

Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide



Sense and Sensibility

Adapted for the stage from Jane Austen's novel by
Joseph Hanreddy and JR Sullivan

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SACRAMENTO THEATRE COMPANY

1419 H Street * Sacramento, California 95814 * 916-446-7501

Sacramento Theatre Company

Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical reviews.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:

<http://www.sactheatre.org>



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Jane Austen



Questions to Ask and Answer - Before Visiting the Theatre

1. When was the play written?
2. Who wrote the play? Have they written other things?
3. This play is an adaptation; when was the original work written?
4. Who wrote the original novel?
5. Did the author of the original novel write anything else?
6. What reasons might an author adapt a book like this into a play or movie script?
7. Is the play set in a time and place familiar to the authors (the original or those who adapted it)?
8. What are the important issues of this time and place and in what way do they differ from our own?
9. What can I do to be sure I can follow the action of the play?



Answers to Questions

When was the play written?

This adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* was created quite recently. The process began in 2011 and culminated in the World Premiere production during the 2014 season at the Utah Shakespeare Festival.

Who wrote the play? Have they written other things?

The adaptation was created by J.R. Sullivan and Joseph Hanreddy, both directors and playwrights during the course of their careers in theatre. Hanreddy also directed the premier production. The pair has also jointly adapted another Jane Austen novel *Pride and Prejudice* which was produced at STC in the 2013-2014 season. Hanreddy has also written adaptations of *A Christmas Carol*, *Seven Keys to Slaughter Peak* and *The Tavern*. He was Artistic Director at the Milwaukee Rep for seventeen years, ending in 2010 and has directed for numerous companies, ranging from Off-Broadway to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Sullivan was Artistic Director for seven years at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, ending in 2009 with a move to New York to lead the Pearl Theatre Company.

This play is an adaptation, when was the original work written?

Sense and Sensibility was originally released in 1811.

Who wrote the original novel?

Jane Austen. However, the novel was originally released anonymously and she received very little recognition despite the popularity of the books she had written. It wasn't until her nephew published, *A Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1869 that she was introduced to the public at large. By WW II, she was recognized in academia as a great English writer.

Did that author write anything else?

Sense and Sensibility (1811)
(1815)

Pride and Prejudice (1813)

Mansfield Park (1814) *Emma*

Published posthumously:
Northanger Abbey (1818)

Persuasion (1818)

Austen also had begun, but not finished, a final novel titled *Sanditon* before she died in 1817.



What reasons might an author adapt a book like this into a play or moviescript?

There is, of course, no single right answer. Just as any popular novel, comic book, or cultural icon might be made into a movie, the original is popular enough that the theatre hopes to attract large audiences to see a staged version. Despite almost two centuries of time past, Austen's novels remain incredibly popular.

The adapters might also believe that the key issues of the play remain relevant to the conflicts and decisions of our contemporary society. At times, this can take a very thorough knowledge of the script as well as the original work to clarify, because the adaptation might be constructed to place more emphasis on certain issues than in the original work.

Fortunately, Austen's novels tend to include a great deal of dialogue relative to the narrative prose. This lends itself effectively to conversion into script format. The end result is a play that is still completely in Austen's words... just not ALL the words originally used to write the novel. This leaves the narrative and the words that were not included from the novel in the hands of the actors, who must fill their characters with all the underlying humor and irony no longer on the page.

Is the play set in a time and place familiar to the authors (the original or those who adapted it)?

Sense and Sensibility is set in southwest England, London, and Kent in the mid-1790's (1792-1797), a time frame roughly fifteen years prior to the writing of the book... and roughly two hundred and fifteen prior to the writing of the adaptation. The story takes place in homes, manor houses, and the meeting places of society very similar to the ones in which Austen herself grew up and lived.

While two centuries is a difficult bridge to leap, the adapters of the novel into script have the benefit of working with very realistically written novels and a wealth of work produced since about Austen. Because they have used Austen's own words, in a condensed format; the real challenge of ensuring the difference between contemporary reality and Austen's story will be on the actors.

