the consequences of their actions. *Sense and Sensibility* is a novel describing the education of two young women into the world of mature responsibility, the world in which compromises are necessary when circumstances get out of control. The sisters learn to look to others instead of being engrossed in themselves; they learn to accept the love and help of

others instead of assuming that they can manage alone; they learn to combine warmth and intensity with prudence and judgment. Elinor and Marianne, when the novel closes, are prepared to add to the pleasure and happiness of those immediately around them as well as to their society in general. *Sense and Sensibility* presents a complicated and compelling morality through an excellent story.

Source: P. Gila Reinstein, "Moral Priorities in *Sense and Sensibility*," in *Renascence*, Vol. XXXV, No. 4, Summer 1983, pp. 269-83.

Adaptations

Sense and Sensibility was first adapted for television in 1985. This version starred Irene Richards and Tracey Childs.

A movie adaptation was produced in 1995 by Columbia/Tri Star Studios and directed by Ang Lee. The film starred Emma Thompson (who also wrote the Oscar-winning screenplay), Hugh Grant, and Kate Winslet.

Several abridged audio recordings of the novel have been produced, most notably a version read by Kate Winslet, produced by Highbridge.

An unabridged audio version, 900 minutes long and performed by Jill Masters, is available from Blackstone Audiobooks.

Topics for Further Study

In *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, a classic feminist work published during Austen's lifetime, Mary Wollstonecraft argues that because women are enslaved to their weaker sensibilities, they must become completely dependant on the more rational men to survive. Wollstonecraft believes that women can only gain their independence through the complete rejection of their sensibility in favor of a strict course of rational education. Based on your reading of *Sense and Sensibility*, how do you think Jane Austen would respond to this argument? Do you think she was a supporter of Wollstonecraft's views?

One of the major political movements of the eighteenth century was taking place in France during the time that Jane Austen began her writing career. The Jacobins had just taken over France from the aristocracy; their cry for individuality and personal freedom, or sensibility, was revolutionary at the time and would come to profoundly impact all of European politics. How do you see the political events in France affecting Austen's writing of *Sense and Sensibility*? Does she side with the Jacobins' cry for individual freedoms, or do you think Austen was more conservative and would have wanted to retain the status quo?

Sense and Sensibility is often described as a "didactic" novel, that is, a novel that pits two opposing viewpoints against each other. Didactic novels were popular at the time Austen was writing and were known for being formulaic: one view point always won over the other. The opposing viewpoints in this novel are obviously sense and sensibility. Do you consider *Sense and Sensibility* to be didactic in the classic sense of the word? In other words, is there a clear winner and loser in the struggle between sense and sensibility?

One of the curious characteristics of *Sense and Sensibility* is the almost complete absence of father figures from the main action. The father of nearly every adult child in the novel who has to make a decision about matrimony is either dead or absent, and for some it is the mother who has sole authority over them. In fact, mothers play a leading role in the upbringing and education of many of the novel's leading characters. Can you discern Austen's view of motherhood from your reading of *Sense and Sensibility*? How are the mothers in the novel represented, and what point do you think Austen is attempting to make?

Sense and Sensibility very much centers around a small minority of the English population at the beginning of the nineteenth century, namely, the upper class. There is little mention of workers or farmers, yet agrarian reform and the earliest stages of the Industrial Revolution were having a profound affect on these lower classes and, in turn, were affecting the upper classes that Austen was writing about. Research the class structure of England at the time of the publication of *Sense and Sensibility*. Describe the reforms that were affecting farmers at the time and discuss the ways the working classes were being affected by changing technologies. How did these changes come to impact the classes represented by the characters in *Sense and Sensibility*?

Compare and Contrast

1800s: Women in the class to which Jane Austen and the Dashwood sisters belong are not allowed to work. They depend upon suitable marriages or the generosity of their male relatives for financial support and have virtually no economic freedom.

Today: While women still face discrimination in the workplace, such as unequal pay, women are free to enter any profession they desire and can be found in leadership roles both in the business world and in the government.

1800s: As well as being denied economic freedom, women are also not allowed much social freedom. They are not allowed to travel alone even a short distance from their homes, and unmarried women cannot keep unchaperoned company with men who are not their relatives for fear of ruining their reputation and thus their chances of a suitable marriage.

Today: Because of economic independence, women have the freedom to purchase property, to live alone, to travel alone, and to move about freely without fearing for their reputations.

1800s: English society at the time of Austen's writing is sharply divided between the working class and the upper-class, landed gentry.

