When Jane Austen published her first novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, in 1811, she established herself as a writer who was ahead of her time. With her funny, feisty, and unapologetically complicated female protagonists, it may be true that Jane Austen is even ahead of our time right now in 2015.

*Sense and Sensibility* follows sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood as they navigate love, finance, and strict social expectations on their way to finding happiness. Following the death of their father, the girls see the wealth of opportunities that had once been theirs begin to slip away, and are forced to make difficult decisions about their futures. Although Elinor makes her decisions using logic and reason (sense) while Marianne is more inclined to follow her heart (sensibility), the sisters love and support each other through every hardship and ultimately learn that a balance of both sense and sensibility is key.

In this brand new, critically acclaimed adaptation by Kate Hamill, Austen’s many wonderful women come to life in ways that are fun, spirited, and – despite being set at the dawn of the nineteenth century – altogether modern.

**BY THE NUMBERS: Money and Age**

£1 in 1810 = $100 in 2015

Total yearly income for the Misses Dashwood: £500
Yearly income Marianne considers necessary to live comfortably: £2,000

In 1810:
- Average yearly income for a female servant: £10
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So your dating life is going well...

**Affable** (adj.)
- friendly, good-natured, easy to talk to

**Propriety** (noun)
- behavior that is accepted as socially correct and proper

**Genteel** (adj.)
- polite, refined, respectable; usually referring to one’s high social status

**Irreproachable** (adj.)
- not deserving criticism or blame; having no fault

**Beau** (noun)
- a boyfriend or male admirer

**Dalliance** (noun)
- a casual romantic or sexual relationship

**Gay** (adj.)
- lighthearted and carefree

**Prudent** (adj.)
- acting with or showing care and thought for the future

**So your significant other is driving you crazy...**

**Uncouth** (adj.)
- behaving in a rude way; not polite or socially acceptable

**Saucy** (adj.)
- bold, disrespectful, forward, flippant

**Contention** (noun)
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**Infirmitie** (noun)
- the quality or state of being weak or ill, especially because of old age

**Libertine** (adj.)
- characterized by a disregard of morality and accepted religious teachings, especially in sexual matters

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- not showing due respect for another person

**How to speak like you’re from the 18th century**

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Sense and Sensibility takes place in England in the 1790s. Defined by the reign of King George III, The Georgian (or Regency) Period in Great Britain was known for its elegance and achievement in fine arts and culture. On the cusp of the Industrial Revolution, this was a time of great social and economic change. English society was very strictly defined by social classes and there was a wide gap of economic disparity between the rich and poor. Gender roles were strict and traditional as well, with few (if any) opportunities for women outside of the home or marriage.

Sense and Sensibility is a story that deals primarily with upper class families, commonly referred to as “the gentry” - which were well-born, well-bred people of high social class. The gentry were predominantly wealthy landowners who did not work and whose income was derived from family inheritance and income from their landholdings (think Downton Abbey!).

Amongst the gentry, money was extremely important. Women were expected to marry men who had a lot of money in order to secure their future. Daughters from poorer families were often encouraged or forced to marry up as a way to get them into a better social class. Marrying well was especially important for the Dashwood girls because they no longer had a father providing for them and they lost the family fortune to their half-brother. John Dashwood, though only a half-brother, was expected (by the late Mr. Dashwood) to ensure the women in the family were taken care of.

Marriage was chiefly a business proposition. The dowry of a woman, or her financial worth, was the most important determinant of her marriageability, since her husband would support her and provide servants to do most of the childrearing and household tasks.

If a woman had no wealth of her own, her only options were:

1. Be supported by and live with her brother and his wife, sometimes against their will.
2. Work everyday as a ladies’ companion, governess, or teacher on minimal salary, living in “genteel poverty,” totally dependent upon employers, and with little personal life.
3. A young woman had her official “coming out” around age 17 – at which time her family threw a party or ball in her honor, and she was allowed to attend “adult” social gatherings. Most upper class families residing in the countryside (like The Dashwoods) would spend part of their year in London, when everyone seeking a marriage partner, aspiring to a higher social status, or attempting to maintain their status made appearances at the right balls, clubs, and social gatherings.

MARRIANCE and ELINOR DASHWOOD costume renderings by MORRIS SINCE CLINTON.

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Marriage & Courtship

Social Etiquette in Jane Austen’s England

1. Young unmarried women were not allowed to be alone with men, except old family friends, without a chaperone.
2. Kissing indicated an intent to marry.
3. A gentleman was not supposed to dance with a lady more than twice unless he intended to marry her.
4. A lady was not to shake hands with a man.
5. Only relatives and friends of long-standing acquaintance could address each other by their first names.
6. A married lady was politely referred to as “Mrs.” followed by her husband’s first name and surname. Elinor and Marianne’s mother is “Mrs. Henry Dashwood”.
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