# Jane Austen--Sense and Sensibility

## Introduction

“Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything.”

-Jane Austen

Jane Austen was an English novelist and at the age of 14 she wrote her first novel, *Love and Friendship*. In her early 20’s Jane Austen wrote the books that were later to be re-worked and published as *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*. She lived on the lower end of English gentry and was educated mostly by her father and older brothers as well as through reading books. Her family and their support of her writing was critical to her development as a professional writer. She was the seventh of eight children and had a happy childhood. She wrote and performed many plays and was always encouraged to write.

When she was young Jane enjoyed dancing (which is often an activity included in her novels) and attended balls in many of the great houses of the neighborhood. She enjoyed long walks and had many friends in Hampshire. Her parents decided to move to Bath in 1801 and things became difficult for her. Jane disliked the busy town life and missed the country. After her father’s death, in 1804, his widow and daughters suffered financial difficulties and had to rely on the charity of the Austen sons. During this time Jane fell in love. However, the man died and Jane was very upset. She later accepted a proposal from Harris Bigg-Wither, a wealthy landowner and brother of one of her closest friends. Later she changed her mind and decided to call off the engagement.

After Mr. Austen passed away, the Austen ladies moved to Southampton to share the home of Jane’s brother Frank and his wife Mary. Jane made occasional visits to London where she stayed with her favorite brother Henry. In July 1809 her brother Edward offered a home at his Chawton estate and the Austen ladies moved back to the Hampshire countryside. It was a nice home that allowed Jane to write. In the seven and a half years that she lived in that house she revised *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* and published them both. She was then incredibly productive and wrote *Mansfield Park* in 1814, *Emma* in 1816 and completed *Persuasion* in 1818 (it was published the year after her death). None of the books published in her life had her name on them, they were simply described as being written “By a Lady”. She started another book called *Sandition* in 1816 but she was too ill to complete it.

Jane contracted Addison's Disease, a tubercular disease of the kidneys. She was unable to walk and died in the arms of her sister in the early hours of July 18th, 1817. She was just 41 years old. She is buried in Winchester Cathedral.

http://www.jasa.net.au/jabiog.htm
http://www.janeausten.org/jane-austen-quotes.asp

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## Topics for Discussion

### Themes of *Sense and Sensibility*

- **Truth vs. truth and Romanticism vs. Realism**
  
  Romanticism was a reaction to Neoclassicism, and focused on the spiritual and the power of emotion. The realists responded to the romantics with disdain, thinking that they pursued “Truth” instead of “truth.” The Victorian realists used literature as an instrument of reform. Austen focuses on the good aspects of both the romantics and the realists, and it is reflected well in the dichotomy of *Sense and Sensibility*. Romanticism focused on “Truth”: the absolute, the idealistic, the individual, the picturesque scenes in nature, and the sublime. Realism focused on “truth”: abstraction caused blindness, multiple truths instead of “Truth,” relative truths, value, usefulness, and the balance of society v. the individual. The romantic characters include Marianne and Willoughby, who were about excess, emotions, indulgence, and no reserve. The realistic characters include Elinor and Edward, who used common sense, propriety, selflessness, and rationality.

- **Marriage Market**
  
  Marriage is seen as a binding contract rather than a love match. Jane Austen's novel shows the implications of considering marriage as a market rather than a match. Women are married for money/status rather than for love. It is all about the advantage of the match within society. A good match within the novel has nothing to do with love but companionship. A companionate marriage is considered the “best” type because the couple is friends and the relationship is supposed to last longer than a love match, like the marriage of Marianne and Colonel Brandon. Romantic love was suspicious, as it was seen as not based on true compatibility. By having logical, companionate marriages, London and therefore England itself would be in balance. The market was an economic register, always balancing the individual against society.
Social Order
The social order within the novel keeps each person within their proper role within society. Each character is subjugated to a certain role, which is especially evident with women. Women could not own property or hold a job, otherwise they would not be able to maintain their status within society. Even in the situation where Mrs. Dashwood must rely on the kindness of others to maintain their living she cannot get a job because then her daughters would not be able to marry within the social class. Class in the 19th century England was a hierarchy with the upper 400 families at the top, the middle classes, then the working class, and finally the impoverished. The middle class is where Austen bases most of her novels, including Sense and Sensibility. They were able to live without working, and this class included skilled business owners. The working class was the largest section of the pyramid, which included many agricultural jobs. The upper 400 families included the gentry and the aristocrats, as well as the "country families," or those who owned a majority of the land. It was this class that inherited titles, like the ones disputed over at the beginning of Sense and Sensibility. Class was about birth and marriage.