What are the important issues of this time and place and in what way do they differ from ours?

The words of the title of Austen's novel are a really good place to start. These words represent the dichotomy of attitudes that are at the heart of political and philosophical struggles - to do the practical thing and act with good sense or to allow ones sensibilities to rule them, to do whatever emotions and passions lead one to do. This was enormously important to women of the period because family and a husband was the whole of opportunity in life.

A wealthy husband meant they might have servants and nice clothing that society would treat them well and they might participate in such social activities as dinners and dances. A husband with status might give them power of influence over others, meaning those who want support or a good word from the husband will cater to and seek to win the favor of the wife as well.

On the other hand, there is marrying for love, attraction, etc. Wonderful for a short time in youth, perhaps... but without hope for a nice home, clothing, or influence to ensure your children will find good placement.



On a national scale, England had only just lost to the Americans (the American Revolution from 1776-1783). And in a few more years, it would find itself again at war with France (1803-1815). All of this happened at the center of the Industrial Revolution in England. During this time, a wildly spread out population living in the country began to converge on central industrial areas to form larger cities. The population grew rapidly and many were poor and with no means of providing for their families. This would lead to the world we see in Dicken's (who was born in 1812) novels, where even children work from dawn to dusk in factories for very little pay and the only hope is that one's children would marry well to keep the family alive when the adults grew too old and tired to continue to labor.

What can I do to follow the action of the play?

Some people like to read a novel before seeing the adaptation of the story on stage or in film. Others choose to wait until after. There are merits to both perspectives. The important thing to do if making this choice (or if you are reading the book for a class and then coming to see the play) is to remember that they are going to be different. That's simply a matter of practicality. A theatre will attempt to recreate an environment and characters as closely to the script as possible but that doesn't mean it will match the script... let alone the novel. A play, on stage and live in front of you, is not a copy. It's an interpretation.

If done right, the play will give you insights into the characters, their interactions, and the time period in ways that one may not discover in reading the book. The production team of the play, led by the Director, studies the script and the book and the author. They notice and may highlight how people are the same or do the same things as those characters in the book... or how they're completely different. The creative team hopes the audience will bridge the gap between the contemporary world and the one told by Jane Austen over two hundred years ago resulting in an engaged audience in the storytelling of the Theatrical piece.



Setting - Time and Date - Why That Matters

Knowing where and when a play takes place is one of the foundational elements in seeking to understand it. As mentioned earlier, the plot occurs in the midst of the Industrial Age of England during which many small houses, or three and four family villages, found it no longer feasible to make a living in the country and began moving into the more industrial urban areas of cities such as Sussex.

This has an added importance because these country manors and households have been present for such long times that they have a sort of presence in society on their own, even without the people inhabiting them. Some are traditional, some recognized for their financial success, others because one can always find wisdom and good advice. A member of a country household quickly becomes lost in the more aggressive urban settings where society is more active, when minds and opinions are more open, and country 'folk' are considered out of date and backwards.

Act 1 opens in Norland Park, in Sussex. Amidst walnut trees. This is the Dashwood home, which is unfortunately going via inheritance to John (the only male heir) despite the wife and daughters left behind by Mr Dashwood.

Chased away from their family home by John's wife, Fanny; Mrs. Dashwood and daughters, Marianne and Elinor, head to Devonshire where a family friend has offered them the Barton Cottage, a small dwelling on his estate. This is the cottage used in the 1995 film version of the novel:



Act 2 opens with the ladies of Dashwood, along with Mrs. Jennings, heading from Devonshire to Mrs. Jennings' apartments in London.

After the Winter is over, the girls move on from London to Somerset.

Note that with each step, they have less and less space to themselves and the environment is less natural country and more cultivated and then industrialized. They have less influence on those who enter the home, having to accept more and more the guests demanded by their position in society. But in the end, with the move to Somerset, everyone finds happiness.



