



INDIANA  
REPERTORY  
THEATRE

Jane Austen's  
**Sense and  
Sensibility**  
adapted by  
Jessica Swale

September 14 – October 9, 2022

on the OneAmerica Mainstage



## STUDY GUIDE

Indiana Repertory Theatre  
140 West Washington Street  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Janet Allen, Margot Lacy Eccles  
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# JANE AUSTEN'S *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY*

## ADAPTED BY JESSICA SWALE

Three sisters and their widowed mother lose their family home and must create new lives for themselves in a tiny seaside cottage. Along the way, they face kindness and cruelty, duty and deception, as they try to navigate the complex social rules for proper young ladies. What will lead to lasting happiness and true love: practical good sense or following the sensibility of your heart? Indulge in the wit and wisdom, the beauty and charm of Jane Austen.

*Recommended for students in grades 7-12*

## CONTENT ADVISORY

*Sense and Sensibility* contains coded discussions of mature subject matters, depictions of alcohol consumption, and antiquated gender norms.

The performance will last approximately two hours and 45 minutes with one intermission.

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AND/OR STUDENT MATINEE  
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# THE STORY OF THE PLAY

When Henry Dashwood dies, his house, Norland Park, passes directly to his son John, the child of his first wife. His second wife, Mrs. Dashwood, and their daughters, Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret, are left only a small income. John had promised Mr. Dashwood that he would take care of his half-sisters; however, John's wife, Fanny, soon persuades him to renege. John and Fanny take claim to Norland, and Mrs. Dashwood begins looking for somewhere else to live. Meanwhile, Fanny's reserved brother, Edward Ferrars, visits Norland and forms an attachment with Elinor. Fanny makes sure that Mrs. Dashwood understands that Edward's family has more exalted plans for him.

The Dashwoods are offered a cottage in Devonshire by a cousin, Sir John Middleton, where they are warmly received by Sir John and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jennings. Their neighbor, the quiet Colonel Brandon, is attracted to Marianne, but she finds him uninspiring.

Out walking one day, Marianne takes a fall and injures her ankle. The dashing John Willoughby sees the accident and assists her. Marianne and Willoughby become close, and Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood begin to suspect that the couple are secretly engaged. Elinor cautions Marianne, but Marianne ignores her. When Willoughby informs the Dashwoods that his aunt is sending him to London on business, indefinitely, Marianne abandons herself to her sorrow.

Edward Ferrars visits the Dashwoods but seems unhappy; Elinor fears that he no longer cares for her. Soon after he departs, Lucy Steele, a cousin of Lady Middleton, comes to call. Lucy confides to Elinor her secret engagement to Edward, and Elinor begins to understand Edward's odd behavior.

As winter approaches, Elinor and Marianne accompany Mrs. Jennings to London, where Marianne writes unanswered letters to Willoughby. When they finally meet, Willoughby is cold to her. The next day, Marianne receives a curt letter informing her of his engagement to Sophia Grey, a wealthy young lady. Marianne is devastated. She admits to Elinor that she and Willoughby were never engaged, but that she loved him and believed that he loved her. Colonel Brandon reveals to Elinor that Willoughby has seduced and abandoned Brandon's ward, who is now pregnant.

In the meantime, Lucy Steele meets Fanny Dashwood and, mistaking Fanny's politeness for friendship, reveals her secret engagement. Edward's mother orders him to break the engagement. Edward refuses, and he is disinherited in favor of his brother, Robert. Colonel Brandon generously offers Edward a job as parson in the small church on his estate.

In her misery, Marianne becomes dangerously ill. Willoughby arrives to repent and reveals to Elinor that his love for Marianne was genuine; but threatened with disinheritance, he married for money. Marianne overhears Willoughby's story and realizes that he is not the man she thought he was.

Upon learning that Lucy has married, Elinor is grieved, until Edward himself arrives to reveal that Lucy has jilted him in favor of his now wealthy brother, Robert. Meanwhile, Marianne has begun to return Colonel Brandon's steadfast love, and the two couples are happily married.

# CELEBRATING AUSTEN—AND IRT

BY JANET ALLEN, MARGOT LACY ECCLES ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to IRT's 50th season! We are starting in much-loved story-telling territory: a magnificent adaptation of Jane Austen's classic novel, *Sense and Sensibility*. While today Austen is beloved by many generations and many cultures, in 1811 this novel was published anonymously, crediting the book as simply "By a Lady." This euphemism was used to protect Austen's identity, as publishing (or any mercantile endeavor) was considered to tarnish the reputation of a lady. And besides, women had no legal ability to reap the rewards of their own financial endeavors.

Our contemporary craze for Austen began with the publication of a first biography by her nephew in 1870, more 50 years after her unheralded death. That enthusiasm has built steadily in the ensuing decades, through multiple stage, film, and TV adaptations of her novels. The "Me Too" movement has sparked its own brand of Austen celebration, focused on how her female characters move forthrightly into the forefront of decision making. Currently our Austen delight is lifted by two extraordinarily popular TV series: *Sanditon* (Prime), an adaptation of her final, unfinished novel; and *Bridgerton* (Netflix), which is set in the same period and relies heavily on Austen's milieu for its success. We have the pandemic to thank for these two series, which drew innovation in story-telling and racially diverse casting from TV and film makers while filling the need for home-based entertainment for audiences. We are pleased to draw on this new Austen surge in the making of this production *Sense and Sensibility*.

While we tend to generalize Austen as romantic fiction, we miss a lot in doing so. Her pen, even at age 20, when she first started writing *Sense and Sensibility*, was actually exploring some very real gender and economic inequities of her time. The novel is fairly unflinching in characterizing the economic plight in which the Dashwood females find themselves on the death of their husband/father. As a second wife with only female children, Mrs. Dashwood has no choice but to cede her comfortable home, possessions, and servants to her stepson, who is legal heir to the estate. Thus, she remains entirely at his whim as to any future financial security.

