

2015 specification
first exams in 2017 (2016 for AS)



Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*

Comprehensive Guide for AS/A Level

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Teacher's Introduction

This Comprehensive Guide has been written to support AS/A Level study of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility**. It is designed to be a cohesive and complementary element in the delivery of a scheme of work involving study of this text and provides an accessible, systematic analysis of the text and its author's style, purpose and context. Throughout, there are questions and discussion points for students to further engage with the text, encouraging individual analytical response and also providing starting points for small and large group discussion. **Plot Alerts!** in the Guide focus on points to consider about Austen's structure and characterisation. The structure enables chapter-by-chapter study as well as study focusing on a particular feature, such as the use of irony, as it appears throughout the narrative. Studies of secondary characters each begin with a 'quick reference' chart of key chapters. Also included is a comprehensive glossary of analytical terms, based on terms highlighted in bold throughout the guide, to help students become familiar with critical vocabulary and its application. To encourage students' additional independent study, there is a section offering suggestions for further reading, which can also form the basis of further group discussion. **The guide is divided into eight main sections:**

Section 1: Background, Context and Critical Reception

- Insights into the personal, cultural and political events that formed the background to the life of Jane Austen
- A chronology table, showing dates of selected significant events in the lifetime of Jane Austen
- An overview of 200 years of critical reception to the work of Jane Austen, with specific reference to *Sense and Sensibility*

Section 2: Plot Summary: 10 sections, each covering five chapters; including discussion points, activities, Plot Alerts and essay questions section:

- Plot summary for each chapter, with Commentary including discussion points and **Plot Alerts!**
- Location and chronology for each section
- 50 chapter-review essay questions

Section 3: Characters and Relationships

- 'Family tree' of character relationships
- Analysis of individual characters, including discussion points and **Plot Alerts!**

Section 4: Genre, Form and Narrative Structure

- Commentary on the development of the novel in eighteenth and early nineteenth century England
- Jane Austen's development of the form and structure of the novel

Section 5: Themes, Attitudes and Values, with discussion points and 'Investigating Further' activities

- Analysis of themes in *Sense and Sensibility*: truth, lies, secrecy and concealment; power and empowerment; the individual in society; reason versus romanticism; illness
- How attitudes and values contribute to character motivation and understanding of the society Austen portrays

Section 6: Austen's Language and Narrative Techniques

- How Austen creates an internal and external landscape for her characters, establishes point of view and engages the reader
- The narrator's voice: purpose and perspective; direct speech; free indirect discourse; grammar and syntax; balanced sentences; descriptive language; rhetorical style; foreshadowing; parallels; language choice as a guide to character; alliteration; creating ironic perspective; imagery, metaphor and similes; symbolism; the role of letters

Section 7: Was Jane Austen a Feminist?

- Consideration of the feminist perspective on characterisation and plot in *Sense and Sensibility*

Section 8: Glossary and Further Reading

- Glossary of key analytical terms
- Suggestions for further reading

Please note: This Comprehensive Guide is based on the Penguin Classics edition ISBN-13: 978-0-141-43966-2 (Reissued 2003) of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, edited by Ros Ballaster, as specified by the Eduqas Examination Board. All page, chapter and volume references are based on this edition of the text.

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Section 1: Background and Context



Jane Austen was born in 1775, the seventh of eight children of Reverend George Austen and his wife Cassandra. Cassandra (born in 1773), all the other children were like her, and neither Cassandra nor Jane had a long formal education. Her father had a library and it can be imagined that Jane took advantage of it. She experimented with writing from her early teenage years. About 1788–1793, are collectively known as her juvenilia. *Sense and Sensibility* was her first published work. It was published in three volumes in 1811. Jane Austen was 36 years old at the cost of publication. Austen insisted on anonymity and published only as 'A. Austen'. *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813 and *Emma* in 1815. *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were published posthumously in December 1817; another novel, *Lady Susan*, was written but never published.

Sense and Sensibility had gone through many revisions before it was published. Austen believes it began life in about 1795, as *Elinor and Marianne*, an epistolary novel – where we learn about the characters and plot through letters sent to one another. As Austen worked on revisions, it seems she found this structure less satisfying. She made a change that gave her the flexibility and ironic distance she needed. The novel is now told by an omniscient narrator or through dialogue. Some critics still show its epistolary origin in places and letters do still play a part in the narrative.

Jane Austen lived at a time of great political upheaval: April of the year she was born, the American War of Independence, which went on until 1783. The French Revolution, from 1789–1799, with the French King Louis XVI being executed in 1793 and Napoleon becoming Emperor of France in 1804 and on October 21st 1805, the same year he died, the Royal Navy defeated the Navies of France and Spain at the Battle of Trafalgar, under the leadership of Admiral Lord Nelson. 1811 saw the start of the Luddite protests against the use of new technologies in the textile industry, which were seen as a threat to the year, King George III's mental health, which had been a cause of concern for some time. At the point where the Prince of Wales was appointed Regent. The Prince Regent, George IV, read Austen's work and asked for *Emma*, published in 1815, to be dedicated to him. William Wilberforce wrote his *Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* in 1789, which was finally abolished in the British Empire in 1834.

Direct references to political events – other than Pitt the Younger's efforts to become Prime Minister of Parliament – do not intrude into the text of *Sense and Sensibility*. We do not see the world looming outside the door, or have characters tormented by the impact of war. Austen had brothers and a sister and her cousin Eliza de Feuillide's first husband was a Frenchman. Instead, Austen focuses on the lives and loves of a small group of people, in a small country gentleman's house. In this small world, Austen examines larger issues, of social responsibility and morality and of the impact of money, or the lack of it (poverty in an established welfare state). Pursuit of purely individual desires is seen as dangerous, not individual but as a potential threat to the structure of society, reflecting perhaps the social upheavals in France.

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Austen could also be seen as commenting on greater prejudices, in her observations of characters towards money. Fine lines are drawn because of wealth: John Darcy is seemingly respectable and responsible (in that he provides for his wife and estate), is shown to be questionable socially and morally because he neglects his duties, driven purely by his need to maintain status and wealth. Mrs Jennings is in a similar position because her husband earned his money 'in a low way' (p. 215). He tries to persuade her to marry Colonel Brandon as a husband, because he has social status and money. At this point, from a perspective to examine the position of women of the genteel class: the unmarried heroines in *Sense and Sensibility* have some choices in deciding the attitudes and values that guide their decisions and actions of male characters are significant factors in their lives. Elinor has to wait for Edward to declare his love; Marianne has to wait – in vain – for Willoughby to return. Suitability for marriage is largely decided by the fortunes they bring with them. As Jane Austen writes to Morton (p. 278) – women have little say in the matter, unless, like Lucy Steele, they are unscrupulous manipulators of people and events. However, as can be seen in the lives of the women, women could have more say than thanks to the growth of publishing and the popularity of the novel, the voice was being heard by a population that was increasingly literate. Frances Burney and Maria Edgeworth were published during Austen's lifetime, and their work; Austen, through the comparison of her own life and choices with theirs, was once again be inviting the reader to consider a wider issue than that first for her. With her expert skill as a writer, Austen could have chosen to write heated political tracts, but instead, commenting directly on the social issues of the day. Perhaps she knew the power of the libraries well enough to realise that the most effective way to not just reach the masses but to make them think (if they so chose), was to embed her observations about the world they knew: a case not of familiarity breeding contempt, but of giving families something to think about.

Resources / Further reading

- Sandock, Mollie: 'Jane Austen and the Political Passions': *Persuasions* Number 10, 1988. <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number10/sandock.htm>
- Butler, Marilyn, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press-Oxford University Press, 1993)
- Johnson, Claudia L, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995)
- For information on the Luddite protests see, for example: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luddism>



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Timeline of Selected Events during the Lifetime of Jane Austen

	Personal	Cultural
1775	December 16 th Jane Austen born at Steventon, Hampshire. The seventh of eight children: six brothers and one sister, Cassandra (b 1773)	Publication of Samuel Johnson's <i>A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland</i> April 23 rd Birth of William Turner, English Romantic artist
1776		June 11 th Birth of John Constable, English landscape painter
1778		Publication of Francis Burney's novel <i>Evelina</i>
1779		Publication of Johnson's <i>Lives of the Poets</i>
1782		Publication of Francis Burney's novel <i>Cecilia</i>
1783	October: Jane and her sister start formal schooling	
1786	End of Austen's formal schooling	
1788	Austen begins to write short pieces, collectively known as <i>Juvenilia</i> (writings from about 1788 – about 1793)	
1789		
1791		December 5 th Death of Mozart
1793		
1794		Publication of Ann Radcliffe's <i>Mysteries of Udolpho</i>
1795	Austen starts to write <i>Elinor and Marianne</i> (thought to be an early version of <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>)	
1796	October: Austen begins to write <i>First Impressions</i> (<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>)	
1797	August: Austen completes <i>First Impressions</i> : not published until publication	
1798/9	January: Austen starts work on revision of <i>Elinor and Marianne</i> Austen begins work on <i>Susan</i> (later <i>Northanger Abbey</i>)	
1800	Austen completes play <i>Sir Charles Grandison</i>	
1801	The Austen family moves to Bath	Publication of Maria Edgeworth's novel <i>Belinda</i>

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1802	December 2 nd Austen accepts a proposal of marriage from Harris Bigg-Wither but then changes her mind the next day	
1803	Austen sells <i>Susan (Northanger Abbey)</i> for publication but the novel is not published	
1804	Austen begins to write <i>The Watsons</i> but does not complete it	
1805	January 21 st Jane's father dies suddenly; family circumstances change for the worse	
1807	The family living in Southampton	
1809	Austen moves to Chawton, Hampshire, with her mother and sister; house owned by her brother Edward	
1810		September 29 th Birth of Elizabeth Gaskell
1811	February: Austen starts writing <i>Mansfield Park</i> November: Publication of <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	October Publication of <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>
1812		February 7 th Birth of Charles Dickens
1813	January: Publication of <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	May 22 nd Birth of Wilhelm Richard Wagner, German composer
1814	May: Publication of <i>Mansfield Park</i>	Mary Shelley begins to work on a story that becomes <i>Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus</i> (first published – anonymously – in 1818)
1815	August: Austen starts to write <i>Persuasion</i> December: Publication of <i>Emma</i>	
1816		April 21 st Birth of Charlotte Brontë
1817	January: Austen starts writing <i>Fanny Hill</i> (lost at her death) July: Death of Jane Austen , aged 41; buried at Winchester Cathedral; December: posthumous publication of <i>Northanger Abbey</i> and <i>Persuasion</i> . Henry Austen added a Preface, a 'Biographical Notice of the Author', which can be read at: http://www.austen.com/persuade/preface.htm	Publication of <i>Rob Roy</i> by Sir Walter Scott

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<http://www.janeaustensociety.org/>

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Critical views over time

Nineteenth century

Sense and Sensibility was Jane Austen's first published work. As Jane Austen wrote anonymously, in 1811. In 1812, anonymous reviews were favourable, finding that characters and events were realistic and entertaining.¹ It was also praised for its moral and educational value for young women, instructing them on how they should behave. Walter Scott admired the novel, particularly the portrayal of the character of Elinor. Austen's work dealt with the life of the middle-class genteel society that was a common view shared by many other critics, suggesting that Austen wrote about what she knew rather than taking on any 'bigger issues' of the day.² It is worth noting that Austen wrote about what was a familiar world to her audience, in contrast to the fantastical world of the gothic genre that Austen herself disliked. Charlotte Brontë does not seem to have shared Austen's view of her subject: writing in 1847, she saw limitations in Austen's approach: sharing the same view from the limited characters she portrayed.⁴ James Austen Leigh, Austen's nephew, wrote *Jane Austen: A Memoir* in 1899.⁵ This had a great impact on Jane Austen's reputation as a nineteenth-century writer, as he was keen to have her seen as 'dear Aunt Jane', the family friend writing around the daily responsibilities and social obligations of the family rather than as a professional writer. Other critics have defended her professionalism and the balance of feminine lightness of touch combined with sharpness of perception in the novels. Some have also commented that Austen's work, although it focuses on such a small range of themes, deals with themes that are universal and timeless.⁷

Twentieth century and into the twenty-first century

In the twentieth century, there was more assessment of the novels as individual works. Critics recognised Austen's skilful use of irony, her perceptive characterisation and the way she brought to her portrayal of nineteenth-century genteel society, although there was debate about whether Austen's concentration on this narrow field meant she could not be seen as a great novelist, as she was writing so perceptively about what she knew best,⁸ or that she *not* be seen as a great novelist, because she did not write about a wider world. The novels were written at a point of cultural transition between the Enlightenment ideas of the eighteenth century and the Romanticism of the nineteenth century and also at a time of great social change, so it is hard to know how much or how little Austen took notice of these changes. Henry James and other writers of the time praised her skill as an author;¹⁰ however, neither Mark Twain nor George Bernard Shaw, also both authors, could find anything to admire in any of Austen's work.¹¹

Much critical debate has centred on Austen's presentation of characters in the novels and how she uses them to communicate with the reader. There has also been critical comment on the controls point of view as the narrative, with the Dashwoods revealing characters we care about. Critical analysis of the character of Elinor has examined how this character's journey from self-knowledge,¹³ the extent to which she is a realist, and how she may act as Austen's conscience in the narrative.¹⁴ The relative attractiveness of the two Dashwood sisters has been debated too: the problem of making Fanny Dashwood interesting¹⁵ and the difficulty of preventing the more wayward, energetic Elinor from being attractive.¹⁶ Austen has been praised for her vivid portrayal of a character's inner life. E. M. Forster admired Austen's skill for the way her minor characters unobtrusively reveal themselves in the narrative,¹⁷ but there has been negative criticism of the portrayal of both Elinor and Colonel Brandon, with both being seen as good but dull.¹⁸ There is critical debate about the role of Elinor and Colonel Brandon's role in it, and general agreement that it is not the story of the Dashwoods.

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The title of the novel has been seen as evidence of Austen's **didactic** purpose – to inform her reader about appropriate attitudes and values, a moral stance which may be seen in the background of Anglican Christianity.²⁰ The title has been interpreted as being a play on the words 'sense' nor 'sensibility' are sufficient to provide on their own an adequate education. It has also been praised for how it sets out clearly the subjects for examination.²²

There has been critical debate about the link between *Sense and Sensibility* and *Marianne*, which Austen had written in 1795, in **epistolary** form – a novel in which the story is told through letters. This structure is in favour of using an **omniscient narrator** and dialogue. This is a variation in perspective; but some critics believe that the constraints of the epistolary form in the final published novel²³ – and letters do still play a significant part in the novel. It has also been recognised as being amongst the first writers to use the device of the omniscient narrator enabling the reader to have access to the characters' inner thoughts, particularly in the dialogue between John and Marianne. This skill in writing dialogue has been praised – the dialogue between John and Marianne in Chapter 2 being singled out for particular praise, for the way Austen allows the characters to reveal themselves. This is an outstanding example of Austen's use of irony.²⁶

Critical views of *Sense and Sensibility* have gained in number, momentum and variety over the two hundred years since its first publication and the debate continues into the twenty-first century. The novel has been subject to analysis from many different socio-cultural perspectives. There have been significant contributions from critics with a feminist point of view.²⁸ For all its perceived flaws, *Sense and Sensibility* has consistently remained on the reading list and has successfully extended its appeal in adaptations for television and film.

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Section 2: Plot Summary

Chapters 1-5

Plot Summary



Old Mr Dashwood dies. Henry Dashwood dies at Park but dies a year later. His son John and his wife Fanny move in with their young son. Due to inheritance laws and John's failure to marry, Mrs Dashwood (Henry's second wife) and her daughters Marianne and Margaret, have very little money. They must move out of Park and Fanny Dashwood offers them financial help. Mrs Dashwood accepts Mr. Cadleton's offer of Barton Cottage. She and her daughters move to Devon.

Mr. Dashwood will take Elinor and Marianne to Edward Ferrars. Elinor loves Edward but she is not sure if he is the right man for her. Marianne does not approve of suppressing her feelings for Edward (Chapter 4, p. 23). Edward is Fanny's brother. He is ambitious for Edward and want him to marry a wealthy woman who also has a good education. In John and Fanny's presence, Mrs Dashwood makes a point of inviting Edward to Barton Cottage. Marianne has doubts about Edward as a husband for her sister because of the romantic ideals that she believes in. The day comes for them to leave Northampton and they say a tearful farewell to the place that has been their home for over eleven years.

Commentary

Austen creates **dramatic tension** in Chapter 1 by using the **omniscient narrator** to introduce characters who are clearly defined and sharply contrasted and by starting the story in a place in the narrative. The uncertainty of the Dashwoods' future creates drama in the mind of the reader.

Who do we meet first in Chapter 1?

Elinor and Marianne are central characters but we don't get to meet them first. We meet characters who are secondary but significant in the lives of the Dashwoods first. This suggests their dependency on the decisions of other characters. We do not meet Edward Ferrars until the fourth page of Chapter 1. The character of Edward Ferrars is introduced on page 17. We know that he is the 'love interest' for Elinor but we are told of difficulties. What are these difficulties? Will they be overcome? At this point, we are given a critical piece of information from both the Dashwoods and from the reader. Although Elinor's anxieties have hinted that all may not be quite as it should be, we are now told that Edward Ferrars is not the man Elinor needs.

Note:

This literary device, called **misdirection** through the withholding of information, is a significant construction in *Sense and Sensibility*. Look out for other examples of 'misdirection' as you read Chapter 13, Chapter 18, p. 96; Chapter 43, p. 295.

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Chapter 2 gives us a prime example of Austen's use of irony, as John and Fanny should – or should not – be done for Mrs Dashwood and her daughters. We see the relationships between these women: Elinor's role as the voice of reason, Marianne dominated by their romantic sensibility and Margaret showing signs of having a bit of the same attitude. Through the language choices made by Austen in Chapter 3, we see the good-hearted concern of Sir John Middleton as Mrs Dashwood receives his offer of Barton Cottage. As Chapter 5 closes, we are beginning to sense which characters deserve criticism. Thanks to Austen's careful direction, we engage with the events as they unfold. We are given an insight into the attitudes and values of genteel nineteenth century England: the elaborate construct of rules, which codified behaviour. Austen has created a credible landscape, populated by a cast of intriguing, dynamic characters who are drawn into their lives and curious to know what will happen to them next.

Location and Chronology (Chapters 1–5)

The location is Norland Park, Sussex, the estate and long-established residence of the Dashwood family. Chapters 1–5 give the background to the reasons behind the change in the widowed Mrs Henry Dashwood and her three daughters having to move to Barton Cottage in Devonshire. Chapter 1 gives the chronology of events that lead to Sir John and his wife Fanny becoming the new owners. Inheritance laws mean that the estate is inherited by John's son Harry, who at the start of the narrative is still a young man. The daughters have no choice but to make preparations to leave Norland Park. In Chapter 2, the invitation of old Mr Dashwood, to give him companionship, and for one of the daughters, Henry Dashwood then inherits the estate. They remain at Norland for six months. In Chapter 3, Henry Dashwood, until Mrs Dashwood receives the offer of Barton Cottage. She accepts the offer, and agrees to rent the cottage 'for a twelvemonth' (Chapter 3).

Chapters 6–10

Plot Summary



In early September, Mrs Dashwood and her three daughters leave Norland and move to Barton Cottage in Devonshire. On their arrival, Sir John Middleton, the owner of the cottage, visits to welcome them and offer them a tour. The following day Lady Middleton comes to visit the Dashwoods. The Dashwoods go to visit the Middletons at Barton Cottage. Sir John introduces them to Mrs Jennings, who is Lady Middleton's friend. Mrs Jennings is a friend of Sir John's. Mrs Jennings is particularly attracted to Marianne. Marianne is pleased that Sir John is playing off the two daughters but thinks of him as old-fashioned. At Barton Cottage, Marianne discusses Colonel Brandon with Elinor. She does not accept that he could marry Marianne.

Elinor wonders how it is possible that Edward Ferrars has not yet come to visit them and hurts Marianne's feelings. She is carried home in the arms of a handsome stranger, Willoughby, and he is staying at Allenham with his aunt, Mrs Smith. On his arrival, Sir John says he is a good man. Over the following days, Willoughby visits frequently and he appears to be in love with Marianne, and Marianne makes it clear that she is in love with Willoughby. Elinor is concerned that Colonel Brandon is indifferent to Marianne's indifference to him. Sir John has hinted that he has been hurt in the past and he dislikes the Colonel.

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Commentary

The **omniscient narrator** is used to give us an insight into the feelings of the relocate to Devonshire. Apart from Mrs Dashwood, we hear no direct voice narrator, we learn of how the Dashwoods settle in to their new home, of the Middleton and the invitation to visit Barton Park; we get a sense of the impact may have on the lives of the tenants at Barton Cottage. We see the action in Chapter 7 entirely through the eyes of the narrator – just like Chapter 1, there is no dialogue in this chapter. In Chapter 8, after the narrator has given us further insight into the character and motivations of Mrs Jennings, the remainder of the chapter is a dialogue between Marianne, her mother and Elinor. For once, we see that Marianne and her mother are not of the same opinion, when Colonel Brandon and marriage are the topics for discussion.

By the end of Chapter 9, Edward is firmly placed as central to the action with all the graces of a gentleman, yet we learn that Elinor has contempt for his 'fashionable society'. After he leaves, Austen gives both Marianne and Elinor Marianne's unrestrained conversation with this handsome newcomer. We

Discussion point:

Study the characters of Sir John and Lady Middleton, Mrs Jennings and Colonel Brandon, as seen through the eyes of the narrator in Chapter 7. What words and phrases give us a sense of who these characters are and what their attitudes and values might be?

Marianne's impulsive, self-absorbed, and unreflective response to the narrative through the introduction of characters as Sir John and Mrs Jennings. Elinor's attitude to life could have a negative impact on Marianne. Colonel Brandon himself, but the narrator, and the subject, give us an insight into his character and values that motivate him. Austen's focus on Edward Ferrars as he stays at

Location and Chronology in Chapters 6–10

As in the earlier chapters, Austen takes care to place the characters and action. In Chapter 6, the narrator carries the action from Norland to Barton Cottage. In Barton Cottage and Barton Park are described in Chapter 6 and the hills for Chapter 9. We are told in Chapter 6 that the Dashwoods arrive at the cottage again, seasonal changes in weather will play a significant part in the plot. As *'we have now been here almost a fortnight'* (p. 40), *'the next day'* (p. 32 x2, p. 33), *'in the evening'* (p. 36), give us a clear understanding of the sequence of events.

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Chapters 11–15

Plot Summary



Once Marianne has recovered from her fall, Sir John Dashwood is included in all his plans for social gatherings. Elinor observes the growing attachment between Marianne and Willoughby. She is concerned at her sister's lack of judgment and takes no notice of her advice – she is too busy with her own feelings. Sir John Dashwood believes Marianne's behaviour to be the reason why she should hide her feelings. Elinor does not enjoy the company of the Middletons or Mr. Morton's pleasure in Colonel Brandon's company. She is aware that Marianne obviously has eyes only for Willoughby.

At Barton Park, the Colonel and Elinor do not see Marianne's belief that 'second attachments' are critical of Marianne but the Colonel sees something 'so amiable in the prejudice' and starts to talk about someone in his past who was like Marianne, but he suddenly dies. The following morning, Marianne tells Elinor that Willoughby has asked her to marry him. Marianne cannot understand her sister's negative reaction, until Elinor points out that she could not afford the expense of keeping a horse. Marianne reluctantly tells him to accept his gift. Elinor hears their conversation and is convinced that they are in love. She has seen Willoughby take a lock of Marianne's hair – further evidence of their love.

Elinor is embarrassed by Mrs Jennings' probing questions about who her lover is and Margaret betrays the fact that his name begins with F. Sir John makes them all to Whitwell, an estate owned by a relative of Colonel Brandon. The Colonel is with them, so when he receives a letter and has to leave immediately, his excursion has to be cancelled. Willoughby and Marianne criticise the Colonel. Mrs Jennings says the reason for the Colonel's sudden departure is most likely 'the daughter', Miss Williams. Sir John orders the carriages and Marianne accompanies him. Mrs Jennings discovers that they have visited Allenham, unchaperoned and alone (Willoughby's aunt and the owner of the house). Elinor is horrified at the behaviour. Mrs Dashwood has plans to alter Barton Cottage but Willoughby says it is 'faultless'. She promises not to change anything and he promises to see them at 10 o'clock, after the Dashwoods have returned from a visit to Barton Park. They go with the rest of the family to Barton Park. On returning to the cottage, Willoughby is by the door. Mrs Dashwood thinks he has visited Marianne to propose to her. She tells them in tears and Willoughby, obviously embarrassed, says his aunt is sending him on business and he has no idea when he will be back. Mrs Dashwood tries to tell Elinor, although she is very concerned, says she will try to keep an open mind about the reasons for Willoughby's sudden departure.

Commentary

In Chapter 11, while the narrator still has a significant role in 'setting the scene' for our perspective, Austen allows us to hear more of the voices of the characters through dialogues that are key to our understanding of their attitudes and values, and their relationships. The narrator's perspective in the early part of Chapter 11 gives us a sense that for the Dashwoods is developing. Willoughby is now an established guest at Barton Park. His 'animated admiration' of Marianne and her 'affection' for him (p. 54). The narrator's perspective into the other characters at Barton Park.

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Discussion point:

How does Austen use the narrator's perspective to contrast Elinor and Marianne's feelings at this point?

Analyse the language choices Austen makes to characterise Mrs Jennings and her daughter Lady Middleton (pp. 55-56). How do these choices contribute to our understanding of these characters? How is the narrator being used to guide our point of view?



So far, we have been introduced to Colonel Brandon (both senses, according to Marianne!) friend of Elinor. In Chapter 11 (p. 56), the Colonel speaks directly to Elinor. Although they are at a social occasion, this is a confidential conversation between two people who know one another. The Colonel's speech reveals that, although (p. 39), he has genuinely compassionate concerns, he should not be totally condemned. Chapter 12 features dialogue between the characters affected by the events in London. Sir John and Lady Middleton, Mrs Jennings and Willoughby all have a say about the situation. In Chapter 14 (p. 77), Mrs Jennings is busy with her own concerns; the Colonel's sudden departure; Elinor's concern for Marianne. Whereas we hear Marianne's point of view, Austen uses the narrator to enable us to see the situation from a different perspective.

Plot alert!

In an example of Austen using one of her characters to 'misdirect' her audience, Mrs Jennings tells Elinor that the Colonel has an illegitimate (a 'natural') daughter, Miss Williams. We already know from Chapter 11 that the Colonel himself, that there is something in his past that is still causing him unhappiness; Austen uses this to give us a slightly sceptical acceptance of Mrs Jennings' opinion.

Willoughby has already shown himself to be skilled at 'tuning in' to what Marianne wants to hear (see Chapter 10, p. 49, where the narrator reports that Willoughby becomes Marianne's point of view, because he shrewdly knows Marianne wants him to be her romantic hero and it suits his own purpose to play the part). On pp. 73-74, Willoughby's spontaneous style of expression but reveals that he is using his charm to manipulate Mrs Dashwood. When he states that the cottage has 'one claim on my affection' it disarms her, as she takes this as confirmation of his love for Marianne.

By the end of Chapter 15, two of the main male characters have left Devon. Marianne is inconsolable, and is not inclined to be consoled, over Willoughby's departure. Elinor is perplexed about whether there is an engagement between Willoughby and Marianne. The business in London remains shrouded in mystery. The social circle has collapsed. Sir John and Mrs Jennings as keen as ever to involve themselves in the lives of the Dashwoods. Lady Middleton remains coldly aloof.

Location and Chronology in Chapters 11-15

We are now in October (see p. 54). Barton Park continues to be the centre of the social world. A week after the Colonel's departure, Willoughby is visiting. The day after, he too leaves Devonshire for London. For the moment, Devonshire is a place of events.



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Chapters 16–20

Plot Summary



Willoughby has gone; Marianne is heartbroken. Elinor and Edward try to work out a way to help her. Edward unexpectedly comes to visit. Elinor and Marianne discuss their differing reactions to Edward. Marianne is struck by how indifferent Edward is towards Elinor. He seems in low spirits. Elinor and Edward discuss the link between Edward's feelings and Marianne's. Marianne confesses to him her belief that 'she will love more than once in their life' (p. 97). Edward feels that at times, she has been too idealistic. Edward remarks that it appears Elinor is converting Marianne to 'general civility'. Elinor's own shyness is sometimes mistaken for indifference.

convention. On returning from a walk to the village one morning, Edward says he has been pleased by the landscape. Marianne launches into another speech about the landscape but he quickly reminds her that he knows nothing about 'the beauty of the landscape'. Elinor tries to explain Edward's attitude, he is quite dismissive of her and her feelings. To change the subject, she draws attention to a ring Edward is wearing. Edward says it is a family ring. Although he goes along with the suggestion that the hair belongs to his father, his embarrassment suggests that it does not. Marianne believes the hair to be her own, but she has no idea how he got the hair. Sir John and Mrs Jennings arrive and dance at Barton Park the following evening. Marianne is not enthusiastic. Even in Willoughby's absence, there will be plenty of people to dance with.

Edward enquires about Willoughby and is surprised by the strength of Marianne's feelings for him. At the end of a week, Edward decides he has to leave. Once he has left, Marianne has very mixed feelings about him, to spare her family any distress. One morning, Mr and Mrs Jennings arrive and bring with them Mr and Mrs Palmer. Charlotte Palmer is Edward's daughter. She is a complete contrast to her sister, being lively, always laughing and cheerful despite the apparent coldness of her husband. Charlotte is pregnant with her first child. Mr Jennings confides, much to the outrage of Lady Middleton, that 'She expects a boy' (p. 105). The following day, the Dashwoods visit Barton Park. Charlotte is delighted to hear that they will all meet again in London. Just as when Colonel Brandon made his proposal in Chapter 13 (p. 66), Elinor says there is no possibility of their going to London. Mrs Palmer lets slip that she has heard that Marianne is supposed to be married to John Willoughby. Elinor is surprised that Charlotte should have found out the information – and is even more surprised that the information has apparently come from Colonel Brandon. Charlotte gives a good report of Edward. He has little direct or indirect knowledge of him. Elinor is glad to hear of whatever news she can get.

Commentary

In Chapters 16–20, Austen frequently gives the characters their own voice. Elinor and Marianne play a significant part, either giving an overview of events or giving insights into the plot. The narrator opens Chapter 16 with an **ironic** observation of Marianne's belief that she will love more than once in their life. Marianne has gone.

Discussion point:

How does Austen convince us of Marianne's indifference?

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In Chapter 16 (pp. 84–85), Elinor asks the logical question: after several chapters of speculation about whether Edward and Marianne are engaged, she suggests to her mother that she asks Marianne directly whether they are engaged. Mrs Dashwood responds quite forcefully that she will not ask Marianne a question that would cause Marianne distress.

Plot alert!

How does Elinor's logical request to her mother, and her mother's rejection of the idea, connect to the fact that Mrs Dashwood had agreed to ask Marianne the question at this point, what would the impact be on the remaining narrative?

In Chapter 19, the narrator shows that, just as Elinor tries to think the best of Edward's behaviour, by convincing herself that 'his mother is the cause of it' (p. 100), even though she does not really know Mrs Ferrars' character. Chapter 19 also shows that the birth of her son will have significant impact on Elinor and Marianne. By introducing three primary male characters into the Dashwoods' social circle in Devonshire, Austen has done little to reassure Elinor and Marianne. Willoughby's absence continues to cause a clear ideological 'doctrine', which stems from the desire to preserve the family's reputation by continuing its tradition as a social being, observing the rules of propriety – but Elinor does not yet acknowledge as necessary. The introduction of the third marriage (the others being John and Fanny Dashwood and Sir John and Lady Middleton) is recommended as a state likely to increase understanding, compassion and

Plot alert!

Austen uses Elinor's impression of Mrs Ferrars as a credible reason for Edward's behaviour. Elinor wants to think well of Edward – but perhaps more importantly from the point of view of the reader, she is less curious about finding out what the real reason might be.

Location and Chronology in Chapters 16–20

The location continues to be Devonshire but the mention of other locations – Bath, London, Magna in Somersetshire, London and Plymouth – indicate widening horizons. The chronology: events take place from the day after Willoughby's departure, to the day after Edward Ferrars, his week-long stay at Barton Cottage and the day after

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Chapters 21–25

Plot Summary



The Palmers leave Barton Park and it is not long before guests arrive: Anne (Nancy) and Lucy Steele, and Mrs Jennings. They quickly ingratiate themselves with Elinor by spending a lot of time with her children and so on. Sir John is delighted with the Miss Steeles too, but Elinor is not impressed. The Miss Steeles are the Dashwoods leaving Norland and settling in Devon. Elinor is particularly interested in whether they have any children. She is convinced that the young women are now all settled in Devon, so that from then on, they will spend part of the year in Devon every day together.