Proper/Propriety
The novel tries to show the reader what is proper and what isn't within society. Marianne mocks the rule set forth for women and breaks out of what is proper, while Elinor seems to know what is proper in society and tends to follow that set of limitations. This is especially evident when Marianne falls for John Willoughby and takes his intentions for her to the point that she jeopardizes her own reputation. What is valued by outward Victorian society isn't always valued in Austen's novels. It appears as though she values integrity and the self-aware. The wealthiest characters in the novel are often the most cruel, calling into question what should actually be valued/proper by society's standards.

Gender
There are many gender issues within the novel that are explored such as the fact that women cannot own property, and they are expected to marry and settle down with a man who can take care of them. Women cannot have a career or follow a different path than social. The law of coverture included that wife/husband are one under the law. She is consolidated under her husband – essentially the woman is property of the man. A man of the time period could simply accuse her of adultery to get a divorce. He owns all of her legal property, and she has no legal right to her own children. There was an obsession with chastity to ensure blood relatives in the family – a woman who had sex outside of marriage was viewed as "fallen." To be totally innocent, one must lack knowledge. The only goal for a woman was to have a husband, and while femininity was valued with women – masculinity was valued with men.

Expectations vs Reality
Within the novel Marianne has a lot of expectations which seem to lead to a reality eventually within the novel. At first expectations lead to unfortunate consequences but in the end reality takes over and the novel ends happily, yet perhaps not exactly as Marianne had envisioned.

Discussion Questions
1. What do you think the Truth's of the novel are?
2. Where in the novel are the themes of gender explored?
3. What are the proper rules of society?
4. How does Marianne break out of the proper rule of society?
5. What are the social orders of the novel? How does class affect relationships?
6. What are the roles of women in the novel?
7. What relationships within the novel are considered part of the Marriage Market? Why are they considered a part of a "deal" rather than as a match?

Form is Content

Marianne Dashwood

""Mamma, the more I know of the world the more am I convinced that I shall never see a man whom I can really love. I require so much!"" (18; Vol 1 Chapter 3).

Marianne is talking to her mother, after hearing Edward read, and saying that she could never fall in love with a man who would not be animated when reading Cowper. She then compares herself and Elinor and realizes that although she does not like how Edward read, Elinor is the one interested in him, not she. She has realized that she has many requirements of a man, so many even, that she's afraid she'll never find a man that is able to meet them all. It's interesting that Marianne should say this. It implies that upon education, women will no longer find the average man to be enough for them. It appears to be an argument against any advancement of women's education. Although, this quote may come across as previously mentioned, it is quite likely that Austen meant Marianne to have a humbling experience by realizing that she will never find the "perfect" man.
"That is what I like; that is what a young man ought to be. Whatever be his pursuits, his eagerness in them should know no moderation, and leave him no sense of fatigue" (42; Vol 1 Chapter 9).

- Marianne made this remark after hearing that Mr. Willoughby danced from eight till four, and was up the next morning at eight to hunt. Marianne is a passionate person, and so she wishes to find a man just as passionate as she. This quote is exactly what Marianne feels about herself, and finding someone that might live their life the same was she does, makes her a step closer to finding someone she can love. This is a good example of one side of the extreme in the novel; living life only with the senses, and not enlisting in any sensibility.

"Her eyes were red and swollen; and it seemed as if her tears were even then restrained with difficulty. She avoided the looks of them all, could neither eat nor speak, and after some time, on her mother’s silently pressing her hand with tender compassion, her small degree of fortitude was quite overcome, she burst into tears, and then left the room. This violent oppression of spirits continued the whole evening. She was without any power, because she was without any desire of command over herself" (75; Vol 1 Chapter 15).