This was so common an occurrence at the time as to go without notice. But Austen noticed it, in large part because it was so true in her own life and the lives of all the women around her. Women had status only in their relationship to men, and working outside the home ruined one's social standing. Austen herself never married (nor did her only sister) and was entirely beholden on male relatives—first her father, and later, her brothers—for her survival. In *Sense and Sensibility* Austen explores the loss of stability and fear that comes, for single women, from the death of the protecting male. The women's allowance from the usurping stepson is insultingly meager, and they are evicted from their family home, forced to find new housing far from friends and relations. The death of the patriarch immediately impoverishes them, throwing into stark relief the diminished potential of the three daughters as commodities in marriage.

Furthermore, Elinor and Marianne cannot think only of their own marriage prospects, but also of the financial needs of their mother and their adolescent sister, who must be cared for by their prospective husbands. Elinor, with her good sense, and Marianne, with her extravagant sensibility, must think not as individuals, but as a family. As in all good comedies, the progress of the story is the progress toward meeting in the middle, learning from one another, and finding joy and security on their own terms, with men who prize them for their strengths and accomplishments.

In this 50th season, we are focused on reviewing the past and presaging the future, by the return of beloved artists whose work has fueled the IRT, and introducing new faces and talents to work alongside them. We are delighted to have at the directing helm Peter Amster, who has made 22 productions at IRT, including the blockbuster *Pride and Prejudice* in 2004. His design team includes three IRT veterans: scenic designer Ann Sheffield (20 productions), costume designer Tracy Dorman (16 productions), and composer Michael Keck (13 productions). We are also delighted to welcome back actor Priscilla Lindsay, a 35-year veteran of more than 60 IRT productions, as well as a former associate artistic director (she is on sabbatical this fall from University of Michigan). Joining them is a wealth of new talent both on the stage and behind it, backed by our equally stellar staff. We celebrate this fusion of artists, artisans, and administrators as we lift the IRT into its second half century!

*Priscilla Lindsay & Carrey Cannon in the IRT's 2004 production of Pride and Prejudice.  
Ms. Lindsay plays Mrs. Jennings in Sense and Sensibility.*



# JANE AUSTEN A QUIET LIFE

BY RICHARD J ROBERTS, DRAMATURG

Jane Austen was born in 1775 in Steventon, County Hampshire, England. The daughter of a scholarly country clergyman and his accomplished wife, she had six brothers and one sister: Cassandra, three years older. Jane grew up in a small cottage where her father taught lessons to seminary students and her mother ran the family farm. The two sisters had three years of boarding school; otherwise, they were educated at home. An avid reader, Jane began writing at age 13, stories and poems and even short books. Eventually, her childhood works were collected in three volumes entitled *Juvenilia*.

Jane's first major novel, written at 20, was *Elinor and Marianne*. Two more followed over the next few years, *First Impressions* and *Susan*. Like her childhood works, these were written for the entertainment of family and friends. Jane often read her works to visitors without revealing the author, in order to get their honest opinion. Like all of Jane's mature novels, these first three books focus on small-town life and the rituals of romance and marriage.

Much of what we know about Jane comes from 100 surviving letters to and from her sister, Cassandra. Jane was a sociable young woman who enjoyed parties, but for someone who wrote so much of love, there was little romance in her own life. Family legend suggests that Jane's one true love was a family friend who could not support her and left to pursue other possibilities, but there is no proof. There is also a suggestion of a brief summer romance, but the young man died. One man did propose to Jane while she was visiting his family, and she accepted; but the next day she changed her mind and left town. Cassandra seems to have burned all the letters from the time when these romances might have occurred, so to this day there is some mystery. In the end, neither sister ever married.

When Jane was 25 her father retired to Bath, a resort town that was a bit too active for Jane's taste, and her writing came near to a halt. Four years later, her father died. Jane, Cassandra, their mother, and a spinster in-law had about £210 yearly to live on—less than one quarter of their previous income. They moved around for four years, seeking affordable lodging. Then a brother who had been adopted by a wealthy family came into his inheritance, and he gave them a little house on one of his estates in Chawton near their childhood home. The return to a quiet, peaceful home and a measure of economic security allowed Jane to begin writing again.

Over the years Jane had revised *Elinor and Marianne*, and under the new title *Sense and Sensibility*—"by a Lady"—it was published at her own expense in 1811. Within two years she had earned £250 from the book. This success encouraged her to revise and publish *First Impressions*. As another book by that title had recently been published, she changed the name. *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813 and became her most popular book during her lifetime.

Despite her newfound success, Jane refused to compromise her privacy and never revealed herself as the author of her books except to her closest relatives. She wrote on small papers that looked like stationary, and whenever visitors called she hid her pages away. She preferred to live quietly and enjoy her family status as a much-beloved maiden aunt.

In the peaceful serenity of Chawton, Jane wrote *Mansfield Park*, and it was published in 1814. *Emma* was published in 1815, and she wrote *Persuasion* in 1816. She was working on a seventh novel, *Sanditon*, when ill health forced her to cease. She died in 1817, age 41, probably of Addison's disease—adrenal insufficiency—or a lymphoma such as Hodgkin's disease.

*Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (the revised *Susan*) were published shortly after Jane's death. Again there was no name on the title pages, but now a brief note at the back of the books revealed the author's identity. Jane Austen was buried in Winchester Cathedral, where her tombstone keeps her secret and makes no mention of her work as an author.



*This hand-colored etching, published in 1873, is based on the only known life portrait of Jane Austen, a pencil sketch by her sister Cassandra.*

# JANE AUSTEN'S WORLD

## SOCIETY

This stage adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* is set in 1811, when the novel was published. In the United Kingdom, society or the “upper class” traditionally comprised the landed gentry and the aristocracy of noble families with hereditary titles. From the 16th well into the 19th century, respectable wealth in England was accumulated primarily through the ownership of land. The land would be leased to tenants for farming, and the landowning families would live entirely off of the income generated by these leases. The families owning the largest of these hereditary estates, which varied in size but averaged about 10,000 acres, drew incomes sufficient to construct great parks and manors, purchase fashionable goods, retain servants and livery (horses and carriages), and meet other expenses related to keeping a country home. The most prosperous landowners also kept a town home in London, the social and political center of England, and lived there during the social season, January through July. The oldest, though not necessarily the wealthiest, of these families may have had some claim to nobility with inherited titles that gave “precedence,” or a higher rank at social functions in town or country. The term “aristocracy” referred somewhat more ambiguously to any keepers of London town homes whose social and political connections bought them seats in Parliament or influence in the royal court.