Sir John reveals to Nancy what he knows to be a 'great secret': the relationship between Elinor and Edward Ferrars. Nancy tells Edward that he was a pupil of their uncle, Mr Pratt, in Plymouth. Lucy tells Elinor that she knows more than she is saying. Marianne's indifference to Elinor has to bear the majority of their attention. One day, Lucy entrusts Elinor with a lock of Edward Ferrars' hair. Elinor is 'mortified, shocked, confounded' (p. 129). Elinor is convinced that Edward truly loves her and has somehow got himself engaged for the last four years. Lucy tells Elinor that Edward holds a lock of her hair. Elinor realises that Lucy may well be jealous of her, because Edward holds a lock of her hair. Lucy's disclosure of the engagement to Elinor is proof enough of this. Elinor's heart is 'unwounded' (p. 136). When another chance comes for them to be concerned she might have offended Elinor: 'there seemed to me to be a manner...' (p. 140). Elinor assures her this is not the case and that their secret money, and fears that Mrs Ferrars will disapprove of the engagement, are not. Lucy says that she has a jealous temperament but Edward 'has never given me the constancy of his feelings. On hearing this, Elinor does not know 'whether Lucy is reluctant to do anything hasty, for fear of alienating Mrs Ferrars, or whether Edward in favour of his younger brother, Robert. Lucy has not met Robert and a great coxcomb' (p. 142). Mrs Jennings says Lucy is 'a sly little creature' (p. 142). Mrs Jennings is able to find out who her 'beau' is. Nancy says she expects him to be 'quite as good as Miss Dashwood's' (p. 142). At this, Elinor blushes and Lucy bites her lip and Lucy asks Elinor to use her influence with John Dashwood to persuade him to stay at Norland, as Edward wants to make the Church his profession. Elinor refuses to use her influence. She also refuses to give an opinion when asked by Lucy if she should marry. Lucy says she would value Elinor's advice, as she is 'an indifferent person' (p. 142). The Dashwoods will be in London in the winter. Elinor replies, 'Certainly not' (p. 142). Elinor (insincere) regret and says she has accepted an invitation to stay with relatives in Devon. Elinor knows Edward will be in Devon in February. The conversation confirms Elinor's suspicions. The Steeles have ingratiated themselves so successfully with Elinor that their stay at Barton Park is extended for two months, until Christmas. Mrs Dashwood, Elinor and Marianne make plans to go to London after all. They will stay with Mrs Jennings at her house in Portman Square. Marianne is keen to go, as Willoughby will be there. Elinor is initially equally keen not to go, because of her feelings for Edward. They set off with Mrs Jennings in the first week of January, while the Middletons about a week later.

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Commentary

There are a lot of changes: new characters and new information at the start. Austen uses the narrator to economically – and with the irony of an omniscient narrator – tell us what is happening.

Austen’s introduction of Lucy Steele signals a change in the dynamic of the novel. Edward, now has a declared rival for his affections – and one who on the face of it has a prior claim to them. Edward is absent, so questions remain unanswered. Mr. Jennings joins himself with the Steeles at Barton Park and Elinor does not share any of her feelings. John continues to be the main force behind social events; Lady Middleton and her children are present – a ‘foible’ that Lucy and Marianne exploit. By the end of the novel, Marianne are on their way to London with Mr. Jennings, temporarily separating the Steeles and the Middletons, and for a while leaving them from their mother and sister.

Plot alert!

Chapter 22 p. 122: Mrs. Jennings, the background. In the first paragraph of Chapter 22, the interaction between Elinor and Lucy Steele, saying she ‘never had much toleration for any thing but the inferiority of, even difference of taste from herself...’ This nicely sets up our expectations for the rest of the novel and Lucy. It also enables Austen to foreground Elinor as both observer and player as Lucy.

Location and Chronology: Chapters 21–25

At the end of Chapter 24, we know the Steeles will be at Barton Park until Christmas. In these chapters are all in domestic settings – the likely weather in December is cold but the domestic setting also allows focus on the domain of the women in the novel. The story starts at the end of December and ends with Elinor and Marianne beginning their journey with Mrs Jennings in the first week of January, with the prospect of the Mr. Jennings following them ‘in about a week’. Lucy expects Edward to be in London by the end of the month.

Chapters 26–30

Plot Summary



It is early January and the scene changes to London. On the journey there, Marianne is silent, full of hope that Edward will visit. Willoughby. Elinor reflects on how odd it is that she is in the carriage with Mrs Jennings, a woman so different from her. She compares her own subdued feelings about Edward with the excitement about Willoughby. Elinor thinks that she has more chance to find out about Willoughby. She is aware, if she finds out anything bad about him, that she will be able to tell Elinor. Elinor writes to Mrs. Dashwood. Marianne writes to her.

Willoughby does not visit but Colonel Brandon does – he has been told of the situation. The following day there is still no contact from Willoughby. Elinor decides to wait for confirmation of the marriage. When she writes to Mrs Dashwood to tell her that Marianne is well, Colonel Brandon visits nearly every day. Willoughby does not visit again. Elinor and Marianne argue about Colonel Brandon. Lady Middleton, now in London too, invites them to a party. On returning from the party, when she finds out Willoughby was invited but did not attend. Elinor decides to write to her mother. As she finishes the letter, Colonel Brandon arrives with news that the marriage of Marianne and Willoughby is the subject of gossip. Colonel Brandon admits that he loves Marianne. Elinor tries to let him down gently by saying that although she is sure that Willoughby and Marianne love one another. A few days after the party, she accompanies Lady Middleton to a party. Willoughby is there but is extremely

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Marianne suffers an emotional collapse and is taken back to Mrs Jennings' home. In the morning Marianne receives an '*impudently cruel*' letter from Willoughby, revealing his true feelings. Marianne says that Elinor cannot possibly understand the depth of her feelings. Elinor was no engagement – Elinor is amazed that Marianne wrote to him: only to hurt him. Marianne thinks about Sophia Grey and her influence on Willoughby. Marianne returns home to Barton Cottage. Mrs Jennings comes in, knowing what has happened. Marianne's behaviour is inexcusable, even if there was no formal engagement. She thinks that Elinor now has a chance to gain Marianne's love. At teatime, Colonel Brandon reveals the truth about the engagement between Willoughby and Sophia Grey. Elinor says Marianne is to blame for her own excuses for Willoughby.

Plot alert!

Austen has left the character of Mrs Dashwood in Devonshire, where she has been seen from Marianne's points of view. What effect does this have, when the sisters argue? And in what other ways Mrs Dashwood's being in Devonshire contributes to plot development?

Comment



Discussion point:

How does the use of the **omniscient narrator** here give us a view of all that happens during the journey, which would not be possible, if we just heard about it from one of the characters? What is revealed of the attitudes and states of mind of the two sisters?

On the three-day journey to London (Chapter 26), the omniscient narrator is used to describe events and feelings.

As Elinor and Marianne move to London, Colonel Brandon moves into a more central position. It is him who communicates important information and feelings. Quite a challenge!

Elinor and Marianne's relationship becomes more strained. In Chapter 27, (pp. 161–162), they argue. Chapter 28 shows Marianne's passionate outburst when she is in a room that is already '*insufferably hot*'. In Chapter 29, out, '*Tell me Willoughby; for heaven's sake tell me*'

(p. 168). In Chapter 29, the narrator suggests that we can only guess '*with what feelings*' Marianne read Willoughby's letter to Marianne, but then goes into some detail about Marianne's outrage. Marianne comments, '*Poor Elinor! How unhappy I make you!*' (p. 173). What attitude in Marianne?

This is not a very happy section of the narrative: by the end of it, Marianne is a lot unhappier than she was at the beginning. Elinor is also unhappier – she has the continuing concern about Edward and all her worst fears about Willoughby have been proved correct. Colonel Brandon is suffering because of his seemingly hopeless love for Marianne and he also suffers from seeing her suffer. Mrs Jennings is outraged at Willoughby's treatment of Marianne and is kept cheerful largely by the hope that Colonel Brandon may now be able to win Marianne's love. Although it is not appreciated by Marianne, Mrs Jennings' motherly concern for her wellbeing is a welcome example of warm compassion and love in an otherwise bleak prospect.

Discussion

Look at the text on pp. 155–156. What is the role of the omniscient narrator? How does it inform the reader? What does it not provide? Looking at the text, what point of view does the omniscient narrator have?

Location and Chronology in Chapters 26–30

It is January and London is the new centre of Elinor and Marianne's social life. The Palmers, the Middletons, Willoughby and Colonel Brandon are all there 'from home', but for all the comfort of Mrs Jennings' house in Berkley Street, London signals an increase in discomfort for them both.

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Chapters 31–35

Plot Summary



Elinor encourages Marianne to talk about her mood and attitude are very unstable. Jennings 'cannot feel'. Elinor reflects on her misjudgment. Marianne is still hoping for when Mrs Jennings instead brings her a letter. Marianne thinks she is cruel. Events have letter, which is full of her expectations of with Willoughby. Elinor writes to her mother what happened.

Colonel Brandon visits once again; Marianne. Colonel, in a long, hesitant speech, tells Elinor Brandon and Eliza Williams, in the hope that Marianne, it will help her to feel less distressed.

situation. After Elinor tells Marianne the story of the two Elizas, she seems her attitude to Colonel Brandon becomes kinder. Mrs Dashwood replies to Elinor it is better if they stay in London. John and Fanny Dashwood will be in London. Mrs Dashwood would like Elinor and Marianne to meet them. The sisters each think it will be best for the other. Sir John and Charlotte Palmer are outraged by Willoughby. Typically, Lady Middleton does not trouble herself to be concerned. Colonel Brandon makes 'delicate enquiries' about Marianne.

There is an 'increase of goodwill' from Marianne to the Colonel. Mrs Jennings and starts to think that Colonel Brandon might marry Elinor. In early February, Edward and Anne Grey marry. The Miss Steeles arrive in London. At a jeweller's shop, Elinor meets Robert Ferrars (although they don't know who he is until Chapter 36, p. 233). They then meet John Dashwood. He visits them the next day. Colonel Brandon asks to know about his status – if rich, John will be civil to him. He asks Elinor about her and recommends her to marry him. John talks of the preparations for the marriage of the heiress, Miss Morton. He then talks of changes to Norland, and of how Mrs Dashwood has something to Elinor and Marianne in her will. He meets and approves of Sir John. Fanny visits Mrs Jennings and Lady Middleton. She and Lady Middleton do not like Fanny. Elinor would love to ask Fanny if Edward is in London. Lucy visits and unintentionally helps Elinor, by telling her about him in front of Elinor. Lucy visits and unintentionally helps Elinor, by telling her about him in front of Elinor. John and Fanny Dashwood prepare to give a dinner for the Middleton family. Mrs Dashwood, the Miss Steeles and Colonel Brandon will be there but Edward and Anne Steele are invited to stay with the Dashwoods, and it is their status as guests that prompts Fanny to add them to her guest list for the dinner. Mrs Ferrars is so rude to Elinor that she bursts into tears. Colonel Brandon goes to comfort her. John Dashwood recommends Elinor to Colonel Brandon. Elinor is glad to have met Mrs Ferrars and can be so pleased with how Mrs Ferrars treated her, when this is only because of the engagement to Edward, and because she is not Elinor! Lucy comes to visit and afterwards, Edward arrives. He is very embarrassed and soon leaves. Marianne is angry at Elinor's apparent coolness towards Edward.

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Discussion point:

As you read Colonel Brandon's story, note signs of hesitation in his speech. How does Austen use this device to give insight into Colonel Brandon's character?

Chapters 31 and 32 both start with the Marianne's state of mind. In Chapter Marianne, Colonel Brandon makes his Elinor of the story of the two Elizas.

By contrast, the speech of John Dashwood has no real concern for his half-sister's wealth and status of the company the

Lucy reveals a thinly-veiled malicious delight in her apparent triumph over result, over Elinor – at the dinner party. Austen gives Lucy the longest speech Elinor (consider why this might be). In Chapter 34, Austen again shows her irony and dramatic tension, as she gathers Elinor, Lucy, Edward and Maria at the end of Chapter 35, Elinor and Maria are once again in conflict with one another. Elinor believes Elinor to be guilty of an inexplicable reserve towards Edward, and Elinor to change her opinion, because of her promise to Lucy. John and Fanny Dashwood reappeared in the narrative with the attitudes and values they displayed in the past and very similar to those of Mrs Ferrars, Lady Middleton and Lucy Steele. Colonel Brandon; he continues to make 'unobtrusive enquiries' about her well-being. He married Miss Grey and carried her off to Combe Magna.

Location and Chronology in Chapters 31–35

London remains the setting for events in Chapters 31–35: Mrs Jennings' house near Portman Square, the Middletons in Conduit Street, John and Fanny Dashwood in Palmers in Hanover Square, the Steeles staying at their cousin's house in Bath as well as Gray's jeweller's shop in Sackville Street, the Exeter Exchange, and the Street are all mentioned. Mrs Dashwood remains in Devonshire, at Barton. Elinor Willoughby marries Miss Grey in early February, two weeks after Marianne's. Fanny Dashwood's dinner party takes place on a Tuesday, shortly after the opening of the shop.

Colonel Brandon's story of the two Elizas has a chronology extending from the time of the death of Brandon are cousins and close in age, having played together as children. Elinor is seventeen to the Colonel's elder brother. Two years later, she is divorced; then she returns to England and six months after that, he finds her. She dies, leaving Elinor in his care. Colonel Brandon inherits Delaford, on the death of his brother, Edward. Elinor, fourteen, 'three years ago', he moves her from school to the care 'of a very respectable family'. She stays there for two years but then, 'last February, almost twelve months back' she writes a letter from her in October, the letter he received at Barton Park in Chapter 31.

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Chapters 36–40

Plot Summary



Charlotte Palmer gives birth to a son. A lot of her time with her daughter and Elinor and Charlotte have to spend more with Lady Middleton, Lucy and Nancy than that nobody likes. Much to Fanny Dashwood and Marianne are invited to a musical evening with friends. They attend the evening; Marianne goes; Elinor attends, though she is not. Elinor's attention wanders and she sees her brother at the jeweller's shop. John Dashwood meets Robert Ferrars. He is very self-opinionated.

John Dashwood does not tolerate his views on the matter and cottages, as he name-drops to show off his high society. John Dashwood would like to invite Elinor and Marianne to stay in Chapter 36. Fanny Dashwood is expert at changing John's mind. She says to Lucy and Nancy Steele. She writes the invitation to Lucy and Nancy the next day to Elinor, who takes it as evidence that, after all, Lucy has the approval of her prospective sister-in-law.

Mrs Jennings returns to Berkley Street and the Dashwood sisters no longer stay at Conduit Street with the Middletons and the Miss Steeles. About three weeks later, Mrs Jennings comes back from a visit to Charlotte to say that Lucy and Nancy have been as Fanny has reacted with '*violent hysterics*' (p. 242) to Nancy's disclosure of Edward's engagement. Elinor is happy to find that Mrs Jennings does not think she has any part in the matter involving Edward. Elinor's feelings are mixed: she tries not to get her hopes up about marrying Lucy after all. She feels some compassion for Edward, not much for Fanny and Mrs Ferrars. Elinor realises that she has to tell Marianne the truth before she hears about it from anyone else, and she needs to make sure that she does not appear against Edward or reveal that she is distressed for Elinor. She tells Marianne of Edward's engagement '*impetuous grief*'; but Marianne '*listened with horror and cried excessively*' (p. 242). Marianne thinks of Edward as another Willoughby. Marianne is shocked to find that Elinor has had knowledge of the engagement secret for four months. She feels guilty that she has kept it from her, while all the time she has carried this knowledge. Marianne decides that Edward cannot have been that strong; otherwise, how could she be so calm. Elinor makes an emotional speech, where she reveals how deep her love for Edward is and asks her to keep silent. Marianne realises just how self-absorbed and '*barbarous*' Elinor is.

John Dashwood visits to give Fanny an update about Fanny's sufferings – as Mrs Jennings wonders what will happen to Edward. She does not know if Edward's brother Robert is still alive. John Dashwood thinks Edward has been foolish. Mrs Jennings says that Edward behaved honourably. Three days after the news of Edward's situation is given, Elinor and Marianne meet Nancy Steele while out walking. She confirms to Elinor that Edward has been disinherited. Elinor is horrified when Nancy reveals that she eavesdropped on Lucy and Edward.

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Nancy says Edward is going to Oxford to study to become a clergyman. Elinor asks Lucy to put in a good word to Sir John or the Palmers, to try to get Edward home. After two months in London, Marianne really wants to go home. Charlotte gives birth to a son, which is a joy to Cleveland, with her new baby and invites Elinor and Marianne to join her at Cleveland, which would take them part way back to Barton Cottage. Elinor and Marianne is reluctant because Cleveland is in Somersetshire, the location of Willoughby's home. Colonel Brandon speaks to Elinor, asking her to pass on his offer of a living at Delaford. Mrs Jennings has misunderstood the conversation and has proposed to Elinor. Elinor tells Edward about the living. He goes to thank Mrs Jennings that the Colonel's offer was not one of marriage. Mrs Jennings is relieved that the living will be enough for Edward and Lucy to live on, even though the Colonel's offer was not one of marriage.

Commentary

Austen uses the narrator to provide the sequence of events in the first half of the novel, to enable an insight into the thoughts of Elinor, Marianne, the Miss Steeles and the prospect of having to spend more time in one another's company. The best of the novel is having had to put up with the 'emptiness and conceit' of Rosamunde. In the evening, she then has to admit that Lucy's plans seem to be working. The engagement is used by Austen to compare Elinor and Marianne's attitudes about the truth of Edward's situation, it is as if Elinor suddenly tires of her dreams: '...after all that is bewitching in the idea of a single and constant attachment, one's happiness depending entirely on a particular person, it is not meant – it is not to be so...' (Chapter 37, p. 246). Marianne is conscious that her conduct is Elinor's: 'she felt it with all the pain of continual self-reproach...but it brought on without the hope of amendment...' (Chapter 38, pp. 253). What does Austen show?

As has been noted before, Austen often uses the narrator not only to take up the character, but also to give an economical summary of events, and this technique is used in two pages of Chapter 39. In Chapter 40, Austen gives Elinor and Edward a chance to talk alone together – but, ironically, only so that Elinor can convey to Edward Colonel Brandon's offer of the living at Delaford, giving Edward the means to marry Lucy forever.

By the end of Chapter 40, the secret is out about Edward's engagement to Lucy. He has taken Holy Orders, for he now needs a profession, as he has been disinherited. Colonel Brandon has given him the chance to earn a living afterwards, with the offer of a living at Delaford. Elinor and Marianne are hoping to go back to Barton Cottage; Charlotte and Mrs Jennings make at least part of the journey possible. John and Fanny Dashwood had their hopes shattered and their pride has taken a serious knock. Mrs Jennings is relieved that Edward and Lucy will marry and go to live at the Delaford parsonage.

Location and Chronology: Chapters 36–40

London, and the house of Mrs Jennings, the Middletons, the Palmers and the location of the events, with talk of Cleveland, Delaford and Oxford extend the section of the narrative. We are told that Charlotte gives birth 'within a few days' of Elinor, Lucy, Edward and Marianne. Two weeks later, Elinor and Marianne are in 'a quiet street' (p. 241). At the start of Chapter 39, the Palmers are making plans to go to Devon of March, for Easter. Edward is soon to leave for Oxford to study to become a clergyman 'two or three months' (p. 273) before he is ordained. Mrs Jennings is still content that Edward and Lucy at Delaford parsonage before Michaelmas – Michaelmas is the time when the year begins in the old calendar, on 29 September.

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Chapters 41–45

Plot Summary



Edward conveys his thanks to Colonel Brandon for his apparent happiness to Lucy. Lucy is confident that they will be married and living in Devon by September. Elinor feels she must visit Lucy for a week since the start of her 'indisposition'. Mrs Jennings and Mrs Ferrars are not in favour of the engagement between Edward and Lucy, but neither nor Mrs Jennings can be persuaded to change her mind. Fanny but meets John as he is coming to see her. He expresses his regret at the fact that Edward is not living to Edward. He is suffering because of Edward's behaviour. Elinor is surprised: surely Edward has 'escaped'.

Early in April Elinor, Marianne and Mrs Jennings start their journey to Cleveland, accompanied by Charlotte and her baby son. Mr Palmer and Colonel Dashwood arrive. Cleveland is eighty miles from Barton Cottage and thirty from Combe Martin. Marianne goes out for a walk. The following day she is prevented from going out by bad weather. Mr Palmer and Colonel Brandon arrive. The weather is still bad. Mr Palmer is unfavourably with Edward. Colonel Brandon tells Elinor of the plans for a parsonage for Edward. As a result of walking in damp conditions, Marianne is worse.

The next day, Marianne is worse. The doctor talks of 'infection', and Charlotte asks the baby to stay with relatives, with the promise that Mr Palmer will follow in a few days. Mrs Jennings is truly kind-hearted, for instead of going with her daughter Marianne. Mr Palmer goes to join his wife but Mrs Jennings persuades Colonel Brandon to stay. Mrs Jennings is convinced she will get well quickly but Mrs Jennings is convinced she will not. Brandon agrees. Marianne does seem to get better but then suddenly becomes worse. Brandon goes to fetch Mrs Dashwood. The doctor tries another treatment to slowly improve. Elinor listens anxiously for the sound of the coach bringing her mother. She hears a coach arrive and rushes to meet it – only to be confronted by a man who reluctantly agrees to let Willoughby explain his behaviour. He admits that his fear of poverty made him leave her and marry Miss Grey. Elinor agrees to let Willoughby stay. He leaves, saying he cannot bear to think of Marianne. Willoughby has gone, Elinor realises that she is still influenced by her appearance and graceful manners. She goes back to Marianne, who is just getting better. Mrs Dashwood arrives and there is a tearful reunion between them. Later, Mrs Dashwood says that Colonel Brandon has told her that he loves Marianne. She is still in love with Willoughby. Elinor hopes Colonel Brandon will marry Marianne, feeling 'a pang for Willoughby' (p. 316).

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Commentary

In Chapter 41, Elinor feels obligated to visit Fanny to see how she is; Maria as ever not to let propriety dictate what she does or doesn't do, and in this with Mrs Jennings, who heartily dislikes Fanny and won't visit her either. It again pointing out the difference between Elinor's and Marianne's points of view versus individual will; this contrast is continued in Chapter 42, when, on the Cleveland, Marianne's sensibility appears as strong as ever. The chapter ends as Marianne's state of mind starts to affect her physical wellbeing. Marianne is symbolic of the destructive power of her romantic ideals but is also used by Elinor's character: her devotion to her sister and her overconfidence in her are already on shaky emotional ground, because of Marianne's illness and because of the coincidence that has made Willoughby aware of Marianne's illness and become a source of confusion. Her agreeing to let him go is based not just on a rational decision but also realises she is not immune to his charms. Her outrage at his behaviour shows her understanding of why he did, and to even find mitigating circumstances.

Plot alert

Austen uses Elinor not just as 'audience' but also in the role of interrogator, to clear up an ambiguity: 'Why was it necessary to call?' (p. 302)... 'But you have not explained to me the particulars how you heard of her illness' (pp. 307–308).

Why is it important from the reader's point of view that Elinor has this extra role?

What is the coincidence that has made Willoughby aware of Marianne's illness? (see page 307 for coincidences!)

This section of the narrative takes us on a roller-coaster ride of emotions: sorrow for Edward and Lucy, confusion for John Dashwood, distress for his wife and children, and for Mrs Jennings and Charlotte at the prospect of returning to Cleveland with Edward from Mr Palmer, sharing the same prospect and ultimately, Mrs Dashwood's realization that Colonel Brandon loves Marianne. But most significantly, Chapter 44 contains a high level of tension, on the same level as Chapter 28, but extended (Chapter 44 is over 10 pages long). All the elements and motivations of Willoughby's version of events to be revealed by both Elinor and the reader. Marianne's illness and recovery, tracked through another series of lows and highs, as she falls ill, seems to recover, then becomes a symbolic start her true recovery, '...awakening, refreshed by so long and so complete a rest'. Willoughby has left her life forever. Willoughby, tormented by the idea that he has become Colonel Brandon's wife, rushes away from Cleveland and out of the country.

Location and Chronology: Chapters 41–45

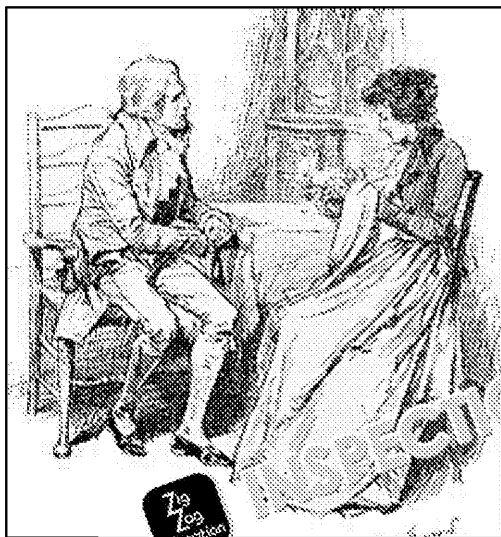
Chapter 41 sees the final stage of Elinor and Marianne's stay in London. The plan to return to Cleveland, made by Charlotte Palmer in Chapter 39, is fulfilled in Chapter 41. They leave for Cleveland in 'very early April' for the two-day journey to Somerset. Four days after the journey, Marianne is ill for about a week and then starts to recover just as Willoughby quits Cleveland. She is brought from her illness by Colonel Brandon. Chapter 43 has many revelations and night, Elinor waits anxiously for signs of recovery in her sister and to reunite them with their mother. Willoughby's melodramatic visit, we learn, occurs an hour and half an hour later, Colonel Brandon and Mrs Dashwood arrive.

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Chapters 46–50

Plot Summary



Marianne's health starts to improve. Colonel Brandon to visit her. Elinor's condition of her sister must remind her. Elinor Dashwood believes Marianne has been deceived by Colonel. As Marianne is improving, she moves to Barton Cottage. Marianne bids a goodnight to Mrs Jennings and says goodbye with the *cordiality of a friend*' (p. 318). After Mrs Jennings sends her for Delaford. Safe to say, Elinor does not say very much but she smiles and be cheerful. She talks about once she is well – all walks that have been more than to indulge in solitary misery. Elinor's *course of serious study*' (p. 320). Elinor

change in her sister. She realises that she has not yet told Marianne about Willoughby and Cleveland and all that he said. One day, when the weather is fine, Elinor and Marianne go past the place where Marianne fell and where she first saw Willoughby. They go past the place where Marianne fell and where she first saw Willoughby. Marianne compares her past conduct to Elinor's, to *'what it ought to have been'* selfishness and ingratitude. She promises that she can *'practise the civilities'* easier if she *'could but know his heart'* (p. 323). So Elinor recounts Willoughby's story and says only *'Tell Mama'* (p. 324) before going up to her room. Elinor tells Mrs Dashwood: she cannot forgive him for the harm he has done. In the evening, Elinor tells Willoughby, but only to reassure her mother and sister that she sees every fault. Elinor declares that all of Willoughby's behaviour has been based on selfishness. Marianne agrees that *'(Her) happiness was never his object'* (p. 327). Mrs Dashwood is partly to blame for what has happened.

Margaret returns home and the domestic routine is re-established. Elinor writes letters. Letters from John Dashwood, who is in London, only say that he thinks Edward is on returning from Exeter one morning, the Dashwoods' manservant, Thomas, finds a carriage and that she is now Mrs Ferrars. Mr Ferrars was in the carriage with Edward. Mrs Dashwood realises from Elinor's expression and manner how deeply for Edward than she had let her family believe, and Mrs Dashwood is now focused more on Marianne's more obvious suffering. Elinor imagines Edward at Delaford parsonage. She wishes her friends in London would write and give her news but no one does. She asks her mother what she intends to write to Colonel Brandon. Mrs Dashwood replies that she wrote to him a week ago and expects him any day. Just after Edward's horseback approach to Barton Cottage and at first thinks it is Colonel Brandon. Edward.

Edward comes in and everyone feels awkward. Mrs Dashwood manages to get Edward to say that Elinor asks directly whether Mrs Ferrars is at Longstaple. Edward responds that his mother is in London. Elinor persists, saying she meant Mrs Edward Ferrars. Mrs Dashwood hesitantly says, *'Perhaps you mean ... Mrs Robert Ferrars'*. Lucy has married and has run out of the room and bursts *'into tears of joy'* (p. 335). Edward hurriedly leaves the room later and asks Elinor to marry him. He tries to explain to Elinor how he became

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They are both puzzled about the circumstances that led to Robert and Lucy Edward, confirming the marriage. Elinor convinces Edward to try to be reconciled after some 'resistance', Edward is reinstated as her son, although the inheritance Mrs Ferrars gives Edward ten thousand pounds, the same sum given to Fanny Dashwood. Edward and Elinor have enough money to marry, in the autumn relationship between Marianne and Colonel Brandon develops and they too, with their husbands are close neighbours at Delaford and there is every chance of a reconciliation 'without disagreement' (p. 353).

Commentary

In the first part of Chapter 46, the narrator confirms that Marianne is recovering from Brandon's affection for her is as strong as ever and that Mrs Dashwood is happy for both. Marianne's reflections show her developing 'sense' (see pp. 331-332). Willoughby's story for four chapters in Chapter 44, the narrator condenses this into a few lines, in Chapter 46, with some additional talk of Willoughby as they walk. The significance of these lines is in their effect on Marianne: she says nothing, we hear her sister's voice. But there is no hysterical outburst, no defence of Willoughby, no resentment towards Elinor. In Chapter 49 (p. 336), we do not hear the direct speech during a scene of high emotion, when Edward finally asks Elinor to be his wife. He says: 'in what manner he expressed himself and how he was received, need not be repeated'.

Discussion point:

Why do you think Austen chooses to use the narrator here, rather than the characters' speech?

However, Austen finally relents and lets Edward and Elinor have a scene of their own. In this scene, through their language choices, we are given an idea of how these two characters are going to live together.

By the end of the novel, both self-sacrifice and selfishness have got their due. Edward and Lucy has married money, in the shape of Robert Ferrars. Colonel Brandon and Marianne and Willoughby has won his future financial security, by marriage. But it is not money that is the true prize but the prospect of a truly happy marriage. For Marianne, it counts for more than excessive displays of wealth or status. Austen does not end with a moral: the morally good characters are rewarded; Marianne's journey, from self-knowledge and an understanding of the balance between individual and society, ends – or begins – with the prospect of her fulfilment 'as wife, the mistress of a village' (p. 352). Through suffering, as strong as Marianne's, Elinor's character gives her mental and physical resilience – but also the love that Edward can rely on. She is secure enough to express her own feelings and to put down the burdens she has to bear for others.

Austen's remarks suggest that morally dubious characters, such as Fanny and Mrs Ferrars and Mrs Middleton, are survivors too – they are motivated by wealth. As long as these remain intact, if a little battered – there is every likelihood they will continue to exist at the end of Austen's interest in them; all their values are to do with show, and this shows the poverty of their inner selves, and this is their punishment: to lead a life of responding but not creating; replicating their values in their offspring, determined not to be the one left without a chair. Austen's purpose is not just to witness the lives of characters brought vividly to life, but to also ask us questions, such as: how should we treat one another? What values should we live by in our relationship between the individual and society, so that both flourish?

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Irony is a useful tool for sharp observation but, once the observation has been made, it is an 'exertion' for change for the better to be possible. It is perhaps that Austen is flawed but believes that there is always the possibility of redemption – and beyond the happy ending.

Location and Chronology: Chapters 46–50

The scene is briefly Cleveland, as Marianne recovers and then once again, reunited at Barton Cottage. The action is based around the life of the cottage and its social engagements, for not only would Marianne be still too unwell to attend to her social circle in London, Mrs Jennings is at Cleveland and Colonel Brandon has returned to the estate. Their social circle is empty. Edward is supposedly in Oxford, but turns up at the cottage to discuss the question of his marrying Elinor, stays at the cottage for a week. Colonel Brandon returns after Edward. 'Three or four days' after Edward's departure, Colonel Brandon and Edward leave to go to Delaford to decide on the improvements to the parsonage. Edward returns in the autumn. Marianne, now thirteen years of age, marries Colonel Brandon. Colonel Brandon and Mrs Elinor become close neighbours at Delaford.



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Chapter Analysis Questions

All answers should be supported by evidence from the text of *Sense and Sensibility*.

Chapter 1

Money and inheritance are the key themes of Chapter 1. Are these the key themes of *Sense and Sensibility*?

Chapter 2

The dialogue between John and Fanny Dashwood sets out their attitudes to their daughters. In what way does this chapter contribute to our understanding of the values that motivate other characters in *Sense and Sensibility*?

Chapter 3

'I can feel no sentiment of approbation, or of love.' Comment on how Mrs Jennings' attitude affects the life of Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, Elinor gives her 'real opinion' of Edward Ferrars. How does Austen's characterization of Elinor?

Chapter 5

The Dashwoods prepare to leave Norland. How does Marianne's response to the move reflect into her character?