The Author - The Voice behind the Voices

Austen, Hanreddy, and Sullivan: Sense and Sensibility at the Utah Shakespeare Festival

By Marlo M. Ihler

Renowned English novelist Jane Austen is revered worldwide for her literary genius, social commentary, and satirical wit. Ironically, she never enjoyed public acknowledgement during her lifetime, as she used a pseudonym when she wrote. Today her works are read, studied, performed, translated and admired by millions of people.

Austen was born on December 16, 1775, at Steventon Rectory in Hampshire, England. She was the seventh of eight children born to an Oxford-educated clergyman and his wife, George and Cassandra Austen. Her father also farmed and taught school in their home. Thus, Jane began her education at home and was surrounded by literature from her father's extensive library at an early age. Education and creativity were highly valued and encouraged growing up. At age eight, she and her sister Cassandra were sent to boarding school for more formal education. However, after near-death bouts of typhus and because of financial constraints, the sisters returned home.

By age twelve, Jane began writing stories and poems, a collection now referred to as the *Juvenilia*. It didn't take long for her to realize she wanted to become a professional writer. By age nineteen she had written her first mature work, a novella entitled "Lady Susan" written in epistolary form (as a series of letters). It was preserved by her family and was later published after her death (www.jasna.org/info/about_austen.html, accessed Dec. 18, 2013).

Jane was very close with her family, especially her father and older sister. Her family served as her audience, as she read to them her manuscripts. They enjoyed a story called Elinor and Marianne, which was the beginning of what would later become *Sense and Sensibility*. Around the same time she also began *Pride and Prejudice*, (originally called *First Impressions*) as well as *Susan* that would be published as *Northanger Abbey* after her death.

Also in her early twenties, in the era when marrying well was the only way a woman might improve her situation, she met and fell in love with a wealthy gentleman named Tom LeFroy. According to record, this is the only time Jane admitted to being in love, documented in letters to her sister. However, because she had nothing to offer to the match financially, Tom yielded to family pressure and left town, never to be seen by Jane again. This heart-wrenching experience greatly influenced her writing and her life: she never got married ("Jane Austen," The Biography Channel website, <http://www.biography.com/people/jane-austen-9192819>, accessed Dec 18, 2013).

At age twenty-six, she moved with her parents and sister to Bath, England. Only a few short years later, her father died, and the three women moved around until they were able to settle in Chawton, in a cottage provided by Jane's brother Edward, near his estate. This began a period of prolific writing for Jane. In 1811, at age thirty-six, she published *Sense and Sensibility*. *Pride and Prejudice* followed in 1813, *Mansfield Park* in 1814, and *Emma* in 1815. All were published anonymously.

By age forty-one, Jane's health was beginning to deteriorate. She continued to write and edit older works as best she could. She even began a new novel called *The Brothers* (published after her death as *Sandition*). It was believed she suffered from Addison's disease, which ended her life on July 18, 1817, in Winchester, Hampshire, England.



Following her death, Jane's brother, Henry, published *Persuasion and Northanger Abbey*, and revealed to the public it was Jane who authored all of her novels (www.jasna.org/info/about_austen.html, accessed Dec 18, 2013). Since then, Jane's popularity and prominence have only continued to grow, as she has become known as one of the greatest writers in the English language.

As two individuals who have long admired and studied Jane Austen and her works, the adapters of the Festival's *Sense and Sensibility*, Joe Hanreddy and J.R. Sullivan, are also no strangers to literature, theatre, and classic works. Both have directed productions at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, and Hanreddy directed the Festival's production of *Sense and Sensibility* in 2014.

Joe Hanreddy was born in southern California and always had a love of literature and learning, but artistic influence by family members was limited as a child. His family moved to the San Francisco Bay area when he was a teenager. After graduating from high school he happened to attend a play (because a friend had a free ticket) and this experience reshaped his path as an adult. Instead of continuing training as a cabinetmaker, Hanreddy decided to take a few acting classes at the local community college. This led to enrolling at San Jose State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in acting and a master's degree in directing and dramatic literature.