## WEALTH

Austen’s novel focuses on only a narrow slice of British society—the privileged, wealthy upper class. While most of the characters in *Sense and Sensibility* are well off, having money does not stop them from worrying about finances. Their attitudes range from reasonable concern to extreme greed. The novel’s characters worry over how many servants one needs to live comfortably, without considering whether those servants themselves live “comfortably.” For most of the novel’s characters, when it comes to marriage, concerns of wealth, money, and socio-economic class trump love. Elinor and Marianne resist this materialism to some extent, but not entirely. They are still concerned with the financial prospects of their respective husbands. While Austen negatively depicts the greed that can be found in the upper classes, she does not go so far as to critique the system as a whole.

## ENTAILMENT

Entailment is a term that is not heard in the play, but it exerts a powerful influence over the story. Entailment is a legal procedure that regulates the distribution of an estate. The Dashwoods’ estate is entailed so that it must be inherited by a male heir, in this case Mr. Dashwood’s son by his first marriage, John Dashwood. Such laws were enacted to prevent estates from being broken up or passed out of the family. For the Dashwood women, it means their inheritance from their father is very small; they cannot support themselves, so they must find husbands, and quickly.



## WOMEN

*Sense and Sensibility* takes place in a world where there are limited roles and opportunities for women in society. Austen's female characters do not inherit property and cannot have careers. Their futures and fortunes depend almost exclusively on the men they marry, and they are expected to be dutiful, upstanding ladies of society. But Austen depicts her female characters as thoughtful, clever, ambitious, and sometimes scheming women. Even while living within a male-dominated world, some female characters exert a limited amount of power and agency through force of personality and/or control of purse strings. Nonetheless, women in the play are often at the mercy of the male-dominated society in which they live. Only by marrying eligible men can Elinor and Marianne guarantee stable, comfortable lives for themselves. Thus the story presents the dangers and limited possibilities for women in a rigidly patriarchal society.

## LOVE & MARRIAGE

Today, we consider love to be vital for any good marriage. In Jane Austen's day, that was not the case. In fact throughout most of history, marriage was seen as an economic contract, a way to ensure financial security for women and financial heirs for men. The fact that both Elinor and Marianne seek love before marriage makes them rather unusual for their time. Many other couples in the play are united largely for economic security, often despite a lack of affection, let alone love.

## FAMILY

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen shows us a wide range of family relationships. While she shows us many examples of how familial love can help bring someone through a personal crisis, she also reveals how cruel and unfeeling families can be at the same time. We see everything from unbreakable sisterly bonds to parents disowning their children. Yet, despite the gamut of different possibilities, family remains the central unit of this story—no matter how difficult a character's family life may be, it is still fundamental to that character's existence.

## SOCIAL MANEUVERING

Jane Austen's novels illustrate in great detail the workings, habits, customs, and manners of high English society in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This is a world that is dictated by a rigid social and economic hierarchy. People are not simply rich or poor: there are very specific gradations of wealth and status. Most of the characters in *Sense and Sensibility* are obsessed with maintaining their family's place on the social ladder and potentially moving up the ladder through either marriage or simply by associating with wealthier, higher class people. These kinds of social dynamics are at play at formal society events such as the ball, as well as more casual gatherings. All social events are governed by codes of behavior, manners, and proper speaking. The high society Austen depicts is a complex, dangerous landscape through which characters have to navigate strategically. This strategy is reflected in the character's witty conversations, artfully written letters, skillful persuasion, and meddling in others' affairs. While Elinor and Marianne participate in the same societal circles as other characters, they are less ruthless than other characters. They look out for each other and their own interests, but are less concerned with rising in society than they are with finding their own happiness.

# EVENINGS WITH JANE

BY PETER AMSTER, DIRECTOR

It is deeply satisfying to be back in the company of Jane Austen, especially here at IRT, where my love affair with her novels first moved from page to stage. Eighteen years ago, I directed *Pride and Prejudice* here and found the experience to be ... well ... I can't think of a better word than joyous. That production went on to the Cleveland Play House and Northlight Theatre in Chicago, and in all of those places it held the stage, and also held the hearts of the people who came and witnessed Elizabeth Bennett and Fitzwilliam Darcy back themselves into love. Then came *Emma* at Cleveland Play House, where the audiences cheered when our heroine finally stopped trying to manage other people's lives and concentrated on her own. And now ... *Sense and Sensibility*. I feel like I won the trifecta.

*Sense and Sensibility*, of the three, seems like the most mature story, even though it was the first written. Two sisters, both of a marriageable age, are suddenly reduced to poverty, limiting their chances of marrying well. Each responds to the events and challenges of their lives quite differently: Elinor, the older, is more rational, more sensible, more aware of the implications of behavior in society, and more guarded emotionally. Marianne is passionate, reckless, tending toward emotional extravagance and having little regard to social decorum. In some way Elinor represents *Sense* and Marianne *Sensibility* (the word's original meaning was more closely aligned to "sensitivity" than what we now think of as being "sensible"). But Austen is too clever and too compassionate to allow either to be mere paradigms or objects of ridicule. These women are complicated, interesting, and, most important, open to the changes, the re-balancing if you will, that their journey provides. And their journey is a fraught one. They do not, like Elizabeth Bennett or Emma Woodhouse, marry the Prince. Their destinies are less fairy tale and more earthbound.