Chapter 6

Sir John and Lady Middleton visit the Dashwoods at Barton Cottage. How do you judge their opinion of their characters? Is this opinion justified by what happens in the novel?

Chapter 7

Austen introduces two new characters: Mrs Jennings and Colonel Brandon. How does she establish the contrasts between them and how we get a sense of the parts they play in the lives of Elinor and Marianne.

Chapter 8

'It would be an excellent match, for he was rich and she was handsome.' Comment on the marriage. How does it relate to the theme of social conventions in the narrative?

Chapter 9

To what extent do Willoughby's appearance and manners blind the Dashwoods to his true nature? What other examples can you give of the conflict between appearance and reality in *Sense and Sensibility*?

Chapter 10

'I have erred against every conventional notion of decorum...' In what way could Marianne be said to have erred in the scene for what happens to her as the narrative continues?

Chapter 11

'...her opinions are all romantic...Her systems have all the unfortunate tendency of the age.' What impact do Marianne's romantic opinions have on the life of Elinor?

Chapter 12

Margaret sees Willoughby cut a lock of Marianne's hair and reports this to Elinor. What is the impact of this engagement. Consider Margaret's role in the plot of *Sense and Sensibility*. Is she a reliable narrator?

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Chapter 13

Mrs Jennings questions Colonel Brandon about the reason for his sudden departure. How does she embarrass Marianne by her questions about her visit to Allenhurst? How does Austen guide our opinion of Mrs Jennings? Does that opinion change as the chapter progresses?

Chapter 14

What does Willoughby's talk of cottages being '*the only form of building in the country*' reveal about his character? Which other character talks to Elinor about cottages? Do the two characters have anything else in common?

Chapter 15

Willoughby leaves. Analyse the dialogue between Elinor and Mrs Dashwood in the weeks following terms with his sudden departure. What is revealed about each character?

Chapter 16

In what way does the conversation between Marianne, Edward and Elinor contrast with the 'serious' conversation between Elinor and Mrs Dashwood?

Chapter 17

Elinor reflects that she has often been '*in a total misapprehension of character*'. Where could Elinor be said to have misjudged a character or situation in the novel?

Chapter 18

The theme of secrecy and concealment is developed in this chapter, when Mr. Dashwood's lock of hair in his ring belongs to his sister. What other instances can you find of this theme in *Sense and Sensibility*? Why is concealment significant to the plot?

Chapter 19

Compare and contrast the portrayal of Mr and Mrs Thomas Palmer with the portrayal of Mr and Mrs Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*. What appear to be Austen's views on marriage, based on these characters?

Chapter 20

Charlotte Palmer, a secondary character, is used to convey the fact that the news of Willoughby and Marianne is talked of all over town. What other examples of secondary characters being used as messengers? Why does Austen choose to do this way?

Chapter 21

'...a fond mother, though in pursuit of praise for her children, the most rapacious and the most credulous...' Analyse and comment on Austen's portrayal of the relationship between a mother and her children in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Chapter 22

In what way could Lucy's attitude to her values be said to be understandable?

Chapter 23

Analyse the effects of Elinor's character that are revealed in this chapter.

Chapter 24

'Could you have a motive for the trust that was not honourable...?' Discuss the theme of trust in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Chapter 25

The scene now shifts to London. Consider the role of location, both geographical and social, in *Sense and Sensibility*. Are issues of gender connected to location?

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Chapter 26

On arrival at Mrs Jennings' house in London, Elinor writes to her mother; Willoughby. What other letters form part of the plot of *Sense and Sensibility*? What is the purpose of this useful plot device?

Chapter 27

'If this open weather holds out much longer... Sir John will not like leaving Barton' does weather contribute to the plot of *Sense and Sensibility*? Where can it be used for dramatic purpose?

Chapter 28

Analyse and comment on Austen's technique in creating the dramatic tension in this chapter.

Chapter 29

Analyse and discuss how the character of Elinor and Marianne are shown in this chapter. What part does the differing attitudes to propriety play in this contrast?

Chapter 30

Analyse and comment on the role of Mrs Jennings in this chapter. Is Marianne's role in Chapter 31?

Chapter 31

Colonel Brandon reveals Willoughby's connection to Eliza Williams. Where is the 'flashback' used as a plot device? What is the purpose of 'flashbacks' in *Sense and Sensibility*?

Chapter 32

'Her carefulness in guarding her sister from ever hearing Willoughby's name mentioned' Consider Elinor's role as a 'screen' for her sister in *Sense and Sensibility*. What is the purpose of this?

Chapter 33

Analyse and comment on how this chapter contributes to the theme of weather in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Chapter 34

In what way does the Dashwoods' dinner reveal the roles of and the relationships of the genteel nineteenth century?

Chapter 35

Analyse and comment on the role of Marianne in this chapter. How does it contribute to the dramatic tension of the scene?

Chapter 36

In what way could Fanny Dashwood be said to be the cause of the failure of the marriage? How does Fanny's triumph in Chapter 36 contribute to the misdirection of the plot at the end of Chapter 36?

Chapter 37

Analyse and compare the characters of Mrs Jennings and Mrs Dashwood. Do they share the same attitudes and values? Are there any examples in the narrative where their attitudes and values are not the same?

Chapter 38

Nancy Steele takes great delight in telling Elinor about the conversation between her and Willoughby. Why is this chance meeting in Kensington Gardens significant? Compare and contrast the language of Lucy's letter to Elinor at the end of the chapter.

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Chapter 39

Elinor is asked by Colonel Brandon to tell Edward about the offer of the living. What is the purpose of the narrative? Why is Elinor's character important?

Chapter 40

In what way can Mrs Jennings be seen in the role of 'comic relief' in this chapter? Can you find of a character being used in this way in *Sense and Sensibility*? What is the 'comic' role in the structure of the narrative?

Chapter 41

Robert Ferrars comments to Elinor that Edward 'is ruined forever' because he is in love with whom Robert describes as 'the merest awkward country girl...'. In what way is Edward 'ruined'? Analyse and comment on any other example of irony in *Sense and Sensibility*.

Chapter 42

By the end of Chapter 42, Marianne is suffering from a heavy cold. Analyse the significance of illness in *Sense and Sensibility*. In what way could illness be seen as a metaphor?

Chapter 43

Analyse the roles of Mrs Jennings and Colonel Brandon in this chapter: in what way is this a point for their relationship with Marianne?

Chapter 44

Willoughby is determined that Elinor will hear what he has to say. How far is this justified by his past actions?

Chapter 45

Mrs Dashwood is convinced that Colonel Brandon is 'the very one' to make her happy. What evidence can you offer to support or contradict this belief?

Chapter 46

In Chapter 46, Marianne is penitent: she sees all her past behaviour as 'imprudent'. How does she reform herself, keep close to home and devote herself to study. What evidence does this change of heart is realistic (given the way she has been portrayed up until now)? How has she sacrificed to the needs of the plot, to ensure that everything will end 'happily'?

Chapter 47

Analyse the structure of this chapter to show how Austen builds the emotional tension of the revelation of Lucy and Edward's supposed marriage.

Chapter 48

When Elinor realises that Edward is not married to Lucy, she 'almost' runs away. Compare descriptions of Elinor with descriptions of Marianne. Which is more active? Which is more passive? What purpose do these characteristics serve in the narrative? How does the narrative draw to a conclusion? Are there any changes?

Chapter 49

Elinor and Edward at last have a long scene together. Analyse the language and dialogue to reveal about the relationship that they are developing?

Chapter 50

The ending of *Sense and Sensibility* has been seen as the weakest part of the novel. Do you agree or disagree with this view?

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Section 3: Character Analysis

Character Relationships

'Old' Mr Dashwood	deceased; the 'last owner but one' of Norland Park, the Dashwoods' home for generations
Mr Henry Dashwood	deceased; son of 'Old' Mr Dashwood; inherits Norland Park 12 years later
Mrs Henry Dashwood	widow; mother of Elinor, Marianne and Margaret
Miss Elinor Dashwood	19 years old at the start of the novel; secretly in love with Edward Ferrars; marries him
Miss Marianne Dashwood	16 years old at the start of the novel; loves Willoughby; marries John Willoughby
Miss Margaret Dashwood	13 years old at the start of the novel
Mr John Dashwood	son of Mr Henry Dashwood and his first wife; half-brother of Margaret; has inherited Norland Park on the death of Henry Dashwood
Mrs Fanny Dashwood	wife of John Dashwood; daughter of Mrs Ferrars; sister to Edward and Robert
Master Harry Dashwood	only son of John and Fanny Dashwood; between 4 and 5 years old at the start of the novel
Mrs Ferrars	widow; mother of Fanny, Edward and Robert
Mr Edward Ferrars	brother of Fanny Dashwood; secretly engaged to Lucy Steele; marries her
Mr Robert Ferrars	brother of Fanny Dashwood; ultimately marries Lucy Steele
Miss Lucy Steele	secretly engaged to Edward Ferrars; ultimately marries him
Miss Nancy (Anne) Steele	older sister of Lucy
Mr Pratt	uncle of Lucy and Nancy; has been a tutor to Edward Ferrars; lives in Plymouth; is referred to but does not appear in the novel
Mrs Jennings	widow; mother of Lady Middleton and Charlotte Palmer
Sir John Middleton	owner of Barton Park and Barton Cottage
Lady (Mary) Middleton	wife of Sir John Middleton; mother of John, William, Anne and Mary
Master John Middleton	aged about 6 at the start of the novel
Master William Middleton	second son of the Middletons; 'nearly of the same age' as Elinor
Miss Annamaria Middleton	aged about 3 years old
Baby Middleton	
Mrs Charlotte Palmer	wife of Mr Palmer; gives birth to son in Chapter 36; daughter of Mrs Jennings
Mr Thomas Palmer	husband of Charlotte Palmer; father of newborn son; also referred to as Mr Parham
Baby son Palmer	
Mr John Willoughby	nephew and heir of Mrs Smith, from whom he hopes to inherit the estate; falls in love with Marianne Dashwood but ultimately marries her
Mrs Smith	widow; aunt of John Willoughby; is referred to but does not appear in the novel

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Character Relationships (continued)

Colonel Brandon	owner of Delaford; friend of Sir John Middleton; has the gift; his past links him with Eliza Brandon and Eliza Williams; for most of the novel, this love is not returned; and Marianne marry
Mrs Eliza Brandon	deceased; divorced wife of Colonel Brandon's now deceased Colonel and his first love
Miss Eliza Williams	illegitimate daughter of Eliza Brandon; unmarried mother of Willoughby; is referred to but does not appear in the novel
Baby Williams	
Miss Sophia Grey	the wealthy ward of Mr. and Mrs. Ellison; ultimately marries Mr. Knightley
The Hon. Miss Morton	a wealthy aristocratic daughter of Lord Morton (deceased); she is married to Mr. and also Robert Ferrars; is referred to but does not appear in the novel
Thomas	manservant of Mrs Dashwood at Barton Cottage; brings her to see her in Exeter, in a carriage with her new husband

Character Analysis: Elinor Dashwood

First impressions

- Her place in the family:** Elinor is nineteen years old at the start of the novel, the eldest of the three Dashwood sisters.
- The elder sister:** There is a very strong bond between Elinor and Marianne, although their differing attitudes and values do cause conflict between them (Chapter 27, pp. 161–162). Publically, Elinor does everything she can to protect Marianne from criticism and gossip (see Chapter 29, p. 173). Marianne's illness in Cleveland and Elinor, once she has realised the seriousness of the illness, in trying to nurse her sister back to health. Elinor's *'strength of understanding'* and *'coolness of judgment'* (Chapter 1, p. 8) are severely tested by Marianne's illness. Elinor's relationship with Willoughby and with Colonel Brandon: Elinor wants to believe that they are good for her sister and Willoughby, but struggles to be convinced.
- The voice of Reason:** From Chapter 1, we see that Elinor's attitude is different to that of her sisters and mother. Although she is *'deeply afflicted'* (p. 9) by the death of her father and the need to move from Norland, which has been their home for over eleven years, she can still *'exert herself'* to make plans and to advise her mother about what needs to be done. She also tries to advise her sister about how to behave with 'proper decorum'.
- The observer:** We see many events and characters through Elinor's eyes. She is a keen observer of individual and social values in the novel, and to the **cohesive** features of every chapter except Chapter 2, and helps us form opinions. Elinor's response to the central male characters is in conflict with Marianne's, a **tension**. She has a key role in our understanding of the other female characters. (unlike a male character) can pass unobserved in the act of observing in her domestic habitat. Elinor's character responds to the demands of politeness rather than to her own free will. Through her, we have access to the events we see and reflect on, even if Elinor herself would rather not be there.

Discussion point

Can you find other examples of Elinor trying to 'cover' for Marianne from pain and anger? (Chapter 23, p. 153)

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- **The messenger:** The Colonel regards her as his '*kind confidante*' and unaskingly asks her to tell Edward of the offer of the living at Delaford – which would mean Edward marrying Lucy. The Colonel has previously also confided to her that he wants her to tell this story to her sister, when she judges Marianne fit to hear what happened. In Chapter 44, Willoughby unburdens his guilty conscience unexpectedly at Cleveland and pleads with Elinor to let him tell his sister. Elinor later gives Marianne an edited version of what he has said.
- **The keeper of secrets:** Of her own love for Edward, and then, from Chapter 31, of Lucy's engagement to the same man. There is a recurring **motif** of secrecy in Elinor. Her ability to not disclose her feelings and to keep a secret, which increases the reader's confidence in her integrity and, in her reliability, sometimes chooses to subvert – see, for example, chapter 12, p. 60; Chapter 39 develop the themes of loyalty, honesty and duty that are woven into the novel.

Investigation: Full

Read the following scenes and evaluate the role of secrecy. To what extent is Elinor's defining characteristic?

- Chapter 10, p. 51: Through Elinor revisiting comments made by Sir John Dashwood, the Colonel has a 'backstory', with '*hints of injuries and disappointments*'. Marianne too (see pp. 57–58)), Elinor makes no assumptions about what the circumstances might have been.
- Chapter 22, p. 127: '*Your secret is safe with me; but pardon me if I express my doubts of your communication.*'
- Chapter 27, p. 165: It is to Elinor that Colonel Brandon makes '*a direct confession*'.
- Chapter 31, pp. 193–199: Elinor has to take the full impact of the knowledge of her husband's conduct towards Eliza Williams, as told to her by Colonel Brandon, and the moment to convey '*the particulars of this conversation*' to Marianne.
- Chapter 37, pp. 244–247: Elinor does not disclose the extent of her feelings. The revelation of his engagement to Lucy requires her to confess her feelings.
- Chapter 39, pp. 264–266: Elinor is unintentionally burdened by Colonel Brandon when he asks her to tell Edward of his offer of the living at Delaford.
- Chapter 40, p. 272: Mrs Jennings believes Elinor is keeping her engagement a secret.
- Chapter 44, pp. 296–310: Elinor keeps secret the news of Willoughby's departure. She judges the time is right for Marianne to hear it.

- **Elinor, stillness and appearance:** In Chapter 1, p. 48, a physical description of Elinor is given, to allow Willoughby's comparison of the two sisters and judgment in favour of the younger. Elinor's physical stillness and her constant good health fit her to be a good observer and support Marianne in her emotional and physical breakdowns. Her physicality does not give rise to any plot line, in marked contrast to Marianne, whose exceptional beauty and inclination to walk about in the rain, fall over and become ill are devices which serve

Discussion point

Why do you think the descriptions of Elinor are so important? When and why do you think the description for of Elinor is given? For example, Chapter 33, pp. 211–212.

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- **Elinor and irony:** Irony is largely absent from Austen's portrayal of Elinor, indicating her creator's high opinion of her character and confirming her as a (usually) reliable observer. Elinor herself uses irony, as in her response to Marianne's first conversation with Willoughby: 'Well Marianne... for one morning I think you have done pretty well... Another meeting will suffice... and then you will have nothing further to ask' (Chapter 10, p. 49). When Marianne questions Edward's feelings for her, Elinor asks, 'Does Mr. Norland look?' Elinor cuts in immediately with, 'Dear, dear Norland... poor man! He does at this time of year. The woods and walks thickly covered with dead leaves... has your passion for dead leaves' (Chapter 16, p. 87).

Discussion

As you read, consider how Elinor and Marianne contrast her characters.

Discussion point

What happens to Elinor's relationship with Marianne once she realises that Marianne is seriously ill?

Elinor's relationships with other characters:

Elinor and Edward

- Elinor suffers, largely in silence, because of her love for Edward. Her love for him and the obstacle of Lucy, lasts from p. 23 to p. 335, 312 pages: the longest in the novel. Marianne's suffering, by comparison, could be said to last from p. 158 to p. 335, 177 pages.
- We mostly build up a picture of their relationship through our access to the narrative through the perspective of the *omniscient narrator*. When Elinor and Edward are together, it is as part of a conversation with others; even the scene where Edward asks Elinor to marry him is reported by the narrator, rather than direct speech (Chapter 49, pp. 335-336). In Chapter 40, when Elinor gives Edward the news of Colonel Brandon's return, they are unable to talk to one another but the subject of the conversation threatens to tear them apart from one another forever. In Chapter 49 (pp. 337-346), Austen finally allows them a scene containing dialogue, when we hear of Edward's 'grateful cheerfulness' and of Elinor being 'overcome by her own felicity'. Austen shows that they can work together with intelligence and good humour to deal with the issues of Lucy and of Edward's family.

Discussion

In Chapter 49, Elinor will be an intruder'. How could Elinor's assessment of attitudes be different?

Elinor and Colonel Brandon

Have a look at scenes involving Elinor and Colonel Brandon. How do these scenes contribute to the narrative? See, for example: Chapter 31, pp. 193-199 and Chapter 39, p. 264.

Discussion

In what way is Elinor's 'kind confidence' different from Marianne's?

Elinor and Miss Lucy Steele

Lucy Steele presents Elinor with a dilemma and heartache. Lucy ingratiates herself with Elinor and later with Fanny Dashwood and Mrs Ferrars, and becomes a recurring character. Elinor's resilience and rationality. Austen shows Elinor's resilient spirit, for with the revelation of the engagement, 'Elinor's security sunk' but 'her self-command did not sink with it'. She is able to respond to Lucy in a 'firm voice'. She chooses her words carefully and '(guards) her countenance from every expression that could give her words a suspicious tendency' (Chapter 24, p. 141).

Discussion

How does Elinor's relationship with Lucy so that she is not for her?

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Elinor and Mrs Jennings

Elinor is aware of Mrs Jennings' shortcomings but is also conscious of her kindness and the obligation they owe to her. She goes to some lengths to make up for Marianne's lack of civility towards Mrs Jennings. In Chapter 43 (p. 288), Mrs Jennings stays at Cleveland to look after Marianne, *'which made Elinor really love her'*.

Discussion point /

As you read *Sense and Sensibility*, find words that link with Elinor's character. Create a wordcloud. Add it to a wordcloud for Marianne. Compare wordclouds made by other students.

Essay question:

How far do you agree with the statement that the character of Elinor Dashwood is the *Sensibility*? Support your answer with examples from the narrative.

Character analysis: Marianne Dashwood

First impressions

- **Her place in the family:** Marianne is the middle daughter of Mr and Mrs Dashwood. In Chapter 3, we learn from Mrs Dashwood that Marianne is *'seventeen'*. The resemblance between the characters of Marianne and her mother is *'strikingly great'*.
- **The younger of the two older Dashwood sisters:** Although the relationship is close, Marianne refuses to accept Elinor's advice or *'doctrine'* (see, for example, Chapter 10 pp. 49–50, Chapter 13 p. 69, Chapter 22 p. 122); she does not appreciate how Elinor tries to *'screen'* her *'from particularity'* (Chapter 11) until after her illness. The sisters appear to be used to dealing sincerely with each other, so the belief that each is concealing something causes conflict.

Discussion point:

'...our situations are...alike. We neither of us have anything to tell: you, because you are so sensible; and I, because I conceal, nothing' (Chapter 27, pp. 161–162). Is Marianne justified in withdrawing from Elinor?

- **The voice of Romanticism:** Marianne's character is seen to be romantic; she values individual will above convention and propriety; she is self-opinionated and careless of consequences, for herself or others. She is an articulate young woman, but is clearly unable to express her feelings, however inappropriate, ill-timed or uninformed.
 - Marianne declares that at her time of life, *'opinions are tolerably fixed'*. For her, *'to say what she did not feel was impossible'* (Chapter 11). Her abilities, we are told, are *'in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's'* (p. 122). The outset that what lies ahead for Marianne is not due to some lack of understanding on her part. We are told that *'her sorrows, her joys, her*

Discussion point:

What do you think would have happened if Elinor had not been the sensible one? What situations (see, for example, Chapter 11) would have been different?

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- **Marianne and conflict between individual will and social convention:** Marianne compromises her beliefs in order to conform to convention and propriety. The health that results from this conflict, she grows from self-absorbed certainty to an awareness of her responsibility to others. In the last chapter of the book, Austen defines Marianne's character: *'Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate, the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite feelings'* (Chapter 48, p. 400).
- **Marianne, 'truth' and justice:** Marianne speaks and acts motivated by the truth as she sees it. She has a strong sense of justice; this extends to when she feels she has herself been unjust. *'...where Marianne felt that she had injured, no reparation could be too much for her to make'* (Chapter 37, p. 248). After her illness, her sense of justice gains strength and she is able to realise the true worth of Colonel Brandon.
 - She connects her own opinions and feelings as her own, *'...where Marianne felt that she had injured, no reparation could be too much for her to make'* (Chapter 37, p. 248).
- **Marianne and movement:** Movement characterises Marianne. She rushes out of rooms, upstairs, towards and away from people as well as running down hillsides and walking in bad weather. Her activity when driven by 'sensibility' is in marked contrast to the stillness that overtakes her – during her illness and convalescence, when she starts to understand the value of 'sense'. Elinor's role as watchful guardian to her sister requires her to 'almost' run, when she hears from Edward that he has not married Lucy Steele.

Discussion

Marianne has a strong sense of justice, but she also has a sense of hypocrisy and self-interest. What is the significance of her reaction to John Dashwood's treatment of her? How does her reaction to the 'ecstasy of individualism' (Chapter 34, pp. 221–22) relate to Mrs Ferrars, or to the Dashwoods?

Discussion

What is the significance of Marianne's sickness in Cleveland (Chapter 34) in relation to her life beyond?

Investigating Further:

Marianne and 'sensibility': Study these extracts and 'map' the progress of her values.

- Austen's language choices reveal Marianne's character, for example: *'because she was without any desire of command over herself'* (Chapter 15, p. 73) and *'herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night of parting at consolation'* from her mother and sisters (Chapter 16, p. 83).
- She tries to draw Edward into her enthusiasm for the landscape but when she sees dirt (Chapter 16, p. 87).
- Her attitude to money is 'noble' but not realistic: *'money can only give her a false sense of power, else to give it. Beyond a competence, it is no real satisfaction, as far as she is concerned'* (Chapter 17, p. 90).
- Marianne's perspective starts to change when she realises Elinor's feelings for Edward: *'barbarous to you – you...who have seemed to be only suffering for me'* (Chapter 18, p. 95).
- By Chapter 18, Marianne is feeling *'more dissatisfied with herself than ever'* (Chapter 18, p. 95) for her behaviour to Elinor's and feels *'the pain of continual self-reproach'*, but she is determined, to make an effort, to *'exert'* herself to action. Her inability to try to do so leads her to be careless of her health, resulting in her near death at Cleveland.
- In Chapter 46, Marianne has reflected on her past behaviour: *'My illness has given me leisure and calmness for serious reflection'* She sees that her *'own sufferings, and that (her) want of fortitude under them had almost led (her) to'*

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Marianne and the main male characters

Because of her attitude towards social situations, Marianne keeps herself as far from encounters with female characters not of her immediate family, the exception being her relationship to Mrs Jennings. She has more involvement with the main male characters.

- Marianne and Willoughby:** Marianne sees Willoughby as *'equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story'* (Chapter 9, pp. 44–45). His influence seems to rob her of her independent thoughts: the opinions she expresses, especially where Colonel Brandon is concerned, are echoes of Willoughby's: *'That is exactly what I think of him'* (see Chapter 10, p. 52). After the excursion to Whitwell is cancelled, Marianne once again follows Willoughby's lead: he declares that *'There are no people who cannot bear a party of pleasure. Brandon is an exception'*. Marianne replies, *'I have no doubt of it'*. However, when Willoughby becomes more defensive: Marianne is only persuaded by Willoughby's present of a horse because Elinor says their mother's appeal to her sense of propriety has no effect; she tries to deflect Elinor's appeal to her sense of propriety by making insulting comments about Mrs Jennings.
 - She pines for the loss of her romantic illusions about Willoughby and her own life. Symbolically, she only starts to recover fully after Willoughby leaves her and out of her life forever. She comes to understand that *'the object'* (p. 327). She begins to have the strength to live beyond Willoughby and start a new life with Colonel Brandon.
- Marianne and Colonel Brandon:** *'But he talked of flannel waistcoats...and was invariably connected with aches, cramps, rheumatisms, and every species of weakness and the feeble'* (Chapter 8, p. 40). Not a very hopeful beginning for a relationship. At the start of the narrative rushing from rooms when Colonel Brandon arrives, Marianne seems to soften after Elinor has told her the Colonel's story about Eliza Williams (Chapter 10). However, it is still further after the Colonel has brought her mother to Cleveland (Chapter 12) that his constant, if undramatic, love is something she can depend on for her future.
 - Marianne and Edward:** When Marianne first assesses Edward as a potential husband, she judges him only according to the qualities that are important to her: she criticises him for his lack of *'spirit'* and *'grace'*, and most of all for the fact that *'he has no real taste'* (Chapter 3, p. 19). When she feels he is not being sufficiently attentive to Elinor, she *'began almost to feel a dislike'* of him (Chapter 16, p. 87). However, she gives him a very positive character assessment in Chapter 35 p. 229, saying that *'He is the most wounded creature I ever saw, and the most incapable of being selfish of any body I ever knew'*. When she learns of his engagement to Lucy, making her think of Willoughby, but this opinion changes when Marianne realises how hard Edward is by Mrs Ferrars, because of his determination to honour his engagement: *'offences in compassion for his punishment'* (Chapter 38, p. 253).

Discussion point /

As you read *Sense and Sensibility*, make a list of words that link with Marianne's character. Create a wordcloud and compare it to a wordcloud made by other students.

Essay question:

Using examples from Chapters 17 and 18, analyse and discuss how Austen uses conversation to help Marianne to help us evaluate Marianne's attitudes and values.

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Character Analyses: Secondary Characters

John Willoughby



Key chapters

Chapter 9: First appearance and rescue of Marianne (p. 43)

Chapter 10: Reported conversation with Marianne; Elinor like gives opinions '*without attention to persons or circumstances*' (p. 50)

Chapter 12: Offer of gift of horse (p. 59) / cuts lock of Marianne

Chapter 13: Criticism of Colonel Brandon; carriage ride to Allerton

Chapter 14: Talk of cottages (pp. 73–74)

Chapter 15: Sudden departure

Chapter 27: Leaves calling card at Berkley Street House (p. 161)

Chapter 28: The party where Marianne meets Willoughby

Chapter 29: The letter from Willoughby to Marianne (pp. 173–174)

Chapter 32: Marianne is soon as married (p. 204)

Chapter 40: Elinor's confession to Elinor

Chapter 50: '...could not hear of her marriage without a pang...thought of Colonel Brandon with regret' but '*...he found no inconsolable degree of domestic felicity*'

John Willoughby is cast by Marianne in the role of the romantic hero 'exact' (p. 50): his qualifications for this are that he is handsome, his manners are good, and he appears to share all her attitudes and values. The snag is, his true character is the opposite of her imaginings. He is extravagant, impetuous and selfish. He is indifferent to Marianne of ignoring propriety and social convention. He is shrewd enough to play the hero while it suits him but drops the façade as soon as it threatens his financial interests.

Austen uses the character of Willoughby as a device to examine and test Marianne's attitudes and values. The relationship between Willoughby and Marianne balances the relationship between Elinor and Edward, and provides apparent parallels – for example, both relationships have 'are they / aren't they going to get married?' plotlines; both relationships involve concealment and apparent – or actual – betrayal. It also contrasts with the relationship between Colonel Brandon and Marianne, where the hesitant sincerity of the Colonel is contrasted with the self-assured insincerity of Willoughby, which contribute to Marianne's journey towards self-knowledge. Willoughby's actions are driven by self-interest. When it comes to action, the Colonel has to search for the right words. Willoughby does it, even if it is at personal cost: he goes immediately to London from Eliza Williams; recognising the urgency of the situation, he goes to fetch her with Marianne at Cleveland. Willoughby's actions are driven by self-interest. Marianne's 'lovely person and irreproachable manners' are the cause of his behaviour (p. 298); he accepts his inheritance to London by Mrs Smith, as it preserves the estate; Miss Grey's prospect of marrying her money makes him feel (Chapter 20) to sever all ties with Marianne.

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Colonel Brandon



Key chapters

Chapter 7: First appearance

Chapter 8: Marianne thinks Colonel Brandon is 'an old bachelor'

Chapter 10: Willoughby and Marianne's opinion of Colonel Brandon

Chapter 11: Talks to Elinor about Marianne (pp. 56–58)

Chapter 13: Cancels visit to Whitwell on receiving letter; returns to London

Chapter 26: First visitor at Berkley Street; confirms Palmerston's suggestion

Chapter 26: 'accustomary mildness' to Mrs Jennings' question

Chapter 27: 'came to look at Marianne and talk to Elinor' (p. 160)

Chapter 27: Talk of Marianne and Willoughby's engagement (pp. 164–5)

Chapter 30: Brings news of Mrs Ellison's death; news of Miss Grey and Willoughby's marriage

Chapter 31: 'you will find me very awkward narrator' (p. 193)

Chapter 32: 'unobtrusive' (p. 204)

Chapter 33: Elinor's screens (p. 221)

Chapter 39: 'I have heard of the injustice... The cruelty, the impolitic cruelty...'; the Colonel's reaction

Chapter 42: Gives news of Edward to Elinor (p. 285)

Chapter 43: Tries to 'reason himself out of fears' (p. 289); goes to fetch Mrs Dashwood

Chapter 45: Mrs Dashwood and Elinor discuss Colonel Brandon (pp. 313–314)

Chapter 49: The Colonel and Edward advance 'in good opinion of one another'

Chapter 50: Happy: 'in Marianne he was consoled for every past affliction' (p. 321)

Colonel Brandon is one of the three main male characters in *Sense and Sensibility*, along with Edward Ferrars and John Willoughby. We do not learn his first name. He is a friend of Sir John Middleton (although they have no 'resemblance of manner' (p. 36)), and is his guest when we first meet him in Chapter 7. Marianne and Margaret quickly decide he is 'an absolute old bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five and thirty' (p. 36). However, 'unpleasing... his countenance was sensible and his address was particularly gentle'. Elinor notices that he is the only person in the room to appreciate her playing of the piano: 'with respect for him on the occasion... His pleasure in music, though it amounted not to passion, could sympathize with her own, was estimable...' (p. 37). Following the musical conversation, Elinor is convinced that Colonel Brandon is in love with Marianne. Marianne 'hardly' notices the absurdity of this suggestion 'or censure its impertinence, for she considered the Colonel's advanced years, and on his forlorn condition as an old bachelor' (Chapter 8). This is the subject of a heated discussion between Marianne, who contends that 'thirty was not a bad age for matrimony' (p. 39) and her mother and sister, who think the Colonel should be married because he had a touch of rheumatism. Elinor consoles herself with Willoughby's remark that 'he has neither genius, nor spirit... his understanding has no ardour, and his voice no passion'. Elinor offers a contrasting view: 'a sensible, steady, and unobtrusive man, possessing an amiable heart' (p. 53).

Once Marianne has become obsessed with Willoughby, it is clear to Elinor that she will never love Marianne and she is concerned that he will suffer. Elinor likes him, 'in spite of his age' – which appear to be rather 'the result of some oppression of spirits, than of any real weakness' (p. 51). This hints at the story of the two Elizas, which the Colonel hesitates to tell (Chapter 31), in the hope that when Marianne is told of Willoughby's treacherous behaviour, she will feel less wretched about her own situation. He says 'you will find me very awkward narrator' and his story is full of pauses and hesitations. Unsurprisingly, as the

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doing rather than saying; he takes decisive, if unpopular, action in Chapter 13, when he receives Eliza's letter; he is the one to ride to fetch Mrs Dashwood to bring her to Marianne at Cleveland (Chapter 43); he challenged Willoughby to a duel (Chapter 31). His character is also used by Austen as a way of bringing information from the outside world into the world of Elinor and Marianne: in Chapters 27 and 30, he brings news firstly, that Marianne's 'engagement to Mr Willoughby is very generally known' (p. 164), and then in Chapter 30, that he has heard that Willoughby was engaged to Sophia Grey. It is his history with Eliza Brandon and her daughter that makes him particularly sensitive to the 'cruelty, the impolicy, the unkindness... of dividing, or attempting to divide' (p. 267) Edward and Lucy. This prompts him that he will help them by offering them the living of the Delaford parsonage in distress to Elinor, which will be the means of removing the obstacle to the marriage to another woman. Unfortunately, Lucy's own greed and ambition lead to Edward's engagement to her so the Colonel's efforts to prepare the parsonage ultimately fail. Following her recovery from her illness and her infatuation with Willoughby, Marianne realises the true worth of Colonel Brandon's character, and finds

Discussion

In Chapter 30, the Colonel describes Edward's 'gentleness, his other people's simplicity, his liveliness' (p. 164) of (Willoughby) Dashwood. This another way of seeing things?

