

READING QUESTIONS FOR SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

What qualities seem to get the narrator's (Austen's?) approbation, and which ones demonstrate inappropriate behavior or values. Do keep a list. (Notice my Austen language!)

Tag the characters with a phrase that captures them: Lady Middleton--insipid, vacuous, cares about superficial elegance, infatuation with her spoiled offspring. Fanny Dashwood--mean-spirited snob. ETC

Why include so many repulsive, flawed characters (namely?)--what's Austen's larger point?

What is the role of money in the novel? How important is it—and to whom? Does the pursuit of wealth diminish a person's moral integrity?

What is the cost of hiding one's feelings? Of having strong feelings?

Which characters do you as reader like least? like best? Why? Did you change your feelings about any of them by the end? Which one(s) and why?

Do any of the characters remain static throughout? Which ones and why?

How does Austen use dialogue to reveal character? Or, put another way, discuss differences in the ways that many of the characters speak. Take the women, for example. Or all the men. Or members of the same family. What gets revealed and HOW?

How does Austen create humor? Look for the humor in the episode in III.iii. (Chapter 39, p.263) where Mrs. Jennings misinterprets what she sees and hears. Other episodes that tickled your sense of humor? How?

How does Austen create satiric irony? Look at I.ii (chap.2)—Mrs. John Dashwood and her husband.

Role of the narrator's voice (see Marcia Folsom's excellent essay).

Role of sincerity, speaking honestly and directly? Role of reserve? How much should be openly and honestly expressed. What sort of things should remain unspoken in Austen's world in S & S?

Significance of illness—emotional and physical in the novel. (Marianne, Mrs. John Dashwood, Mrs. Ferrars)

Why include the scene of Marianne telling Elinor about the “remarkably pretty” upstairs sitting room at Allenham (I.xiii) (Chapter 13, p.69-70)?

Asking Marianne outright if she and Willoughby are engaged would spoil the whole plot, but does Mrs. Dashwood's justification (I, xvi.) (Chapter 16, p. 83.) for not doing so persuade you?

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Focus on I.xxii (Chapter 22) and II.xxiv (Chapter 24)—Lucy shares secrets with Elinor. What does Lucy want to gain in these interchanges? What does Elinor want beyond hiding her real feelings? Other observations?

Here are some important plot moments:

Vol. II. vi-vii (Chapters 28-29)— the crisis

Vol. III. i (Chapter 37), p.246-247—Marianne knows what Elinor has been dealing with.

Vol. III. viii (Chapter 44) —Willoughby's confession

Vol. III. x (Chapter 46), p.322-323—Marianne's confession

Vol. III. xi (Chapter 47)—Errors reviewed by all.