

# Sense and Sensibility

Jane Austen

Retold by  
Laura O'Loughlin

Level B1.1



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## The Dashwoods

## Preview Questions

1. What do you know about the author of *Sense and Sensibility*?
2. What is the meaning of the title “The Dashwoods”?
3. What do you think will be the main subject of this story?

The Dashwood family had lived in Sussex for a long time. They had a large house with gardens and were well thought of by those who knew them. An old man owned the house and, when his sister died, he invited his nephew, Mr. Henry Dashwood, and his family to move in with him. He loved them all very much, and they were kind to him. Mr. Henry Dashwood had one son from his first marriage and three daughters from his second. His son was very rich because his mother gave him a lot of money, but his daughters were not.

When the old man died, he left the beautiful house and gardens to Mr. Dashwood’s son and his son’s son, a child of four years. This left Mr. Dashwood with no way of caring for his daughters who had been so kind to the old man for many years.

He was so worried that he became sick and died one year after his uncle died, leaving only ten thousand pounds to his wife and daughters. Before he died, he told his son to take care of his **mother-in-law** and his sisters.

Mr. John Dashwood gave his **promise** to his father and decided to give them one thousand pounds each every year. However, he was a selfish man, and his wife was even more selfish than he was. As soon as the funeral was over, John Dashwood’s wife arrived at the house with her child. It was true that the house now belonged to her, but she wanted her

mother-in-law to move out. It was not a nice thing to do. Mrs. Dashwood was the most upset, having just lost her husband, and hated her daughter-in-law for her actions.

5 Elinor, Mrs. Dashwood's eldest daughter, always gave good advice to her mother, even though she was only nineteen. She was a lovely girl with strong feelings, and she knew how to control them. It was a knowledge that her mother and one of her sisters had not learned. Marianne was very similar to her mother. She was **sensible** and clever but  
10 could not control her emotions well. Elinor was always worried by the excess of her sister's sensibility. Margaret, the third sister, was a nice girl, but at thirteen she was still a child compared with her sisters.

Mrs. John Dashwood soon moved into Norland and made  
15 her mother and sisters-in-law feel like visitors in their own home. She thought that the money her husband had planned to give to his sisters was far too much. It would mean that their little boy would become poor! How could he rob his own child by giving money to women who were only his half  
20 sisters? One day, she asked him to re-think his decision.

"It was the last thing my father asked of me," replied her husband.

"He was sick. If he had been well, he would not have asked you to take money from your own child."

25 "Perhaps, then, I could halve the sum. Five hundred pounds is still a lot of money!"

"Oh, yes! What brother on Earth would do so much for his sisters, not even his real sisters! You are a generous man!"

"I wouldn't do anything mean," he replied. "It will still be  
30 a very comfortable life for any young woman. I also think it might be good to do something for their mother while she

lives, a gift of some money each year.”

His wife paused. “Yes,” she said, “we could do that. But then, if Mrs. Dashwood lives for another fifteen years, we will be poor.”

5 “Yes, perhaps you are right, my love. A present of fifty pounds, now and then, will be enough to keep my promise to my father.”

“Oh yes, I am sure it will. And I am sure that your father would have asked you for nothing more than that. Really,  
10 they will be able to give you something.” In this way, Mr. John Dashwood decided that the best way to help his mother-in-law and sisters was to do exactly as his clever wife had said.

Mrs. Dashwood stayed at Norland for several months  
15 after her husband died, not because she was happy there, but because she noticed a growing friendship between Elinor, her eldest girl, and the brother of Mrs. John Dashwood. Edward Ferrars was the eldest son of a man who had died very rich; but it was enough for Mrs. Dashwood that he appeared to be  
20 a good man, that he loved her daughter, and that Elinor loved him. Edward Ferrars was not handsome, but when his natural shyness disappeared, he was a friendly person. His mother and sister wanted him to become an important man with important friends, but they did not know exactly what. But  
25 Edward had no **desire** to enter politics or to be a great man and instead liked to be at home. Mrs. Dashwood was sure that Elinor and Edward would soon **marry**.

“In a few months, my dear Marianne,” she said to her daughter, “Elinor will probably be married! We will miss her,  
30 but she will be happy.”

“Oh! Mamma, what will we do without her?”

