

Sensibility  
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The topic of this paper is to distinguish the differences between sense and sensibility. Represented in Jane Austin's novel by two sisters, Elinor and Marianne, the disposition of the two girls can be seen quite vividly. The two girls are accompanied by a mother, and many other well developed characters. One character questionable to the theme of the story is the youngest sister Margaret. Her personality if described would be more like that of her sister Marianne.

The novel begins with a dying father telling his son that he must leave his estate to him and his wife. This means that the three girls and their mother will be left without a place to stay and the girls without dowry's. As lethal a blow as this may seem, it is coupled by the fact the their brothers new wife is less than sympathetic to the three girls needs. This is when we are first introduced to Elinor and her younger sister Marianne. As usual, Marianne is being her impulsive self and Elinor is trying to take care of her families well-being.

A brief synopsis of Elinor and Marianne's personalities leads to the following: Elinor is quiet, soft spoken, full of good manners, and well brought up. Marianne is impulsive, outspoken, full of a vibrant love of life and playful. To fully understand the girls, it is important to see how other character viewed them.

1.

Edward Ferrars, the object of Elinor's affection (though she would never show it) is quoted as saying Miss Dashwoods friendship the most important of his life. This is a considerable compliment (even if it isn't what Elinor wants to hear at the time) coming from a man as highly esteemed as Mr. Ferrars. Elinor is viewed by her mother and her two sisters as a saving grace, someone to depend on. To a certain extent this is true, but Elinor also has problems and she doesn't quite know how to let people know about them. Even when Lucy Steele confides in Elinor that she has been secretly engaged to Edward for four years, she tells no one, and bears the burden of a broken heart on her own.

The same would not, and did not happen with Marianne. She made sure that everyone knew how she felt about a young man named Mr. Willoughby. Rescued in a rather dramatic fashion by the gentleman after spraining her ankle, Marianne falls head over heels in love. Rather than keep her feelings a secret like Elinor, she parades around town and flaunts her affections for Willoughby shamelessly. This of course is looked down upon by Elinor, the staple of sensibility. She has a very

hard time accepting how Marianne acts purely upon her senses.

A real contrast can be seen between the two women when Marianne comes to see Elinor in her bedroom one night. It is the same evening in which Edward has read to the family upon Marianne's insistent urging. Edward lacks the emotion that Marianne thrives on while reading to the women and she has no qualms about sharing this with him.

2.

When talking to her sister, Marianne states that she finds Edward to be an "amiable" man, but lacking a certain spark. When Elinor says that his disposition suits her just fine, Marianne is appalled. Her immediate reaction is one of question. Would Elinor rather love a dull, amiable man or the kind of man she would choose? Marianne would settle for no less than a prince on a white stallion, ready to rescue her from the confines of her little cottage. Her man must possess "spirit, wit, and feeling."

The fact that the girls have no dowry is now beginning to weigh on them. It is becoming an increasingly important theme in the novel that the two want to be married. Elinor to Edward and Marianne to her prince, Mr. Willoughby. It is here where the lines between the eighteenth and twentieth century can truly be drawn. These women waited their entire lives to be proposed to by a man who accepted their dowries and in some cases, even loved them. A sort of desperation can be seen in Elinor and Marianne as they wonder when they will be proposed to. Elinor has all but given up having heard the news of Ms. Steele, but Marianne remains hopeful that she will be reunited with Willoughby after being separated and he transferred to London.

This is where in the novel, the true difference between sense and sensibility can be seen. At a party in London, Marianne looks and finds Willoughby, only to see that he is there in the company of another woman, one he is engaged to.

3.

Not knowing quite what to do, she retreats to her abode in London and falls into a state of depression. Of course what else could you expect from the queen of drama herself, one who feels that no death could ever be nobler than death in the name of love. Remaining in her state of illness for some time causes a sudden change in Elinor.

For the first time since the beginning of the novel, Elinor actually breaks down. In a moment of pure feeling, she finally cries and lets the burdens of a broken heart and the near loss of her sister take over.

When Marianne begins to recover, a change can be seen in both sisters' attitudes. Word comes that Mr. Ferrars has been married and it is Elinor who displays emotion rather than her sister. Although this is a subtle happening, to anyone who follows Elinor's emotions closely, it is easy to see she is showing much more now than in the beginning of the novel.

It is at this time that Edward pays a visit to the Dashwoods and clears up

the rumor that it is he who is married to Ms. Steele. It is in fact his brother, who has taken over Lucy's affections. It is obvious to the reader the delight that is bestowed upon Elinor at this time. For she now for the second time truly shows how she feels with an impromptu burst of crying at the news.

Her sister, is once again rescued from the depths of despair only this time by a much older Cn. Brandon whom she once pushed aside for Willoughby.

4.

Both sisters, despite their lack of sufficient dowries, do eventually find love and marriage. It is in the process, however, that we see the true difference between sense and sensibility. Marianne's "impulsive sweetness" is what saves her and leads her to follow her senses, whereas Elinor's mild mannered disposition gains her the title of the sensible sister. In the end, both girls flourish, and sense as well as sensibility triumph.

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