- Marianne is observed upon coming down to dinner. She recently found out that Willoughby is leaving town, and that their separation is most likely final. She is heartbroken and allows herself to be carried away by her pain. Instead of attempting to deal with it, and move past the hurt, she allows herself to wallow. She has no desire to control her emotions and so she can not control when she will be overcome by her emotion.

"I have laid down my plan, and if I am capable of adhering to it, my feelings shall be governed and my temper improved. They shall no longer worry others, nor torture myself" (306; Vol 3 Chapter 10)

- Marianne after learning how Elinor was able to suffer quietly for four months, and then being on her deathbed, is willing to attempt to control her emotions. She is willing to try and lead a life which is not controlled solely by emotions, as hers previously was.

Elinor Dashwood

"Elinor sat down to her drawing-table as soon as he was out of the house, busily employed herself the whole day, neither sought nor avoided the mention of his name, appeared to interest herself almost as much as ever in the general concerns of the family; and if, by this conduct, did not lessen her own grief, it was at least prevented from unnecessary increase, and her mother and sisters were spared much solicitude on her account" (94; Vol 1 Chapter 19).

- Edward has just left the family, after staying with them for a short while. Elinor is sad to see him go and that he was not in better spirits upon the end of his visit. Instead of showing everyone her pain, she hides it, and deals with it quietly on her own, seeking support from no one. She does this in an attempt to spare her family any pain on account of her pain. This is a perfect example of sense which is a theme that appears throughout the novel.

"Yes. But I did not love only him; and while the comfort of others was dear to me, I was glad to spare them from knowing how much I felt. Now, I can think and speak of it with little emotion. I would not have you suffer on my account; for I assure you I no longer suffer materially myself" (232; Vol 3 Chapter 1).

- This is Elinor’s response to Marianne who has just found out that her sister has known that Edward was to marry Lucy for four months, and kept her pain silent. This is typical Elinor; she puts the people she loves before herself. She thinks of what would be of a less burden to them, rather than what would make her feel better.

Edward Ferrars

"I shall not attempt it. I have no wish to be distinguished and I have every reason to hope I never shall. Thank Heaven! I cannot be forced into genius and eloquence" (82; Vol 1 Chapter 17).

- Edward is making this statement after Mrs. Dashwood says that he must be famous in order to satisfy his entire family. She has noticed that he has been unhappy and attributes it to his mother. Edward is typically shy and quiet; this exclamation allows the reader to see under the surface of his reserve.
“My judgment,” he returned, “is all on your side of the question; but I am afraid my practice is much more on your sister’s. I never wish to offend, but I am so foolishly shy, that I often seem negligent, when I am only kept back by my natural awkwardness. I have frequently thought that I must have been intended by nature to be fond of low company, I am so little at my ease among strangers of gentility.” (85; Vol 1 Chapter 17).

- He is saying that although he believes as Elinor does, that one should not judge another based on what has been said of them, but rather how they behave, he acts more like Marianne because of his shyness. He is saying that he is much more comfortable around the lower classes than the upper class because he is not confident in his ability to speak and act properly. This ties in with the theme: rules of society. Edward is middleclass, and shouldn’t feel inferior, but he was raised hearing that what he wanted, or liked, was not what a man of his class should want. Therefore, his insecurities come from his parents, who enabled him to go against the rules of society by making him feel inferior.

John Dashwood

“I am extremely glad to hear it, upon my word; extremely glad indeed. But so it ought to be; they are people of large fortune; they are related to you; and every civility and accommodation that can serve to make you situation pleasant might be reasonably expected” (196; Vol 2 Chapter 11).

- John says this upon meeting Elinor, and hearing that the Middletons have been kind and very helpful in introducing them to people. It is ironic coming from him, considering that he is of a much closer relation to the girls than the Middletons. He has a small fortune of his own, and yet he talked himself out of giving them any money to help them survive.