**Chapter 1****rich** *adj.* having a lot of money**mother-in-law** *n.* the mother of one's husband or wife**promise** *n.* assurance that someone will do something**sensible** *adj.* having good sense or judgment**desire** *n.* the feeling of wanting something**marry** *v.* to take another person as a husband or wife**engaged** *adj.* in the state of being promised in marriage**opportunity** *n.* a chance or good position**cottage** *n.* a small house in the country**relation** *n.* a person connected to you by blood or marriage**gentleman** *n.* a man from a good family or social position**reply** *n.* an answer in writing**Chapter 2****carriage** *n.* a wheeled vehicle pulled by horses**late** *adj.* recently dead**continue** *v.* to go on**village** *n.* a small group of houses in a country area**furniture** *n.* moveable items in a house such as desk, chairs, tables, etc.**hunt** *v.* to chase and kill wild animals as sport**ball** *n.* a large, formal party**lover** *v.* a person who is in love with another**blush** *v.* to turn red from embarrassment**fortnight** *n.* two weeks**Chapter 3****wish** *v.* to hope, desire or dream**ancient** *adj.* very old**gun** *n.* a weapon out of which bullets are shot**assistance** *n.* help; aid**forget** *v.* to not remember something or someone**opinion** *n.* a personal view or attitude**brother-in-law** *n.* the brother of one's husband or wife**Chapter 4****alarmed** *adj.* scared; frightened**amazed** *adj.* greatly surprised**guilty** *adj.* having been found to have done something wrong, such as committing a crime**horseback** *n.* the back of a horse (on horseback, on a horse)

**Chapter 5**

**reserved** *adj.* tending to avoid becoming close with others in a social situation

**impossible** *adj.* unable to be

**church** *n.* the whole of the Christian religion

**sour** *adj.* unpleasant or unfriendly

**trick** *v.* to fool; to misguide

**Chapter 6**

**violently** *adv.* forcefully; strongly

**situation** *n.* a state or condition

**Chapter 7**

**unpleasantness** *n.* the state of not being enjoyable

**apartment** *n.* one or more rooms joined to each other

**embarrassed** *adj.* feeling shameful, doubtful, or self-conscious

**parcel** *n.* a packed or wrapped small object

**fashionable** *adj.* stylish and knowledgeable of or wearing the latest fashions

**Chapter 8**

**housemaid** *n.* a female servant

**pregnant** *adj.* expecting a baby

**Chapter 9**

**toothpick** *n.* a small, pointed bit of wood for removing food from between the teeth

**neighbour** *n.* someone who lives in a house next to or near yours

**height** *n.* a measurement of how tall someone or something is

**Chapter 10**

**whisper** *v.* to speak softly using the breath and lips, rather than voice

**bishop** *n.* a person who supervises a number of local churches

**misunderstanding** *n.* a confusion

**prayer** *n.* a way of worship

**Chapter 11**

**infection** *n.* passing on or having germs of disease

**emergency** *n.* a sudden occurrence

**Chapter 12**

**burn** *v.* to set on fire





Sense and Sensibility

**Cast**

Maid	Elinor
Sir John	Colonel Brandon
Lady Middleton	Willoughby
Mrs. Jennings	Male servant
Marianne	Margaret

All are seated around a beautifully set breakfast table, having just finished eating. There is excited chatter as the group considers the fun excursion planned to Whitwell. A maid enters with the letters. Colonel Brandon receives his letter, looks at it, changes colour, and immediately leaves the room.

**Sir John:** What is the matter with Brandon?  
**Lady Middleton:** I hope he has had no bad news. It must be something extraordinary that could make Colonel Brandon leave my breakfast table so suddenly.  
**Mrs. Jennings:** Oh, yes, it is very strange indeed.  
**Marianne:** (*whispering*) What kind of news do you think it might be, Elinor?  
**Elinor:** I don't know.

**Colonel Brandon re-enters, looking concerned.**

**Mrs. Jennings:** No bad news, Colonel, I hope?  
**Colonel Brandon:** None at all, ma'am, I thank you.  
**Mrs. Jennings:** Was it from Avignon? I hope it is not to say that your sister is worse.  
**Colonel Brandon:** No, ma'am. It came from town and is just a letter of business.  
**Mrs. Jennings:** But how could a business letter make you look so concerned, Colonel? Come, come, and tell us the truth!  
**Lady Middleton:** My dear madam, please be careful of what you are saying! I am sure the Colonel has a reason for not telling us.  
**Mrs. Jennings:** (*ignoring her daughter*) Perhaps it is to tell you that your cousin Fanny is married?  
**Colonel Brandon:** No, indeed, it is not.  
**Mrs. Jennings:** Well, then, I know who it is from, Colonel. And I hope she is well.