His desire to work in theatre first landed him a job as a director of a dinner theatre in Carmel, California, which was, in his words, a "modest beginning" (Personal interview with Joe Hanreddy, November 2013). He then taught for four years at the University of California, Santa Barbara. From there, he co-founded the Ensemble Theatre Project (now the Ensemble Theatre Company) in 1978 in Santa Barbara and served as its artistic director for seven years. During his early career he started adapting literature into dramatic works. "It was fun to pick the literature, adapt it, and create scripts for the strengths and talents of the resident company," he said.

A new adventure took he and his wife, Jamie, to Wisconsin, where he was the artistic director at the Madison Repertory Theatre for seven years. It was here that Hanreddy began his now-thirty-year friendship with J.R. Sullivan.

"When I got to Madison, he called to welcome me, a California native, to the Midwest" (Personal interview). Sullivan, at the time, was the artistic director at the New American Theater in Rockford, Illinois, a city only a couple of hours to the south of Madison.

In 1993, Hanreddy became the artistic director of Milwaukee Repertory Theater, one of the nation's preeminent regional theatres. While there, he directed classical and contemporary plays, acted in productions, and wrote stage adaptations of literature. In fact, over fifty new American plays, translations, and adaptations were created under his leadership. Many of these have subsequently been produced in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and the nation's leading regional theatres (www.josephhanreddy.com, accessed Dec 18, 2013).

In 2010, he resigned from Milwaukee Rep (as it is called), after giving "a long, two-year notice" (Personal interview). During those last two years, he "crammed in" some of the projects he had always wanted to do but hadn't been able to yet. These included an adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* that the Festival subsequently produced in 2010. That was Hanreddy's first adaptation project with Sullivan. That season's production of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* was the team's second project together. Since Hanreddy's resignation from Milwaukee Rep, he has had various guest directing opportunities around the country, among other things, and lives in rural Wisconsin on the shores of Lake Michigan with his wife and daughter.



J.R. Sullivan's background is very different from Hanreddy's. He was born in Oak Park, Illinois, near Chicago, and is the oldest of eight children. When he was young, his family moved to South Bend, Indiana (ninety miles east of Chicago) and Rockford, Illinois (ninety miles north of Chicago) before Sullivan was in high school (Personal interview with J.R. Sullivan, November 2013).

He enjoyed significant artistic influence growing up. Both of his parents were involved with the community theatre in South Bend, and he became very involved in theatre in Rockford. From this, he knew that working in the theatre was what he wanted to do with his life. He attended Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin, where he earned bachelor's degrees in theatre and English composition. He began adapting plays during this time because it helped to meet the requirements for both degrees. Also while in college, he had an acting internship at Milwaukee Rep, which was the beginning of lifelong relationships with the organization and theatre professionals he worked with there.

Right after college, a friend convinced him to start a theatre company in Rockford, Illinois. He founded the New American Theatre, and thought he would only be there for a couple of years. In 1994, after twenty-two years, he decided it was time to dedicate his career to freelance directing, teaching, writing, and adapting.

He has directed throughout the country, including off-Broadway, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Rep, Northlight Theatre, the Utah Shakespeare Festival, and other regional and university theatres. In 2002, he was invited to be an associate artistic director here at the Festival, a position he held for seven years. In 2009, he became the artistic director for the Pearl Theatre Company in New York City, an off-Broadway theatre company which was awarded a Drama Desk Award in 2011 for "notable productions of classic plays" (www.jrsullivan.net, accessed Dec 18, 2013).

It was while he was at the Pearl that he and Hanreddy collaborated on both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. When asked what attracts him to Jane Austen, he replied: "Her wit and wisdom that is still applicable today; great dialogue and interactions between characters; family dynamics and their connections to the larger world. Jane Austen's writing is so rich" (Personal interview).