Discussion point:

In Chapter 49, the narrator says of the Colonel and Edward that 'Their resemblance in sense, in disposition and manner of thinking' (p. 344) would have been enough to make them important that these two characters should become friends?

his' (p. 352).

Edward Ferrars



Key chapters

Chapter 3: Family relationship established: brother of Fanny
Chapter 4: Marianne and Elinor discuss Edward (pp. 21–22)
Chapter 5: Mrs Dashwood's invitation to Edward to come to Barton Cottage (p. 86); opinions of Edward
Chapter 16: Arrives at Barton Cottage (p. 86); opinions of Edward
Chapter 17: Conversation about career, the importance of being 'reserved' by Marianne (pp. 89–93)

Chapter 18: In low spirits; conversation with Marianne about landscape; ring
Chapter 19: Decides to leave Barton Cottage; conversation with Mrs Dashwood
Chapter 34: Calls and leaves card at Berkley Square (p. 217)
Chapter 35: Edward arrives when Lucy is visiting Elinor (pp. 226–9)
Chapter 38: After the revelation of his engagement to Lucy, his behaviour
Chapter 40: Reaction to the offer of living (p. 271)
Chapter 41: Meets Colonel Brandon (p. 275)
Chapter 48: Arrives at Barton Cottage; the revelation that Lucy has married Robert
Chapter 49: 'walked himself into the proper resolution' (p. 336); explains about his
Chapter 49: 'advance in good opinion' Colonel Brandon and Edward (p. 344)
Chapter 49: 'A letter of proper submission!' (p. 346)
Chapter 50: Mrs Ferrars reluctantly accepts Edward's engagement to Elinor
Edward marries Elinor at Barton Church in the autumn (p. 348) and they go

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Edward is Fanny Dashwood's brother and ironically, she is the means by which he comes to stay at Norland after Fanny and John Dashwood have to leave. Elinor falls in love with him, for although *'He was not handsome'* (Chapter 3, p. 19) and *'reserved'*. He admits himself to being *'foolishly shy'* (Chapter 17, p. 93). His mother wants the quiet of a domestic life, but his mother and sister have much greater cause of one obstacle to Elinor and Edward's love, as Mrs Ferrars and Fanny are wealthy women with a prominent position in society: this is not Elinor. The obstacle is that Edward is already engaged. This remains a secret, unknown about it in Chapter 22. Austen takes care to make sure that we do not think of keeping this secret: he cannot tell her himself because they are unable to have a conversation. He is absent from Chapter 5 until Chapter 16, when he visits Barton Cottage and thanks to Marianne dominating the conversation when they are together and Mrs Ferrars about his plans for a career. Elinor and Marianne are not given the opportunity to discuss Edward's engagement. Edward is drawn into a discussion with the Dashwood women about wealth and dialogue. In this scene, Marianne's romantic ideals are contrasted with Edward's attitude: he dismisses her *'favourite maxim, that no one can ever be in love more than oneself'* (p. 92). Austen also uses Edward's practical, unromantic view of Barton Cottage to contrast with Marianne's romantic, emotional response to the prospect but not on picturesque principles. *I do not like crooked, twisted, blasted trees and tattered cottages...* (Chapter 18, pp. 95–96).

Given his *'diffident'* nature, he is never going to find it easy to tell Elinor about himself *'I am no orator'* (Chapter 40, p. 271). Also, as he later explains to Elinor because his *'faith was plighted to another, there could be no danger'* in his being engaged (p. 342). After the visit to Barton Cottage (Chapters 16–19), he does not appear again until Chapter 35, when after having twice left a calling card at Berkley Street when Elinor is to visit when Elinor is at home – only to find that Lucy is there too; so again a private conversation. Marianne only makes the situation worse: she has no conversation between Edward, Elinor and Lucy, and, trying to support both Edward and Marianne, he *'is the most fearful of giving pain, of wounding expectation, and the most incapable of ever saw'* (Chapter 35, p. 229). Once his engagement to Lucy, and his determination to become known, general opinion is that he has behaved honourably. The negative reactions to the news, so yet again Elinor and Edward are kept apart, for as Marianne like Mrs Jennings, Edward seems to believe that Colonel Brandon is in love with Elinor it is as a result of Elinor's intervention that the Colonel makes the offer of marriage. Elinor is the one to tell him about, in Chapter 40, when he is at last able to tell Elinor, he seems to find the spirit that Marianne had thought he lacked. John Dashwood suggesting that Edward write *'a proper submission'* to his mother, to which Edward is outraged at the injustice of the suggestion: *'...would they have me beg my mother's forgiveness for ingratitude? ...a word of honour to me? I can make no submission – I am grieved and penitent by what has passed. – I am grown very happy...*' (Chapter 49, p. 346), but persuaded by Elinor that his asking for his mother's forgiveness would be without some spirit, he would rather face his mother in person than write a letter. To his grudgingly forgiven and Mrs Ferrars supplies the means for them to marry.

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John Dashwood



Key chapters

Chapter 1: Background: son of Henry Dashwood, husband of Fanny, the Dashwood sisters

Chapter 2: Talk with Fanny about what help he should offer

Chapter 33: At jeweller's; next day talks to Elinor about Colonel Brandon and Mrs Jennings and Lady Middleton and thinks Fanny wrong

Chapter 34: Tries to promote Elinor to Colonel Brandon

Chapter 36: Thinks of inviting Elinor and Marianne to stay; overruled by Edward

Chapter 37: Comes to tell Elinor, Marianne and Mrs Jennings how Fanny acts after learning of the engagement between Edward and Lucy (pp. 248–249)

Chapter 41: Talks to Elinor about Colonel Brandon and Mrs Ferrars (pp. 270–271)

Chapter 42: Congratulates Elinor on 'travelling so far towards Barton without a fall'

Chapter 43: Comes to London to Elinor, giving details of Mrs Ferrars' situation

Chapter 44: Tells Elinor of Mrs Ferrars' situation

Chapter 50: 'I will not say that I am disappointed, my dear sister...' (p. 349)

The narrator introduces John Dashwood on the first page of the narrative, as a 'steady, respectable young man' (p. 5). This sounds quite positive, if not very exciting. But on page 7, the narrator's ironic perspective gives us more insight into John's character: 'He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold-hearted, and rather selfish, is to be ill-disposed...' We are told that if he had married 'a more amiable woman... he might even have been made amiable himself... But Mrs John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself; – more narrow-minded and selfish' (p. 7). Mrs Dashwood and her daughters are dependent on John's financial support – that things are not going to go well for them. His role in the plot could be seen as he is shown to be manipulated by her. His character is used to communicate Fanny and Mrs Ferrars to Elinor, and to be a reminder of the attitudes and expectations of society. He tries to act as matchmaker between Elinor and Colonel Brandon, once he is a man of property. He brings Robert Ferrars into the narrative, introducing him in Chapter 36, and in Chapter 41 gives Robert the chance to disguise his shallow vanity and self-satisfaction. John is consistently overruled by his wife (Edward's sister). Austen devotes Chapter 2 to the dialogue between John and Fanny about what help should be given to Mrs Dashwood and her daughters. Austen constructs John's diminishing willpower and lack of moral compass as he allows himself to be persuaded by the strategic flattery of his ego: 'Perhaps it would have been as well...' 'Why, to be sure, it might be better...' 'Certainly...' 'That is true...' 'I believe you are right, my love...' (pp. 12–14). Outcome: the Dashwoods are persuaded from him and he is convinced he has acted correctly.

Discussion

Given the conventions of genteel society in nineteenth century England, do you think that John Dashwood's attempts to marry Elinor off to Colonel Brandon would have been seen as reasonable by a reader of that time?

John is consistently overruled by his wife (Edward's sister). Austen devotes Chapter 2 to the dialogue between John and Fanny about what help should be given to Mrs Dashwood and her daughters. Austen constructs John's diminishing willpower and lack of moral compass as he allows himself to be persuaded by the strategic flattery of his ego: 'Perhaps it would have been as well...' 'Why, to be sure, it might be better...' 'Certainly...' 'That is true...' 'I believe you are right, my love...' (pp. 12–14). Outcome: the Dashwoods are persuaded from him and he is convinced he has acted correctly. He is overruled again in Chapter 36 when Edward persuades Elinor and Marianne to stay with them. John's character of John Dashwood controls the themes of duty, propriety, the conventions and expectations of society. He is another example of a character in Austen's novels who is dressed up as propriety.

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Fanny Dashwood



Key chapters

Chapter 2: Talk with John Dashwood about help for Mrs D

Chapter 34: Visits Mrs Jennings and Lady Middleton; plan

Chapter 34: Afraid of being too civil (p. 221); 'cold insolence'

Chapter 36: Invitation to musical evening; John's suggestion

Marianne to stay (pp. 233, 237)

Chapter 36: Changes John's mind again (p. 237)

Chapter 37: Hysterical reaction to news of Lucy's engagement to Edward

Chapter 41: Her attitude to Elinor appears to change ('p. 281')

Chapter 50: Social connections re-established ('p. 351')

On the death of Henry Dashwood, Fanny 'installed herself mistress' (p. 10) of the impact on Mrs Dashwood. We get more evidence of her heartlessness in question concerning how much John should give to the Dashwoods is discussed. She is praising his 'generous spirit' (p. 11), but at the same time implies that anything he does for her will affect the financial security of their son. The first sentence of John's suggestions appears to support his plans: 'To be sure...' (a phrase used 'Undoubtedly...' 'Certainly not...' 'Certainly...', but each of her speeches built leading John to believe that any help at all would be foolish and excessive and would deem appropriate in such circumstances.

Her actions are all dictated by selfishness and determined by social convention. She tries – not wholly successfully – to manipulate social conventions to fit her own plans. She is a more energetic character than the 'insipid' Lady Middleton, and her involvement has a direct impact on the lives of Mrs Dashwood and her daughters, on Edward and on Lucy Steele. In the end, apart from her initial success in persuading John not to give any financial help to Mrs Dashwood, nothing really goes according to plan for her: she is keen to make sure that Edward and Elinor do not become engaged; she wants Edward to marry and wants him to have a distinguished career. She invites the 'harmless' Steele to Nancy, believing Fanny to be 'so fond of Lucy', can see no harm in telling Fanny between Lucy and Edward. When Fanny realises she has been thwarted by into a fit of hysterics, such is the impact on 'all her vanity and pride' (Chapter practical. She realises that life has to go on, even if it is not without its conflict. The narrator states that once Elinor and Edward are married and living at the Fanny visit them. When Robert and Lucy are married, the narrator comments within a short time they are 'on the best of terms imaginable with the Dashwoods, and ill-will continually subsiding between Fanny and Lucy... nothing could exceed lived together' (Chapter 50, p. 351).

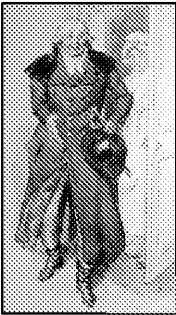
Fanny Dashwood is a character of very definite views and actions, not someone with empathy. In a similar way to Lucy, she is a strong female character, who, although with her point of view or her actions, is certainly not passive. She uses her influence over people and events. Within the constraints of the society in which she lives, where her wishes are at her disposal, she tries to achieve the outcomes she desires.

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Sir John Middleton



Key chapters

- Chapter 4: His letter to Mrs Dashwood (p. 25)
- Chapter 6: Report of his first visit to Barton Cottage (pp. 32–33)
- Chapter 7: Description of his activities; his sociability
- Chapter 9: Endorses John Willoughby (p. 45)
- Chapter 18: Invitation to party (that we don't hear about) – not aware of Willoughby (pp. 97–98)
- Chapter 19: Invitation to the Dashwoods to Barton Park to dine

- Chapter 21: Invitation to Barton Park to see the Miss Steeles; gossiping to Elinor and Marianne; betrays Elinor and Edward's love to Fanny and Lucy (p. 123)
- Chapter 23: Invitation to dine (p. 136)
- Chapter 27: 'disposition is not at all altered by a change of abode' (p. 162)
- Chapter 32: Astonishment at Willoughby's behaviour towards Marianne (p. 202)
- Chapter 36: First time how popular the Steeles are with John and Fanny Dashwood
- Chapter 44: Willoughby tells Elinor that it was Sir John who told him about his illness (p. 308)

Sir John Middleton's letter to Mrs Dashwood in Chapter 4 is the signpost to the Dashwood and her daughters. We first meet him in person when he arrives at Barton Cottage and overwhelms them with courtesy and kindness: 'an object of real solicitude to him' (p. 32). His constant wish to have company with the Dashwoods creates the basis of the Dashwoods' social life: Chapters 7 (p. 35), 136 and 27 (p. 162) contain examples of his sociability. He also unintentionally causes conflicts in their lives: in Chapter 9, Mrs Dashwood trusts his judgment when she says 'good a sort of fellow... as ever lived' (p. 46). We know from Chapter 7 (p. 34) that from the perspective of the Dashwoods, he 'was a sportsman... he hunted and shot... and these were (his) only pleasures'. He offers the cottage to Mrs Dashwood as it will not then be occupied by potential tenants (Chapter 7, p. 35). When, in Chapter 32 (p. 202), he is trying to understand Willoughby's behaviour, he finds it is 'an unaccountable business' – 'such a good-natured fellow!...not...a boy who would gossip and in Chapter 21, this leads him to betray Elinor's secret by telling her 'in confidence' – about her regard for Edward, which triggers Lucy's attitude. At the end of Chapter 36 (p. 238, the end of Volume 2), he unwittingly adds to the confusion by making it known that Lucy and Nancy are in great favour with Fanny Dashwood. Austen uses Sir John as a device to 'link' characters and events: for example, it is through his conversation with Elinor – and the reader – become aware of trouble in Colonel Brandon's past. His coincidental meeting with Willoughby in Drury Lane (Chapter 44, p. 308), which occurs at the point of death, leads to Willoughby's flight to Cleveland.

Discussion point:

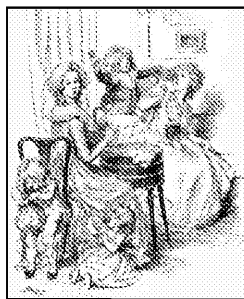
How does Sir John use his character to 'link' the Dashwood women to other characters and events? Which characteristics could Sir John be said to share with Mrs Jennings and Mrs Elton?

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Lady Middleton



Key chapters

Chapter 6: First appearance

Chapter 7: Description of her activities and her desire for

Chapter 11: Compared to her mother, Mrs Jennings (p. 55–56)

Chapter 21: Lady Middleton in the light of narrator's comment, *though in pursuit of praise for her children, the most likewise the most credulous...* (p. 116)

Chapter 23: Annamaria's basket (p. 137)

Chapter 28: At party: *'too polite to object...'* (p. 169)

Chapter 32: Reaction to Willoughby's situation: *'calm and polite unconcern'* Willoughby to Barton Park (p. 203)

Chapter 34: Meeting with Fanny Dashwood: they like each other; invites to Conduit Street

Chapter 36: *'fancy'* but dislike of Elinor and Marianne (p. 231)

Chapter 38: *'Is she angry? / I cannot suppose it possible that she should'* (p. 254)

Discussion point:

In the 1995 Ang Lee film adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* (with screenplay by Emma Thompson), Lady Middleton is one of the characters not seen on screen. What difference would it make to the novel if this character was absent?

Lady Middleton's chief characteristic is 'cold'. We are told that she has *'four noisy children'* but never exerts herself. Claiming to love music, the music has probably not been touched. *'celebrated that event by giving up music'* – it is an effort for her to bother with. Lady Middleton lacks *'elegance'* her husband lacks, also lacks his *'fancy'*. She is shown to be obsessed with her children. The conversation to a discussion about the children has brought along on her first visit to Barton Park.

key to Lady Middleton: something that the Steele sisters quickly learn to exploit. In Chapter 21 and make it their business to be in *'continual raptures'* (p. 116) about all her children. Lucy will remain for some time at Barton Park to be a torment to Elinor. Elinor is shown to be *'calm and polite unconcern'* (p. 203) about Marianne's situation. Marianne is overwhelmed by *'the clamorous kindness of the others'*. But Austen leaves us in no doubt that she seeks to please only herself: having expressed her opinion, *'she thought herself obliged to her own assemblies'*, and realising that Mrs John Willoughby *'would at once be a great help'*, she decides *'to leave her card with her as soon as she married'* (p. 203). When Marianne sees Willoughby unexpectedly at the party, Lady Middleton is *'too polite to wish'* (Chapter 28, p. 169) to be taken home. When the Middletons give a party, her *'fancy'* is shown in *'the coldness of her table, and of all her domestic arrangements'* (p. 34). When Fanny Dashwood visits, *'There was a kind of coldness and selfishness on both sides, which mutually attracted them each other in the simplicity of demeanour, and a general want of understanding'*. Lady Middleton's invitation to the Steele sisters to stay at Conduit Street ensures her place in Elinor's social circle. While she is unfailingly polite, she does not like Elinor and does not flatter either herself or her children. The narrator shows her general disinterest in the Dashwood sisters *'were fond of reading, she fancied them satirical: perhaps it was to be satirical...'* (Chapter 36, pp. 231–232) – her *'fancy'* is borrowed from the Steele sisters rather than based on any idea of her own. When Nancy asks Elinor if Lady Middleton is angry about Lucy's engagement to Edward, Elinor replies, *'I cannot suppose it possible that she should be angry'* (p. 254) – that she understands Lucy's actions and feels no anger towards her, but that she is concerned about what has happened and is disinclined to put herself to the trouble of getting at the truth.

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Key chapters

Chapter 7: First appearance

Chapter 8: Mrs Jennings decides Colonel Brandon is fit

Chapter 12: Teasing about Edward (p. 62)

Chapter 13: Questioning of Colonel Brandon (pp. 64–6)

Chapter 13: Questioning Willoughby about carriage trip

Chapter 14: *'wondering'* about the reason for Colonel Brandon's

Chapter 24: *'modestest ... young men ...'* She teases Elinor and Lucy (p. 142)

Chapter 25: Thinks about London; invitation to Elinor and Marianne (pp. 143–4)
'ways behind my back' (p. 147)

Chapter 26: Journey to London: *'all new ... inhumanity'* (p. 153)

Chapter 26: *'usual noisy cheerful ...'* (p. 155)

Chapter 27: Comments on the weather and sportsmen (p. 159)

Chapter 27: *'of ...'* (p. 160); note from Lady Middleton about her arrival

Chapter 27: Tells Willoughby was invited (p. 163)

Chapter 28: Kept away from party where Willoughby and Marianne meet

Chapter 29: *'thoroughly good humoured concern ...'* (p. 175)

Chapter 30: Mrs Jennings' kindness; concern for Marianne; is surprised to hear
the news that Marianne is not engaged to Willoughby (pp. 183–189)

Chapter 31: Apparent cruelty to Marianne – letter from Mrs Dashwood, not

Chapter 32: *'Long time, indeed!'* to silence Lucy (p. 206)

Chapter 36: Unaware Elinor/Marianne and Lucy/Nancy dislike each other

Marianne *'on having escaped the company of a stupid old woman so long'* (p. 232)

Chapter 37: Tells Elinor of Fanny's shock on hearing the news of Lucy's engagement
there is *'no reason on earth'* why Edward should not marry Lucy just because
Dashwood's viewpoint here – see p. 17] (pp. 241–243)

Chapter 37: *'blunt sincerity'* (p. 250) *'poor young man ...'* (x2); disagrees with

Chapter 38: Still thinks Lucy *'good-hearted'* (p. 260)

Chapter 39: Talks to Colonel Brandon to try to provoke him into proposing

Chapter 39: Misunderstands conversation between Colonel Brandon and

Chapter 41: Thinks all at Delaford by Michaelmas (p. 274; p. 275)

Chapter 43: Concern for Marianne's illness (p. 287)

Chapter 49: *'honest indignation against the jilting girl'* (p. 344)

As the mother of Lady Middleton, Mrs Jennings is a frequent visitor to Barton property in London, and her role in both places is significant in the lives of the Dashwoods. Sir John, we are told, describes her as *'a very cheerful agreeable ...'* to this, saying she was *'a good-looking, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked and rather vulgar'* (Chapter 13, pp. 65–66). It is her vulgarity that Marianne initially takes until Chapter 29 for her to fully appreciate *'the kindness, the unceasing ...'* treated with *'grateful contempt'* (p. 322). For all her joviality, she is mindful and has made sure that her two daughters are both *'respectably married'* (Chapter 30). The boundaries of social acceptability frame her very public comments about Edward and Willoughby in Chapter 13, when they visit Allenham uninvited and unprompted – a possible way for their behaviour to be interpreted – and acceptable – is that Edward is engaged and Marianne will one day be mistress of Allenham. It is this intention of Mrs Jennings to make her light-hearted references. She believes them to be engaged and so clearly confirms it. A useful characteristic for the plot is Mrs Jennings' habit

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more than she does, or of misinterpreting events: she says she can guess why Edward rushes away from Barton Park in Chapter 13 – it is because of his ‘*natural dislike*’ for an illegitimate daughter, but at this point neither the other characters nor the reader know so we are misdirected about the Colonel’s past. In Chapter 39, she misinterprets the conversation between Colonel Brandon and Elinor, believing the Colonel to be proposing to her. In a long episode where Elinor and Mrs Jennings talk at cross-purposes: the one offering to offer of the living to Edward, the other convinced there are soon to be wedding plans.

Mrs Jennings is directly responsible for introducing Lucy and Nancy Steele to Elinor and Marianne. Meeting them in Exeter and discovering them to be her relations (Edward is his wife less so) to invite them to Barton Park. She also is the means of getting Elinor to London and so into the social circle that Willoughby and Edward inhabit. She is also responsible for Marianne when she provides a reason for Willoughby’s absence, by saying he is a sportsman in the country (Chapter 27, p. 159), but also unintentionally causing Marianne to believe that Edward is a sportsman, not from Willoughby, but from her mother (Chapter 28, p. 165). She is the best of people and takes the letter from Lucy to Elinor and tries to make her think of Lucy as ‘*a good hearted girl as ever lived*’ (Chapter 38, p. 260), but it is only when she realises the truth of Lucy’s deceit, when she calls her ‘*the jilting girl*’ (Chapter 49, p. 344).

Having no malice in her own nature, she finds it difficult to recognise in others. Her concern for Marianne during her illness at Cleveland takes precedence over her concern for her daughter and newborn grandson. She stays to help nurse Marianne, to support Edward, encourages Colonel Brandon to stay, enabling him to undertake the vital journey from London to Cleveland and so develop the bond between the Colonel and Elinor.

There are instances where Austen keeps Mrs Jennings away from the centre of the action, enabling Elinor to speak to John and to give a reason for John to call the footman. She is the one who introduces Mrs Jennings for the first time; at the party where Marianne sees Willoughby, she is the one who introduces Lady Middleton for support; her absence when looking after Charlotte and Edward. Elinor and Lucy are much more in one another’s company. Equally, Mrs Jennings is responsible for the development of the plot lines for both Elinor and Marianne: they are in London when Mrs Jennings goes to visit Fanny Dashwood with Elinor and Marianne; this visit leads to the musical evening, which not only introduces Robert Ferrars to Elinor but also leads to her inviting Lucy and Nancy Steele to stay with her. This in turn leads to the re-engagement to Edward, which goes full circle as it is brought back as senseless when Edward is returning from one of her visits to Charlotte. Second only to their own moment of joy is the genuine pleasure in the knowledge that both Elinor and Marianne are safe and that there is every prospect of a happy future.

Discussion Question

Compare and contrast the characters of Mrs Jennings and Mrs Dashwood. What impact do they have on Elinor and Marianne?

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Key chapters

Chapter 19: First appearance

Chapter 20: Talks of Mr Palmer; claims knowledge of Willoughby; Brandon might have married her

Chapter 21: Elinor reflects on 'Charlotte's being so happy with Willoughby'

Chapter 26: First visit to Berkeley Street; shopping with Mrs Jennings

Chapter 32: Charlotte's reaction to Willoughby's behaviour: 'She

acquaintance immediately, and she was very thankful that she had never been acquainted with him'

Chapter 36: Gives birth to son (p. 231)

Chapter 39: Plans to return to Cleveland in March; invites Elinor and Marianne to stay (p. 261)

Chapter 42: Her laughter (p. 274); 'the openness and heartiness of her manner, of recollection and elegance' (p. 285)

Chapter 43: Leaves Cleveland to protect her baby son (p. 288)

Charlotte Palmer and her husband arrive at Barton Cottage in Chapter 19. She is alone, quietly working at her drawing and thinking of him 'with tenderness, and without doubt' (p. 102). Austen uses their arrival, in the company of Sir John and Lady Jennings, to alter the dynamics of the scene: from Elinor in solitary contemplation at her drawing-table, to a houseful of visitors: Charlotte's character joins that of Sir John and Lady Jennings, being gossipy, well meaning and good-humoured. She is a complete contrast to Elinor: 'Her manners were by no means so elegant as her sisters but they were more agreeable' (Chapter 19, p. 104). In London, she is used as the means of getting Marianne on a shopping trip, so that we can see Marianne's anxiety and disappointment at not seeing Willoughby. She has a positive opinion of Willoughby but she has no direct knowledge of him (Chapter 20, p. 111). She also makes Elinor aware that she knows of Marianne's supposed engagement to Willoughby – and that apparently Colonel Brandon knew it to be true'. In Chapter 32 (pp. 202–203), Austen's ironic perspective is used to declare she will have nothing more to do with Willoughby – at the same time as she has had anything to do with him. We can see that Charlotte is well intentioned. Charlotte's giving birth to a son is used to occupy Mrs Jennings, and so to keep her frequently in the company of Lucy and Nancy Steele at Conduit Street, will present as a 'buffer' between the two sets of sisters. Charlotte's return to Cleveland with Elinor and Marianne the means to travel part way back to Barton Cottage and to give freedom for Marianne's walks and for her illness. Cleveland is a sufficient distraction for Colonel Brandon to show his devotion to Marianne by going to fetch Marianne. Marianne's illness is thought to be infectious, Charlotte leaves Cleveland – in Chapter 43, because of her understandable motherly concern for the health of her son.

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Mr Thomas Palmer



Key chapters

Chapter 19: First appearance

Chapter 20: Charlotte's assessment of her husband (pp. 110–111)

Chapter 21: Elinor reflects on Mr Palmer *'acting so simply, with a strange unsuitableness which often existed between husband and wife'* (p. 111)

Chapter 27: At party *'careful to avoid...'* (p. 162)

Chapter 36: Mr Palmer's attitude to his newborn son: *'(he) met with a very unfatherly opinion among his sex, of all infants being alike...'* (pp. 232–233)

Chapter 39: *'so much real politeness'* (p. 261)

Chapter 42: Elinor can see that Mr Palmer is *'very capable of being a pleasant companion to a child, though affecting to slight it'* (p. 285)

Chapter 43: Attitude to Colonel Brandon (p. 289)

Mr Palmer first appears in Chapter 19 and his first direct speech is in Chapter 20, one of *'studied civility, difference, insolence and discontent'* (p. 109). He is largely reliable. He offers a glimpse of life beyond the Dashwoods, the Middletons and the Palmers, who enter Parliament. It is through the Palmers that Colonel Brandon learns that he is staying with Mrs Jennings in London (Chapter 26 p. 156). He is *'careful to attract attention to his mother-in-law'* (Chapter 27, p. 162), as he regards her as vulgar. On a different side to his character, *'so much real politeness'* and *'...very great amends to them since her sister had been known to be unhappy'* (p. 261), which suggests the compassion – and at Cleveland, Elinor observes that he is *'perfectly the gentlest of visitors, and only occasionally rude to his wife and her mother'*; he is *'very capable and only prevented from being so always by too great an aptitude to fancy himself a better man'* (Chapter 42, p. 285). Elinor compares Mr Palmer's character to Edward's and says he is a better man. Mr Palmer and Colonel Brandon seem to have respect for one another (Chapter 289), Mr Palmer feels relieved that he can leave Cleveland in the Colonel's hands. Charlotte and their son to stay with friends when Marianne becomes ill.

Discussion point:

Why do you think Mr Palmer married Charlotte Palmer, if he has apparently so little respect for her that her husband is *'so pleasant'* (Chapter 20, p. 110) and *'Mr Palmer is just the kind of man who would delude herself about the man she has married or is there evidence that he might be kind to her'* (Chapter 289)?

Robert Ferrars



Key chapters

Chapter 3: First mention (p. 18)

Chapter 12: First appearance, at jeweller's shop: *'sterling impression'* (p. 110)

Chapter 36: Talks of self/Edward; cottages; name drops (p. 232)

Chapter 41: *'laughed most immoderately'* at thought of Edward's *'merest awkward country girl'*: his first opinion of Lucy (p. 285)

Chapter 49/50: How Lucy got Robert to marry her (p. 339/340)

We first hear of Robert when the narrator reveals Fanny Dashwood's thoughts. Fanny and her mother *'...longed to see (Edward) distinguished'* (p. 17), but all they want is *'comfort and the quiet of private life'* (p. 18). Fortunately, he has a younger brother. The younger brother is Robert. We meet him next in Chapter 33, without knowing his name. Elinor and Marianne have to wait for him to make up his mind about which

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Discussion point:

Do Robert and Lucy deserve each other? Do you think that they might one day regret getting married to each other or do they have enough in common to make a happy marriage?

The narrator comments ironically that ‘*the delicacy of his taste, proved to be beyond*’ and assesses him as ‘*a person and face, of strong*’ insignificance, though adorned in the first steps of completing his purchase, he ‘*walked off with*’ and affected indifference’ (p. 209). In Chapter 11, the narrator comments on Edward’s ‘*easy civility*’ about Edward. He blames his character, saying it is all down to the ‘*mis*’ (p. 235), that she chose for him. He is very

great length about how he has helped Lady Elliott rearrange her rooms to and is convinced that a cottage can be as comfortable as ‘*the most spacious dwelling*’ all, for she did not think he deserved the compliment of ‘*personal opposition*’ (p. 237) using Robert’s character as a contrast to Edward’s. Elinor herself wonders ‘*young men*’, and why it is that ‘*she does not find that the emptiness and conceit of*’ charity with the ‘*modest*’ worth of the other’ (p. 235). When he meets Elinor Dashwood, he ‘*laughed most immoderately*’ at the prospect of Edward becoming Edward, he ‘*laughed forever!... he has done for himself completely! – shut himself*’ society!’ (p. 280). The irony here is that it is the engagement to Lucy that causes about his brother – and he will himself fall under Lucy’s spell and actually Edward believes that this marriage came about because ‘*the vanity of the one*’ flattery of the other, as to lead by degrees to all the rest’ (p. 339), and this view is when it is clear that Lucy has managed to convince Robert to marry her and proud of tricking Edward, and very proud of marrying privately without his mother and Lucy both manage to gain the forgiveness of Mrs Ferrars, but it is clear happily ever after, as though only newly married, there are already ‘*frequent*’ (p. 351).