- Colonel Brandon: (*looking very uncomfortable*) Whom do you mean, ma'am?
- Mrs. Jennings: Oh! You know who I mean.
- Colonel Brandon: (*ignoring Mrs. Jennings and turning to Lady Middleton*) I am very sorry, ma'am, to receive this letter today, as it is on urgent business. I must go to town immediately.
- Sir John: To town! Today?
- Colonel Brandon: I am all the more sorry, as it is necessary for me to be there for you all to enter Whitwell today. I am afraid we must go to Whitwell some other time.
- Marianne: But if you write a note to the housekeeper, Mr. Brandon, would that be enough?
- Colonel Brandon: No, I'm afraid not.
- Sir John: We must go! We won't delay when we are so near it. You cannot go to town till tomorrow, Brandon that is all.
- Colonel Brandon: I wish it were that easy! But I must go at once!
- Mrs. Jennings: Perhaps if you could just TELL us what your business is, we could decide whether or not it is so important . . . .
- Willoughby: Couldn't you just be six hours late and wait until we return this afternoon?
- Colonel Brandon: (*looks at Willoughby angrily*) No, I cannot lose ONE hour!
- Willoughby: (*in a low voice to Marianne*) Some people can't stand to have fun. Brandon is one of them. I'm sure he was afraid of catching a cold and wrote the letter himself as a way of getting out of going.
- Marianne: Oh, yes, I'm sure you are right!
- Sir John: Well, I know I can't change your mind, Brandon. But I hope you will think better of it! The three Miss Dashwoods have come up from the cottage, and Mr. Willoughby got up two hours before his usual time, just to go to Whitwell.
- Colonel Brandon: I truly am sorry to ruin your morning, but I must go.
- Elinor: Oh, what a shame!
- Sir John: Well then, when will you come back again? If you are not here by the end of the week, I will go after you!
- Mrs. Jennings: Yes, yes, do, Sir John! And then perhaps you will find out what his business is!
- Sir John: I do not want to do that. It might be something he is ashamed of!

# The Dashwoods

## I. Put the sentences in order from 1 (first) to 5 (last).

- \_\_\_\_\_ Elinor's sister-in-law told Mrs. Dashwood that her brother could not marry Elinor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Henry Dashwood died.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The old man died and left his house to Mr. John Dashwood and his son.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne discussed Elinor and Edward.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. Dashwood accepted an offer to live at Barton Cottage.

## II. Choose the best answer.

1. Why was Mr. Henry Dashwood's son rich while his daughters were not?
  - a. His son married a very wealthy woman.
  - b. Mr. Dashwood gave all of his money to his one and only son.
  - c. His daughters did not work as their brother did.
  - d. His son received money from his mother, Mr. Dashwood's first wife.
2. What promise did Mr. John Dashwood make to his father?
  - a. He promised to take good care of the house.
  - b. He promised to take care of his father's daughters and wife.
  - c. He promised not to sell the house.
  - d. He promised to allow his half-sisters and stepmother to live with him forever.
3. Why did Mrs. Henry Dashwood continue to live with her stepson for so long?
  - a. Because she was happy there
  - b. Because she owned the house they were living in
  - c. Because she had nowhere else to go
  - d. Because her oldest daughter was becoming friends with a man there
4. Why did Mrs. Dashwood decide to leave her stepson's house?
  - a. Because she received an offer to live in another house
  - b. Because the house was too small and crowded
  - c. Because she did not want Elinor to be near Mrs. John Dashwood
  - d. Because she married another man and went to live with him

### III. Match the word with the meaning used in the chapter.

- |                |   |                                                     |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. promise     | • | • a. a person connected to you by blood or marriage |
| 2. desire      | • | • b. a man from a good family or social position    |
| 3. sensible    | • | • c. in the state of being promised in marriage     |
| 4. relation    | • | • d. an answer in writing                           |
| 5. cottage     | • | • e. to take another person as a husband or wife    |
| 6. marry       | • | • f. having good sense or judgement                 |
| 7. gentleman   | • | • g. a chance or good position                      |
| 8. reply       | • | • h. an assurance that someone will do something    |
| 9. opportunity | • | • i. the feeling of wanting something               |
| 10. engaged    | • | • j. a small, modest house, usually of one story    |

### IV. Complete the summary by writing the correct phrase in each blank.

- |                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • worried about his wife and | • received a letter from a    |
| • convinced him to give      | • was rich because his mother |
| • had one son with his       | • never marry a poor woman    |

Mr. Dashwood 1\_\_\_\_\_ first wife and three daughters with his second wife. His son, John, 2\_\_\_\_\_ gave him a lot of money. The three daughters were not rich. Mr. Dashwood was 3\_\_\_\_\_ daughters, so before his death he asked his son to take care of them. John's wife 4\_\_\_\_\_ his stepmother and sisters less money than what he had originally decided. His sister Elinor was interested in Edward, John's brother-in-law. John's wife told Mrs. Dashwood that her brother could 5\_\_\_\_\_. This made Mrs. Dashwood angry. When she 6\_\_\_\_\_ relative who offered her a house where they could live, she immediately accepted it.