Mrs. Dashwood

“‘You are in a melancholy humour and fancy that any one unlike yourself must be happy. But remember that the pain of parting from friends will be felt by every body at times, whatever be their education or state. Know your own happiness. You want nothing but patience—or give it a more fascinating name, call it hope’” (93; Vol 1 Chapter 19).

- This was Mrs. Dashwood’s response to Edward saying that his children will be brought up to be as unlike himself as possible. By her response, it can be seen that Edward must believe since he is unhappy because of the way he is (his characteristics: most likely that he is shy), everyone else is happy because they are not like him. She points out that this is not the case, and he only sees it this way right now because of the mood he is in. This is one of Mrs. Dashwood’s finest moments, in that she uses good sense, unlike many of her other moments when she only employs her emotions.

“She found that she had been misled by the careful, considerate attention of her daughter, to think the attachment, which once she had so well understood, much slighter in reality than she had been wont to believe, or than it was now to be proved. She feared that under this persuasion she had been unjust, inattentive, nay, almost unkind to her Elinor; that Marianne’s affliction, because more acknowledged, more immediately before her, had too much engrossed her tenderness, and led her away to forget that in Elinor she might have a daughter suffering almost as much, certainly with less self-provocation and greater fortitude” (314; Vol 3 Chapter 6).

- At this point in the novel, Thomas, the Dashwood’s servant, has just informed Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters that Mr. Ferrars is now married. Elinor immediately broke down, and Marianne fainted. Mrs. Dashwood is discovering that she did not understand Elinor’s situation half as well as she thought she did because she was so preoccupied with Marianne’s feelings because she never hid them. This preoccupation is partially because Marianne is much like Mrs. Dashwood, and so Mrs. Dashwood can easily understand her. This passage is a reminder to the reader that although you may think you know the situation, it is likely that you don’t know all. It is quite possible that you only know what someone wishes you to know. This is a reminder to pay attention to detail, to the little things, and not only what is right in front of you.


Main Character Discussion and Analysis

Marianne Dashwood

The second daughter of Mrs. Dashwood and Henry Dashwood. Marianne’s is very spontaneous and has romantic idealism. This all leads her to fall in love with the John Willoughby when he romantically rescues her early on in the novel. Willoughby is the character that in the end betrays her by marrying someone else, although it seemed as though their love was true. Marianne finally recognizes her misjudgment of him and eventually marries her long-standing admirer, Colonel Brandon. Marianne is stubborn, opinionated, flaunted, open, romantic, passionate and spontaneous.

“She was sensible and clever, but eager in every thing; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent.” (6; Vol 1 Chapter 1)
Elinor Dashwood
The eldest daughter of Mrs. Dashwood and Henry Dashwood, sister of Marianne and Margaret and the most sensible of the Dashwoods. She is the advice giver to her mother and governs her emotions very well. She is the epitome of propriety, reason, sense, introversion, and selflessness. She falls in love with Edward Ferrars, but when she finds out he has been engaged she loses all hope. Although a match with Colonel Brandon seems more likely, she eventually marries Ferrars.

"Elinor, their eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and a coolness of judgement, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be counsellor of her mother...She had an excellent heart; - her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them." (5-6; Vol 1 Chapter 1)

Colonel Brandon
Is a retired officer who eventually falls in love with Marianne Dashwood. Throughout the novel Colonel Brandon is helpful toward the Dashwood family and becomes a friend of Elinor's. Marianne realizes that Colonel Brandon is a perfect match for herself and they marry. His marriage to Marianne is what is referred to as a companionate marriage. Colonel Brandon is honorable, kind, gentlemanly, reliable, older, and held back in his actions. He has a moderate wealth that is able to carry him throughout the novel.

"He was silent and grave. His appearance however was not unpleasing, in spite of his being in the opinion of Marianne and Margaret an absolute old bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five and thirty; but though his face was not handsome his countenance was sensible, and his address was particularly gentlemanlike." (27; Vol 1, Chapter 7)

Mrs. Dashwood
Is the mother of Marianne, Margaret, and Elinor Dashwood and the second wife of Henry Dashwood. Mrs. Dashwood has no fortune of her own and is reliant on the good fortune and kindness of others throughout the novel. Her wish in life is to have her daughters married to men whom they can be happy with. Both Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood have romantic notions and high expectations in life.