But if *Sense and Sensibility* is less "light, and bright, and sparkling" than *Pride and Prejudice*, and less charmingly inconsequential than *Emma*, it still provides abundant comic characterizations, displays the author's razor-sharp wit, and reveals a storyteller in complete command of her narrative strategies. Austen's understanding of and compassion for the plight of Elinor and Marianne might well be based on her own relationship with her sister Cassandra. But what's important here is that the novel—written by a backyard genius who never married nor was celebrated in her lifetime—endures. And now, thanks to this splendid new adaptation by Jessica Swale, it takes the stage.

*Carrey Cannon & Jason Bradley in the IRT's 2004 production of Pride and Prejudice, directed by Peter Amster, who also directs the current production of Sense and Sensibility.*

# POETS IN THE PLAY

## THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The Age of Enlightenment was an intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Enlightenment included a range of ideas centered on the value of human happiness, the pursuit of knowledge obtained by means of reason and the evidence of the senses, and ideals such as liberty, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government, and separation of church and state.

### ALEXANDER POPE

Alexander Pope (1688–1744) was a prominent English poet of the early 18th century. He is best known for his satirical and discursive poems such as *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, and *An Essay on Criticism* (source of the famous quotations “To err is human; to forgive, divine,” “A little learning is a dangerous thing,” and “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread”). Only a decade after his death his reputation began to wane; the Romantics considered him quite old-fashioned. In the 20th century, however, his reputation revived. Today he is regarded as one of the greatest English poets. After Shakespeare, Pope is the second-most quoted author in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*.

## ROMANTICISM

Romanticism was an artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movement that was at its peak from around 1800 to around 1850. Romanticism was characterized by its emphasis on emotion and individualism, idealization of nature, suspicion of science and industrialization, and glorification of the past, with a strong preference for the medieval rather than the classical. The major English Romantic poets were William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and William Blake.

### WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake (1757–1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in both the poetic and visual arts of the Romantic Age. He believed strongly in racial and sexual equality and was actively interested in politics and social reform. He claimed to have visions. Although he was considered mad by contemporaries for his idiosyncratic views, he is held in high regard by later critics for his expressiveness and creativity, and for the philosophical and mystical undercurrents within his work.

### JOHN KEATS

John Keats (1795–1821) was an English Romantic poet, one of the main figures of the second generation of Romantic poets, along with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Although his poems were not generally well received by critics during his lifetime, his reputation grew after his death, and by the end of the 19th century, he had become one of the most beloved of all English poets. Among his most acclaimed works are “Ode to a Nightingale,” “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer,” and “Endymion” (“A thing of beauty is a joy forever”).

# MARGARET'S MENAGERIE

## “I'M GOING TO BE A NATURALIST”

In 1811, twelve-year-old Margaret's plan to become a naturalist is bold and daring, not only because she is female, but also because the profession itself was then in its earliest stages. Natural history is the study of plants and animals in the wild, and their environments, as well as those aspects of geology which can be done in the field. People who study natural history are called naturalists. Their work is observation, interpretation, collecting, and classification, rather than experimentation. Before Charles Darwin (1809-1882), most naturalists did not think of themselves as scientists. When they looked at nature, perhaps as explorers, they looked at everything: land, people, plants, and animals. Naturalists found new species and classified plants and animals. Naturalists were educated amateurs; today's scientists are trained professionals. This change happened slowly, during the 19th century. In fact, the very word *scientist* was not coined until 1837. Before then, *natural philosophers* studied the physical sciences (astronomy, physics, chemistry), while *natural historians* studied the biological sciences (biology, zoology). The term *naturalist* is short for *natural historian*.

Some of the many creatures mentioned in the play include:

### STAG BEETLE



So called because of the large and distinctive mandibles found on the males of most species, which are thought to resemble the antlers of stags. Although many people feel they look dangerous, they are generally harmless to humans.



### BARN OWL

The most widely distributed species of owl and one of the most widespread of all birds.



### TAWNY OWL

Commonly found in woodlands; makes its nest in a tree hole.



### HERMIT CRAB

A Hermit crab has a long, soft, spirally curved abdomen. It protects its vulnerable abdomen by salvaging an empty seashell (most often that of a sea snail) into which its whole body can retract.

### PORCELAIN CRAB

Porcelain crabs are small, usually less than 5/8 inch wide. Their bodies are compact and flattened, an adaptation for living and hiding under rocks. Porcelain crabs are quite fragile animals—hence their name.



### WINKLE

Found on rocky shores, often in small tide pools. When exposed to extreme cold or heat, it withdraws into its shell and starts rolling, allowing it to fall to the water.