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Key chapters

Chapter 1: First mention, as being the wealthy mother of Fanny Dashwood

Chapter 2: Mentioned by Fanny Dashwood, about the payment of her dowry

Chapter 3: Narrator's reference to Mrs Ferrars' longing 'to see her son'

Chapter 4: Elinor: *'What his mother really is we cannot know' – (p. 23)*

Chapter 17: Mrs Dashwood: *'What are Mrs Ferrars' views for Edward?'*

Chapter 19: Elinor of Edward: she *'placed all that was astonishing in this way of thinking' (p. 99)*

Chapter 22: Lucy to Elinor: *'...are you personally acquainted with your sister-in-law?'*

Chapter 24: Lucy: *'...Mrs Ferrars is a very understanding proud woman...' (p. 142)*

Chapter 33: John Dashwood of Edward: *'He has a most excellent mother...Mrs Ferrars'*

Chapter 34: First and only appearance: *'a little, thin woman...' (p. 219)*

Chapter 35: John Dashwood's view of Mrs Ferrars: *'...her pride, her meanness, and her caprice...' (p. 219)*

Chapter 35: Lucy's view of Mrs Ferrars: *'So exceedingly affable as she was! ...Such hauteur... Mrs Ferrars is a charming woman...' (p. 225); '...where she does dislike, I am sure she is right' (p. 225)*

Chapter 37: John Dashwood's report on Mrs Ferrars' reaction to Edward's departure: *'poor Mrs Ferrars suffered...She was quite in an agony...if he still persisted in this penury... must attend the match...; she would never see him again...she would do nothing to advance in (his career)' (pp. 249–250)*

Chapter 41: Elinor of Mrs Ferrars: *'...she has done with her son, she has cast him off in anything that befalls him...She would not be so weak as to throw away the comfort and anxiety of a parent!' (p. 278)* John Dashwood: *'Mrs Ferrars can never forget that Edward has married Lucy'*

Chapter 48: Elinor to Edward: *'Is Mrs Ferrars at Longstaple?' (p. 334);* Edward: *'he has married Lucy'*

Chapter 49: Elinor to Edward: *'...your mother has brought on herself a most appropriate punishment'*

Chapter 49: John Dashwood: *'...we all know the tenderness of Mrs Ferrars' heart...nothing so much as to be on good terms with her children' (p. 345)*

Chapter 50: *'After a proper resistance...just so violent and so steady as to preserve her being too amiable, Edward was ... pronounced to be again her son (p. 347)... after Edward owed to her dignity, and as served to prevent every suspicion of goodwill, she issued her marriage of Edward and Elinor' (p. 348)*

Chapter 50: Mrs Ferrars gives Edward and Elinor ten thousand pounds, and is *'surprised at her not giving more' (p. 348);* Robert and Lucy are rapidly restored to *'affection and influence' (p. 350);* Edward is *'never fully forgiven' (p. 350)* and is *'an intruder' (p. 351)*

Mrs Ferrars' influence is felt long before she actually appears. She appears in person for the first time, in Chapter 34, at the dinner given by John and Fanny Dashwood at Harley Street, when she treats Lucy with *'graciousness'* and treats Elinor with *'cold insolence' (p. 222);* but her attitude to Elinor at the dinner is not unexpected: Austen has given us many insights into Mrs Ferrars' attitudes and values in earlier chapters, through the comments of other characters and the narrator. She values social status and wealth above all else – apparently, even above her son. The 'good' character references she is given come from John Dashwood and her value system and have vested interests in keeping on the right side of her son-in-law and Lucy as her potential daughter-in-law. Austen's ironic perspective is evident throughout the novel.

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in the characterisation of Mrs Ferrars: John Dashwood's unconscious irony inspired by her *'tenderness of heart'* and the narrator's consciously ironic view leave us in no doubt that she is a character who deserves no sympathy. Elinor (p. 219) – although after she is engaged to Edward, she does encourage him (p. 346). Mrs Ferrars' role in the plot is to add a further, largely 'off stage' character to Edward and Elinor and to give insights into the characters of Lucy, Robert, John Dashwood. Her character also contributes to Austen's **didactic** purpose, as her attitudes and values are exposed and contrasted with those of Edward and Elinor.

Lucy Steele



Key chapters

- Chapter 21: First appearance
- Chapter 22: Reveals her secret engagement to Edward to Elinor
- Chapter 23: Lucy thinks Robert Ferrars is *'silly and a great deal of nonsense'* and Edward's dislike for each other grows (p. 144)
- Chapter 32: Arrives in London to stay at Bartlett's Building
- Chapter 34: *'seldom been happier'* – invitation to dinner (p. 219)

please (p. 220)

Chapter 35: Lucy delighted by Mrs Ferrars' reaction to her (p. 225)

Chapter 35: *'demure and settled air'* when Edward comes to see Elinor (p. 227)

Chapter 36: Constrained by Elinor's presence (p. 232)

Chapter 36: *'subdued the pride of Lady Middleton'* (p. 238)

Chapter 37: The engagement between Lucy and Edward is revealed to Fanny

Chapter 38: Letter from Lucy to Elinor (p. 259)

Chapter 47: Behaviour in carriage and message via Thomas (pp. 328–331)

Chapter 48: Elinor pictures Lucy as *'active, contriving manager'* at Delaford (p. 329)

Chapter 49: Lucy's letter to Edward (pp. 339–340)

Chapter 50: How she got Robert to marry her (p. 350)

Chapter 50: Domestic disagreements (p. 351)

Lucy and Nancy Steele first appear at Barton Park just after the Palmers end their visit to Cleveland. Nancy, the elder, is characterised by *'vulgar freedom and folly'* (p. 119); she *'joined insincerity with ignorance'* (p. 119); her uneducated use of language betrays her ignorance: *'You saw it all; and was it not so?'* (p. 225) [See Section 6 of this guide for more discussion on language choice]. Mrs Jennings and Sir John Middleton who are responsible for their invitation to the party (p. 114) of Charlotte Palmer and Mary Middleton. Lucy and Nancy are then living at Longstaple, near Plymouth. It is clear that the only way the sisters can get what they want is to marry well. Lucy is particularly ambitious. She is *'shrewd'*, more intelligent than her sister. She is manipulative. Like Fanny Dashwood, she schemes to get what she wants. Her first campaign to marry Edward, is not successful, in terms of financial security. She does in the end get what she wants, by managing to lure Robert into marrying her.

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At the end of Chapter 21, Lucy and Nancy are told by Sir John of Elinor's makes the link: *'What! Your sister-in-law's brother, Miss Dashwood?'* Lucy's Lucy knows, or believes she knows, *'something to (Edward's) disadvantage'* (p. revealing to Elinor the secret of her four-year engagement to Edward. Fully inflicting on Elinor, Lucy provides evidence of the engagement: the miniature letter from him and, most hurtful of all, the ring with the lock of hair (see C she is *'of a jealous temper'* but has never had cause to doubt Edward's love for her. She tries to flatter Elinor by saying how much she respects her judgment; she goes to London in the winter and pretends to be sorry that she will not, but *'her eyes'* (p. 144). Once in London, Lucy continues to torment Elinor: *'Their presence hardly knew how to make a very gracious return to the never-fading delight of Lucy'* (Chapter 32 p. 205).

By Chapter 34, Lucy and Nancy have ingratiated themselves so successfully to the Middletons that they are invited to stay with them in Conduit Street. As a result of the dinner party, Fanny and John Dashwood, in honour of the Middletons, Lucy had found that as an obstacle to her engagement to Edward, is at the dinner party. Dashwood treat her cordially, in contrast to Elinor, who is *'pointedly slighted'* *'constrained'* by Elinor – she fears that Elinor will despise the flattery that her *'Lady Middleton'* (Chapter 36, p. 238). Lucy is visiting Elinor when Edward is *'demure and settled air'* (p. 227), she relishes the discomfort of the other two. Lucy and Nancy Steele to stay with them at Harley Street as a way of avoiding her Marianne.

Just as the first chapter of Volume 2 (Chapter 23) focuses on Lucy's secret engagement (Chapter 37) opens with that secret being revealed and the upheaval this causes for Edward and John Dashwood. Mrs Ferrars has disinherited Edward. Lucy's influence in the chapters that make up the third and final volume of the narrative, but we do not hear her speech: her comments and actions are reported by the narrator, for example by another character, in Chapter 47 (p. 329). In Chapter 38 (p. 254), Nancy is walking and says that Edward and Lucy are still engaged and that Edward is going to take Holy Orders. Elinor receives a letter from Lucy the following morning in which she offers support in recommending Edward *'to any body who has a living to bestow'* (p. 254). In Chapter 47, when Thomas, the Dashwood's servant, comes back from Exeter, Elinor tells Lucy and she is now Mrs Ferrars. Elinor is devastated and imagines Lucy to be at Delaford parsonage. But a visit from Edward reveals that Lucy has married him. Elinor the letter he receives from Lucy, in which she confirms she has married his *'dear brother'* (p. 340). Elinor realises that in Exeter, Lucy *'had certainly not meant to go off with a flourish of malice...'* (p. 341). Although Lucy's flatteries mean that Edward and Robert are forgiven by Mrs Ferrars, Austen shows that there is some justice, for Edward's marriage is subject to *'frequent domestic disagreements'* (p. 351).

Discussion point

Chapter 22 is a key chapter in which Lucy tells Elinor about her engagement to Edward Ferrars. Analyse Lucy's character: how does she use her calculating purpose?

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Nancy Steele



Key chapters

Chapter 21: First appearance; questions Elinor; embarrassment

Chapter 22: Lucy of Nancy: ‘...she has no judgment at all; in more harm than good, for I am in constant fear of her betraying hold her tongue...’ (p. 127)

Chapter 24: Mischief-making (p. 142)

Chapter 32: First appearance in London; ‘conquest’ of Doctor Davies (p. 205)

Chapter 37: Reveals Lucy’s secret to Fanny Dashwood (p. 242)

Chapter 38: Gossip on walk with Elinor /has listened to private conversation Edward going to Oxford; ‘I write to the Doctor and tell him’ (p. 258)

Nancy is silly, vain and sly. Lucy is ‘amused’ of her (p. 119), fearing that Nancy will get in the way of her plans for self-advancement. Nancy lacks social graces and finds pleasure in making mischief – as in Chapter 14 when she teases both Lucy and Elinor, ‘I dare say Lucy’s beau is quite as modest and pretty behaved as Miss Dashwood’s’ (p. 142). She is nearing thirty years of age but is still talking of Dr Davies as ‘a conquest’, simpering when he is called her ‘beau’ (p. 205). Her role in the plot, apart from establishing Lucy’s background, is to be the one to inform Elinor to the extent she thinks Fanny will approve of the engagement between Edward and Lucy. Her other function is to convey information to Elinor about the conversation between Lucy and Robert. Nancy’s unscrupulous character is further revealed when she has eavesdropped on this conversation, and sees nothing wrong in having done so. In this version, it is Edward who offers to release Lucy from the engagement. In the next day, Lucy states that she was the one who felt it prudent to suggest to Edward that he should write to the Doctor. Nancy also gives Elinor Edward’s address in London (p. 257), which would allow her to write to him with the offer from Colonel Brandon.

Discussion point:

How does Nancy’s indignation at the suggestion she write to Doctor Davies (Chapter 38, pp. 257–8) reflect on Marianne’s writing letters to Willoughby?

to him with the offer from Colonel Brandon. If he had not come to visit her in London, his final view of Nancy is as the unwitting agent in the separation between Lucy and Robert – Nancy, in return, lends her all her money, leaving her financially dependent on Mrs Jennings to take her to London. ‘I write to the Doctor again’ (p. 345).

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Mrs Henry Dashwood



Key chapters

Chapter 1: Family background and situation
Chapter 3: Believes Elinor and Edward to be falling in love
Chapter 4: Letter from Sir John Middleton offering Barton Cottage
Chapter 5: Preparations for leaving Norland
Chapter 8: Conversation with her daughters about the future
(pp. 39–41)

Chapter 11: Sharing Marianne and Willoughby's feelings (p. 55)
Chapter 14: Reaction to Willoughby's flattery (p. 74)
Chapter 15: Response to Willoughby's departure and her feelings with Elinor
Chapter 16: 'I know Marianne's heart' (p. 85)
Chapter 19: Conversation with Edward on leaving (pp. 100–101)
Chapter 25: Positive attitude of Elinor and Marianne going to London (pp. 148–149)
Chapter 31: Edward with Willoughby on every page (pp. 191–192)
Chapter 32: Persuades Elinor and Marianne to stay in London (p. 201)
Chapter 45: Reunited. Reveals Colonel Brandon loves Marianne (pp. 312–313)
Chapter 46: Sees further evidence of this love (p. 317)
Chapter 47: 'Rather say your mother's imprudence, my child' (p. 327); 'She feared for her Elinor' (p. 331)
Chapter 48: Has written to Colonel Brandon (p. 333)
Chapter 50: Happy – 'darling object' to see Colonel Brandon and Marianne
'to remain at the cottage' (p. 353)

Mrs Dashwood's world is turned upside down when Henry Dashwood dies. As a widow, she loses her home and any status that went with it. She despises the new Mrs. Dashwood, who is quickly moved into Norland to take over Mrs Dashwood's position, but who is not the same as John Dashwood. We are told that the resemblance between Mrs Dashwood and the new Mrs Dashwood is 'strikingly great' (Chapter 1, p. 8). The end of the lives they have lived is a 'agonies of grief'. They give themselves up 'wholly to their sorrow', whereas Elinor and Marianne have more control over their emotions. In spite of promises to his father, Mrs Dashwood believes John Dashwood is not fit to inherit (Chapter 16) and as the time comes for her to leave Norland, she realises her judgment was wrong. Elinor and Marianne have a degree of practicality: having received the offer of Barton Cottage, Elinor accepts it and then sets about organising the practical consequences of the move. Her actions 'was exceedingly rapid in the performance of everything that interested her' (p. 28). Elinor is guided by her about the sale of the carriage and the linen. Elinor displays a degree of ironic humour at the expense of Marianne, when she defends herself against her daughter's accusation of his 'being too old and infirm, at the age of ... you must be in continual terror of his death, and it must seem to you a miracle that he should live to the advanced age of forty-seven'. However, she is of one mind with Marianne and Willoughby, 'she shared all their feelings with a warmth that left her no inclination to display' (Chapter 11, p. 55). In this, as she finally admits, she must be answered by allowing Marianne to behave as she did with Willoughby (Chapter 47, p. 331). Mrs Dashwood is reluctant to think anything but good of Willoughby. She believes his behaviour to Marianne 'has declared that he loved and considered her as his future wife'. Elinor for wanting proof of their engagement. She refuses to do as Elinor asks her outright if Willoughby has asked her to marry him. This refusal is in keeping with the necessary to the plot – for had she found out that there was no engagement, the story of Marianne develop?

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The warmth of her nature shows in her treatment of Edward. She realises that she has misled him about having a *'profession to engage (his) time and give an interest to (his) future'* (p. 100). She believes that his mother will *'secure'* his future, for *'it is her duty to prevent any objections to Elinor and Marianne going to stay with Mrs Jennings in London, as every young woman of your condition in life, acquainted with the manners and customs of the world, should do'* (p. 148). Events overtake Mrs Dashwood – Willoughby has abandoned his engagement to the wealthy Miss Grey – and so her letter to Marianne, filled with *'future happiness'* with Willoughby, causes Marianne to weep with agony (C. 14). When she has learnt of what has happened, she still believes that it is better for Marianne to stay in London, partly to *'cheat Marianne at times, into some interest beyond herself'* (C. 15) because she knows that John and Fanny will be in London and she thinks that *'they sometimes see their brother'* (p. 201). This obviously also serves the plot of the novel as Marianne and Elinor in London keep them in the social circle that also includes Mrs Jennings, the Palmers, the Dashwoods, the Steeles, Colonel Brandon, and Edward and their mother.

Mrs Dashwood remains at Barton Cottage until, in Chapter 45, Colonel Brandon arrives where Marianne is dangerously ill. On the way to Cleveland, Colonel Brandon visits Marianne to her; on arrival at Cleveland, Elinor greets her with the news that Mrs Dashwood confides to Elinor that she now believes that the Colonel is *'your sister happy'* (p. 315), saying also that, *'There was always a something – in Willoughby's eyes at times, which I did not like.'* She knows nothing of the story when she observes the Colonel's emotions on seeing Marianne so pale and interprets this as arising *'from the most simple and self-evident sensations', and from the actions and words of Marianne...something more than gratitude already dawned*. In Chapter 47, Elinor has told her mother about Willoughby's 'confession'. As Mrs Dashwood could still have been susceptible to Willoughby's charms, when she *'replaced him...in her former esteem, ... it is probable that her compassion would have witnessed his distress, and been under the influence of his countenance and his manner'*, the dramatic tension caused by misdirection, it is Mrs Dashwood's letter to Colonel Brandon from Barton Cottage as Marianne convalesces, that leads Elinor to think that the person approaching the cottage is the Colonel – when it turns out to be Edward. In the end, safely married to her first love, Mrs Dashwood fondly hopes that Marianne will be married soon; it is her *'darling object'* (p. 351) and her wish is fulfilled. In spite of moving to Delaford to be closer to Elinor and Marianne in their new house, Mrs Dashwood *'remain at the cottage'* (p. 353), for after all there is Margaret's future to think of and her the chance to enter into the social circle that played a significant part in the lives of her elder sisters.

Discussion point:

Mrs Dashwood is shown to share many traits of character with Marianne. Can you find evidence to show that she also shares some characteristics with Elinor?

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Margaret Dashwood

Key chapters

Chapter 1: First mention: she has *'imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance'*
Chapter 7: Her view of Colonel Brandon's character (p. 36)
Chapter 9: Walk with Marianne (p. 43)
Chapter 12: She confides to Elinor that Willoughby has cut a lock of Marianne's hair
Chapter 17: Conversation with Marianne, Elinor, Mrs Dashwood and Edward
Chapter 47: Returns to Barton Cottage (p. 328)
Chapter 50: *'reached an age highly suitable for dancing and not very ineligible for being*

The third daughter of Mrs Dashwood does not feature prominently in the narrative. She is described in Chapter 1 as having *'already imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance'* (p. 7). In Chapter 7, she supports Marianne's view of Colonel Brandon as being too old and infirm to consider marriage. In Chapter 9 she is the one to accompany Marianne on her fatal walk on Highchurch Down. In Chapter 17, we hear her voice the wish that *'somebody would give us all a large fortune apiece!'* but then *'should do with it!'* (p. 91). She is sent to friends while Mrs Dashwood goes to Barton Cottage (Chapter 47, p. 328) to rejoin her family signals that all is resolved. Elinor and Marianne set up homes in Delaford, Margaret can look forward to society, under the wing of the Middletons, and very probably, Mrs Jennings.

Parents and Children in *Sense and Sensibility*

Key chapters

Chapter 1: Family relationships
Chapter 6: Middleton's eldest child *'a fine little boy about six years old'*; *'On the eve of the party, by way of provision for discourse'* (p. 33)
Chapter 19: Edward's views on child-rearing: *'to be as unlike myself as is possible'*
Chapter 21: Lady Middleton *'saw with maternal complacency all the impertinent mischievous tricks'* of her children (p. 116); *'fond mother'*... the *'most credulous'*
Chapter 21: Elinor: *'while I am at Barton Park I never think of tame and quiet children'*
Chapter 23: Lucy: *'seemed to infer that she could taste no greater delight than in spoiling a child'* (p. 138)
Chapter 34: The comparison of the heights of Harry Dashwood and William Palmer
Chapter 36: Mr Palmer's attitude to his newborn son: *'(he) maintained the composure among his sex, of all infants being alike...'* (pp. 232–233)
Chapter 42: Elinor can see that Mr Palmer is *'misguided as a child, though affecting*

The relationship between parents and children is central to the narrative of *Sense and Sensibility*. The relationships and inheritance laws are set out in the first chapter of the novel, the lives of Mr and Mrs Dashwood. The dynamics within the various dramatic tensions of the narrative, as well as giving the opportunity for irony, the family groups in *Sense and Sensibility* could be said to be unconventional, in mother/father/children: Sir John and Lady Dashwood and their four children; Mr and Mrs Palmer with their newborn son and the Middletons with their only son. The Dashwoods with their only son and the Palmers with their newborn son are central to the novel. Austen gives us glimpses into the domestic life of these families as the children are being brought up to reflect and perpetuate their parents' attitudes.

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Mrs Dashwood and her three daughters, Mrs Jennings and her two, Mrs Ferrars and her one daughter form another family type, in that they are headed by a widow whose sole likeness ends. There are two other mothers: Eliza Brandon and her daughter, but they feature only as a warning to others and their story is embedded as a 'flashback' – a symbolic perhaps of their being excluded from a life in present polite society. And Colonel Brandon, all other main characters do have some kind of family connection, although through Eliza Williams' child, even Willoughby and Colonel Brandon are distantly connected. The fathers in *Sense and Sensibility* do not seem to take much interest in their children's lives: Sir John is apparently more preoccupied with entertaining his own offspring. John Dashwood sees his son in terms of securing the future, and appears fond but distanced from his baby son. John Willoughby is the father who takes no responsibility for it. Colonel Brandon is the father figure, and effectively guarding the illegitimate baby. Lucy and Nancy are mentioned once (Chapter 3, p. 25), but there is no mention of their mother. Their uncle, Mr Pratt, is their only significant family link, until luck shines on the Jennings and the Dashwoods in Exeter and discover they are related. Lacking a social background, there are few options open to Lucy and Nancy, other than to use of these newly-discovered relatives to make sure that they marry well. This is a minor role in the narrative.

Mothers feature in far more significant roles than fathers, creating an emotional connection, although not always a positive one. Mrs Dashwood and Mrs Jennings extend their own children to other people's children – Mrs Jennings acting *in loco parentis* while they are in London and Cleveland, and Mrs Dashwood taking a very active interest in the wellbeing and future plans of Edward Ferrars. Charlotte Palmer obviously loves her son, but her attitude is likely to turn him into the sort of spoilt child that Fanny and Lady Middleton have produced. Mrs Ferrars' attitude to her children is the antithesis of the others: she sees Edward, Robert and Fanny only in terms of their value in securing the future. Robert and Fanny are very much their mother's children, but Edward has no direct mother's influence suffering only from a lack of self-confidence, which Robert has. Having sent Edward to a private tutor, rather than to public school. His early education prompted Edward, unlike any of the other fathers, to consider how he will be brought up... *they will be brought up... to be as unlike myself as is possible. In feeling, in action, in every way* (Chapter 19, p. 101). Young children in *Sense and Sensibility* are generally spoiled, unmannered, spoilt and noisy. Elinor's comment, 'I confess that while I am at Bath, I am not at all fond of quiet children with any abhorrence' (Chapter 21, p. 118), expresses an irony of the narrator that, unlike Lady Middleton's belief, unruly children have no place in the drawing rooms of polite society.

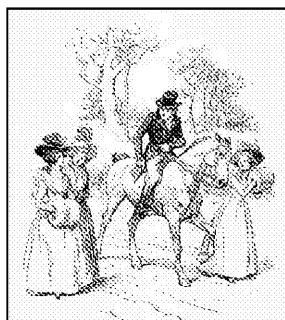
For women like Fanny Dashwood, Lady Middleton and Charlotte Palmer, their place in society; they have no other primary function in providing sons for their husbands. Had Mrs Dashwood been able to produce a son, *Sense and Sensibility* would have been a very different story!

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Section 4: Genre, Form and Narrative Structure

Genre



Jane Austen played a significant role in the development of the novel, not just as an author, bringing her writings in novel form, but also in the structure and form of these writings. Although 'the first English Novel', the novel as a distinct form emerged in the eighteenth century, with the works of writers such as Daniel Defoe (*Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719), Jonathan Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*, 1726), Samuel Richardson (*Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded*, 1740; *Clarissa*, 1748), Henry Fielding (*Tom Jones*, 1749), Joseph Andrews (Fanny) Burney (*Evelina*, 1769). The **epistolary** novel, an accepted form: *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, *Sarah*, *David* and *Evelina*, for example, were all in this form which found popularity in the Gothic novel – for example, Horace Walpole (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794).

Austen's style and tone can be seen as both development of and reaction to eighteenth century forms of the novel: in terms of structure, Austen's work is a development of the epistolary, letter-writing format; in terms of style, tone and content, it is a reaction against the Gothic novel, with its dependence on sensational, **melodramatic** settings. It is believed that an early version of *Sense and Sensibility*, entitled *Love and Friendship*, was written in epistolary form but that Austen revised it, using instead an omniscient perspective that allowed the reader to observe the actions and share the thoughts of the characters. Austen also reveals her characters through carefully constructed dialogue. Unlike the Gothic tale of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was published in 1794 – the year of *Elinor and Marianne*. In contrast to the style of the Gothic novel, Austen favours realistic writing fiction, not fact, the settings and characters are comparable with her own likely experience, in terms of location, social relations and cultural references. She incorporates familiar aspects of society and social convention and comments on them with ironic observation. Her plot is driven by character rather than by the apparent forces, and her characters could happily mingle with the people of Exeter in the nineteenth century, without drawing undue attention to themselves.

Form

The rise of literacy and developments in printing meant that there was an increasing demand for written word. The novel supplied that audience. The three-volume novel was a popular form for author and reader: it meant more books bought and it meant that families and friends could read the volumes and share their opinions on what was going on – you can imagine a nineteenth century version of a Book Club. As can be seen from the divisions in the Penguin Classics 2003 edition, *Sense and Sensibility* was originally written in three volumes. The three volumes are designed to be read as separate stories, but as a whole they tell the same story, with the first part acting as a lure to read the second part, the second part acting as a lure to read the third and final part, to see how the story ends. The three-volume form is designed with a 'cliffhanger' in the final chapter of Volumes 1 and 2, to keep readers interested in what happens next and in *Sense and Sensibility*, at the end of Volume 1 (Chapter 22) Elinor is given proof by Lucy of her engagement to Edward Ferrars, with the miniature portrait of Edward and a letter to her. What will Elinor do? Is Edward lost to her? Read on! At the end of Volume 2 Elinor is given further proof of the success of Lucy's campaign to become Mrs. Ferrars. She shows her the note from Fanny Dashwood, inviting the Steele sisters to stay at their house. Now we know how Elinor is going to respond, and with the knowledge of the other characters' feelings established, what impact they are going to have. The reader has to read the

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Narrative Structure

The narrative of *Sense and Sensibility* progresses along two primary storylines; this creates a symmetry, both emotional and structural, that enables comparison of the sisters' reactions and behaviour. The bond of sisterhood and shared adversity in Chapter 1 does not weaken throughout the narrative, and acts as a cohesive thread for both stories.

Parallels

Austen guides our point of view about the sisters by making us aware of parallels in events, for example:

- Both the older Dashwood sisters are in love with men who are out of their social class; the situation between Edward and Lucy is in marked contrast to Marianne's situation. This parallel runs through the narrative, coming to a head in the final scene between Elinor and Marianne in Chapter 37 (pp. 246–248).
- Elinor loves Edward, who is cautious; Marianne loves Willoughby and is impulsive.
- Elinor is aware of Willoughby as a suitor for Marianne; Marianne is unaware of Elinor's feelings.
- The lock of hair given by Marianne to Willoughby and the lock of hair given by Elinor to Edward are thought to be Elinor's.
- Willoughby visits and is seemingly in love with Marianne; Marianne is in love with him; Edward visits and does not seem to be in love with Elinor; Elinor does not seem to be in love with Edward.
- Elinor writes letters to her mother; Marianne writes letters to Willoughby.
- Elinor does not become ill; Marianne does become ill.

There are other parallels in the structure of the narrative, such as:

- Edward, Colonel Brandon and Willoughby all have a 'secret'.
- Elinor is the audience for the 'backstories' of Colonel Brandon, Willoughby and Lucy; she has the task of telling Marianne what she has been told.
- The similarity, which so troubles Colonel Brandon, between Marianne's situation and her own characters and situations.
- Mrs Dashwood and Mrs Ferrars are both widowed mothers of three children.
- The Dashwood sisters, the Ferrars brothers, Willoughby and the Steeles are all present in the narrative.
- Edward and Marianne's situations are both said to be caused by 'ignorance'.
- The examples of existing marriages (the Middletons, the Dashwoods, the Steeles and the Willoughbys) suggest they are based on material comfort rather than love.
- There are two 'love triangles': Elinor, Edward and Lucy form one; Willoughby, Marianne and Colonel Brandon form the second. For a short time, Colonel Brandon is in love with Lucy Jennings, John Dashwood – and Elinor herself perhaps – add a 'red herring' to the story. He briefly that he favours the younger Miss Dashwood. The dynamics of the first triangle with Elinor the rival for Edward and Marianne the object of desire in the second with Willoughby the rival for Marianne and Colonel Brandon the object of desire in the first. This creates dramatic tension and to show the characteristics of the sisters: Elinor's ability to rationalise and Marianne's emotional self-absorption. This is clearly because of the positions they occupy in their respective triangles.

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Parallels can be used to give insight into character and add 'layering' to an event. For example:

- In Chapter 27 (p. 161), Marianne *'insisted on being left behind, the next morning, to wait out'*, hoping that Willoughby will visit – recalling how she stayed behind to wait for the expected proposal from Willoughby: in both scenes, she is true to her character and that of Willoughby.
- In Chapter 37 (p. 242), Mrs Jennings comments on the revelation that Elinor is engaged for a long time: *'There is no great wonder in their liking one another, having brought so forward between them and nobody suspect it...'* Compare this to Marianne and Edward, where everyone believes them to be engaged, but in Chapter 38, Elinor confesses to Elinor that *'there has been no engagement'*.
- To create a point of dramatic tension at the end of both Volume 1 (Chapter 35) and Volume 2 (Chapter 36), Austen uses the same formula: Lucy, Elinor and a letter. In Volume 1, it is Lucy that Lucy shows to Elinor at the end of Chapter 35 parallels the scene at the end of Chapter 36 where Elinor shows the letter from Edward as proof of their engagement.
- In Chapter 37 (p. 244), Elinor has to tell Marianne about Edward and Lucy. For a moment that *'...Edward seemed a second Willoughby'*; she also has to tell Marianne what Colonel Brandon has said about Willoughby (Chapter 32, p. 200) and the letter from Edward (Chapter 34, p. 324), what Willoughby has said about himself.
- In spite of Marianne's belief that Willoughby is a kindred spirit, united by shared values, Austen shows us just how far apart they are: at the end of Willoughby's justification, he takes his leave of Elinor saying, *'... I will not stay to rob you of your good-will, by shewing that where I have most injured I can least forgive.'* (p. 243) Marianne's contrite response to Elinor's revelation of her own secret situation is that *she had injured, no reparation could be too much for her to make'* (p. 248).

Plot twists are another feature of the structure of *Sense and Sensibility*, for example:

- The letter from Eliza arrives at the moment Colonel Brandon is about to propose to Elinor.
- After Mrs Dashwood returns with Elinor and Margaret from her visit to Mr. Dashwood, we walk with her into the cottage, expecting to see Marianne and Willoughby engaged; instead, we find Marianne inconsolable and Willoughby has already got away.

Discussion point:

What is the impact on the narrative of this plot twist? What happens next?

- Two men on horseback: the first, thought to be Willoughby, turns out to be Colonel Brandon; the second, thought to be Colonel Brandon, turns out to be Edward.
- Elinor rushes to greet her mother at Cleveland, only to be confronted by Mrs Dashwood's news of Marianne's engagement.
- Edward reveals that, contrary to the Dashwoods' belief, he is still unmarried. Elinor *'almost'* faints from the room as she realises that Edward is not Robert. Elinor *'almost'* faints from the room as she realises that Edward is not Robert.
- The first two twists are **pivotal** to the plot, signalling the removal of Willoughby from the lives of the Dashwoods and the joining of another to their lives for good.

Further parallels: The significance of being seventeen and female

We know from Chapter 3 that Marianne is nearly seventeen. As Colonel Brandon is nearly fifty, it is clear that seventeen is a dangerous age for a woman to be married at seventeen, against her wishes, to the Colonel's elder brother. He is a man of a different generation, and her unhappiness in her marriage. Her daughter Eliza Williams runs away from her father's treacherous Willoughby at the same age. Austen chooses to spare Marianne the same fate.

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that befalls the other two women. Marianne, while sharing some characteristics with the heroine, does not share their usual fate: ruin and death. She comes close to the precipice by the constant vigilance of Elinor and Colonel Brandon. She realises that society does not forgive the woman who breaks the rules. The same rule applies to Edward though Colonel Brandon is believed to have a 'love child', this does not exclude him from society; Willoughby, though his character is damaged by the revelations of his relationship with Williams and his child, is still able to make a financially advantageous marriage and will welcome his wife into her social circle.

Flashbacks

Austen adds a further dimension to the narrative structure by adding 'backstories' to the characters themselves. Colonel Brandon tells the story of the two women to give us insight into his character and into the world that Marianne has been in; because of this we sense that Marianne's story will not be a repeat of Eliza's. Edward's backstory is revealed in the **climax**: Elinor has already agreed to marry him. But the telling at this point in the narrative is engaged to show us the genuine love and trust Elinor has for him: she explains to him why she said 'yes'. This backstory is used as a bridge to their marriage. Austen gives them a long scene together, during which we get a sense of how this marriage will work together to solve the issue of how to gain Mrs Ferrars' approval – and hope to enable them to marry. Willoughby's anguished and extended appeal to Elinor shows that his love for Marianne was sincere, he was and continues to be more sincere than he appears of material comforts. Austen allows us to see how Willoughby still has the capacity to change. Elinor has to stop herself from feeling sorry for him – she is even persuaded to consider his death, so that Willoughby and Marianne could be together. So, we realise that Willoughby is an attractive but ultimately destructive force and his departure from the narrative means a positive future can now be constructed for Marianne.

The structure of *Sense and Sensibility* presents a logical sequence of events, relationships and compelling – if not all likeable – characters. Austen's skill in her attention to structure, form or genre conventions. Her world is so subtly constructed that when we deliberately analyse how it has been constructed, we are more than happy to let the characters and let the story unfold.

Essay question:

Consider Austen's use of coincidence in the structure of *Sense and Sensibility* - for example the meeting of Mrs Jennings and Sir John with Lucy and Mr. Steele in Exeter; Colonel Brandon talking about the engagement of Willoughby and Sophia Grey; Willoughby meeting Sir Thomas seeing Lucy Ferrars in Exeter.

Does the use of coincidence work in the novel or is it an effective device, to enable the story to unfold?