Today: Thanks to industrial developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the economic changes they brought, the middle class in Western countries, such as the United States and Britain, now makes up a significant part of the population.

1800s: It is uncommon and frowned upon for women to undertake serious artistic endeavors such as writing. Jane Austen, though her work is received warmly, maintains her anonymity until her death for fear of developing a scandalous reputation because she writes novels.

Today: Women, though still facing an uphill battle for equal recognition across the arts, are now recognized as major contributors to literature. For example, although the majority of Nobel Prizes for Literature have been awarded to men, women such as Toni Morrison (1993) and Wislawa Szymborska (1996) have recently been recognized.

1800s: The protection of an unmarried woman's chastity is of utmost importance in making a suitable marriage. Women such as Miss Eliza Williams in *Sense and Sensibility*, who become pregnant out of wedlock, are doomed to a life of shame and economic hardship, as are their children.

Today: With the development and acceptance of a variety of birth control methods, women today can have complete, independent control of their sexuality. Also, an increasing number of women are opting to have children outside of marriage.

What Do I Read Next?

Pride and Prejudice (1813), the second of Jane Austen's novels to be published, is perhaps her most famous work. Much like *Sense and Sensibility*, the action in this novel centers on upper-class English society, in particular the courtship of the Bennet sisters. Elizabeth Bennet, a spitfire of a character, and her equally spirited beau Mr. Darcy are one of literature's most famous pairs.

Mansfield Park (1814), by Jane Austen, tells the story of Fanny Price, an insecure girl who is brought up by her rich aunt and uncle and examines the questions of morality of the time. It has been described as unique among Austen's work in its more somber and moralizing tone.

Emma (1815), the last of Austen's novels to be published before her death, is a lighthearted story of upper-class courtship, featuring a charming heroine but nevertheless displaying Austen's razor-sharp wit and observation of her society. Emma has much in common with Marianne of *Sense and Sensibility* in both her spirited naïveté and her eventual growth into a more mature wisdom, an act which exhibits Austen's views of the necessity of social propriety.

Jane Austen's Letters (1997), a new edition edited by Deirdre Le Faye, is a compilation of Austen's witty and sharp correspondence, which give insight into her daily life and the inspiration she had for her novels.

A Vindication on the Rights of Woman, by Mary Wollstonecraft, was published in 1792. While Austen was busy writing novels that portrayed the domestic and economic situations of upper-class women, the omen's rights movement in England was coming into full swing. Mary Wollstonecraft, a radical of the time, composed this most significant work to call for the equal education of women across the social strata. A shocking and controversial work during its time, it is today considered a classic of women's literature.

A Room of One's Own (1929), written by British author, literary critic, and feminist Virginia Woolf, outlines Woolf's groundbreaking analysis of the position of women in English literature, including Jane Austen.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, a nineteenth-century poet, was one of the key figures of the romantic movement. Romanticism places great importance on passion, emotion, and the self, which Austen is thought to criticize in her portrayal of Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*. Shelley's most famous long poems are "Prometheus Unbound" (1820) and the highly controversial "Laon and Cythna" (1817), which was banned during his life because of its sexual references and its negative portrayal of the church.

John Keats was also a key poet of the romantic movement. Poems such as "The Eve of St. Agnes" (1819) and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819) concentrate on the sensuality of both natural and artistic beauty.

Further Study

Armstrong provides a comprehensive criticism and examination of *Sense and Sensibility*, including the novel's social constructs and the philosophical beliefs of the characters.

Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, New Haven, 1979.

Gubar and Gilbert are two of the most important feminist literary theorists of recent times. This seminal work brings to light the psychological anxieties faced by women writers throughout the history of English literature, caused by their inferior status in society.

Harding, D. W., *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Jane Austen*, edited by Monica Lawlor, Althone Press, 1998.

Harding, a significant literary critic of the twentieth century, considered Austen one of his favorite authors. Written over a span of sixty years, the essays

in this collection examine a range of aspects of Austen's writing, from its historical context to the psychology of her characters.

Jenkins, Elizabeth, *Jane Austen*, Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1949.

Jenkins provides a seminal biography of Jane Austen.

Monaghan, David, ed., *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, Macmillan Press, 1981.

This collection of essays examines Austen's contemporary social context and the way it is exhibited in her writing.

Neill, Edward, *The Politics of Jane Austen*, St. Martin's Press, 1999.

This contemporary collection of essays on Austen's major work defends the position that Austen was a subtle political writer.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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