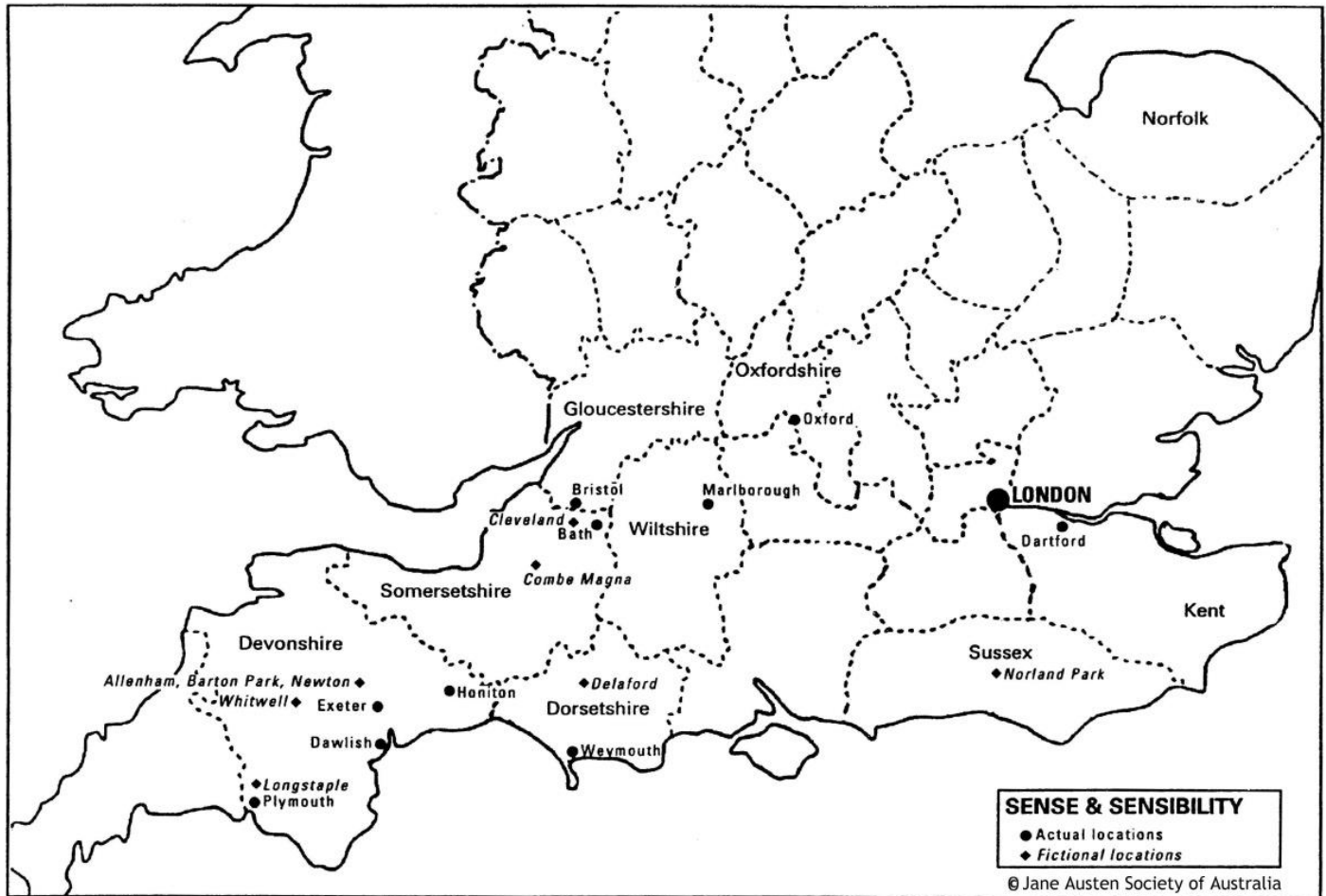


### STICKLEBACK

Sticklebacks are a fish most commonly found in the ocean, but some can be found in fresh water. Their name comes from their spiny dorsal fins.



# PLACES IN THE PLAY



**NORLAND PARK** is the family home of the Dashwoods, located somewhere in **SUSSEX**, around 25 miles south of London. Sussex is known for its green hills and lush gardens. While Norland Park is fictional, it might look something like this home in Hailsham Grange, East Sussex



When the Dashwoods are forced to leave Norland Park, they move to a cottage on the grounds of Barton Park, the estate of Sir John Middleton and Lady Middleton, located near the town of Exeter in Devonshire. The fictional **BARTON COTTAGE** might look something like this cottage in Lewdown, Devonshire

**DEVONSHIRE** is a county in southwestern England, roughly 200 miles west of where the Dashwoods lived in Sussex. Devonshire is known for its bleakly beautiful moorland hills, particularly Dartmoor and Exmoor. Barton Cottage is located near the seashore, and there are several scenes in the play atop the cliffs of Devonshire.



Much of the second act of the play is set in **LONDON**. In 1811, London had a population of 1.2 million, and was one of the largest cities in the world.

Mrs. Jennings's London house is located on **BERKELEY STREET** in Mayfair, London's most expensive and fashionable neighborhood.

# INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS

## ALIGNMENT GUIDE

Seeing *Sense and Sensibility* at the Indiana Repertory Theatre is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of a text. Some key literature standards to consider on your trip would be:

### READING LITERATURE

- RL.1 Read a variety of literature within a range of complexity appropriate for one's grade.
- RL.2 Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by identifying, describing, and making inferences about literary elements and themes
- RL.3 Build comprehension and appreciation of literature, using knowledge of literary structure, and point of view
- RL.4 Build comprehension and appreciation of literary elements and themes and analyze how sensory tools impact meaning

### READING--VOCABULARY

- RV.1 Build and apply vocabulary using various strategies and sources
- RV.2 Use strategies to determine and clarify words and understand their relationship
- RV.3 Build appreciation and understanding of literature and nonfiction texts by determining or clarifying the meaning of words and their uses

### SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- SL.1 Develop and apply effective communication skills through speaking and active listening
- SL.3 Develop and apply active listening and interpretation skills using various strategies

### MEDIA LITERACY

- ML.1 Develop an understanding of media and the roles and purposes of media
- ML.2 Recognize the purpose of media and the ways in which media can have influences

### THEATRE CREATING

- TH.Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

### THEATRE RESPONDING

- TH.Re.7 Perceive and analyze artistic work
- TH.Re.8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work
- TH.Re.9 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

### THEATRE CONNECTING

- TH.Cn.10 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art
- TH.Cn.11 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding



## LANGUAGE HISTORY

- LH.3 Build understanding of history/social studies texts, using knowledge, structural organization, and author's purpose

## PSYCHOLOGY

- P.7 Students discuss the socio-cultural dimensions of behavior including topics such as conformity, obedience, perception, attitudes, and the influence of the group on the individual.