He stepped down from the Pearl in July 2013 and relocated to Chicago to prepare for his wedding to fiancée Cheryl Hamada in the spring of 2014. He also remarks that by moving to Chicago, he is "returning back home where it all began" (Personal interview). (For more insight and information about Joe Hanreddy, J.R. Sullivan, and their adaptation of Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility," visit the Utah Shakespeare Festival's blog at:

<http://utahshakespearefestival.blogspot.com/2013/11/utah-shakespeare-festival-guest-blog.html>).



The Characters

Henry Dashwood:

Father of John Dashwood (from his first marriage), husband to Margaret (his second wife), and father to Elinor and Marianne. Henry Dashwood dies in the first scene of the play and leaves his Norland estate to John but makes him promise to be generous with his inheritance towards Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, and Marianne.

Margaret Dashwood:

Henry's second wife and John's stepmother, Margaret Dashwood is left impoverished after Henry's death. She is the loving, emotional, and gentle mother of Elinor and Marianne and wants only the best for them.

Elinor Dashwood:

Nineteen-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood and John's half-sister, Elinor Dashwood is practical and composed. She falls in love with Edward Ferrars but does not open up about her feelings for him except to Marianne; thus, she quietly suffers because of misunderstandings between them.

Marianne Dashwood:

Seventeen-year-old sister of Elinor and half-sister of John Dashwood, Marianne Dashwood is spontaneous, romantic, and emotional. She falls in love with John Willoughby who eventually spurns her.

John Dashwood:

Son of Henry Dashwood and half-brother to Elinor and Marianne, John Dashwood is weak and easily influenced by his wife. As such, he fails to fulfill the promise made to his father to provide financially for Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters.

Fanny Dashwood:

John Dashwood's domineering, selfish, and manipulative wife, Fanny Dashwood is the sister of Edward and Robert Ferrars.

Sir John Middleton:

Distant cousin to Mrs. Margaret Dashwood, Sir John Middleton offers her and her daughters a place to live following the death of her husband.

Lady Middleton:

Wife of Sir John Middleton.

Mrs. Jennings:

Lady Middleton's gossipy but goodhearted mother, Mrs. Jennings invites Elinor and Marianne to stay with her in London during the winter and makes it her "project" to get them married as soon as possible.

Edward Ferrars:

Eldest brother of Fanny and Robert, Edward Ferrars is private, sensible, and kind. He is drawn to a quiet life, though he is caught under his mother's rule. He and Elinor are immediately attracted to each other, but other obligations initially prevent them from being together.

Robert Ferrars:

Younger, conceited brother of Edward and Fanny.

Mrs. Ferrars:

Manipulative, wealthy mother of Edward, Robert, and Fanny, Mrs. Ferrars would have Edward follow a career and marriage path that he is adamantly against. Money and reputation are pivotal to her.



John Willoughby:

Charming but untrustworthy neighbor of Sir John's, John Willoughby seems to be as impassioned with Marianne as she is with him, but he leaves her suddenly and offers no explanation to his departure.

Colonel Brandon:

Retired officer and bachelor, Colonel Brandon is a friend of Sir John Middleton. He becomes enamored of Marianne Dashwood, is honorable and kind towards the Dashwoods, and is essential to uncovering the truth about John Willoughby.

Mrs. Charlotte Palmer:

Mrs. Jennings's silly and talkative daughter.

Mr. Palmer:

Charlotte's crotchety, unemotional husband.

Lucy Steele:

A distant cousin of Mrs. Jennings, Miss Lucy Steele has been secretly engaged to Edward Ferrars for four years.

Anne Steele:

Lucy's older, unmarried sister, Anne Steele accidentally reveals to Elinor the details of Lucy's secret engagement to Edward.

Baines:

Mrs. Jennings' butler in London.