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Section 5: Themes, Attitudes and Values in *Sense and Sensibility*

Themes

Truth, Lies, Secrecy and Concealment



Much of the dynamic of the plot of *Sense and Sensibility* is based on concealment, of information on a 'need to know' basis, and of truth and of lie-telling embedded in social convention.

Discussion point:

To what extent do you agree with the statement that, 'In the presents, telling lies is an accepted - and necessary - form of communication?' Use an example from the novel to support your view.

- In Chapter 2, the 'truth' is carefully edited by Fanny Dashwood as she presents her husband's point of view, by presenting him with a picture of the poverty he persists with his plan to offer financial help to Mrs Dashwood and her daughters.
- From Chapter 3, we see that Edward Ferrars is already someone who is at least according to the ambitions of his mother and sister. It is a short time before he is also not who he appears to be in relation to Elinor – and to Lucy. His honour binds him to the other.
- Uncertain of Edward's true feelings for her, Elinor, mindful of propriety, hides her love for him even to her own family, adding to her burden of concealment. Something is not right but Austen ensures that although she has time to doubt to her family, there is never an opportunity for Elinor to confront the truth – the truth is supplied by Lucy in Chapter 22.
- Lucy has her own secret agenda, based on her need to gain security and a 'truth' is only from her own perspective: she keeps on with the illusion of Edward, for just so long as he remains her best hope of fulfilling her ambition (remind you of?), but he is quickly supplanted by Robert, when the young man makes a better bet.
- Elinor is burdened by her promise to Lucy to keep her knowledge of the truth. She has guessed Elinor's love for Edward, and Elinor is determined not to tell her, which puts her under additional strain.
- It is not until Chapter 37, provoked beyond endurance by Marianne's weakness of her sister's feelings, that Elinor finally admits her deep love for Edward. She does not realise Elinor's true feelings until Chapter 37 – and even then, it is her facial expression that betrays her.
- The honourable Colonel Brandon is suspected of having 'a past' – and Mrs Jennings' opinion of him is so low that he rushes off in Chapter 13 after receiving her opinion.
- Colonel Brandon has fallen in love with Marianne from the moment he met her in Chapter 7. He is forced to keep his love concealed because of any doubt that she prefers Willoughby.
- Only when it becomes clear that Marianne has fallen in love with Willoughby, does Elinor feel at liberty (in Chapter 31) to reveal to the already overburdened Elinor Willoughby's involvement with Eliza Williams.
- Colonel Brandon's 'confession' in Chapter 31 is matched by Willoughby's. Again, it is Elinor who has to carry the burden of the knowledge of Willoughby's truth. They can be shared with Marianne.

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- Whereas Colonel Brandon's revelations are made in order to help Marianne (and to help the plot line by raising the Colonel in Marianne's estimation), Willoughby's emotional outburst is all about self-justification; he sees himself as a victim of circumstance and the pressures of social expectation. Elinor is conflicted: Willoughby is undoubtedly 'blameable' but at the same time, she cannot help but believe that it was 'the world' that he was 'vain' – 'too early an independence' had caused 'irreparable injury' to his character.
- Elinor, of all the characters, has a conscious understanding that membership of established society requires the individual to compromise: she lies 'when necessary' (Chapter 21, p. 118), conceals feelings and keeps secrets in order to try to protect the interests of family, friend and even foe within the bounds of propriety. She recognises the potential for conflict between individual will and social conventions, but chooses to ensure the maintenance of the status quo.
- The title is not shown to be a wholesale bringer of comfort: it does reveal devotion but it also reveals betrayal, disloyalty, dishonour and greed.

Discussion

Note and discuss the secrets – either of people's. What secrets are being kept? What is the secret being kept?

Discussion point:

Until Edward and Willoughby become factors in their lives, is there any evidence in the text that Elinor and Marianne have been in the habit of keeping secrets from one another?

Investigating Further: Secrecy and Concealment

Chapters 1–10

Example 1: Chapter 8, pp. 40–41: Why does Edward not visit Barton Cottage?

Example 2: Chapter 10, p. 50: Elinor has concerns about Willoughby's character.

Example 3: Chapter 10, p. 51: The hint about Colonel Brandon's past.

Chapters 11–15

Example 1: Chapter 11, p. 54, Chapter 12, pp. 60–61: Engagement or no engagement?

Example 2: Chapter 12, p. 62: Elinor's wish to keep secret her feelings for Edward.

Example 3: Chapter 13: Colonel Brandon's departure on unexplained business. Miss Williams.

Example 4: Chapter 15: Willoughby's sudden change of heart.

Chapters 16–20

Example 1: Chapter 16, p. 84: 'We have already agreed that secrecy may be necessary to rationalise Marianne and Willoughby's silence about their status.'

Example 2: Chapter 19, p. 72: Elinor's response to sorrow: Elinor's response to Marianne's death is an example of the concealment that Elinor has to practice to conform to social conventions.

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Chapters 21–25

Example 1: Chapters 22–24: Lucy and Elinor: There is symmetry of secrecy between the other's secret and each is aware that they are both threatened by and protect the other's secret.

Example 2: Chapter 23: Elinor's involvement in double secrecy: Not only is the disclosure of her secret engagement to Edward, she is also determined that her mother and sisters how this news has affected her.

Chapters 26–30: Some secrets are revealed; others are still concealed: In Chapter 26, a growing sense of tension caused by truth being concealed and revealed, in the relationship between Colonel Brandon and Willoughby. In Chapter 27, the sisters can only express their frustration in not knowing what is happening in the life of the other: for the moment, their secret remains hidden.

Example 1: Chapter 26, p. 156: Mrs Jennings' quiet visit to Colonel Brandon: She is the first visitor to Mrs Jennings' home, in the place of the longed-for Willoughby. She immediately asks him, '... how does your business go on?' He replies with a smile and tells her nothing to satisfy her curiosity.

Example 2: Chapter 27, pp. 161–162: Elinor and Marianne: the accusation of secrecy in London, without the moderating influence of their mother and under the influence of their longings, they each express impatience with the other. Elinor insists that she is not keeping secrets. Marianne responds, 'Nor I... our situations then are alike. We have neither of us any one to whom we can communicate, and I because I conceal, nothing.'

Example 3: Chapter 27: Secrets and revelations

- pp. 163–164: Deciding that things have gone far enough, Elinor writes to Edward about her 'suspicions of Willoughby's inconstancy', without discussing her fears further. After Elinor writes the letter, Marianne walks about restlessly.
- pp. 164–165: After he has revealed that the 'secret engagement' is known, Edward then reveals to Elinor his own feelings for Marianne (p. 165). He is resolved to marry her, if the news of the engagement is true. Mrs Jennings confirms the news, 'known all over the town' (p. 173).

Example 4: Chapter 29: Truth and trauma

- pp. 171–172: The day after Willoughby has publically humiliated Marianne, Elinor tells Marianne what is happening. Marianne replies, '... ask nothing; you will tell me what you think.' (p. 172)
- pp. 173–174: The revelation of his engagement to Miss Grey by Willoughby in his letter to Marianne, is the cause of Marianne's complete collapse. The truth shatters all her hopes and dreams.
- p. 176: Beyond despair, Marianne at last reveals to Elinor that there was a secret engagement. Elinor reacts with amazement and concern, for how is Marianne's reputation to be publicly known?
- pp. 179–180: Elinor begs Marianne to keep her misery secret, as a way of protecting her from Willoughby's inconstancy, but true to her character, Marianne refuses to keep her misery secret.

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Chapters 31–35: In Chapter 31, a major secret is disclosed and has an impact on the plot; in Chapter 35, a major secret is kept hidden and has an impact on Elinor's character.

Example 1: Chapter 31: Colonel Brandon's story of the two Elizas: Austen uses the story of the two Elizas, Willoughby's, and his own, past, as a device to move the plot forward: for Elinor, it is a warning of the 'irreconcilable rupture' of any relationship with Willoughby; as Mrs Jennings says, 'it is a warning to Elinor that Colonel Brandon's love for Marianne might have some possibility of success, but it is also a warning of the burden of suspecting, but not knowing for certain, of Willoughby's 'inconstancy'. As Mrs Jennings says, 'to support Marianne through her grief, there is a chance that she can now force him to do so'.

Example 2: Chapter 34: Lucy's smug satisfaction at tormenting Elinor with her secret of her engagement to Edward: Lucy is allowed to keep her secret a little longer. This enables Austen to build up her 'pride before a fall' or 'tragic fall': she believes that her prospective daughter-in-law by Mrs Ferrars and she gloats over her power. When she falls and rises again, is the subject of further discussion (see **Character Analysis: Elinor Dashwood**).
Investigating Further: The Individual in Society).

Chapters 36–40: In this section of the novel, a secret that has been simmering since Chapter 31 reaches boiling point: Edward's engagement to Lucy is disclosed and much of the plot and action are as a result of this revelation.

Chapters 41–45

Example 1: Chapter 44: Willoughby's revelations to Elinor: Willoughby reveals that he could not declare his love, for fear of being disinherited by Mrs Ferrars.

Chapters 46–50

Example 1: Chapter 49, p. 345: Mrs Ferrars' response to Robert's marriage to Lucy: *'The secrecy with which everything had been carried on between them, was rather heightening the crime, because, had any suspicion of it occurred to the others, prompt action might have been taken to prevent the marriage...'*

Power and Empowerment: Wealth and Inheritance versus Love and Marriage

- Power: how it is gained, lost and used, is another significant theme in *Sense and Sensibility*. In Chapter 1, the framework for the narrative is established in terms of the power that comes through wealth and inheritance. In the nineteenth century, this would largely seem to be the business of men: men had the wealth and the freedom to create more; males were heirs to the family fortune; females were at the mercy of their male relatives. However, while the fortune of Mrs Dashwood and her daughters is diminished by John Dashwood, it is actually a woman who is instrumental in his decision not to give them any financial support.
- We see in *Sense and Sensibility* examples of women who are very capable of manipulating circumstances to ensure that decisions go their way, whether Lucy is using money but she knows how to charm her way into someone's heart, or whether, as Mrs Jennings, seems to be attempting to lure Doctor Davies just as Lucy lures Robert. Mrs Jennings has been left independently wealthy on the death of her sons and presumably no other eligible male relative, the money he leaves her – and it pleases her to move about in society, creating a role for herself in the lives of Elinor and Marianne and trying to manoeuvre them into marriage. Mrs Ferrars is also a widow, who has been left in control of the family fortune and her two sons. As in the example of John Dashwood, the elder of the two sons is to inherit on his father's death, but this is not the case here. It is obvious that

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Edward has only a small amount of independent income, but Austen is a woman who has power: she does not use this power either wisely or wickedly. Her attempts to manipulate the choices made by her sons are all recognised by the characters involved – she is not a woman to be ignored. Sophia Grey, with 100,000 pounds, has sufficient money to win Willoughby as a husband, and although absent from their contract, she presumably is happy with the bargain. With 30,000 pounds, though a still-substantial thirty thousand pounds, and also seems to have power. Mrs Dashwood expresses surprise when Elinor questions whether Miss Merton is whom she marries.

- There are frequent references to the wealth of a particular character – e.g. pp. 210–215 – and in Chapter 17, there is an earnest discussion between Elinor and Edward Ferrars about how much money is sufficient to live on. In Chapter 18, Elinor is persuaded not only that he can be a suitable husband for Fanny, but that he is a suitable husband for Fanny, because he has sufficient wealth and proper social backdrop for the Dashwoods' social circle in Barton: Sir John and Lady Middleton, the privileged country gentry. Their activities and amusements, hunting for her, are appropriate occupations for people of their class. Demonstrating the daily significance: Lady Middleton is particularly keen to ensure 'the domestic arrangements' (Chapter 7, p. 34). Austen shows that wealth can be used wisely, as Mrs Dashwood is also aware, just like in Elinor in Chapter 17, that 'wealth has much to do with the world'. Austen's own life after the death of her father was far from financially secure, but she existed to help those in poverty. Opportunities for women to earn their own money were limited. Dependence on the attitude of wealthy relatives was neither a choice nor a prospect. It is therefore not surprising that having a sufficient income was a goal. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen balances the power of wealth with the power of love. The relationship between Mrs Dashwood and her daughters is genuine and stays strong. Elinor refuses to falter in her love for Edward, even when she is confronted with the fact that he is not worthy of such devotion, and she is ultimately rewarded with love and a happy married life. Marianne's love for Willoughby is no less strong, but she loves an image rather than a reality; her reward is to be given the chance to see the truth. Earlier opinions and to have her eyes opened to the true merit of Colonel Brandon's 'delicate, unobtrusive' love for Marianne proves stronger and more genuine. Willoughby's dramatic gestures and Marianne becomes his reward. Austen's significance of wealth and power to society – and to the creation of drama – is clear. She also acknowledges the significance of genuine love between individuals, and the contribution this phenomenon makes to narrative tension. Although the final chapters seem to show that those who have wealth, and those who relentlessly pursue it, can go on to consolidate lives of power and privilege, the closing lines of Chapter 50 suggest that of the two, love may ultimately be the stronger power.

Discussion

How far do you agree that 'In *Sense and Sensibility*, more powerful examples from your view.'

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Investigating Further: Power and Wealth

Example 1: Chapter 17, pp. 90–91: The conversation between the Dashwoods is meant by ‘prosperity’?

Example 2: Chapter 33, p. 210: The narrator observes John Dashwood’s attitude towards Brandon

John Dashwood assesses people only according to wealth and status. On meeting him for the first time: *‘he eyed him with a curiosity which seemed to say, that he only was equally civil to him’*.

Example 3: Chapter 33, p. 211: John Dashwood instructs Elinor how to ‘secure’ her fortune. John Dashwood can only value people in terms of their wealth and status. He views the Colonel as Elinor’s husband: *‘he is a man of fortune’* and has *‘two thousand pounds a year’*. He sets himself up *‘to a pitch of enthusiastic generosity’*, wishing this fortune might be put to use. He is happy to be enthusiastic and generous, just as long as it does not involve his own pocket. Elinor cannot see any doubts the Colonel may have, because of her smallness of mind: *‘those little attentions and encouragements which ladies can so easily give’*. These are the powers *‘in spite of himself’*.

The irony here is that these are exactly the powers that Lucy will use to ‘secure’ her fortune, to upset Mrs Ferrars’ and Fanny Dashwood’s plans (see Chapter 50, p. 350).

Example 4: Chapter 34, p. 217: The narrator comments on the Dashwoods’ delight in the Middletons. John and Fanny are so *‘prodigiously delighted’* by the Middletons, that they are willing to give them the honour, even though they were *‘not much in the habit of giving any thing’*. The Dashwoods do not make this invitation out of friendly sociability or benevolence, but because of self-interest: the Middletons have wealth, property, and connections. For John and Fanny, these are the things that matter.

Example 5: Chapter 41, pp. 276–279: John Dashwood’s reaction to Colonel Brandon’s offer of the Delaford living to Elinor.

Discussion point:

Just like Lucy, John is concerned about wealth: how much is the living worth? Could the price for it? Why is John so astonished about the Colonel’s offer of the Delaford living to Elinor?

Example 6: Chapter 44, p. 306: Willoughby’s account of why he married Miss Steele.

Discussion point:

‘In honest words, her money was necessary to me, and in a situation like mine, anything would have been a great advantage.’ Is Willoughby’s situation similar to Lucy’s? Are there any similarities in their temptations to behave as they do? Are we to see Lucy as lacking a ‘moral compass’. Is this true of Willoughby?

Example 7: Chapter 49, p. 337: The redeeming power of paid employment. Not for the first time (see Chapter 19, pp. 100–101), Edward says that he would have given him some kind of *‘active profession’*; had he been *‘allowed to chuse’* a profession, he would then have learned more about the world and himself and would not have been so easily engaged with Lucy Steele.

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Discussion point:

Is Edward's behaviour towards Lucy a direct result of his upbringing, as he suggests, or is it a result of his own feelings for himself?

Example 8: Chapter 50, p 347: Mrs Ferrars' attitude to Miss Morton

Mrs Ferrars does all she can to 'dissuade' Edward from marrying Elinor, using her strongest argument: that Miss Morton is a 'woman of higher rank and larger fortune than a nobleman with thirty thousand pounds, while Miss Dashwood was only the daughter of a tradesman no more than three....'

Discussion point:

What does Robert and Lucy's home represent in Mrs Ferrars' social circle and being an intruder? How does Edward 'is never cordially forgiven' (p. 350) and Elinor 'intruder' (p. 351) relate to the social and moral code of the people in that circle?

The Individual in Society: Propriety, Social Conventions and Individuality

- In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen explores the relationship between the individual and society, examining the rights and responsibilities that define this relationship, in the light of the demands of propriety and social conventions.
- Elinor discusses Marianne's romantic opinions with Colonel Brandon in Chapter 11 and is concerned that her sister has 'the unfortunate tendency of setting propriety at naught' (p. 57). Until her illness in Chapter 43, this is the phrase that defines Marianne's behaviour. Her attitudes and values are all based on the right of the individual to be true to themselves, without compromising ideals to conform to social expectation. For Marianne, 'to say what she did not believe was impossible' (Chapter 4, p. 21), and her actions are spontaneous, rather than premeditated.
- Elinor is preoccupied by propriety: she is concerned to make sure that Marianne is in line with propriety and most particularly concerned to try to shield Marianne from her refusal to 'learn the game'.
- Although nineteenth century social conventions bound both men and women to a set of rules, they were particularly restrictive for women and the choices that women made, if they chose to live outside the boundary set out by propriety, were very limited. Colonel's cautionary tale of the fates of the two daughters. Marriage to the person who is most socially appropriate, in terms of status and wealth, is the goal throughout the narrative.
- Fanny Dashwood is concerned to remove Elinor from Edward in order to prevent the development of a relationship that Fanny regards as completely inappropriate for status and so she does not constitute a good match.
- Both Elinor and Marianne are aware that some money is necessary for a comfortable life and in fact the minimum amount that Marianne believes necessary is £10,000. She is not preoccupied with finding a man with a fortune; she pursues love, falling, literally and metaphorically, for Willoughby, cast in the role of the Handsome Stranger.

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- Having decided on her course, Marianne is deaf to all her sister's pleas for caution and restraint. Marianne has complete faith in the rightness of her own opinions and follows them almost to the point of her own destruction. Unfortunately, the man she believes loves her turns out to love money and status rather more.
- Although Willoughby has flouted social convention by fathering an illegitimate child, he can buy his way back into social respectability by marrying a wealthy woman. It is interesting that Austen shows how Willoughby's marriage to Sophia Grey, while condemned by other characters, is also acknowledged to be a rational, though selfish, response to his situation (Chapter 47, p. 327), whereas Lucy Ferrars, who has committed the lesser sin of jilting one brother in favour of the other, is portrayed by Austen as irredeemably scheming and selfish. Although even she too is accepted back into society – the status she has acquired through marriage means that she can overcome some of the criticisms of her character, but perhaps her creator is not so easily

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Investigation 1: Further: The Individual in Society: Propriety, Social Individual Will

Chapters 1–10

Example 1: The world of Barton Park

Austen uses the backdrop of Barton Park to give a sense of the social 'norm'. There are rules of behaviour that govern the lives of the Middletons and everyone in their circle. From Chapter 6, we see the etiquette of invitations, visits made and received, and activities and conversation at social gatherings.

Discussion point:

Why does Austen establish this sense of what is socially acceptable before Chapter 9? How do propriety demands give us an insight into the character of Marianne?

Example 2: Willoughby

In Chapter 9, Willoughby's behaviour towards Marianne appears to be within the bounds of what is socially acceptable. However, her need to be helped home after her fall. The Dashwoods are all impressed by his charm. The narrator's report of his conversation (p. 44) contains nothing other than conventional compliments.

Example 3: Marianne

Discussion point:

Consider how Austen's portrayal of Willoughby on pp. 43–44 contributes to the dramatic tension of the novel. How quickly after he is introduced does Marianne begin to have doubts about his character?

In Chapter 10, Austen gives us further evidence that Marianne is in conflict with the demands of socially acceptable behaviour. Elinor criticises her sister for having behaved without sufficient regard for the opinions of others. Willoughby with good reason is resentful about his likes and dislikes and in expressing his feelings to Marianne, he is in direct conflict with the social norms of the time.

Discussion point:

How does Marianne feel about 'decorum' (see p. 49)?

Extension activity:

Review these scenes in Examples 1–3 and analyse how Austen builds up the tension between Marianne's desire to behave as she pleases and the sense that there is going to be a price to pay.

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Chapters 11–15

There is an increasing divide between what Elinor believes is acceptable behaviour and what she chooses to do. Elinor is suffering for two reasons: ruled by propriety, her own engagements with people she dislikes, while she sees Marianne, careless of propriety, do what she wants, with the approval of their mother.

Example 1: Chapter 11, pp. 54–55: Marianne's perspective

Example 2: Chapter 12, pp. 59–60: Marianne's rapturous response to Willoughby

Example 3: Chapter 13, pp. 68–69: Marianne's defence of her visit to Allenham

Discussion point:

Examine the dialogues between Elinor and Marianne in the scenes in Examples 1–3.

Note and discuss the language choices each makes to show their conflicting attitudes.

What is Elinor's role in the scenes above?

Extension activity:

On pages 52 and 53, Austen gives Willoughby and Marianne their own voices as they talk. Does hearing their opinions in their own words give us a sense that for these two characters, self-expression is more important than individual self-expression?

Chapters 16–20

Example 1: Chapter 17, p. 92: Elinor sets out her doctrine

Discussion point:

As you read through the narrative, note and discuss examples of where Elinor has attempted to do more than cover up for, Marianne's behaviour (see, for example, Chapter 10, p. 49; Chapter 20, p. 110).

Example 2: Chapter 19, p. 102: Elinor's determination to not give in to sorrow
The **antithetical** temperaments of the two sisters are clearly seen in their opposite responses to the departure of the men they love. The narrator suggests that Marianne feels free to give herself to grief and spread that grief to her family after Willoughby has gone, while Elinor keeps her grief to herself and not to add to the sorrow of her mother and sister.

Discussion point:

In what way do their different responses to sorrow link with their different responses to love?

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Chapters 21–25

Example 1: Chapter 21, p. 114: The Steeles are invited to stay at Barton Park. The giving and accepting of invitations is a key plot device in *Sense and Sensibility*, in which characters in a carefully ordered society give one another permission to interact, though still within a tightly knit social and geographical circle. The arrival of the Lucy Steeles at Barton Park is slightly unorthodox, in terms of strict propriety, and Lady Middleton's reaction on pp. 114–115. So, although they soon make the acquaintance of Lady Middleton, there is still a sense of their 'not quite belonging', which is reflected in the conversation.

Example 2: Chapter 22, pp. 123–126: Lucy questions Elinor about Mrs Ferrars. This exchange is conducted with the utmost civility and attention to the conventions of polite conversation, but there is no mistaking the determination in both characters to discover what they can from the conversation, while each manipulating the conversation to discover what they can from the other. The reader gets a clear idea of the 'subtext' of the conversation. Elinor and Lucy engage in a genteel, polite conversation. For example: 'I hope you will do me the justice of not thinking me inquisitive or curious...' (Lucy); '...there is no occasion to trouble you with it... not... if it can be of any use to you to know my opinion of her' (Elinor); '...you are very kind' (Elinor).

Discussion point:

By the end of Chapter 22, Elinor is 'mortified, shocked, confounded'. How does her 'sense' and 'composure of voice' help her?

Example 3: Chapter 23, p. 136: The opportunities and frustrations offered by the social situation. For these people, and particularly for the women, from the leisured genteel class, there is little choice about how or with whom they spend their time. Elinor is curious about the situation, but as she is determined not to make her mother and sisters suffer through the same situation, she can only hope to talk to Lucy when they meet at Barton Park. On p. 136, Sir John and Lady Middleton's gatherings are for the purpose of 'eating, drinking, playing at cards or consequences, or any other game that was sufficiently general chat and none at all for particular discourse'.

Chapters 26–30

Example 1: Chapter 26, pp. 153–154: Elinor's reasoning when she realises that Willoughby is not what she thought.

The narrator tells us that Elinor concludes that, '...however mysteriously they may be engaged.'

Discussion point:

How does Austen use our trust in Elinor's judgment to misdirect our perspective here?

Example 2: Chapter 26, p. 154: The conversation between Colonel Brandon and Elinor. Elinor's curiosity about the Colonel's past is evident. After Mr. Brandon has left the room, Elinor tries to make polite conversation, but the Colonel has been in London since she had last seen him. The manner of his reply makes it clear that his question shows too much curiosity.

Discussion point:

What does Elinor really want to ask the Colonel about here? Why doesn't she ask?

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Example 3: Chapter 26, p. 158: Marianne refuses to take part in a game of whist. After tea, the expectation is that everyone will play a game of cards, but the *was of no use on these occasions, as she would never learn the game.*

Discussion point:

What other examples can you find in the narrative of Marianne's being reluctant to take part in the game expected of her at social gatherings (see, for example, pp. 162-3)? How can the comment 'she would never learn the game', be seen as a **metaphor** for Marianne's attitude to social conventions?

Example 4: Chapter 27, pp. 167–168: Marianne's reaction on seeing Willoughby. Marianne pleads 'Why does he not look at me? Why cannot I speak to him?' Elinor replies 'He is composed... and do not betray what you feel to everybody's comment.'

Discussion point:

Why is Elinor so anxious to prevent Marianne not to make a scene?

Chapters 30–34

Example 1: Chapter 31, p. 192: 'He will not come in, as Mrs Jennings is from home.' Marianne has reason to believe that they are 'safe' from Colonel Brandon, as he, the owner had not invited him. In fact, he has met Mrs Jennings in Bond Street and has received a necessary invitation to visit.

Discussion point:

How does this have an ironic resonance with events in Chapter 13, p. 69?

Example 2: Chapter 31, p. 199: Colonel Brandon reveals he has fought a duel. In keeping with the Colonel's 'grave' character, the fact that he challenged Willoughby on behalf of Eliza is not described in dramatic language. Described as a 'meeting', it is a direct result of Willoughby's breach of honour and Colonel Brandon's strict code of honour.

Example 3: Chapter 32, p. 203: Austen shows Lady Middleton's approach to Marianne. Lady Middleton satisfies her sense of outrage by saying Marianne's situation is 'not what it should be' then 'she thought herself at liberty to attend to the interest of her own assemblies rather against the opinion of Sir John) that as Mrs Willoughby would at once be obliged to leave her card with her as soon as she married'.

Discussion point:

Consider why Sir John may not be in favour of Lady Middleton's behaviour here.

Example 4: Chapter 34, pp. 220–221: Elinor and Marianne's opinions about the Dashwoods. Harry Dashwood and William Middleton are both tall. Although neither of the brothers is present, the ladies' after-dinner conversation is dominated by a discussion on their heights. Austen shows the 'socially acceptable' way in which Marianne does her best not to offend either mother by saying they are both the same height. Elinor, who is shorter than William, is the taller – and so offends Mrs Ferrars and Fanny. Marianne, once again refusing to join in the game, and 'offended them all, by declaring she had never thought about it'.

Discussion point:

What does Elinor's response indicate about her attitude to the women in the room? We have used before, in her remarks to Marianne about dead leaves (see Chapter 16 p. 87), but also from Elinor's public **persona**?

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Chapters 36–40

Example 1: Chapter 36, p. 231: Propriety demands an outcome that none of the Dashwoods want. Elinor and Marianne do not want to spend more time at Conduit Street but *'at the part of propriety, the wishes of everybody'*. The narrator says that the invitation was *'at the part of propriety'*. Reluctant to appear impolite, they resign themselves to days in the company of Miss Steeles, *'by whom their company was in fact as little valued as it was professed'*. Being honest and nobody is happy, but propriety and social convention are the only rules.

Example 2: Chapter 36, p. 233: Mrs Denison invites Elinor and Marianne to stay. Fanny Dashwood has previously shown herself very capable of getting her way within the rules of propriety. Here, her acquaintance, also acting in accordance with the rules, invites the Dashwoods, as John's relatives, to the evening party. This sets in motion a chain of events that leads to the ruin of Fanny's hopes for her brother Edward, and most particularly to her inviting Lucy and Nancy to stay.

Discussion point

Why is it important to establish that the visitor, Mrs Denison (p. 237), is an acquaintance of Fanny Dashwood?

Example 3: Chapter 36, p. 237: Propriety moves John Dashwood to think of staying at Conduit Street. *'Consideration of Mrs Denison's mistake... had suggested the propriety of (Elinor's) inviting (to stay).'*

John is sensitive to the need to be seen to act with propriety – and he is especially sensitive to the *'inconvenience'* to himself is *'nothing'*.

Discussion point

How does this comment from the narrator use the rules of propriety to reinforce what John Dashwood's character is?

Example 4: Chapter 37, p. 250: Marianne's response on hearing of Mrs Ferrars' *'liberal designs'* (p. 249) for Edward, his mother's refusal to see him as a consequence, Edward is disinherited, his mother refusing to see him as a hindrance to the progress of his career. Marianne, *'in an ecstasy of indignation'*, cries *'it is impossible!'*

Discussion point

What does John think Marianne is reacting to? What is she actually reacting to?

Chapters 41–45

Example 1: Chapter 41, p. 275: Lucy is manipulating social convention to get what she wants. The character of Lucy is seen as an 'apprentice' version of Fanny Dashwood. At the beginning of Chapter 41 she shows herself as well qualified in the art of getting what she wants. Her plans for Edward have been in the air since he was a child. Until a better offer comes along, he is still her best hope of a new life and happiness. What is required: she shares Mrs Jennings' expectation of them all being 'comfortable' by September. We are told she speaks of Elinor with 'grateful warmth'. Towards Brandon, she is *'ready to worship him as a saint'*. However, the narrator's ironic doubt about what is going on beneath this enthusiastically humble exterior: that *'his tythes should be raised to the utmost'* and that when installed as Edward's steward, *'secretly resolved to avail herself, as far as she possibly could, of his servants, his carriage, and his money'*.

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Discussion point:

What does this last sentence reveal about Lucy's character?

Example 2: Chapter 44, p. 306: The social consequence of Willoughby betraying Elinor is that Willoughby says to Elinor that he said to himself, *'I am ruined forever in the eyes of the people from their society...'*

Discussion point: Compare:

Edward's punishment, for honouring an engagement to a woman regarded as socially inferior and cut off from *'all decent society'*, until he is redeemed by his questioning love of Elinor, is to be accepted back into his family - but not his fortune.

Willoughby's punishment, for abandoning Elinor, is to be cut off from his family, to be married to a woman of one family and to marry a woman whose wealth will keep him in the style to which he is accustomed.

Is Austen concerned with these two characters and their individual choices, or is she using them to explore the ethical values of the society in which they live?

Chapters 46–50

Example 1: Chapter 49, p. 342: Elinor thinks she knows why Lucy chose to marry Robert, though he had been disinherited

'The connection was certainly a respectable one, and probably gained her considerably. If nothing more advantageous occurred, it would be better for her to marry you than to marry Robert.'

Discussion point:

Do you think this is a fair assessment of how Lucy would have thought and acted? What would you think?

Example 2: Chapter 49, p. 342: Elinor 'scolds' Edward because his previous conduct was against convention

'Your behaviour was certainly very wrong... because – to say nothing of my own feelings – I had been led away by it to fancy and expect what, as you were then situated, could never be.'

Edward, 'because (he) was simple enough to think that because (his) faith was placed in me, I was in danger' in his 'friendship' with Elinor; in fact caused Elinor great suffering as she was not happy, as were those who were distinctly unhappy, at the prospect of her marrying Robert.

Discussion point:

Lucy, in her letter informing Edward of her marriage to Robert, says *'I scorn to accept of another's'*. She is right about Edward's heart belonging to someone else. So are Lucy's feelings more genuine than Edward's?

Discussion point:

Why is it that Marianne's 'confession' is sufficient for Willoughby, who then gets to lead the life he wants, whereas Elinor has to suffer deeply – life-threatening illness, humiliation, repentance – before she is 'redeemed' by Colonel Brandon?

Is it that Marianne is the stronger character, capable of bearing these things, and capable of both socially and spiritually, whereas Willoughby is 'a lost soul'?

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Reason and Romanticism

- The conflict between the value systems of Elinor and Marianne Dashwood is another major theme in the narrative of *Sense and Sensibility*.
- The sisters share a stubborn streak, each believing that their way is the way – the significant difference and major element in the plot is the fact Elinor has the weight of society behind her, whereas Marianne has the weight of society against her.
- Colonel Brandon's life experience has taught him to be wary of trying to change the opinions of young people too forcibly, but Elinor, too aware of how vulnerable their situation is already, is fearful that Marianne's romantic attitudes and values are going to lead to her ruin.
- Elinor spends a great deal of her time and energy trying to shield and protect the consequences of her opinions, while all the time she is trying to bear the love for Edward, for society forbids her to acknowledge her love when it exists in her heart – not a consideration that constrains Marianne.
- Elinor's rational approach to life also makes Colonel Brandon see her as resulting in her being further burdened with the story of the two Elizabeths. He tells Edward about the offer the Colonel has made of the living at Delaford in the same light, unburdening his guilty conscience and effectively deterring him from giving a thought to the impact Marianne's illness is having on her.
- Right from Chapter 1, we see that Elinor has been cast in the role of the sensible sister; a daughter on whom her romantic-hearted mother can rely for good advice.
- Marianne and Mrs Dashwood share many characteristics, including the desire to be seen, to want to see them, rather than as they are. It is only in Chapter 47 (p. 322) that she realises that her attitude has been partially responsible for Marianne's suffering (p. 331) that she has misinterpreted Elinor's stoicism as a lack of true feeling. Marianne has also levelled at her sister (Chapter 27, p. 162).

