

Reviews

Sense and Sensibility is a subtler and a more searching novel than [its critics'] blunt instruments of perception have been capable of registering, because it deals not with the categories of romantic philosophy but with the transformation of those categories into ways of feeling and behaving. It explores the unsettling romantic alteration of the internal life."

–from the Introduction by Peter Conrad

With Mr. Dashwood's death, his wife and two daughters, Elinor and Marianne, must accustom themselves to genteel poverty. When Marianne meets the man of her dreams, everyone expects a marriage; unaccountably, he rejects her, with devastating effect. It falls to Elinor, the sensible elder sister, to pick up the pieces, while harboring a secret longing of her own. In **Sense and Sensibility**, the warmth between two very different sisters contrasts with Austen's deliciously precise observation of vanity, selfishness and snobbery.

--*This text comes from an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.*

Further Reading

Other novels by Jane Austen – *Pride & Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park* , *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte

BOOK CLUB TO GO!

Sense and Sensibility **By Jane Austen**

Possible Discussion Questions

1. As the title suggests, **Sense and Sensibility** is, in some ways, a debate about the principles of rationalism, represented by Elinor Dashwood, and those of Romanticism, represented by her sister Marianne.

Few Austen heroines are set up so approvingly as Elinor is. Yet novelist David Gates has described her as "ambivalent a heroine as **Mansfield Park's** notoriously hard-to-warm-up-to Fanny Price." What does he mean?

2. And what about Marianne?

3. One of the tenets of Romanticism is that instinct and emotion are better moral guides than reason. At one point in the book, Marianne tells Elinor that if she (Marianne) were doing anything wrong, she (Marianne) would know it. Does Marianne do anything wrong?

Do people usually know when they're doing something wrong? What does Austen think?

4. A turn of the century review describes Mrs. Jennings as a character it is "equally delightful to have met on paper and not to have met in the flesh". What does this reviewer mean?

5. Think for a moment about the scene in which Lucy tells Elinor about her secret engagement to Edward. It is a scene full of secrets. Sometimes it seems that everyone in **Sense and Sensibility** has a secret. Make a list. What roles do these secrets play in the story?

6. Although the women are beautifully delineated, **Sense and Sensibility's** leading men remain somewhat shadowy. "For my money Edward is the least likable of Austen's heroes," David Gates has said, "while his opposite number, Willoughby, is the most sympathetic of Austen's libertines." Discuss.

7. Why doesn't Colonel Brandon fall in love with Elinor?

8. Elinor considers Lucy's marriage to Robert Ferrars as "extraordinary and unaccountable," "completely a puzzle." Is it completely a puzzle to you as well?

10. What is the role of letters in *Sense and Sensibility*? When does Austen include the letters that one character sends to another, and when does she merely mention that a

letter was sent? How do you think Austen determined whether a letter would be displayed or simply described? How do both kinds of letters further the novel's plot or characterizations?

11. Although it ends with the marriages of the two main female characters, some readers have claimed that of all of Austen's novels, **Sense and Sensibility** has the saddest ending. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

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. Although Elinor Dashwood is not a first-person narrator, most of the story is told through her eyes. Why do you think the author chose this method of storytelling?

--Reading Group Guides and Spark Notes