Doctor:

Treats Marianne when she becomes gravely ill



The Synopsis

Synopsis: Sense and Sensibility

By J. R. Sullivan

Henry Dashwood dies and, in accord with British custom and law, leaves his substantial estate and wealth to the oldest son of his first marriage, John Dashwood. This leaves his second wife, Margaret Dashwood, and her daughters, Elinor and Marianne, without a home and little income. Though John has pledged to his dying father to provide for his stepmother and stepsisters, he sidesteps his promise to do so. Mrs. Dashwood then accepts an offer from a distant cousin, Sir John Middleton, who has heard of her situation: with her daughters she moves to a small house in Barton Park, located in Devonshire. Nineteen-year-old Elinor is unhappy about leaving their Norland estate home because she has met and fallen in love with Edward Ferrars, the brother-in-law of her half-brother, John.

In their new home they encounter new acquaintances, including the retired officer (and bachelor) Colonel Brandon, and the magnetic and impetuous John Willoughby. Seventeen-year-old Marianne is utterly smitten with Willoughby, and it seems that he is equally passionate about her. Willoughby and Marianne become very attached, and it appears that their whirlwind romance will quickly result in an engagement; but Willoughby suddenly announces he must depart Devonshire for London with little explanation as to why. Marianne is inconsolable. Meanwhile Lucy and Anne Steele, two distant cousins of Lady Middleton's mother, Mrs. Jennings, arrive at Barton Park as guests. Lucy is especially eager to meet Elinor and after ingratiating herself confides that she has been secretly engaged to Edward Ferrars for almost four years. Deeply shocked and distressed, Elinor nonetheless keeps her feelings to herself and—when pressed—agrees to keep Lucy's secret until Miss Steele is able to meet and win over Edward's imperious mother, Mrs. Ferrars.

Mrs. Jennings organizes a winter stay at her London home for Elinor and Marianne. Marianne continues to pine for Willoughby and hopes to meet with him in London. Colonel Brandon visits and tells Elinor that the talk in London society is of an engagement between Marianne and Willoughby. It is very clear by now that Colonel Brandon harbors his own feelings of deep attachment to Marianne. At a subsequent London party Marianne sees Willoughby, but he coolly rebuffs Marianne and rejoins his own friends, including Miss Sophia Grey. The next day a letter from Willoughby arrives for Marianne, and in it he disowns ever having had feelings for her. Shortly after, it is revealed that Willoughby is to be married soon to Miss Grey. It is then that Colonel Brandon informs Elinor of Willoughby's history of debauchery, including with Brandon's own adopted ward, Eliza.

Not long after this, Lucy's sister Anne reveals news of Lucy's secret engagement to Edward Ferrars. Outraged, Mrs. Ferrars disinherits Edward, and promises the family fortune will go to Edward's brother Robert instead. The Dashwood sisters leave London to visit with family friends in Somerset, and it is there that the still grieving Marianne develops a severe cold that quickly worsens and threatens her life. Colonel Brandon, who had escorted the Dashwood sisters to Somerset, departs so that he might bring Mrs. Dashwood from Devonshire to Somerset. After Brandon leaves, Willoughby arrives seeking forgiveness from Marianne. Elinor denies him that privilege, and Willoughby makes an explanation of his actions to her. Elinor takes a level of pity on Willoughby, and he departs into the night. Marianne's fever breaks, and when Mrs. Dashwood and Colonel Brandon arrive the next morning they are relieved to find Marianne beginning to recover.



Elinor later tells Marianne of Willoughby's visit, and Marianne fully realizes that she could never have found happiness with him. As preparations are made for a return to Barton Park, Marianne begins to appreciate Colonel Brandon and finds herself increasingly attached to him.

Brandon and Marianne soon become engaged to marry.

Shortly after the return to Barton, the Dashwoods learn from a servant that Lucy Steele has married Mr. Ferrars. Unsurprised at the news, they are nonetheless saddened to hear it. Edward arrives soon after and corrects a misconception: Lucy Steele has instead married the recipient of the family fortune, the supercilious younger brother, Robert. Edward confesses that he has loved Elinor and only Elinor ever since their first meeting at Norland and now he is finally free to propose to her. Elinor happily accepts and the story ends on a note of exhilarated joy.