Investigating Further: Reason and Romanticism

Chapters 1–5

Example 1: The character of Elinor in Chapter 1 is shown in the role of mediator, her tendency to 'imprudence' and the realities of their changed circumstances. It is her self-reflection, rather than the opinionated self-absorption of Marianne's 'sensibility'.

Example 2: The presentation of Marianne's character shows that initially she speaks and acts with little reflection or consideration of consequences. In Chapter 2, when trying to evaluate Edward impartially, she applies her own value system to him, assuming him wanting.

Example 3: Marianne's self-absorption is evident in her response to the prospect of marriage. Chapter 5 is full of references to her own suffering and her romantic response in the park, rather than any consideration of her mother's or sisters' feelings.

Example 4: Elinor's character is much more private. She is reluctant to reveal her feelings. Austen makes effective use of the literary device of the **omniscient narrator** and for this reason can gain privileged access to her thoughts and motivations.

Discussion point:

Austen chooses to give Elinor and Marianne the potential for both 'sense' and 'sensibility'. What purpose does this choice serve, in terms of plot and in terms of Austen's **didactic** purpose?

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Discussion point:

Consider, as the narrative progresses, how other characters might be assessed in terms of 'sense' and 'sensitivity'. Consider, for example, the characters of Mrs Dashwood, Fanny, Charlotte Palmer, and the attitudes and values they demonstrate.

Chapters 6–10

Example 1: Elinor and Marianne's reactions to their new life

Elinor and Marianne have to respond to the challenges of a new life in unford. For Elinor, it is the challenge of separation; for Marianne, it is the challenge of being such a man who appears to embody all her requirements as a suitor. Their individual attitudes and values.

Discussion point:

Up to this point in the narrative: what evidence can you find of how Elinor feels about the evidence can you find of how Marianne feels about John Willoughby?

How does Austen's choice of language guide our perspective and critical judgment of the

Chapters 11–15

Example 1: Chapter 11, pp. 56–57: The discussion between Colonel Brandon and Marianne's romantic belief that 'second attachments' are not possible

Example 2: Chapter 12, p. 59: Elinor's attempt to use rational argument to persuade her to accept Willoughby's gift of a horse

Example 3: Chapter 13, p. 69: Marianne's belief that she has done nothing wrong with Willoughby

Example 4: Chapter 14, p. 73: Willoughby's romantic response to Barton Cottage and acknowledge its faults

Chapters 16–20

Example 1: Chapter 16 p. 83: Marianne's refusal to allow herself to be consoled for London

Example 2: Chapter 18 p. 95: Marianne and Edward's differing response to the 'picturesque'

Example 3: Chapter 19 p. 102: Elinor suppresses her feelings after Edward leaves her family

Discussion point:

Marianne and Edward's discussion about the 'picturesque' is part of a wider debate: what about this and the Romantic movement?

Chapters 21–24

Example 1: Chapter 22, p. 129: Even though Elinor is 'mortified, shocked, confused' by the proof of the engagement to Edward, Elinor does not break down. She keeps her composure in spite of Lucy's efforts to provoke her.

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Chapters 26–30

Example 1: Chapter 26, p. 152: On the journey to London, Marianne is preoccupied with her hopes that she will see Willoughby and all will be well. By contrast, Elinor is able to decide what action should be taken to find out more about Willoughby.

Example 2: Chapter 27, p. 165: Elinor does not want to hurt Colonel Brandon, so she is honest to Colonel Brandon about the relationship between Marianne and Willoughby.

Example 3: Chapter 28, p. 168: Marianne, unable to cope with the destruction of her hopes, suffers a complete emotional and physical collapse, following Willoughby's departure.

Discussion point:

Why do you think that Willoughby leaves the party so suddenly after the encounter with Sophia Grey?

Chapters 31–35

Example 1: Chapter 31, p. 190: The marked difference in Elinor and Marianne's characters is highlighted by Elinor displaying '...the same steady conviction and affectionate counsel', and Marianne showing '...the same impetuous feelings and varying opinions...'

Example 2: Chapter 31, pp. 190–191: Elinor feels Marianne's assessment of Mr. Jennings is due to the 'irritable refinement' of her mind and the 'tendency to dwell on the delicacies of a strong sensibility, and the graces of a polished manner'. She notes that Marianne has '...the same opinions and feelings as her own...'

Example 3: Chapter 31, p. 192: Marianne and Elinor's reaction to Mrs Dashwood's news that Marianne is 'wildly urgent' to go back to Barton Cottage. Elinor weighs up the merits of her counsel of her own except of patience till their mother's wishes could be known'.

Discussion point:

Up until this point, Marianne has been very vocal and expressive about her opinions and feelings, while Elinor is silent, until page 222, when she speaks only to defend Elinor. Why do you think Austen uses direct speech to Marianne in this section? Also, note how, on page 200, Austen uses the insight into Marianne's thoughts that Elinor does not have.

Example 4: Chapter 31, p. 193: Marianne is not able to empathise with others. Chapter 31 shows two examples of Marianne's inability to 'read' a character: her misreading of Mr. Jennings and in her 'esteeming (Colonel Brandon) so lightly'.

Example 5: Chapter 32, p. 201: Mrs Dashwood's response to the revelations about Willoughby. Mrs Dashwood wants Marianne to stay in London, because activities there will 'draw her from times, into some interest beyond herself'.

Example 6: Chapter 32, p. 202: Some change in Marianne's attitude? 'Marianne had promised to be guided by her mother's opinion, and she submitted to her opposition.'

Example 7: Chapter 32, p. 204 and p. 206: Elinor continues to try to shield Marianne from the truth. Elinor gives herself 'the painful office' of telling Marianne that Willoughby has left. She prevents the Miss Steeles from going to see Marianne in her room (p. 206).

Example 8: Chapter 33, p. 209: Marianne at the jeweller's shop. When they meet Robert Ferrars, 'Marianne was spared from the troublesome feelings of resentment...for she was as well able to collect her thoughts within herself and be alone round her ...as in her own bed-room.' She does not join in the conversation between Robert and Elinor.

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Example 9: Chapter 33, pp. 211–212: Elinor's response to the news that Edward is the Honourable Miss Morton

John Dashwood, having insultingly emphasised that any hopes Elinor might have for Ferrars are 'quite out of the question', then goes on to say that Fanny's brother Edward is stoic, asking 'with resolution' merely for confirmation that Edward is making any further comment on the matter.

Example 10: Chapter 33, p. 213: Elinor hears about John's plans for Norland
'Elinor kept her concern and her censure to herself; and was very thankful that Mr. Dashwood did not make the provocation.'

Example 11: Chapter 34, pp. 216–217: Elinor shows restraint

Elinor 'wanted very much to know'...but ...'did not think it proper to ask' Fanny about her feelings, propriety and not wishing to betray her feelings.

Example 12: Chapter 34, p. 218: Elinor's concern about meeting Edward at the house
To see him not only in the company of his mother, but also in the company of her sister, which she could bear.

Discussion point:

This is a glimpse into the heightened state of Elinor's emotions. Why does Austen choose these emotions are beginning to show signs of strain (see Chapter 37, p. 245)?

Discussion point:

Analyse **Examples 1–12**; compare 'sense' and 'sensibility' in terms of what Elinor and Marianne show. Any evidence yet of Elinor showing traits of 'sensibility' and Marianne showing traits of 'sense'?

Chapters 36–40

Example 1: Chapter 38, p. 253: Elinor and Marianne's responses to Edward's return
'Elinor gloried in his integrity; and Marianne forgave all his offences in compassion.'

Discussion point:

How do Austen's language choices – 'gloried', 'integrity' for Elinor; 'forgave', 'compassion' for Marianne – contrast between responses based on 'sense' and 'sensibility'?

Example 2: Chapter 39, p. 261: Marianne and Elinor's thoughts turn towards the Cottage

'(Marianne) sighed for the air, the liberty, the quiet, of the country'; Elinor, although 'was conscious of the difficulties of so long a journey... she went on... seriously to the accomplishment...'

Discussion point:

How do the language choices, revealed by Austen's language choices, show the difference in the circumstances of the two sisters?

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Illness



Marianne's illness, convalescence and recovery can be seen as her ridding herself of Willoughby's influence and of the consequences that have nearly led to her destruction. When she finally comes to acknowledge that she has been mistaken, that she has been wrong, she must abandon her selfish ways and take her place in the world.

Discussion/group activity - the theme of illness in *Sense and Sensibility*

Illness, real or imagined, plays a part in *Sense and Sensibility*. Work in groups to look up instances of illness in the text. What is their significance to our understanding of character and plot in *Sense and Sensibility*?

Chapter 26, p. 155, Colonel Brandon to Elinor: *'Is your sister ill?'*

Chapter 32, p. 206, Nancy Steele to Elinor about Marianne: *'I am sorry she is not well'*

Chapter 33, p. 214, John Dashwood to Elinor: *'...what is the matter with Marianne? - she has lost her colour, and is grown quite thin. Is she ill?'*

Chapter 34, p. 223, John Dashwood to Colonel Brandon: *'Poor Marianne!... She has not recovered from her sister - she is very nervous, - she has not Elinor's constitution...'*

Chapter 35, p. 225, Elinor to Lucy: *'I never was in better health'*

Chapter 37, p. 241, Mrs Jennings of Mrs Palmer: *'Charlotte ...was sure (the child) was very Fanny ill?'*

Chapter 43, p. 291, Narrator of Marianne: *'Hour after hour passed away ... in sleepless pain'*

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Attitudes and Values

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen creates a cast of memorable, highly individual characters; she places them in a restricted social circle within an equally restricted sector of society and this concentration of focus enables the reader to evaluate their attitudes, values and motivations by observing the characters as they interact and by sharing the perspective of the omniscient narrator.

- The value systems of Elinor (rational, reasoned, mindful of propriety, conventions and obligations) and Marianne (romantic, self-absorbed, careless of propriety, conventions and obligations) appear from early in the novel to be a likely source of conflict, and this is indeed the case. But a significant characteristic in common is their fierce loyalty, whatever the price binds them even when they are at their most opposed and sees them through the narrative, where their relationship is established in two neighbouring households. Marianne is brought up to be articulate and confident and is clearly more so than Elinor is more guarded about what she says and to what she writes.
- Although it is true of both sisters at the start of the narrative that their initial impressions of their experiences as the narrative progresses result in both of them feeling that they have been as right as they first thought: Marianne, through her near self-destructive quiet, reliable strength of Colonel Brandon, rather than the extravagant Willoughby, and with this realisation, she also grows to understand the individual and society. Elinor, from the outset, lives her life guided by convention. She learns, through John Dashwood's treatment of her mother and the treatment she herself receives from Fanny Dashwood, Lucy and Mrs Ferrars that rather than ensuring the general good, can be corrupted to serve personal interests. She digs deep to find a response to these threats. Her role in the family has been that of the problem solver, and it is a difficult lesson for her to learn that she is wrong; she hesitates about writing to her mother to get her to intervene between Marianne and Willoughby; she is wrong about the gravity of the situation. The strength of the characters of both these women is shown in their responses: when they learn, they accept and they grow in self-knowledge.
- The interaction between character and money reveals some marked attitudes. Most particularly, Fanny Dashwood, are motivated largely by a desire for the future wealth of their son; obsessed with the preservation of their status and worried about what their relatives do, worried about any negative impact on their position. It's a bit like a football team: in the Premier League, their status in the Premier Championship doesn't just depend on what they do but also on the results of the other teams. Mrs Ferrars' attitude is even more conflicted: she wants the family to prosper but this is threatened by Edward's engagement to Lucy, then by Marianne's engagement to Willoughby, then by Edward's engagement to Elinor (all of which must have come as a challenge to her position). She wants to show her power by excluding Edward, and at one point Robert too, she seems prepared to do so for the future. Presumably, if she had fulfilled all her threats, the one to have the most prominent place in the absence of any other grandchildren, would have been little Harry Dashwood. It is no doubt have been very pleasing to John and Fanny.

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- At the other end of the scale, the attitudes and values of the two Steeles – their lack of money and lack of status and the pressing need to acquire – wrap their ambition in muslin and simpering affectation and Lucy is so convincing Robert Ferrars, who only a few chapters earlier thought her a ‘girl’ (Chapter 41, p. 281), that he has won a great victory over both his father and himself in marrying her. Is there some ambiguity in Austen’s own values here? If the completely self-serving and cynically manipulative is allowed to win, the narrator’s ironic comment, ‘*The whole of Lucy’s behaviour in the affair, and it, may be held forth as a most encouraging instance of what an earnest, an unobscured interest, however its progress may be apparently obstructed, will do in securing every advantage of fortune, with no other sacrifice than that of time and conscience*’ (Chapter 50, p. 350), does not change the fact that Lucy got what she wanted. Austen was very aware of the impact of poverty on an unmarried young woman; options were very limited. What we are seeing here is not so much the victory of an undeserving individual, but a subtle critique of the ethics of society, which are themselves impoverished. And the narrator does make it clear that the Steeles are not a happy one – they are subject to ‘*frequent domestic disagreements*’ so there is some justice, going some way to re-establish the moral values.
- Willoughby is the only one of the male characters to be threatened by disinheritance does not spell poverty: it means he is largely free of the need for money (he still has an income). Unlike Lucy, Willoughby’s situation is largely unchanged. Austen shows that, just like Lucy, he prizes material comfort above personal happiness. He, too, gets what he wants, through his marriage to Sophia Grey, although this will not be the defining feature of his married life. Sir John is generous because he needs to be: he cannot bear to be alone, so he effectively buys company with parties and balls for all. Lady Middleton is content as long as these social pleasures and wealth and status. Colonel Brandon is generous because he can be and because he is living at Delaford to Edward, he is driven purely by a desire to help out and values he believes to be misguided and unjust. He is generous in his criticism; instead of criticising her wayward behaviour, he seeks to justify it (Chapter 15). When all goes horribly wrong for Marianne, he does not abandon her, but tries to help her. Willoughby’s betrayal by revealing the story of Eliza Williams. He shows his loyalty by his vigil at Cleveland and in going to fetch Mrs Dashwood from Bath. Marianne’s bedside.
- It may be that Colonel Brandon’s attitudes and values have been shaped by his past and by the guilt he feels for having failed both Elizas; nonetheless, Austen shows Marianne that she has emerged from negative experiences with greater self-awareness and there is every chance he will create a better future for himself and his bride.
- By the time the narrative reaches Chapter 49, Edward is shown to share ‘*principles and good sense*’ (p. 344). His journey towards these attitudes is straightforward: at nineteen, he is fooled by Lucy’s beauty and seemingly genuine affection, engaged to her. He soon realises his mistake, but the quality of honour and integrity (absent from the characters of his brother and sister) binds him to this path. He is prepared to fulfil his obligation right up to the point Lucy’s self-interest

Discussion

What are the attitudes and values of Mr and Mrs Jennings in Chapters 3 and 4? How do they compare with Mr and Mrs Ferrars? What attitudes have

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meets Elinor at Norland, he tries to persuade himself that he can enjoy compromising his promise to Lucy. His growing love for Elinor in the engagement to Lucy, forces him into uncharacteristic gloom and reserves himself to the consequences of his foolish decision, and tries to avoid Elinor that they both long for. We have seen in Chapter 18 that Edward's sensibilities – he prefers the practical to the picturesque; a straightforward character is then tormented and compromised in the narrative by lying about the lock of hair in the ring he wears (Chapter 18, p. 96) – he created for himself. We can share his sense of release, of being given a chance. In Chapter 49 (p. 337) his '*genuine, flowing, grateful*' *fulfulness*' signals the desire, but unlike Lucy and Robert, it has been won through a recognition of the debt he owes to the kindness of his former lover Brandon, and of the enduring

Essay question



Compare and contrast the attitudes and values of Edward and Robert Ferrars. How does she use them to comment on the attitudes and values they live?



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Investigating Further: Attitudes and Values

Look at these extracts and discuss how Austen reveals the characters of Colonel Brandon and Willoughby:

Example 1: Chapter 11, pp. 56–57: Colonel Brandon's words to Elinor

Example 2: Chapter 13, pp. 64–67: Colonel Brandon's attitude to the letter

Example 3: Chapter 14, pp. 73–75: Willoughby's attitude to Barton Cottage

Example 4: Chapter 15, pp. 76–77: Willoughby's words to Mrs Dashwood and Edward

Example 5: Chapter 26–30, pp. 154–5; p. 156; pp. 160–161; pp. 164–165; pp. 187–188: Compare Colonel Brandon and Willoughby

Example 6: Chapter 44, p. 308: Elinor's evaluation of Willoughby

Having heard Willoughby's story, Elinor reflects on how 'a man who, to every talent, united a disposition naturally open, honest, and a feeling and affectionate heart... Willoughby had. Elinor declares: 'The world had made him extravagant and vain... made him cold, selfish, and dishonest.'

Example 7: Chapter 45, p. 314: Elinor's evaluation of Colonel Brandon

'Colonel Brandon's character...as an excellent man is well established... His character is marked by one act of kindness...I value and esteem him.'

Discussion point:

The final phrase here from Elinor is familiar (see Chapters 3 and 4). What is the significance of Colonel 'on one act of kindness' (see Chapter 9)?

Discussion point:

Analyse and give examples of how Austen uses Colonel Brandon's attitudes and values to contrast those of Willoughby. Why is it important that we are able to compare these two men's characters?

Example 8: Chapter 49, p. 344: Colonel Brandon and Edward develop a good relationship

'... it could not be otherwise. Their resemblance in good principles and good sense... thinking...'

Discussion point:

Are Edward and Colonel Brandon really alike? Both of them are 'poor orators'; what else? What differences in their characters and roles can you find in the narrative? Is age a factor?

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Lucy and Nancy Steele's attitudes and values

Example 1: Chapter 21: Lucy and Nancy's concern to match Lady Middleton in order to ingratiate themselves at Barton Park

Lucy and Nancy's outward appearance gives Lady Middleton no cause for concern. *'Her dress was very smart, their manners very civil'*: they know the outward signs and use them to full effect.

Example 2: Chapter 21–22: First opinions of Nancy and Lucy

Elinor realises that Lucy is ambitious and will flatter anyone she thinks can help her. *'conduct towards others, made every shew of attention and deference towards herself'*. However, Lucy and Nancy's *'manners were particularly civil'* – and Elinor understands their motives.

Example 3: Chapters 22–24: Nancy reveals her attitudes and values

Nancy is twenty-nine, plain and unintelligent. She is perilously close to being one of the creatures in nineteenth-century England, a spinster with no fortune. She is proud and her conversation is full of *'prodigious smart young (men)'* and her 'beauty'.

Example 4: Chapter 22–24: Lucy's attitude towards her sister

All of Lucy's energies are directed towards achieving a financially and socially advantageous marriage. It is the only means of progression available to her and she uses all her natural talents to appear to advantage. It quickly becomes clear that Lucy sees her elder sister as a threat. She knows she will be tainted by Nancy's lack of elegance and is impatient with her. *'an amendment to all her sister's assertions'* (p. 121) to try to keep her own and

Discussion point:

To what extent could it be argued that it is society that forces Lucy to behave as she does? Elinor and Lucy both 'cover' for their sisters: how are their motivations to do this shown?

Mrs Jennings' attitude and its influence on Elinor and Marianne

Mrs Jennings is seen to be often mistaken in her evaluation of people, for example, of Elinor (see Chapter 38, p. 260), and of situations, for example, of the subject of Colonel Brandon (see Chapter 39, p. 263).

Discussion point:

What evidence can you find in Austen's portrayal of Mrs Jennings in Chapters 36–40, with regard to the flaws in her character, we should think well of Mrs Jennings and think of her as generally good? Is she sometimes misguided (see, for example, pp. 232, 241–244, 251, 253, 262, 272)?

Discussion point:

How does Elinor and Marianne's stay in London with a sociable, gossipy woman, rather than Lady Middleton, assist them in their journey?

Discussion point: Chapter 31, p. 190: Marianne's attitude to Mrs Jennings

'... Her kindness is not sympathy; her good nature is not tenderness. All that she wants is now because I supply it.' Is Marianne justified in her assessment of Mrs Jennings' character? When do Marianne start to appreciate Mrs Jennings' attitude and values?

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John Dashwood’s attitude and values

‘He had just compunction enough for having done nothing for his sisters himself, but everybody else should do a great deal; and an offer from Colonel Brandon, or a legal means of atoning for his own neglect’ (Chapter 33, p. 215).

Discussion point:

In Chapter 2, John has to be dissuaded by Fanny from giving money to the Dashwoods. If he had a more compassionate wife, John would have been more generous? Does the quote at least having a conscience?

Mrs Dashwood’s attitude and values

Chapter 45, pp. 313–314: Mrs Dashwood shows her attitudes are still influenced by her past. ‘Had I sat down to wish for any possible good to my family, I should have fixed on you as the object most deserving it. And I believe Marianne will be the most happy’

Discussion point:

What other ‘evidence’ does Mrs Dashwood use to prove that Colonel Dashwood is a much better man than Willoughby and much more likely to make Marianne happy (see, for example, page 316)?

Chapter 45, p. 313: The narrator reveals Mrs Dashwood’s thoughts about her daughter’s situation. ‘Marianne was restored to her from a danger in which, as she now began to feel, her father had contributed to place her...’

Chapter 47, p. 331: It finally dawns on Mrs Dashwood that she has not ‘read’ her daughter correctly. ‘Mrs Dashwood found that she had erred in relying on Elinor’s representation of her daughter. She concluded that everything had been expressly softened at the time, to spare her from suffering then as she had suffered for Marianne... She feared that under this persuasion she had been inattentive, nay, almost unkind, to her Elinor...’

Discussion point:

Austen shows that Mrs Dashwood is able to reflect on her attitudes and actions. Do you think she changes differently as she starts to plan Margaret’s future? Is Mrs Dashwood one of the characters who grows in awareness?

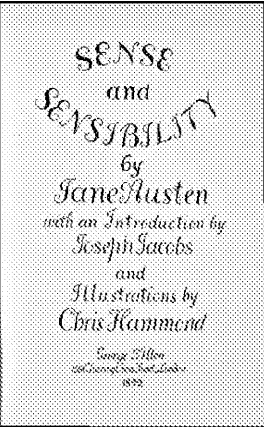
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Section 6: Language and Narrative Techniques

The Narrator’s Voice: Purpose and Perspective



Use of the omniscient perspective of the narrator enables us to see the characters as they interact and the possibility of irony and double meanings in their words and thoughts. The narrator takes no part in events and does not express their presence (an exception to this is found in Chapter 15 when the narrator starts a sentence with ‘I come now to the relation of a new acquaintance’). The narrator’s choice of words guides our understanding of the characters. In introducing the characters of Mrs Dashwood and Mr Dashwood, the narrator comments that the similarity of their temperaments is shown in the words used to characterise them centre on emotions, ‘pleasure’ and ‘sorrow’. Elinor’s character is introduced to us in terms of her ‘reasoning’, her ‘coolness of judgment’, ‘her feelings’ and ‘her sense’.

The narrator gives insight into character; for example, in Chapter 32 we learn of Charlotte Willoughby’s behaviour: it is represented as direct speech, but is actually the narrator enabling us to ‘hear’ what she says and to simultaneously appreciate the irony of the narrator’s intervention. Sir John’s reaction to Willoughby is dealt with in the following: *he had always had such reason to think well!...*” (p. 202) – speech marks here serve to enable the technique appears again in Chapter 30, when Marianne’s insistence that she is not reported, but marked by speech marks: ‘...But “no, she would go down; she could not bustle about her would be less” ’ (p. 183). The narrator’s voice also occasionally intervenes, for example, employing words from French, such as: ‘douceur’ (p. 276, p. 344) and ‘adieu’ (p. 282), showing Austen had some knowledge of French.

‘Direct Speech’

Direct speech allows characters to make themselves known to the reader. This technique is shown to great effect in the dialogue between John and Fanny Dashwood in Chapter 2, where after some initial ‘scene setting’ and insights into the character and motivations of Fanny Dashwood by the narrator, the characters condemn themselves from their own mouths. Austen also uses passages of direct speech to show a character’s emotions: Marianne’s voice is first heard in Chapter 3. Her language is of ‘fire’, ‘spirit’, ‘animat(ion)’, ‘wild’. She is free with her pronouncements: ‘I am afraid...’ ‘It is evident...’ ‘I could not be happy with...’ ‘so much!’ (pp. 19–20). Although Edward is the origin of her assessment, by the time we learn as much, if not more, about Marianne’s character and motivation. By Elinor’s first speech shows her to be rational, thoughtful, cautious: ‘I think I know more of him...’ ‘I do not esteem him.’ (p. 18).

Discussion point

If the narrator had not intervened, how would we have understood the events of the novel?

Discussion point

Read through sections of the narrative which contain direct speech – for example, Chapter 2 – and analyse how direct speech establishes individual characters and their attitudes towards each other.

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Free Indirect Discourse

Austen also uses free indirect discourse – one of the first authors to do so – our understanding of character through privileged access to thought processes of an omniscient narrator. Austen uses this technique with particular effect bound by inclination and by honour to not reveal her feelings for Edward. In her engagement to Lucy, free indirect discourse is our only way of understanding what she does and says. We can ‘hear’ her thoughts, in her own voice, but the narrator guides our point of view on what Elinor is thinking, as she struggles to reconcile her internal world with the external world she inhabits.

Sentence Structure: The Long and the Short of It

Austen employs a variety of sentence lengths – from the very simple to the very long – together by careful use of structure and punctuation – to create the meaning of the text. Short sentences, just as in a detective novel, are used to create tension and suspense. In 43, as the drama of Elinor's illness reaches its climax, we are told, 'It was a moment of delay of any kind' (p. 291); 'The night was cold and stormy'. But as Elinor keeps vigil at Marianne's bedside, the pace and tone change: '...calming every fear, satisfying every enquiry of her enfeebled sister, and succour, and watching almost every look and every breath' (p. 294). The fact that the text is shown by the repeated use of the 'ing' form of the verbs – 'calming...satisfying...watching' – also indicates her tireless devotion to her sister. The **alliteration** of *spirits/sister* echoes a sigh escaping from Elinor as she sits, helpless, full of remorse. The length of the sentence is extended and the pace slows down, so we become aware of time as the evening draws on. The marked repetition of 'every' gives a clear sense of Elinor's desperate effort to influence the course of Marianne's illness. Repetition is a **cohesive** device Austen employs elsewhere in *Sense and Sensibility* (see, for example: 'so bad and so cast down' (p. 185); 'The same steady conviction...the same impetuous feelings' (p. 190); 'conviction, lasting conviction' (p. 193); 'comfort...no, I must not say comfort – not present comfort..' (p. 193) – the word 'comfort' recurs frequently in the narrative; 'same warmth... same eagerness' (p. 194); 'want of sense...want of elegance' (p. 220)).

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Short sentences are also used to give an insight into the rapid thought process of Lucy. In Chapter 23 to convince herself that Edward does love her: *'Had Edward been in love with her, she would have known it. His affection was all her own. She could not be deceived in that... He certainly loved her.'* Prior to this section, there is a sentence of ten lines: *'Elmhor goes over the picture, and Lucy is the true object of Edward's love. But, raised on abstract nouns, she cannot see the picture in her mind, his dissatisfaction at his own position... 'the intimate knowledge' of the picture, the evidence supplied by the picture, the nouns of 'the picture, the letter, the ring'.* The abstract nouns in this section from her own perspective emerges – *'her resentment'...* *'her own mind'* the phrase *'her own mind'* to describe Edward's state of mind.

Extension activity:

Analyse the speeches of some of the characters – for example, Fanny Dashwood (try Chapters 30, 36), Colonel Brandon (try Chapters 31, 39) and Robert Ferrars (try Chapters 36, 41) – to find out more about them by the words and phrases she gives them to speak. Look out for how they use language to both sense and meaning.

In Chapter 42, as Marianne separates herself from the group arriving at Cleveland, Austen gives room for the narrator to fully describe her emotional reaction close to Combe Magna (p. 283). The narrator mimics Marianne's own romantic reference to 'winding shrubberies', a 'distant eminence', 'farthest ridges of hills'. Austen uses the length of this sentence to create both an external and internal space – we are 'only eighty miles from Barton and not thirty from Cleveland'. Marianne's actions, we are drawn into her thoughts too: she enters Cleveland quickly 'steal(s) away' 'wandering over a wide tract of country', letting her mind dwell on 'misery'.

Balanced Sentences

Use of balanced sentences is another feature of Austen's literary style:

- Chapter 10 (p. 52), Elinor criticises the attitude of Marianne and Willoughby towards Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings: 'If their praise is censure, your censure is not more undiscerning than you are prejudiced and unjust.'
- Chapter 14 (p. 124), Elinor feels sorry for Edward, even though she is hurt by what he has done: '...but if he had injured her, how much more had he injured himself; if her case were pitiable, his was hopeless.'
- Chapter 27 (p. 162), Austen uses Marianne's balanced phrases to highlight the conflict between the sisters' attitudes and values: 'We have neither of us anything to tell; you because you communicate, and I because I conceal nothing': the meaning here hinges on the shared application of 'nothing': their value systems have nothing in common.
- Chapter 44 (p. 299), Willoughby reflects: 'To avoid comparative poverty, this society would have deprived of all its horrors, I have, by raising myself to affliction, made it a blessing.'

Descriptive Language



Austen uses descriptive language to provide a sufficient degree of **realism** in the narrative, rather than to create a definitive image in the mind of the reader. Apart from the notable exception of references to eyes looking and seeing, sensory detail is limited: we know Marianne plays the pianoforte competently but the purpose of this skill is to provide a link to Willoughby, rather than to let the reader hear the

of the music that forms the backdrop to the conversation between Elinor and Willoughby (p. 36). We know that the Dashwoods are the least of characters around the dinner table to discuss the meal, but we do not hear of the menu, the guests' reactions, or how the food tasted or smelled: the meal is a device to gather together a group of characters who would be unlikely to meet in other circumstances and to observe how they interact. Austen limits description of physical contact between the characters: apart from some handshaking, characters largely keep their distance from one another. Where contact occurs, as in Chapter 43 p. 291, where Colonel Brandon presses Elinor's hand, or Chapter 45 p. 312, where Mrs De Brandon's hand, and presses Edward's hand in Chapter 48 p. 334, it is used to mark a dramatic and emotional moment.

Discuss

Create a scene in *Sense and Sensibility* using Austen's style of descriptive language.

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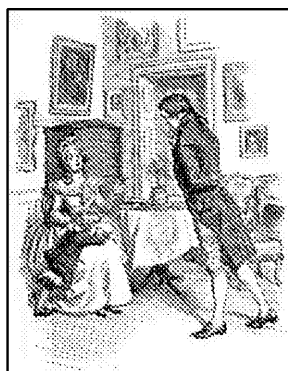
Compared to the access we are given to Elinor's thoughts, Austen does not give us access to Marianne's mind. The narrator or another character will remark on Marianne's actions, as indicators of state of mind as well as of her health: we are told, 'the oppression of spirits' (Chapter 15, p. 82), her 'desperate calmness...excessive affliction' (Chapter 29, pp. 171–172). This latter reference, to how Marianne's inner state, is a device used frequently by Austen to denote the emotional states of her characters. On receiving the letter from Eliza Williams at the start of Chapter 48 (p. 308), Marianne does nothing but 'changed colour and immediately left the room'. In Chapter 48 (p. 308), Marianne's emotional state is further explored.

Discussion point:

As you read the narrative, take note of the use of language related to eyes and observing. Look at the conversation between Elinor and Lucy (for example, Chapters 22 and 24), where Elinor and Lucy converse: how do references to the sense of sight contribute to our understanding of their characters?

of Edward's proposed marriage to Lucy Steele: 'Marianne gave a violent start at her turning pale, and fell back in her chair in hysterics. Mrs Dashwood, whose eyes were in the same direction, was shocked to perceive by Elinor's countenance how much she realised the truth.'

Rhetorical Style: Perspective and Persuasion



Austen uses elements of rhetorical style to explore the complexities of the narrative. This device is used to give insights into the characters' perspectives and to be persuaded by their perspectives. In Chapter 13 (p. 133–134) Austen takes us into Elinor's anguished thoughts as she tries to make sense of Edward's behaviour: 'Had Edward been deceiving her? Had he feigned a regard for her?... Was his engagement of the heart?... She might in time regain tranquillity, and look forward to? Could he ever be tolerably happy with her? Was his affection for her out of the question, with his integrity, his talents, his mind, be satisfied with

a wife like her – illiterate, artful, selfish?' In a despairing outburst, Marianne cries out: 'But how can I appear happy when I am so miserable – Oh! Who can require it?' (Chapter 29, p. 180).

