

Paper Two:

**Option A:** The Errant Imagination in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*

The imagination expresses itself in many ways in Austen's novels. Most of them are beneficial and lead to a greater understanding of our place in the world both of nature and of human society. Imagination enables empathy with others, as Shelley said. It shows us important connections and relationships. It makes us aware of beauty. The education of the imagination is one of our most important responsibilities as we develop, Austen would insist. But the imagination can curse as well as bless. There are some instances of imagination gone wrong, by excess, by indulgence, by its own intrinsic failure to live up to its promises. Consider the successes and failures of the imagination in these two novels. What guidance does Austen give us in preventing an errant imagination?

**Option B:** Modes of Generosity in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*

For Austen much of a person's character can be revealed by their impulses of generosity. How fully does one person understand the needs of another and how well can they serve those needs through acts of generosity? Gift-giving is one form of generosity. But so is patience, good-listening, true concern for what best affects the other. By contrast some of Austen's characters are purely intent on their own self-aggrandizement. Examine some key instances of generosity or its absence and reflect on how one's interaction with others defines oneself. Would Austen say it is possible to be too generous?

Three to five pages, typed, double-spaced, plus works cited, if relevant. Due Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>.