

# Identifying Character Personas

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## Abstract

Understanding the persona of a character can help readers better understand the storyline of a novel, which can be especially important when studying novels from different time periods. Generally, a reader generates a persona by looking at a character's actions, dialog, behavior, sentiment, opinions and relationships. This project produced a program that looks at adjectives and verbs associated with a character's name. The program generates character personas in a novel by giving users a positive or negative number associated with the characters name as well as words most commonly associated with the character.

## Approach

- Used novels from Project Gutenberg
- Used existing tools to attach part of speech (POS) labels to each word
- Used an existing corpus called Subjectivity Lexicon that had POS tagged words with an attached polarity
- Ran the words in the same sentence as a character's name to get POS tag and then polarity
- Graphed polarity and produced frequent adjectives and verbs associated with each character.

## Total Polarity Count of Main Characters in *Sense and Sensibility*

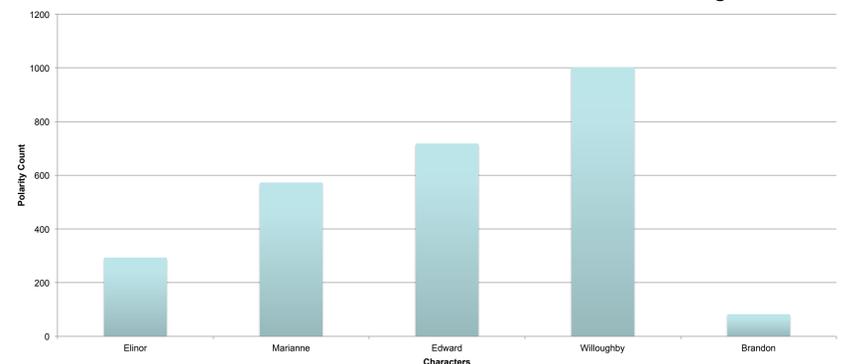


Figure 2. Graph illustrating the total polarity count for each of the main characters in *Sense and Sensibility*. There does not appear to be a direct correlation between total polarity count and the persona of the character. For instance, Willoughby is the most deceitful and has the highest polarity count.

## Polarity of Main Characters in *Sense and Sensibility*

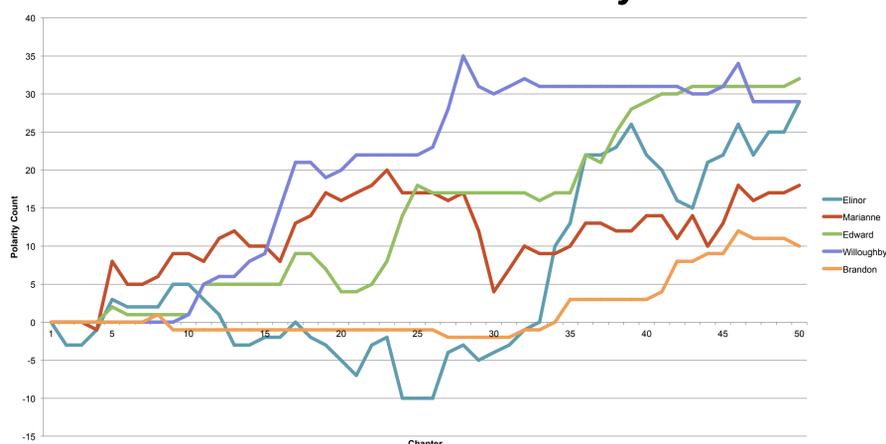


Figure 1. Graph of main characters polarity in *Sense and Sensibility*. There appeared to be a direct correlation between the plot line and the change in polarity for a character throughout the book. For instance Marianne's polarity count decreases near chapter 30 after she becomes depressed that Willoughby has left town.

## Excerpt

**Elinor**, this eldest daughter, whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence.

Verbs: be, counteract, have, imprudence, was, enabled, possessed, qualified, nineteen, led

Adjectives: effectual, strength, coolness, qualified, eagerness

Figure 3. This is an excerpt from *Sense and Sensibility* followed by the verbs and adjectives associated with Elinor. Although some words could be used as part of her persona, not all of them could be.

## References

Theresa Wilson, Janyce Wiebe, and Paul Hoffmann (2005). *Recognizing Contextual Polarity in Phrase-Level Sentiment Analysis*. *Proc. Of HLT-EMNLP-2005*.

## Conclusions/Future Work

There is a correlation between the change in polarity of characters in *Sense and Sensibility* and the plot line, but not with the overall polarity. Future work would be to test this with other subjects. There may be a correlation between verbs and adjectives associated with a characters name. Future work would be to test this with other novels.