Discussion point:

Are we being asked to empathise with Marianne's perspective? Is this further evidence of her determination to see the truth? Or is this more evidence of her self-pity?

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a device used by Austen to hint at aspects of the plot which are later revealed to have significance. It is used with such lightness of touch that it can be missed on a first reading.

- In Chapter 1, we learn of Edward that 'the whole of his fortune depended on the success of his mother's match with his sister, Fanny, who wanted him 'to make a fine figure in the world'. So early in the narrative, neither Elinor nor the reader is fully aware of just how significant this maternal ambition will be in the progress of the relationships between Elinor and Edward and Robert and Lucy, but we store it away, filed under 'obstacle, potential', for future reference.

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- Although she has no definite proof, Elinor's intuition also senses another thread in Edward, which leads her to comment in Chapter 4, that she is 'by no means without regard...' (p. 23). Austen is warning us that there is something, unspecified, holding Edward back from an open declaration of his love. We have to wait until Chapter 22 to find out what this is, and until that moment, Elinor's intuition is one of the threads of the plot; after the revelation, it evolves into how she uses her knowledge of the engagement and to the cost to her of keeping that knowledge secret.
- The fact that Allenham and its occupants will play a part in the Dashwoods' future is mentioned in the narrator's comment in Chapter 9: 'an ancient respectable mansion...' (p. 42). A page later, Willoughby storms into Marianne's life and we learn that she has been deceived. To understand the greater significance of the reference to Allenham, we have to wait until Chapter 13 (p. 69) – Willoughby and Marianne's undisciplined and uninformed relationship – when we finally are told of the truth about Willoughby's plans.
- Colonel Brandon's backstory is suggested by Sir John's dropping 'hints' of his past (Chapter 10, p. 51), so giving Elinor 'reason to suspect that he had already been known by him' (p. 56). We have to wait with Elinor until Chapter 15 to learn the real story, but meanwhile, this hint at past disappointments goes some way to establishing a 'grave' and 'serious' character: characteristics which Marianne dislikes as a further obstacle to any relationship between her and the Colonel.
- At the end of Chapter 11 (pp. 57–58), Elinor's ironic comment about how Marianne would have questioned Colonel Brandon foreshadows Marianne's own fate.
- Lucy has her own moment of foreshadowing premonition, when she says of her sister Nancy in Chapter 22 (p. 127), '...I am in constant fear of her betraying me...' – her fears prove justified in Chapter 37.

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The Role of Letters



Letters, written, sent, awaited and received, play a sometimes **symbolic** part in *Sense and Sensibility*. Forty references to letters and notes in the novel, plus references to calling cards and invitations, mean that, in terms of mention of letters, we only get to see six letters: the 'infamous' letter from Willoughby to Marianne, the 'notes' from Marianne to Willoughby, the letter from Elinor to Willoughby in Chapter 38 and the letter from Lucy to Elinor in Chapter 40. In addition, there are extracts of letters to Elinor from Mrs Jennings in Chapter 49.

Austen uses letters to contribute to the structure of the plot and to our understanding of the characters. The move to Barton Cottage for Mrs Dashwood and her daughters begins in Chapter 1 with the arrival of a letter from John Middleton. We see neither his letter nor her reply but the fact that Mrs Dashwood 'needed no time for deliberation or enquiry' gives us a sense of her nature and Mrs Dashwood's ability to act decisively – impulsively, perhaps – in her current situation is offered. The device of leaving Mrs Dashwood at Barton Cottage while Marianne accompany Mrs Jennings to London means that letter-writing is the main mode of communication between mother and daughters from Chapter 26 until Chapter 40. Elinor does on arrival at Mrs Jennings' house is to write a letter to her mother. The letter from Mrs Dashwood, handed to Marianne by Mrs Jennings in Chapter 41, is a key moment in the plot.

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had been in 'an extasy of more than hope' that it was a letter from Willoughby's confirmation for Marianne that Mrs Jennings 'cannot feel'. The letter Mrs Dashwood receives (p. 201), from John Dashwood, informing her of his intention to be in London. For this reason Mrs Dashwood wishes Elinor and Marianne to stay in London. In Chapter 14, we see further evidence of the characters of Willoughby and Marianne through the letter from Willoughby's so 'impudently cruel' (p. 174) and Marianne's 'so full of affection' (p. 174).

Austen's placing of letters contributes to the dramatic tension of the narrative. The receipt of Eliza's letter precipitates him into a sudden and mystery-shrouded departure in Chapter 13. This change of plan also contributes to the ease with which Willoughby can ride off to Allenhurst unaccompanied. The first letter we see in full (in Chapter 14) is an unfeeling letter from Willoughby to Marianne, giving us a further particular revelation of a letter from Edward, giving Elinor such devastating proof of his indifference at the end of Chapter 1 (Chapter 22, p. 128); the note inviting Lucy and Nan to stay, is shown by Lucy to Elinor at the end of Chapter 22 (p. 238), providing a 'cliffhanger' evidence of Lucy's likely triumph at the campaign to become Mrs Edward Ferrars.

Letters in *Sense and Sensibility* also give us an insight into social conventions of early nineteenth-century England. Unmarried men and women do not correspond with one another until an engagement to marry exists between them. In Chapter 15, talking of her correspondence with Edward, Elinor says, 'If they correspond, every fear of mine will be removed' (p. 81). In London, she demands of Marianne, 'Are you expecting a letter then?' (p. 161). In Chapter 27, Colonel Brandon believes the letter to be true, because he has 'accidentally seen a letter ... directed to Mr Willoughby' (p. 164).

It is possible that *Sense and Sensibility* had its origins in an earlier work, called *Northanger Abbey*, written in 1795. This early version was allegedly written in epistolary form – a novel written by the characters. The limitations of this structure, in terms of perspective and comment, may have led to Austen abandoning this form in favour of the dialogue of the published novel. Whatever the origins, the use of letters in *Sense and Sensibility* contributes to plot structure, dramatic tension and provides insight into early nineteenth-century social conventions.

Language Choice as a Guide to Character: the association of certain patterns of speech to give characters a distinctive voice of their own

- The characters of Elinor and Marianne and their conflicting attitudes and values are shown by their individual **patterns of speech**. Elinor's disclosure that she thinks very highly of Edward, whom she esteems and likes him, is met by Marianne, who exclaims, 'Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor!' (Chapter 4, p. 23).
- Austen shows how both characters are capable of 'sense' and 'sensitivity' by each adopting the speech pattern of the other. An example of Elinor's use of language early in the book is her description of Edward, when she piles on the evidence of a reasoning and rational mind, praising 'the excellence of his understanding and his principles... his mind is well informed... his observation just and correct' (Chapter 4, p. 22). This is just quoted from Marianne; but in Chapter 37, when Elinor is forced to reveal her feelings, there is a marked change in her words, and the way she says them. Elinor's words we associate with her, such as 'duty', 'comfort', 'acquit', 'misconduct'.

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romantic notion that ‘one’s happiness’ should depend only on one other person – *not fit – it is not possible...*’ (p. 246): these words and phrases are very much to know. But when Marianne accuses her of not feeling deeply enough, she erupts into an outburst more characteristic of Marianne herself, where she reveals her love for Edward and how much this love has cost her: words such as ‘unhappy’, ‘unkindness’, ‘insolence’, ‘unhappiness’ and ‘painful’ characterise this part of the novel. In the speech on pages 246–247, there is a marked use of ‘I’ (x34), ‘me’ (x10), signalling that she has at last been provoked into putting herself – and her feelings – first. An early example of Marianne’s customary language comes in Chapter 11, when she writes to Edward in Norland: ‘Dear, dear Norland!... when shall I cease to regret you! – when leave you! Oh! happy house... perhaps I may view you with more pleasure’ (p. 29). But, on receiving his reply, Marianne’s language signals a change to a more reasoned, reflective mode: ‘let your kindness defend me from the reproaches of my friends; and let your judgment must censure...’; and she acknowledges her ‘faults’, ‘of fortitude’, ‘neglected’ in her own previous behaviour.

Secondary characters are also given distinctive **idiolects**:

- Mrs Jennings: her determined questioning of Colonel Brandon (to the point where she cautions her) shows her to be a woman who is not easily put off. Her speech is often peppered with modal verbs (for example: *must, might, could, may, would*) and her thoughts pile on top of one another, as she occupies herself in one of her favourite pastimes – speculating about the lives of her friends and acquaintances. Phrases such as ‘good for nothing fellow’, ‘plague his heart out’ (Chapter 30), ‘hussey’ (Chapter 49) are all given to Mrs Jennings and show not only her way of expressing herself, but also show her vigorous response when she feels provoked.
- Lucy Steele’s misapplication of certain words, such as in the phrase, ‘old acquaintance’, when she confides in Elinor in Chapter 22, and again in ‘as to the person it was drew for’ (p. 126), ‘I am determined to set for it’, ‘I was broke’ (p. 127) and ‘was you not quite struck with it?’ (Chapter 35, p. 225). The assessment of Lucy as ‘ignorant and illiterate’ is accurate. In her letter to Elinor, Lucy tries to gain Elinor’s sympathy by writing of ‘all the troubles we have’, but the style of her final letter to Edward is further proof of her illiteracy: ‘Edward is a stile’ and says that he has ‘blushed over the pages’ of her other letters. And particularly Nancy Steele’s frequent use of the French word ‘beau’, and the way the Steele sisters are ‘out of place’ – Nancy’s affected speech betrays her lack of education, her look ‘smart’ and their manners seem ‘civil’. Lucy adopts the mannerism of the French language reveals both her lack of education and her steely ambition to achieve whatever means.
- Mrs Jennings, Sir John and the Steele sisters all resort to the use of cliché when assessing others: ‘pretty (smart)’, ‘charming’, ‘monstrous (pretty)’ when assessing others. The narrow range of their vocabulary and, by implication, the narrow range of their

Extension activity:

Create an ‘Idiolect Chart’ for two characters of your choice and comment on how their language reflects their values.

Alliteration: Where You Read with Your Ears

Austen uses the stylistic literary device of alliteration, which can add to the cohesion of the text, through sound association, and create emphasis, adding an aural dimension to our understanding of meaning: in Chapter 9, we hear of the 'exquisite enjoyment' of 'Marianne and Margaret one memorable morning' as they 'direct(ed) their steps attracted by the partial sunshine of a showery sky'; 'all possible speed down the steep side of the hill' (p. 43) – here, the sound of 'ti' of 'partial' and the 'sh' in 'sunshine' extends the alliterative effect, as in '...confused, seemed scarcely sensible of the pleasure in seeing them' (Chapter 16); 'excess of suffering had somewhat spent itself' (p. 172). In addition to the title of other examples of alliterative pairings: 'exquisite power of enjoyment' (Chapter 16); 'advantage' and 'rendered so respectable' (Chapter 22, p. 122); 'compact of conversation and confinement' (p. 40); 'reasons and proofs' (Chapter 23, p. 133); 'calmness and caution' (Chapter 24, p. 133); 'affectionate attention' (Chapter 25, p. 148); 'compact of conversation and confinement' (Chapter 26, p. 153); 'short silence' and 'comforts and conveniences' (Chapter 30, p. 188); 'selfish sagacity' (Chapter 50, p. 349).

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Irony: Expressing a Point of View, without Expressing Point of View

Austen's work demonstrates great skill in the use of irony to guide the reader's point of view. The contrast between a character's actual and apparent intention is revealed, for both comic and moral purpose.

- In Chapter 2, we can perceive the ironic 'subtext' of the dialogue, with the narrator's ironic observation as John gives in to Fanny's argument, declaring 'that it would be absolutely unnecessary, if not highly indecorous' to offer any financial help to Mrs Dashwood and her daughters.
- Irony is used to show the distance between where Marianne is and where she needs to be, to comment on how she learns 'the falsehood of her own opinions...' to finally gain self-knowledge and contentment.
- Elinor's character is largely untouched by ironic comment. The irony is in the situation, and is revealed in Chapter 37 (pp. 241–243), when Mrs Dashwood learns that Edward is engaged to Lucy. Events have overtaken her; the irony is in her need for openness about her feelings – not easy for Elinor.

Ironic commentary is most often reserved for secondary characters: the first is necessary to the plot but also relate to wider ideas about attitudes and values.

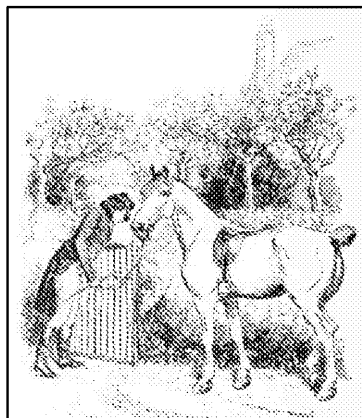
- Mrs Dashwood's plans for her daughters to Barton Cottage, when they come 'from the savings of a small income of five hundred a year by a woman who' (Chapter 10, p. 53).
- Her inappropriate response to situations: Elinor's objections to the proposal are overruled, 'with that happy ardour of youth which Marianne and her mother' (p. 152).
- Given the significance Austen places on dialogue, and the significance of the activities of her time, her comment on the guests gathered around the table is sharply ironic: 'no poverty of any kind, except of conversation, appeared, but a considerable' (p. 220).

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Imagery, Metaphor (what you see and what you 'get')... and Similes



Perhaps part of the key to Austen's continued willingness to let the reader create their own 'Sensibility': there are few detailed descriptions of interiors – just enough to ensure sufficient realism for journeys undertaken between towns; we see the rolling hills of Devonshire, sufficient to make her lose her footing as she runs down to the cottage, the subject of a conversation that reveals the difficulties of Edward and Marianne. We know that rooms are entertaining, or more so, but not detailed, and yet still we have enough information for characters to sit on to have

in Chapter 49, Mrs Dashwood says that Fanny is 'given the dignity' of having 'a room which would hold' (pp. 343), and so on. Austen draws both Edward and Colonel Brandon. Physical descriptions of characters are not over-detailed. Austen gives the information that serves her purpose in plot and motivation. The rest is left to the reader's imagination.

- In Chapter 10, we are given a **synopsis** of the appearance of Elinor and Marianne.
- We learn of Edward Ferrars' physical appearance in a series of negative descriptions: *recommended...by any peculiar grace of person or address*, he was 'not handsome'.
- Although Austen does not use metaphors very often, it could be said that the metaphor of 'love as combat' throughout the narrative:
 - Chapter 32, Nancy talks of making 'a conquest' (p. 205); Lucy's intention in the same chapter sees her 'returning, after a cessation of hostile hints, to the same point'.
 - Chapter 35, Elinor acknowledges Lucy's 'civil triumph' in Mrs Ferrars's acceptance of her.
 - Chapter 38, Nancy confesses to Elinor that she believes that Lucy will win when Edward did not come to visit her. Nancy thinks that it is unlikely that Edward will invite them to stay any more 'this bout' (p. 258).
 - Chapter 49, p. 336, Edward, once he has asked Elinor to marry him, speaks of his 'triumph of accepted love'.
 - Chapter 50, p. 350, Robert Ferrars is 'proud of his conquest' in marrying Elinor.
 - References to 'wounding' (p. 229, for example), 'conciliation' (p. 232) and 'victory' contribute to this metaphor of 'love as combat'.
 - The metaphor is played out for real, when the Colonel admits to Elinor that he is 'by appointment', 'he to defend, I to punish his conduct' (Chapter 31, p. 200).
 - The fact that they both 'returned unwounded' could be seen as a victory, whether honourable or not, men were largely unscathed, while women were not in this type of 'combat'.

Similes are rare and generally given to secondary characters, to indicate a particular world view: there seems to be a lack of 'saintly' similes with some of the main characters.

- John Dashwood compares his wife to an angel: Fanny has coped with her engagement with 'the fortitude of an angel' (Chapter 37, p. 248).
- Lucy is said to 'worship' Colonel Brandon 'as a saint' (Chapter 41, p. 270) when she goes to Delaford to Edward.
- Willoughby's similes also use religious imagery when he talks of 'Marianne as an angel...sweet face as white as death', linking with the religious imagery of the novel (Chapter 44, pp. 305–306) – and he says Sophia is 'as jealous as the devil'.

Mrs Jennings also uses simile:

- Chapter 26, on arrival in London she says she has been 'as busy as a bee'.
- Chapter 37, she says that Fanny 'scolded like any fury' (p. 243).

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Symbolism

The weather: The weather plays a significant part in *Sense and Sensibility*; references to the changes in weather feature frequently and particularly relate to Marianne, either dictating her actions or symbolically reflecting her mood. The sudden change of weather when out walking with Margaret in Chapter 9 brings Willoughby into her plot line. Her insistence on walking in damp conditions and represents her anguished emotional state: illness etc. It could be said to be a motif of the narrative. A 'cold and stormy night' sets the scene for Willoughby's dramatic departure – in Chapter 44.

Hands: Hand-shaking takes on an almost symbolic quality in *Sense and Sensibility* in moments of crisis, contact between characters and indicating more than several passages which contribute to dramatic tension:

- Chapter 26 (p. 167), Marianne exclaims despairingly at Willoughby: 'What do you mean?'
- Chapter 35 (p. 227), Marianne joyfully greets Edward 'with a hand that betokened agonising tension in the room that holds Edward, Elinor and Lucy.
- Chapter 44 (p. 309), Elinor is put into a very difficult position when Willoughby returns unannounced at Cleveland, pleading – demanding – that she listen to him. In the way he has treated Marianne, she is still not entirely immune to the temptation of 'out his hand. She could not refuse to give him her's...'
- Chapter 48 (p. 334), when Edward arrives unexpectedly at Barton Cottage, the Dashwoods are still reeling from the news of his marriage to Lucy. Mrs Dashwood is eager to shake his hand in welcome; Elinor misses 'the moment of action' but she too 'gives him her hands with him too'.

Other symbols in *Sense and Sensibility* are the lock of Marianne's hair which Edward keeps in his pocket-book, and the lock of hair that Lucy has given Edward, which he keeps in his finger. Willoughby enjoys hunting – which could be seen as **symbolic** of his character. The activities of Elinor (creating realistic images of the landscape), Marianne (playing romantic music on her pianoforte) and Lucy (crafting out of whatever materials she can) are as symbolic of their characters. Letters exchanged between an unmarried man and woman in their engagement [see this section, pages 93–94, The Role of Letters].

Essay question on Austen's use of Language and Narrative Techniques:
The plot line in *Sense and Sensibility* could be considered quite conventional. Consider how Austen's use of language and narrative technique raises the narrative from 'run-of-the-mill literature'.

Discussion point / Question

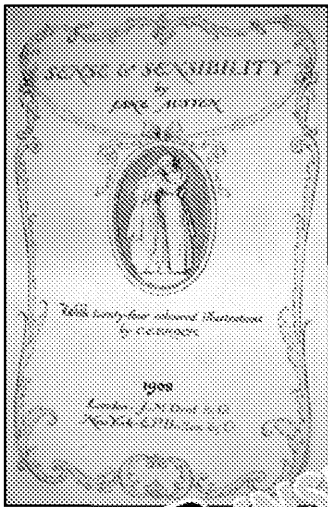
Team up and see how many references to the weather you can find in *Sense and Sensibility*. Do the characters know whether it is raining outside - or does she have a feeling?

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Section 7: Was Jane Austen a Feminist?



Particularly since the early 1970s, there has been a lot of discussion among literary critics: was Jane Austen a feminist? Arguments have been proposed for both sides of the argument: on the one hand, the ambitions for her heroines are in line with the conventions of the early nineteenth century: marriage to a socially superior man is the ultimate goal; on the other hand, her female characters show independence of thought and spirit and an ability to influence other women, in their lives and turn events to their advantage. In the patriarchal society of nineteenth century England, the customary goal of most single women, once they were of age, was to marry, as money became her husband's. In 1792, when Jane Austen was sixteen years old, Mary Wollstonecraft had written *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

the Marriage and Property Act gave women some control over their own property.

Given the knowledge that there was just one chance (divorce was unthinkable at the time), it would be a rational choice for a woman of marriageable age to had, to take advantage of the best prospect offered. Personal fulfilment could be the promise of a position in society and material comforts. In the absence of fortune, looks and language were the key weapons at her disposal. Physically: looks could speak for themselves and be very persuasive. At the beginning of the novel, physical descriptions of Elinor and Marianne are sufficient to show that they repel a potential suitor – and the same is true of the description of Lucy Steele. The description of Nancy Steele makes it clear that her appearance is not a guarantee. The acts that make Doctor Davies her 'beau' are acts of simpering desperation. Austen is presenting her female characters to eligible suitors, and to us, in a conventional way.

Education for women was not encouraged; it took until 1878 for London University in the United Kingdom to allow women to study for a degree. The 'accomplishments', skills which demonstrated a woman's suitability to take over her husband's household. Austen shows that her unmarried female characters have 'accomplishments': Marianne plays the pianoforte, Elinor draws, Lucy is her friend. Austen does not just randomly give these skills to her characters: they can be used. The pianoforte is a creative outlet in tune with Marianne's emotional and romantic landscape on paper is Elinor's reasoned, rational response to the world around her own world and future prospects out of whatever is in her hand. Austen sees conventions as a device to give insight into her characters.

Over and above these conventions, Austen understands how language can be used as a weapon in a woman's competition to secure her future. Her heroines – and her other characters – are marked by their ability to use language; they are articulate and know the power of emotional, charged speech of Marianne and the error-strewn language of Lucy are used effectively to manipulate people and circumstances – Lucy cleverly initiates, until he is secured as a 'more promising' prospect than his brother. Marianne motivates the man she has 'set her cap at' and is able to convince him, through her language that she is a great catch. Marianne's romantic sensibilities mean that she rejects the truth as she sees it. She will not compromise her language for the sake of Elinor to employ some of her own well-developed diplomatic language skills. Marianne's unrestrained expressions of 'truth' contribute to her downfall, as she will become her husband, precisely because they are so full of independent

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well as observing her actions, fires his protective instinct and her appearance, frailty only add to her appeal for him. It could then be said that it is Marianne that attracts the love of a man who will ultimately lead her into a conventional marriage.

Austen makes sure that women's voices continue to be heard, even beyond death. Into obscurity on the death of their husbands, Austen gives us portraits of determined widows in *Sense and Sensibility*: Mrs Dashwood, Mrs Jennings, Mrs Smith. Mrs Dashwood's position is the least prosperous: she is vulnerable to the inheritance, the gullibility of her husband, the selfishness of her stepson – and the linguistic skill of another woman: Fanny manipulates John's intention to help her, convinced that no help at all is the appropriate response. As a result of this, Mrs Dashwood remains dependent upon a man, Sir John. Even so, her language indicates that she knows her own mind, and is fiercely protective of her daughters. Mrs Jennings and Mrs Ferrars have been left financially secure after their husbands' deaths. Mrs Jennings shows in the language that this financial freedom allows them to do as they please. Mrs Jennings thinks and doesn't mind who hears her, as she does of Elinor and Marianne. Mrs Ferrars has the financial power and status to control both her sons (and her daughter and son-in-law) and, by association, the fortunes of Elinor. Mrs Smith's money – and most importantly, her moral values – have been the life of John Willoughby. We learn that she left him in no doubt about her opinions.

Austen can give her female characters traits that she also uses in male characters. These characteristics describe: determined; single-minded; ruthless; calculating. These could apply to Willoughby – but equally well to Lucy – or to Fanny – or to Marianne. We don't necessarily want us to like them, but we can't ignore them either. They make up the themes and plot of the narrative.

The options and opportunities for women at this time were severely restricted. The approach demanded that she showed the lives of women as she knew them. The narrative demanded that she showed just how effectively women could play the hand they were dealt. If, like Marianne, they refused to join in the game. Are female characters seen as they are, or as they look as though they are: Mrs Dashwood is effectively cast out of Norwood while her fate is decided; Eliza is married off to Colonel Brandon's brother; Eliza Williams is abandoned by Willoughby; Marianne has to repent and change her life; Colonel Brandon's bride – even though he fell in love with who she was, not what she was. In these women's characters we can also see strength – Mrs Dashwood makes a positive and active in her daughters' lives; Elinor manages to direct and support her sons and sisters, even though she is tormented by the uncertainty of her own situation (tongue-tied and miserable); Eliza Brandon is able to live a different life from her former husband's control of her money; Marianne is able to consider the possibility of a different life; Marianne was no angel and played a consequential part in her situation; Marianne has a relationship with Colonel Brandon that gives her what she thought she wanted but which she needs.

In the end, the question, 'Was Jane Austen a feminist?' may not be the most important to ask. It could perhaps be argued that Jane Austen's concerns are expressed in terms of values, rather than 'issues' exclusively related to gender. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the choices of women undoubtedly contribute to the structure, themes and plot. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen is clear that both men and women are constrained by social conventions. The approval and social censure form the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. The actions of Edward and Colonel Brandon; dishonourable conduct (at least to the eyes of the society) of Willoughby. It could be argued that more important than, or at least as significant as, the question of whether Jane Austen was a feminist, is the question of whether she was a woman.

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gender, is the part played in *Sense and Sensibility* by the interaction between Inheritance law is obviously significant but Austen also explores the corrosive no place for motherly love in the character of Mrs Ferrars; instead there is a wealth and inheritance. Fanny's concerns for her son are limited to how tall can be accumulated for him. Eliza's wealth divides her from Colonel Brandon's loveless marriage with his older brother, to protect the estate; Marianne's from Willoughby. Mrs Dashwood and Mrs Jennings are remarkable because money or status should dictate whom you marry (although perhaps how it influence this view should be considered). In *Sense and Sensibility*, no one, male or female, rich or poor, is free from money's influence, and how this influence can be seen as contributing significantly to Austen's **didactic** purpose.

Her own career, as a published author, even one that wished to be anonymous voice and believed it had a right to be heard. With an increase in literacy in the power to reach a general audience. Is she the ultimate subversive, drawn with the power of business entertainment, blending her ironic comment on the tale of love and found, so that it was unconsciously absorbed? Perhaps the influence of post-Revolutionary France made her wary of putting forward any alternative of individual liberty was attractive to her but she was concerned about the will. Her knowledge of character and its need for 'comfort' in *Sense and Sensibility* and female characters, as they make their choices in response to circumstances, dynamics of the relationship between the sexes and gives us vivid examples of how to hold the balance of power, who know how to manipulate and negotiate and their contribution to the action of the novel.

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Section 8: Glossary and Further Reading

Analytical terms

abstract noun	nouns that stand for ideas, feelings, qualities: <i>love, beauty, justice</i>
allegory	linked to symbolism: the use of characters, events or objects to communicate an abstract idea, often used by authors for a spiritual purpose in the writing
alliteration	the repetition of the same letter or sound in a series of words at the start of the words
allusion/alluding to	an indirect reference to a person, place or object without naming it
anti-climax	this can be an unexpected 'low' when a 'high' has been expected between a point of high drama followed by a less dramatic event
antithesis/antithetical	opposite: where one idea or character is the opposite of another
attitudes and values	the codes that provide motivation and dictate behaviour
chronology	the timeline(s) within the narrative
cliché	an overused word; shows limited range of vocabulary
cohesion / cohesive device	a linguistic device that helps to create a 'link' between sentences <i>he heartily to think that her husband could not get rid of her</i> the link between 'Charlotte' and 'her husband' as we know Charlotte is Charlotte and we are being given information about her husband
context	the elements of the situation that help to create meaning location , time, relationships of characters, culture, etc.
dialogue	words spoken directly – 'conversation' between characters
didactic	a work with a moral and educational purpose
direct speech	words that convey the spoken words of a character spoken; speech marks are used commonly to show where direct speech begins and ends
dramatic tension	where suspense is created by something being about to happen the outcome has serious consequences for a character for example, the uncertainty about an engagement in <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> or Willoughby in <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>
ellipsis	a word or words left out of a sentence; in dialogue it is often used for a pause
emotive	language designed to convey emotion or create a response in the reader; not 'neutral'
empathy	'in the shoes of': being able to appreciate the perspective of another
epistolary form	a novel written in the form of letters between characters
exclamatory sentences	sentences ending with an exclamation mark; used to express strong feelings (be positive or negative), such as surprise, amazement, etc.

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flashback	the revelation in the 'present' of the narrative of events that occurred at the start of the narrative; used to give insight into characters
free indirect discourse	where we both share the narrator's point of view and the thoughts of a character, for example, in Chapter 11 the carriage with Mrs Jennings and Marianne we firstly have the narrator's point of view of Elinor Willoughby: <i>'Elinor was resolved not only upon not loving him...but ...upon watching his behaviour to her'</i> then we have Elinor's thoughts about how she will react if she is in love: <i>'she must then learn to avoid every selfish feeling which might interfere with her satisfaction in the happiness of her friends'</i> the narrator 'observing' and 'listening' to Elinor's internal monologue.
idiolect	the way a character becomes associated with certain words or phrases – for example, Nancy Steele's free use of <i>'beaux'</i> and her limited range of vocabulary – <i>'vastly agreeable'</i> all occur in a section of her speech which all give us a sense of who she is, as she tries to appear intelligent but instead reveals her lack of intelligence and education.
indirect speech	where we do not hear the words spoken by a character but get a close idea of what they said – for example, at the end of Chapter 11 we are told that <i>'Mrs Dashwood indulged herself in talking to her son-in-law and his wife that she was provided with a carriage and a house no longer... (John Dashwood) civilly hoped to see her from Norland...'</i>
irony	the difference between what appears on the surface and what a character can understand one thing and the reality is the opposite: for example, at the end of Chapter 11 we are told the opinion that she will <i>'never see a man whom she had loved'</i> (p. 20); from the mismatch between what Marianne thinks is likely to happen, we get an ironic view of Marianne's feelings.
juxtapose/juxtaposing	the placing 'side by side' of two ideas or situations so that they are compared and each shed light on the other, for example, the juxtaposing of Elinor's 'sense' and 'sensitivity'; the juxtaposing of Elinor and Marianne's attitude to her love for Edward.
lexical choices	the author's choice of particular words (lexis) to create a certain effect or meaning.
linguistic device	the use of language to create understanding or effect, for example, cohesion, context or ellipsis
literary device	a technique to create extra layers of meaning, for example, alliteration, allusion, flashback or rhetoric
location	the way an author 'places' the characters and events in the narrative to real or imagined places – or, as in the case of <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> , a combination of the two – the real locations create a sense of realism in the narrative
melodrama/melodramatic	over-emotional, exaggerated, over-dramatic

metaphor	a literary device where the author sets up a comparison for the reader by using one thing to refer to another, for example, 'love as combat' (see Section 6 Language and Narrative Imagery, Metaphor... and Simile for examples of metaphors used in <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>)
motif	repeated use of particular imagery or language that has significance: for example, the lock of Lucy's hair and the lock of hair given by Marianne to Willoughby
narration	the telling of the story: this can be from different perspectives: 'first person' – through the eyes of a character, or 'third person' – where the narrator describes what happens, or 'omniscient' – where the narrator describes what happens and also gives us their thoughts
narrative	the story that is told
omniscient narrator	where the narrator has a 'god-like' perspective and knows the thoughts as well as their actions and adds to our understanding with comment on events
persona	where a character 'hides behind a mask' – creates a false identity to themselves to appear to be different to who they are
personification	where human characteristics are given to something non-human: for example, Marianne's response to the trees at Northanger
perspective	viewpoint of the narrator or character; also where the author's opinions can guide our point of view
pivotal	a term used to describe a key scene
plot device	the author uses a character or event mainly to serve a purpose: for example, Willoughby and Sir John meeting by coincidence in this way, Willoughby learns of Marianne's illness
plot symmetry	how the author adds to our understanding by alluding to previous events and attitudes: for example, the different reactions of Willoughby on learning that they have been disinherited
realism	representation that appears 'true to life'
rhetoric/rhetorical question	language designed to persuade/ a question used to make a point without one expecting an answer
satire	the use of irony, humour or mockery to reveal weaknesses in society
simile	figure of speech, using 'like' or 'as' to compare two things
symbol/symbols	something concrete that represents something abstract: for example, the lock of hair in the ring symbolising the engagement of Lucy and Willoughby
synopsis	'edited highlights' – a summing up of the main plot points
themes	major elements that recur throughout the plot, the characters and the setting: themes act as a cohesive device as they link characters and events
third person narration	where the narrator relates what is happening using 'he, she, they' rather than the first person (I)

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Further reading: appropriate wider reading will help to inform your responses to exam essay

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- Tanner, Tony, *Introduction to Sense and Sensibility* (1969) Appendix to Austen, Jane, *Sense and Sensibility* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), ISBN-13:978-0-141-43966-2
- Woolf, Virginia, *The Common Reader* Volume 1 (1927), Kindle e-book edition

* The Penguin Classics editions of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Jane Eyre* both contain additional reading material



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