## ETHNIC STUDIES

- ES.1 Cultural Self-Awareness
- ES.2 Cultural Histories within the United States Context and Abroad
- ES.4 Historical and Contemporary Contributions

## SOCIOLOGY

- S.2 Students examine the influence of culture on the individual and the way cultural transmission is accomplished. Students study the way culture defines how people in a society behave in relation to groups and to physical objects. They also learn that human behavior is learned within the society. Through the culture, individuals learn the relationships, structures, patterns and processes to be members of the society.
- S.3 Students examine the process by which people develop their human potential and learn culture. Socialization will be considered as a lifelong process of human social experience.
- S.4 Students identify how social status influences individual and group behaviors and how that status relates to the position a person occupies within a social group
- S.7 Students identify the effects of social institutions on individual and group behavior. They understand that social institutions are the social groups in which an individual participates, and that these institutions influence the development of the individual through the socialization process
- S.8 Students examine the changing nature of society. They explain that social change addresses the disruption of social functions caused by numerous factors and that some changes are minor and others are major
- S.10 Students examine the role of the individual as a member of the community. They also explore both individual and collective behavior

## GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF THE WORLD

- GHW.4 Students examine the physical and human geographic factors associated with the origins, major players and events, and consequences of worldwide exploration, conquest and imperialism.
- GHW.6 Students examine physical and human geographic factors that influenced the origins, major events, diffusion, and global consequences of new ideas in agriculture, science, culture, politics, industry, and technology.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY

In the context of this story, “sensibility” means something akin to “sensitivity.” Knowing this, what does the title *Sense and Sensibility* suggest in terms of contrasting viewpoints?

What does it mean to adapt a book into a play? What challenges might there be for a playwright? How can you show many different settings? How would you decide which characters are necessary and which are not? What parts of the book would need to be eliminated to make the story fit the time constraints of a play?

What kinds of technology existed in the early 1800s when this play took place? What was life like for men, women, and children, and upper and lower classes?

What were important issues during this era and place, and how are they the same or different from our issues now?

## AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

How do the words “sense” and “sensibility” apply to Elinor and Marianne? To Margaret and Mrs. Dashwood.

When the Dashwoods are kicked out of their home, they live in “poverty” in a seaside cottage with one servant and landlords who invite them over for dinner every night and take them on vacations into the city where they attend parties and balls. Is this what poverty is really like? Did/do most people live like the Dashwoods? How do each of our personal backgrounds affect how we see the Dashwood’s predicament?

Why is finding a husband so important for women from this era no matter their age? What are the “rules” for young ladies in society during this time?

What is the symbolic significance of Marianne being saved from the rain? How is this meaning different on the two separate occasions in the play?

What do we learn about Elinor and Marianne’s sisterly relationship when Elinor chooses not to share with anyone that Lucy says she is engaged to Edward?

Why does the story start with such a dramatic event such as Mr. Dashwood’s death?

How does Austen criticize the upper class with the character Fanny?

Why would Edward's mother disown him for wanting to be with Marianne? What type of girl would his mother approve of and why?

Margaret says, "Do you know sea stars aren't ladies or men, they're both. So when it wants to have a baby, it doesn't need to find a husband, it just makes one on its own. I think it must be better to be a sea star." Why does she think this? How do you feel about Margaret's idea?

How much do you think Willoughby redeems himself at the end when he talks to Elinor after Marianne gets sick? If you were Marianne, would you forgive him? Why or why not? If you were Willoughby, what would you do?

Compare and contrast the relationships between Elinor and Edward, Marianne and Willoughby, and Marianne and the Colonel.

How does money affect the story? Why do the Dashwoods have to leave their home? Why does Lucy marry Robert instead of Edward?

What is the significance of cutting locks of hair? What is something that couples do in modern times that can be compared to this?

Elinor laments to Edward twice about how she wants to do something, but can't because she is a woman. What does she want to do? How have women's rights changed from the early 19th century when this play takes place to now?

Despite both main female characters becoming engaged at the end, some claim *Sense and Sensibility* has a sad ending. Do you agree? Why or why not?

How did the scenic design affect the way the audience perceived the story? What else happened while the set changed? What creative design choices helped move the story along? What details helped the audience to know the time and place of the story?

How did the costumes show the characters' different social status and personalities?

What character was your favorite? How did you relate to them? How are your lives different? How are they the same?

# WRITING PROMPTS

Pretend that you are Marianne after receiving the letter from Willoughby where he says he never loved her and they were only friends. What would you write in a letter back to him?

Imagine that you are a Devonshire journalist. You have just caught wind of the scandal involving the late Mr. Dashwood's daughters and various men across the county. How would you write a juicy article explaining the problems and miscommunications? What would be your sources? Do journalists always know the full truth?

Choose from the following themes: Class/Social Stratification, Greed/Money, or Gender Roles. Write a short essay explaining how your theme impacts and changes the story. Use at least three examples of different events and/or characters.

Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects—scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? To share your reviews with others, send to: [education.irt@gmail.com](mailto:education.irt@gmail.com)

# ACTIVITIES

## BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY

### VOCABULARY WORDS

Below is a list of words found in the play. How many do your students already know? How many can they figure out using root words? How many can they figure out using context within the play's text? What are your most successful techniques for teaching new vocabulary?

cavorting	sumptuous	effervescence	orator	denunciation	imprudent
sentiment	betide	sonnets	poppycock	tedium	veritable
paltry	besotted	genteel	felicity	indiscretion	invalid
curative	amiable	endeavoring	irreproachable	naivety	propriety
naught	elusive	obliged	pensive	bestow	steadfast
reproach	esteem	rapturously	illicit	contrivance	bereft
impertinent	haranguing	solace	indisposed	wretched	exert
unpardonable	alluded	elope	segue	forlorn	putrid
accord	knave	libertine	penury	dictation	atonement
penitence	vicar	imprudence	untoward	veritably	

# ACTIVITIES

## AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

The script of *Sense and Sensibility* has scene titles. Before seeing the show, assign each student or group of students various scene titles and see what stories they can come up with that fit the scene titles. After seeing the show, go through all of the scene titles and recount what actually happened. Were any of the predictions correct?