"Mrs. Dashwood took pains to get acquainted with him [Edward]. Her manners were attaching and soon banished his reserve. She speedily comprehended his merits." (13; Vol 1, Chapter 3)

John Dashwood
Brother to the Dashwood family, John is a very weak man who considers the money and the property Norland Park he inherited solely his and does not share his good fortune with his family. His wife Fanny suggests that he leaves his mother and sisters with very little money which he follows and does not seem to care about their welfare, instead preferring to leave the money to his own son. He appears again later in the novel and encourages the partnership he sees in Elinor and Colonel Brandon due to his guilt.

"He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted, and rather selfish, is to be ill-disposed: but he was, in general, well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might even have been more amiable himself." (4-5; Vol 1, Chapter 1)

Lucy Steele
Is Mrs. Jennings' cousin and is a very selfish and insecure woman who takes advantage of Edward to gain status in life. She was secretly engaged to Edward Ferrars for four years but marries his brother, Robert, once Edward is disinherited.

"Lucy was naturally clever, her remarks were often just and amusing...but her powers had received no aid from education, she was ignorant and illiterate, and her deficiency of all mental improvement...Elinor saw, and pitied her." (36; Vol 1, Chapter 25)

Edward Ferrars
Is the older brother of Fanny Dashwood and Robert Ferrars who develops a close relationship with Elinor while staying at Norland Park. During that time Edward is secretly engaged to Lucy Steele. Later, Edward's relationship with Lucy Steele is revealed and he is freed from the four-year secret engagement after he loses his fortune. Lucy marries his brother Robert while Edward ends up with Elinor. He is sensible and friendly, and represents the realism points of view in the novel.

"He was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open affectionate heart." (12; Vol 1, Chapter 3)

John Willoughby
A young man who wins Marianne Dashwood's heart after saving her but then betrays her trust and marries Miss Sophia Gray for her money. He represents many of the romantic aspects of the novel.

"His manly beauty and more than common gracefulness were instantly the theme of general admiration...His person and air were equal to what her [Marianne's] fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favorite story...Every circumstance belonging to him was interesting." (33; Vol 1, Chapter 9)

Henry Dashwood
A wealthy gentleman who dies at the beginning of the story. His estate doesn’t allow for him to leave anything to his second wife or children. Henry asks John, his son by his first wife, to ensure the financial security of his second wife and their three daughters.
"The old Gentleman died: his will was read, and like almost every other will, gave as much disappointment as pleasure. He was neither so unjust, nor so ungrateful, as to leave his estate from his nephew; - but he left it to him on such terms as destroyed half the value of the bequest." (3-4; Vol 1, Chapter 1)

Fanny Dashwood
Is the wife of John Dashwood, and sister to Edward and Robert Ferrars. She can be described as vain, selfish, and snobbish. She is very harsh to her husband's half-sisters and stepmother, especially since she fears her brother Edward might be attached to Elinor.

"Mrs. John Dashwood did not at all approve of what her husband intended to do for his sisters...what possible claim could the Miss Dashwoods, who were related to him only by half blood, which she considered as no relationship at all, have on his generosity to so large an amount." (7; Vol 1 Chapter 1)

Sir John Middleton
Is a distant relative of Mrs. Dashwood who, after the death of Henry Dashwood, invites her and her three daughters to live in a cottage on his property. He likes to throw frequent parties, picnics, and other social gatherings to bring together the young people of their village. He and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jennings, enjoy gossiping.

"Sir John Middleton was a good looking man about forty...His countenance was thoughouly good-humoured; and his manners were as friendly as the style of his letter." (23; Vol 1 Chapter 6)

Mrs. Jennings
Is the mother to Lady Middleton and Charlotte Palmer. She is a widow who has married off all her children, she spends most of her time visiting her daughters and their families, especially the Middletons. She and her son-in-law, Sir John Middleton, enjoy playing matchmakers with the young people around them.

"Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middleton's mother, was a good-humoured, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy, and rather vulgar. She was full of jokes and laughter, and before dinner was over had said many witty things on the subject of lovers and husbands." (26; Vol 1, Chapter 7)

Biography

Dates: December 17, 1775 to July 18, 1817
Hometown: Born at the rectory in the village of Steventon, near Basingstoke, in Hampshire. Died in Winchester.
### Resources and Links

**Sense and Sensibility Links**

If interested in a full version of the novel, *Gutenberg Project* and *PublicLiterature.org* offers full text and/or PDF versions of *Sense and Sensibility*, while *Public Literature* offers an audio version for the hearing impaired. In addition, *Shmoop.com* has an extensive, understandable analysis of the novel that is suitable for both students and teachers.

**Links to Jane Austen**

Fans of the author could head over to *JaneAusten.org*, where fans have complied a full background and analysis on the author, her books and her life. Other fans may try joining the Jane Austen *Society of North America* – a nonprofit organization dedicated to the canonic author. Fans have also started a blog entitled *AustinBlog* that chronicles updates in the author’s work and modern day adaptations. Fanfiction of Jane Austen can be found at the *Derbyshire Writer's Guild*.

**Biographies on Jane Austen**

J. E. Austen-Leigh, A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections, edited by Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford University Press, 2002).


Park Honan, Jane Austen: Her Life (St. Martin’s Press, 1987).


### Additional Materials

**The Time Period of Jane Austen**

Jane Austen was alive during a time that is called the Georgian Era, the reign of the house of Brunswick. The Georgian Era spans from 1714 to 1811 and encompasses the rule of George the First, Second and Third. This era marked the transition from the Reformation in England to the Enlightenment. The Reformation saw the reign of the Tudors and the struggle of England to find a national religion. There were decades of battles and bloodshed between the Catholic Church and the Puritans, who saw the Pope’s authority as corrupt. The Enlightenment offered the new generation of philosophers who gave life to modern democracy.
The Georgian Era is also known as the “Age of Aristocracy.” This was the time that the Aristocrat came to power and the leisure class truly flourished. This era is also known for its explosion of the arts. Lord Byron and William Blake began to emerge along with other Romantic poets. This poetry tended to involve more intense language, abstract ideas and colorful imagery. The end of the Georgian Era also marked the beginning of the downfall of the first British Empire. England suffered great losses both financially and physically with the French wars and the loss of the American colonies. During the time of Jane Austen the country entered into a great economic depression.

Jane Austen was born at the climax of the American Revolution, during the time of the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party and “taxation without representation” by King George the Third. Austen was born 8 months after Paul Revere made his famous ride, sounding the alarm, “the British are coming, the British are coming,” on April 18, 1775. During Austen’s life France was going through as transition. After losing to Britain the title of world’s most powerful country France assisted the American colonies in the American War of Independence. Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote The Social Contract which became a catalyst for societal and governmental reform which changed not only France but all of Europe. There was a flourish of science, mathematics and technology. Antoine Lavoisier formulated the Law of Conservation of Mass and discovered the elements oxygen and hydrogen.

Austen would have also witnessed news of the French Revolution, the falling of the Girondins and the succession of the Jacobins- this “Reign of Terror” included the execution of Marie Antoinette. In 1789 the French made their first step in writing a constitution with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. She would have also seen the rise of one of the commanders of the French army during the Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon created the First French Empire in 1804 and he was titled Emperor. In 1806 Napoleon captured Berlin and in 1812, during Austen’s most prolific period, Napoleon began war with Russia but didn’t anticipate the harsh Russian winter, and he left the country defeated. He was exiled to Elba in 1814 and finally defeated at Waterloo in 1815.
Austen was alive during the Qing Dynasty, or the Manchu Dynasty, in China. The Qing Dynasty was the last ruling dynasty and was then followed by the Republic of China. Austen would have begun to see rapidly increasing world trade after the Napoleonic Wars. More silk, tea and ceramics would have begun to come to Europe from China with the opening of the trade routes. Also Dream of the Red Chamber was published and it is generally acknowledged as the greatest of the classical Chinese novels. The book details the life and social structures of typical 18th-Century Chinese aristocracy. Like Austen this novel was concerned with class structures and social norms.

