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Sense And Sensibility (Naxos AudioBooks)



Synopsis

When Mrs Dashwood is forced by an avaricious daughter-in-law to leave the family home in Sussex, she takes her three daughters to live in a modest cottage in Devon.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the Dashwood daughters is smart, down-to-earth and sensible. The other is wildly romantic and sensitive. And in a Jane Austen novel, you can guess that there are going to be romantic problems aplenty for both of them -- along with the usual entailment issues, love triangles, sexy bad boys and societal scandals. "Sense and Sensibility" is a quietly clever, romantic little novel that builds up to a dramatic peak on Marianne's romantic troubles, while also quietly exploring Elinor's struggles. When Mr. Dashwood dies, his entire estate is entailed to his weak son John and snotty daughter-in-law Fanny. His widow and her three daughters are left with little money and no home. Over the next few weeks, the eldest daughter Elinor begins to fall for Fanny's studious, quiet brother Edward... but being the down-to-earth one, she knows she hasn't got a chance. Her impoverished family soon relocates to Devonshire, where a tiny cottage is being rented to them by one of Mrs. Dashwood's relatives -- and Marianne soon attracts the attention of two men. One is the quiet, much older Colonel Brandon, and the other is the dashing and romantic Willoughby. But things begin to spiral out of control when Willoughby seems about to propose to Marianne... only to abruptly break off his relationship with her. And during a trip to London, both Elinor and Marianne discover devastating facts about the men they are in love with -- both of them are engaged to other women. And after disaster strikes the Dashwood family, both the sisters will discover what real love

is about...At its heart, "Sense and Sensibility" is about two girls with completely opposite personalities, and the struggle to find love when you're either too romantic or too reserved for your own good.

Although SENSE AND SENSIBILITY is not of one Jane Austen's best novels, it is nonetheless a major novel, with the author's then-young talent in full display. Its publication in 1811 marked Austen as a huge literary talent, and its significance reverberates even today as contemporary readers re-discover the works of this author so adept at uncovering the foibles of nineteenth century aristocracy. The title refers to the two eldest Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, one of whom (Elinor) embraces practicality and restraint while the other (Marianne) gives her whole heart to every endeavor. When the Dashwoods - mother Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, Marianne, and youngest sister Margaret - are sent, almost impoverished, to a small cottage in Devonshire after the death of their father and the machinations of their brother's wife, they accept their new circumstances with as much cheer as they can muster even though their brother and his wife have taken over the family estate and fortune. Their characters, albeit wildly different in their approaches to life, are impeccably honest and intelligent - and their suitors take notice. Elinor falls in love with the shy, awkward Edward, while Marianne's affections are lavished on the dashing hunter Willoughby. As in all Austen's books, love and marriage don't come easily, as affections aren't always returned and social jockeying sometimes takes precedence to true love. In an interesting twist, the end of this novel brings into question which sister represents which part of the title. SENSE AND SENSIBILITY only hints at the social skewering Austen would use to such great effect in her later novels, and the humor here is only occasional and slight, as this novel adopts a generally serious tone. Parody is largely limited to the gossipy Mrs.

One thing needs to be made clear before reading this book; the words "sense" and "sensitivity" do not mean the same things today as they did in Jane Austen's time. Though 'sense' referred to intelligence and the ability to judge situations well, 'sensitivity' had connotations to having appropriate sensitivity toward moral and artistic issues, linked with the superiority of a person's aesthetical 'senses'. As such, there is room for debate over which sister represents which trait, something seemingly obvious from the outset of the book, but which dramatically changes by its conclusion (which amusingly mirrors the ongoing debate over which traits Elizabeth Bennett and Mr Darcy embody in the title of their story "Pride and Prejudice"). "Sense and Sensibility" was Austen's first novel, and as such is considered her weakest by the critics, though this also means it is also the

most accessible and easy-to-read novel. First novels are almost always the most amateurish, and as such it is a much simpler work, from the storyline to the sentence structure, which leads to an easier reading experience than her more complex novels ("Emma" and the aforementioned "Pride and Prejudice"). Anyone new to the world of Austen is best to start here as the easiest book with which to ease into her range of novels. The sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood are extreme opposites; oldest sibling Elinor uses her head, whilst the younger Marianne follows her heart; but for all of this, the two are very close. After the death of their father, Elinor and Marianne - along with their mother and younger sister - are forced to give up their comfortable estate to their stepbrother (the product of their father's first marriage) and sister-in-law due to the inheritance law.

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