Scene titles in order: Act 1: Fifteen Hundred Pounds, The Joys of a Stroll, Bright Stars, A Cottage with No Carpet, A Siren's Song, Dirty Laundry, The Knight, The Poetics of Pope, Winkles and Rockpools, The Picnic at Whitwell, A Stickleback, Showdown, An Unexpected Visitor, Perspective; Act 2: The Best Lace in London, The Duel, Berkely Street, The Ball, Revelations, Visitors, Earl Grey, The Secret's Out, Cleveland, Back in Devonshire, Proposal

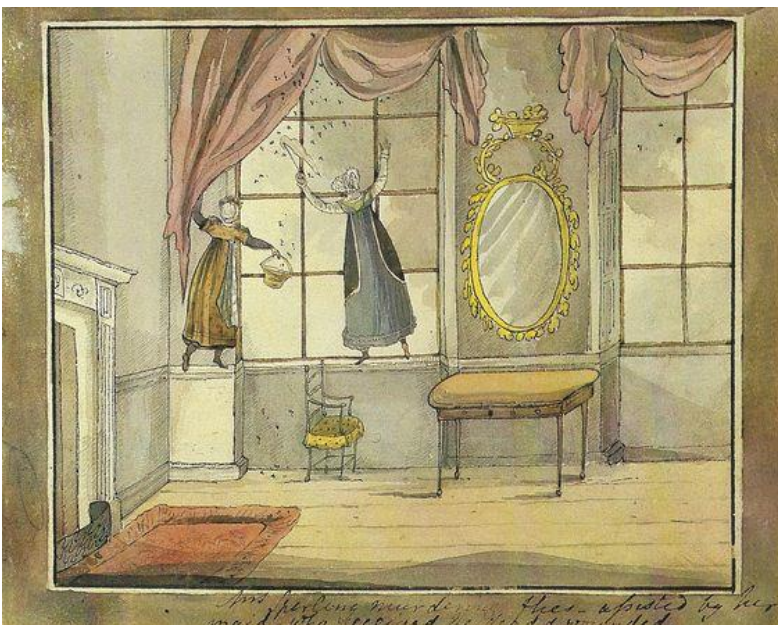
OR: Choose another story the class has previously read, divide it up into scenes, and make up scene titles

Think up a backstory for Fanny. What was life like growing up with Mrs. Ferrars and her brothers Robert and Edward? What happened that caused her to be so mean and selfish? Make a timeline of important events that shaped Fanny's life. Bonus: Write and act out a scene depicting one of those events on the timeline.

Make a map of all of the characters and how they are related or connected to each other.

Design the play as if it took place during modern times. Would the relationships be as secretive? Where would the Dashwood family find refuge? Would any of them have jobs? How would they meet the other characters? What outdated customs would need to be changed? How would the costumes and set look?

Write down different roles on pieces of paper such as "rich daughter," "eldest son," "middle class father," "widow," etc., and have students draw characters from the papers. Roleplay a formal ball, where students interact with one another in these roles. What different goals do different characters have? How does wealth affect these interactions? How does early 19th century etiquette govern the characters' interactions?



### "Spring Cleaning"

A drawing by Diana Sperling (1791-1862) from the book *Mrs. Hurst Dancing and Other Scenes from Regency Life 1812-1823* (published 1982). The book was a source of inspiration for the IRT's production of *Sense and Sensibility* for both scenic designer Ann Sheffield and costume designer Tracy Dorman.

# RESOURCES

## BOOKS

Novels of Jane Austen: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813),  
*Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), *Northanger Abbey* (1817), *Persuasion* (1817)  
*Regency Etiquette: The Mirror of Graces; Or, the English Ladies' Costume* (1811),  
by A Lady of Distinction  
*Frankenstein, or, a Modern Prometheus* (1818) by Mary Shelley  
*Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* (2009) by Ben H. Winters  
*Sense and Sensibility* (2013) by Joanna Trollope (a contemporary retelling)  
*Margaret Dashwood, or, Interference* (1929) by Francis Brown  
*Jane Austen: The World and her Novels* (2002) by Deirdre Le Faye  
*Jane Austen's England: Daily Life in the Georgian and Regency Periods* (2014)  
by Roy and Lesley Adkins  
*What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew* (1993) by Daniel Pool  
*Black London: Life before Emancipation* (1995) by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina  
*Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) by Phyllis Wheatly  
(an African American poet of the era)

## WEBSITES

<https://jasna.org/> Jane Austen Society of North America  
<https://janeausten.co.uk/pages/austen-blog> Jane Austen Centre in Bath  
<https://daily.jstor.org/jane-austens-subtly-subversive-linguistics/>  
<https://lithub.com/sense-or-sensibility-what-if-jane-austen-had-to-choose/>  
<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/sense-and-sensibility>  
<https://janeaustens.house/learn/education/> Jane Austen House Museum in UK

## MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

*Sense and Sensibility* (1995) – directed by Ang Lee and written by Emma Thompson  
*Sense and Sensibility* (2008) – British TV mini series  
*Kandukondain Kandukondain or I Have Found It* (2000) – Indian Tamil language adaptation  
(subtitled in English)  
*Pride and Prejudice* (1995) – TV mini series  
*Clueless* (1995) – directed by Amy Heckerling – modern adaptation of *Emma*

# HOW MUCH IS THAT?

## THIRTY THOUSAND POUNDS

The fortune of Miss Morton, whom Mrs. Ferrars wants Edward to marry.  
**about \$34 million today**

## TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS

The fortune of Miss Sophia Gray, to whom Willoughby is engaged.  
**about \$22 million today**

## TWO THOUSAND POUNDS

Colonel Brandon's annual income.  
**about \$168,000 today**

## FIFTEEN HUNDRED POUNDS

The amount that John Dashwood originally intends to give annually to Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret – each.  
**about \$126,000 today**—or for the four of them, about \$504,000 annually

## FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS

The amount that John Dashwood ends up giving annually to Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret – total.  
**about \$42,000 today.**  
 (Today's poverty line for a family of four is about \$38,000 annually.)



# GLOSSARY

## **ablution**

the act of washing oneself, for hygiene or for ritual purification

## **Adieu**

French: goodbye

## **address (gentle address)**

In this context, address refers to one's manner of speaking.

## **anon**

soon, shortly

## **bluebells**

Both the common bluebell and the Scottish bluebell are native to Devonshire. Both are perennials with small blue flowers that hang in a bell shape. In Britain they bloom in late summer and fall.