Synopsis of the Synopsis

Mrs. Dashwood and her two daughters lose their home to her husband's son by another wife. Instead of listening to his father's advice to use his wealth generously to support the three, John listens to his wife and soon turns them out with nothing. Before they leave, one of the daughters (Elinor) meets Edward. Edward is a bit of a clumsy sort, not good at anything but nonetheless a good heart. Before anything more can come of this relationship, the Dashwoods move to Devonshire where they've been offered a small cottage.

No sooner arrived, but the older couple who own the estate begin efforts to bring the second daughter (Marianne) together with an older (mid-thirties) Colonel. While the arrangement would be good financially (the Colonel has money and connections), Marianne doesn't find the idea of an older man at all appealing and refuses to even consider the match. Meanwhile, Elinor is pining for Edward who has yet to make an appearance. Then, when Marianne twists her ankle, a charismatic young man (Willoughby) carries her home. Not a practical bone in him, he's as infatuated with the Romantic poets as she is... things move much too quickly for propriety and then, he leaves. Elinor discovers that Edward is secretly engaged to another woman (Lucy, and for four years). Both girls are depressed from relationship woes as Act 1 ends.

As Act 2 begins, Mrs. Jennings is taking the two girls to stay in her London apartments for the winter. While at a party, Marianne sees Willoughby with Miss Grey and he completely snubs her. It is revealed that he is to marry Miss Grey and the Colonel reveals information that Willoughby was also involved in debauchery with the Colonel's ward. Lucy's sister reveals the engagement with Edward; their mother disinherits him in favor of his brother Robert.

The Dashwood sisters leave London, heading to Somerset. Here, Marianne becomes deathly ill. She realizes that she would never have been happy with Willoughby and decides to wed the Colonel. Lucy breaks things off with Edward and marries the now wealthy younger brother, leaving Edward free to admit that he has always and only loved Elinor and is now free to propose to her.

In Short...

Two girls fall in love with guys who they think are the ideal for them. One of them ends up married with this guy despite crazy things happening. The other marries the last guy she imagined she would.



Actively Watching - What To Look For

Unlike a novel, where narration tends to show what critical elements the reader should notice, or a film, where camera angles, zoom lenses, and multiple transition and techniques are available to focus your attention; in a live performance, you have to be actively watching to see elements of characters not specifically in the dialogue. There are some things to be aware of that help you find these extra clues over the course of a play.

Common elements: Characters that move alike, who wear similarly styled or colored costumes, or enter the stage in specific ways don't do so by coincidence. A good artistic team (directors and designers working together to support the environment) build these clues in to help the audience make sense of the information overload that comes from being rapidly introduced to multiple people. Those patterns can also reveal other elements of character in addition to relationship with other characters on stage.

Status: A character sitting atop a throne high over their subjects is an obvious sign of someone in power. It's not only positioning on stage that can tell you who is in charge or in control of a given scene. Proximity can be a sign that two people are intimate or are on the verge of exploding into violence. Keeping a third party between two characters is a protective action or an attempt at hiding. Entering from the side of the stage is weaker than entering from upstage. Moving in a diagonal is more actively engaging than sideways, direct lines more so than arcs. Even simply being aware of how characters listen to other characters speak can tell you a lot about what is happening on stage.

Fluidity of time and space: While this sounds like something at the beginning of a lecture on Quantum Mechanics, its much simpler in its relationship to a stage production. Simply be aware that theatres don't have the ability to describe every physical detail of a new location or to tell you the time. To keep events moving along on stage and the focus on the story, there is rarely a break from the action to change scenery. As a result, the scenery needs to become radically different several times within the duration of the play; smaller elements like a walnut tree, a streetlamp, or a different style chair may be the only physically visible difference on the stage. When this happens, understand that the change represents a difference in place or time from the previous scene. Sometimes this will happen with lights dimmed down and other times it will happen in full view as the dialogue and action continues.



Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive to the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance. Whispering is still speaking, so only in an emergency.
- Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over...this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great.
- Do not whistle or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.



Questions to Ask and Answer - After Seeing the Play

1. Were you able to follow the progression of events, especially through scene and act changes?
2. Did the environment serve the purpose of the play? Did the costumes suit the characters of the play?
3. Did the lighting and sound used in the production enhance the environment of the production?
4. Which characters did you identify with the most?
5. How would it feel to live in a society where you were expected to marry young with almost no knowledge about the person you would marry?
6. What would it be like knowing that unless you were the male heir, the only hope you had of wealth/land was to marry well?
7. What is the part about the play that you least understood? What things about it confused you?
8. How do you think this play gives you any better insight into the lives of the British two centuries ago?
9. How do you think this play gives you better insight into the lives of people today?
10. What would you consider to be the climactic moment of the play?
11. Could this play be placed in a contemporary setting and still work?



Using What You Know to Learn More

This study guide was developed with the permission of and using the core materials from the guide created for the World Premier of *Sense and Sensibility* at the Utah Shakespeare Festival in 2014. Further information was collected from online sources.

Jane Austen Society of North America

<http://www.jasna.org>

The society has over 5000 members in more than 70 regional groups in the US and Canada and is a fantastic source for information - both established and newly developed. They have everything from essay contests to scholarly publications, including being the source of the peer reviewed journal [Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal](#) (and its online version).

Wikipedia: Jane Austen

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Austen

Wikipedia, as usual, has just enough general info to give you a rough idea that Austen is a popular novelist from two centuries ago ... without really giving you a solid understanding over why. Unless you already know all the differences and styles of writing that she was making fun of at the time.

The World of Jane Austen

<http://www.janeausten.co.uk>

If you're looking for Regency period fashion, recipes, etc.

Miss Austen Regrets

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece.austen>

Included there, even if you are unable to access the biopic itself, is a number of slideshows and a PDF guide for Teaching





***Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen**

1. Talk about the significance of Austen's title. What is the difference in meaning between the words "sense" and "sensibility" ... and which sister represents which word? Which word most represents your own approach to life and love? Which matters more...or are they both equally important in choosing a mate?
2. If you haven't already (in question #1), discuss the differences between the two sisters, Elinor and Marianne? Does Austen seem to favor one over the other?
3. Then, of course, there's Fanny Dashwood. How does she set about working on her husband after his father's death? Later, why does she make it clear that her brother Edward is not for Elinor? What does this suggest about the role of marriage for the upper classes?
4. Are Edward's attentions to Elinor fair and honorable? Why isn't he more open with her? Where does his honor lie—or where should it lie—with Lucy or Elinor? Do you admire him? Is he overly passive, honorable, loyal...or what?
5. What is Marianne's objection to Colonel Brandon? At times, do you find yourself sympathetic to Willoughby despite his abandonment of Marianne? Does Austen plant clues to Willoughby's character early on?
6. Talk about the other characters, as well: Sir John Middleton and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jennings; John Dashwood; Mrs. Ferrars; and Lucy Steele. How does Austen portray them? What about Lucy, for instance, makes her seem insincere, even when we first meet her?
7. Austen explores the function of marriage in *Sense and Sensibility* (actually, in most if not all of her novels). What social constraints are placed on choosing a mate and for what reasons? Do similar restraints exist today?
8. What gave a woman advantages in the marriage market in Austen's time? What placed her at a disadvantage? Same for men: what made free choice in marriage difficult for them, as well?
9. In the end, does sense triumph over sensibility? Or do you think Austen is sympathetic to both perspectives? What does each sister come to learn from the other?
10. Do you find the ending satisfactory for both sisters? Do you feel the two make the right choice for happiness? Why or why not?

