

Comparison and rodney bennett's made for tv 1981 essay



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Ang Lee's version of *Sense and Sensibility* and Rodney Bennett's TV series adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility* both capture the spirit of Jane Austen's novel; however, there are discrepancies which enhance and detract from each adaptation. Differences arise due to variations in the directors' nationalities and intended audience, events and characters. The American version is much more dramatic than the British version.

Bennett takes the viewer back in historical time in an entertaining, smooth, and touching fashion. It is more true to Austen's time period; whereas Lee's movie is much more dramatic. Whenever there is tension in the novel, it is pouring outside even when it is not raining in the novel. It is raining when Willoughby finds Marianne with a twisted ankle, whereas the British version and novel have sunny weather. Margaret's tree house in the Emma-Thompson movie depicts Margaret as free-spirited tomboy creating more melodramatic tension which is not present in the novel or British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) version.

The American version also portrays men always riding horses, possibly due to the cowboy history of the United States and film industry's considerable use of men on horses to depict heroic figures. The difference in budget between the two movies also created inherent differences. The BBC version was a series designed for TV with a smaller budget and less polished production. Lee's film was created with a larger budget allowing them to shoot at gorgeous locations with beautiful costumes. It is more refined and condensed because of its intended audience. The BBC adaptation was longer (three hours long without commercials) whereas the American production is only a little over two hours.

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The longer version includes more details from the novel and more of Austen's original language, making it more faithful to the book. Edward's character is truer in the BBC series because he is not as attractive as Hugh Grant and more shy and kind than in Lee's movie. On the other hand, the Emma-Thompson movie is more rushed, yet still captures the romantic spirit of the novel. There are two key elements which each adaptation lacks: the BBC series does not include Margaret and the 1995 movie does not include Willoughby's confession to Elinor. Although, we do not know many details about Margaret from the novel, the fact that she looks up to her sisters is an important element of the text. This version would have been enhanced by including her as a character, despite her minor role.

The Emma-Thompson movie includes Margaret and gives her an important role to further the drama. She is seen sword-fighting with Edward and playing in and spying on others from her tree house. Alternatively, Lee's movie does not include Willoughby's confession to Elinor about his motives for leaving Marianne. This leaves the Dashwood sisters ignorant of Willoughby's true feelings toward their family; however, the viewer does gain glimpse of Willoughby at the end.

Willoughby is seen riding a horse on top of a hill overlooking the town on Marianne's wedding day. He appears sad and regrets his decision to trade love for money by marrying Miss Grey. The viewer knows more than the Dashwoods regarding Willoughby; however, the heart of the scene is still captured. The beginnings and endings of each movie are also different.

In the BBC series, the show begins with the Dashwoods conversing in a carriage about Mr. Dashwood's death. The viewer does not see John Dashwood promise to take care of his step-sisters, although it is later implied by John Dashwood's conversation with Fanny. Lee's movie begins with John Dashwood promising a dying Mr. Dashwood to look after his family.

This provides more emphasis on the theme of illness in the novel. Neither version is inherently better than the other; however, the presence of this scene provides more drama and emphasizes the theme of pain which is more clearly addressed in the novel. The ending of the British version is very abrupt for so long a film. The sudden ending is similar to the novel in that everyone gets married and there are quick changes in romantic feelings leading to surprising marriages (Lucy and Robert; Marianne and Colonel Brandon). The American version contains more exaggerated emotions and concludes by emphasizing many of the major themes of the novel: marriage, money, and love.

The viewer sees Marianne and Colonel Brandon's marriage and as they are leaving the church, Brandon is throwing money out of their carriage. It is less sudden and is a better conclusion than Bennett's ending. Clearly, there are several variations in the two adaptations of *Sense and Sensibility*. They both have their own respective strengths and weaknesses. The length of the BBC provides ample opportunity to remain truer to the text. On the other hand, the American movie captures a more youthful, spirited, and contemporary interpretation of Jane Austen's novel.