## **borne**

past participle of bear; in this context, the meaning is tolerated

## **brace**

In this context, a brace means a pair of birds caught while hunting.

## **Broadwood grand**

John Broadwood & Sons is an English piano manufacturer, founded in 1728. Broadwood refined the box piano and extended its range. Haydn, Chopin, and Beethoven played Broadwoods.

## **chaise**

A chaise is a light two- or four-wheeled traveling or pleasure carriage for one or two people with a folding hood top. The name came from the French word *chaise* (meaning chair).

## **coal scuttle**

a bucket-like container for holding a small supply of coal convenient to an indoor coal-fired stove

## **competence**

In this context, an income large enough to live on, typically unearned.

## **consumption**

The word "consumption" first appeared in the 14th century to describe any potentially fatal wasting disease—any condition that "consumed" the body. Over time it came to apply more specifically to tuberculosis, although the word "tuberculosis" was not coined until 1860. In the late 1700s and early 1800s in some parts of England, as many as one in three deaths were caused by consumption.



**Constantia wine**

a South African dessert wine that was widely exported to Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries

**curricle**

a light two-wheeled carriage holding a driver and one passenger and drawn by a pair of horses

**dove cot**

a structure designed to house pigeons or doves

**Earl Grey**

Earl Grey is a tea blend which has been flavored with the addition of oil of bergamot. It is believed to have first been formulated in England around 1830, when Charles Grey, an Earl, was prime minister.

**East Indies**

The East Indies are the lands of South Asia (the Indian subcontinent) and Southeast Asia.

**eglantine**

The eglantine rose, also known as sweet-briar, a pink shrub rose.

**Eremit**

a hermit: one who lives in seclusion from society, usually for religious reasons

**evening star**

The term evening star refers to the planet Venus when it appears in the western sky after sunset. It is the second-brightest natural object in the night sky after the Moon.

**ferret**

To search tenaciously and find something. The verb comes from the animal, a reference to the common ferret penchant for finding small items and secreting them away.

**fortnight**

fourteen nights; two weeks

**gamboling**

To gambol is to run or jump about playfully. (The word "gambling" in the script is a typo.)

**hanging wood**

A woodland on the side of a hill, typically on the steep slopes just below the crest of an escarpment.

**Harrow**

Founded in 1572 under a Royal Charter, Harrow is one of the most prestigious (and expensive) prep schools in the world. Its alumni include Winston Churchill and seven other British prime ministers.

### **hawthorn**

The common hawthorn is a shrub or small tree 15 to 45 feet tall, with a dense crown. The bark is dull brown with vertical orange cracks. The younger stems bear sharp thorns.

### **Haydn**

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) was an Austrian composer of the Classical era, a mentor of Mozart and a tutor of Beethoven. Haydn was instrumental in the emergence of chamber music.

### **japes**

jokes, jests, quips

### **lock of hair**

Historically, giving a lock of one's hair to someone has been considered a sign of love and devotion, especially before an impending separation. It is a popular trope in romance fiction. Jewelry made of human hair has appeared throughout history, particularly tokens of love or mourning.

### **Midsummer**

The summer solstice, between Jun 19 and 25 each year.

### **mulberry trees**

The mulberry fruit looks something like an elongated blackberry or raspberry, about an inch long.

### **North Star**

Polaris, the North Star, lies nearly in a direct line with the Earth's axis "above" the North Pole. Because it appears almost motionless in the sky, it makes an excellent fixed point for navigation.

### **parsonage**

In this context, the term refers not just to the home provided for a rector or vicar, but to the job itself.

### **patronized**

The sense here seems to be to show support for and be a frequent visitor of.

### **piano-forte**

A piano-forte or fortepiano is an early piano such as Haydn, Mozart, and the younger Beethoven used. Starting in Beethoven's time, the design began to evolve towards the modern grand.

### **piquet**

an early 16th-century trick-taking card game for two players that is still popular today

### **Pope Joan**

Pope Joan was, according to legend, a woman who reigned as pope briefly during the ninth century. There was an 18th-century English card game called Pope Joan.

**porter**

Porter is a style of beer developed in London in the early 18th century. The name originated due to its popularity with street and river porters (men for hire who carry things).

**proboscis**

A proboscis is an elongated appendage from the head of an animal, an elongated nose or snout. In flies and other insects, the term usually refers to tubular mouthparts used for feeding and sucking.

**Queen Mab**

Shakespeare's Queen Mab from Mercutio's speech in *Romeo and Juliet* is a fairy who performs midnight pranks and "midwives" the birth of dreams.

**sampler**

A needlework sampler is a piece of embroidery or cross-stitching demonstrating or testing skill in needlework. It often includes the alphabet, figures, motifs, and/or decorative borders.

**siren**

In Greek mythology, the Sirens were dangerous singing creatures who lured nearby sailors with their enchanting music to shipwreck on the rocky coast of their island.

**sherry**

Sherry is a fortified wine made from white grapes grown near Jerez de la Frontera, Spain.

**Snap!**

A card game in which players deal cards and react quickly to spot pairs of cards of the same rank.

**stewponds**

a fish pond used to store live fish ready for eating

**sponging house ... confined for debt**

Through the mid-19th century, debtors' prisons were common. A sponging-house was a smaller house where a debtor would be held temporarily until their debts were paid.

**tea caddy**

A tea caddy is a box, jar, canister, or other receptacle used to store dry tea. When first introduced to Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, tea was extremely expensive, and kept under the eye of the mistress of the house, often under lock and key. The containers used were therefore often expensive and decorative, to fit in with the rest of a drawing-room or other reception room. There still survive vast numbers of Georgian caddies in mahogany, rosewood, satin-wood, and other woods, often mounted in brass and delicately inlaid, with knobs of ivory, ebony, or silver. Hot water was carried up from the kitchen, and the tea made by the mistress of the house, or under her supervision.

# THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

*You, the audience are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:*

Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink are not allowed in the building during student matinees.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call; this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.