The White Lotus Rebellion occurred during the middle of Austen’s life. Like the American Revolution the White Lotus Rebellion began as a tax protest by the White Lotus Society. It became an anti-Manchu uprising toward the Jiaqing Emperor. The Rebellion caused the death of some 16 million people.

In Russia Austen would have seen the reign of Catherine II, the Great and Alexander I. Catherine successfully murdered her husband and took the throne. She then overtook the Ottoman Empire and expanded Russia’s southern borderer to the Black Sea. Alexander I followed Napoleon out of Russia and chased him into Paris where Napoleon finally declared defeat. Alexander became known as the “savior of Europe.” Because of the end of the Napoleonic Wars Austen would have witnessed a new kind of relationship between countries. In 1815 the Congress of Vienna met to discuss issues that arose from the wars. The Congress undid most of the damage done by Napoleon and redrew the continent’s political map. The Congress of Vienna became the model for the League of Nations and the United Nations because of its goal for peace by all parties.

http://www.uncg.edu/rom/courses/dafein/civ/timeline.htm
http://www.bucknell.edu/x20138.xml
http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/imperial3.html#qing
http://www.chinavoc.com/history/qing.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States
http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1261.html

Sense and Sensibility and Jane Austen as Adapted by Film and Theatre
Becoming Jane was released in 2007 and offers a fictionalized version of the author’s life, while the Jane Austen Book Club, also released in 2007, gives an interesting take on those that love Austen. Film adaptations of her other novels have been numerous and spanned decades – the can be found at imdb.com.

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen has been adopted multiple times for both television and film. Kate Winslet and Emma Thompson starred in a popular film adaptation in 1995, while three serial television shows, a 1971 UK version, one 1981 US version and a 2008 BBC version followed. In fact, a Latin version of the canonic novel is set to arrive in 2011. Titled “Sense and Sensibilidad,” it offers a modern spin on Austen’s classic novel.

Arguably the most interesting interpretation is the Sense and Sensibility Musical, by Jeffrey Haddow and Neal Hampton. According to the show’s official website, the hilarious interpretation of chapters of the novel translated into acts is as follows:

Act I:

In Society (Cast)
If I Could (Elinore and Edward)
We Must Have Sense (Elinore)
Impossibly Romantic (Marianne)
Forward (Sir John, Mrs Jennings & Cast)
Don't Try to Change Her (Col. Brandon)
Quiet Life (Elinore and Edward)
Saucy Sailor Boy (Marianne and Willoughby)
Why Am I Here (Edward and Cast)
That's Not Love (Elinore and Marianne)
Summer's Day (Marianne and Willoughby)
Honorable Man (Lucy)

Act II:

You Only Know How To Doubt (Elinore and Mrs Dashwood)
London (Mrs Jennings, Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, Marianne & Lucy)
The Letter (Willoughby & Marianne)
Scandal (Cast)
Awkward (Edward, Lucy, Marianne & Elinor)
Cry, Baby Cry (Elinore)
Most Excellent News (Mrs. Jennings)
I'll Believe anything (Edward)
Can You Hear Me, Marianne? (Elinore)
A Second Chance (Marianne)
Finale (Cast)

Official music samples from the cast can be found on their myspace website here.
YouTube Clips

The Jane Austen Book Club, courtesy of SonyPicturesClassic, hosted by youtube.com

Masterpiece Theatre: The Men and Women of Jane Austen's novels, as told by Masterpiece Theatre screenwriter Andrew Davies. Courtesy of PBS, hosted by youtube.com

Masterpiece Theatre: The Romance of Jane Austen, an interview with Masterpiece Theatre screenwriter Andrew Davies. Courtesy of PBS, hosted by youtube.com

Image Gallery

The Jane Austen/Sense and Sensibility Image Gallery

The Austen family
Steventon Rectory, the Austen home for much of Jane's life.

The difference between Romantic and Neo-classical styles.

A painting of a young Jane Austen. This is a disputed painting because the clothes she is wearing denote a different time period from which Austen would be in her youth.