

The London

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor and Marianne go to London for the 'season'. What was the 'London season', and what happened there?

An exciting time of year

From January to June, young people came to London with their families for the 'season'. There were dances (called 'balls'), parties, breakfasts, lunches and dinners. It was the best time for young people to become engaged.

What's on?

A newspaper called *The Morning Post* gave information every day about balls and parties.

'Will you marry me?'

From the right young man, a marriage proposal was welcome. From the wrong person, it could mean danger. After marriage, it was almost impossible for a woman to escape a bad choice.



Most young ladies chose quickly and were engaged by the end of their first season. It was not surprising. In 6 months,

the average young lady went to 50 balls, 60 parties and 30 dinners!

Out of time

Of course, not everyone found a husband. Some young ladies came away every year with no marriage proposal.

As each year passed, it became more and more difficult for them. In Jane Austen's time, it was not usual to get married after the age of 25.

What were the good and bad things about the London season for a young lady?



Season ❀

The diary of Miss Henrietta Horrocks

Saturday, 5th February, 1814

4 p.m.

This morning at 9 o'clock I went riding in Hyde Park with my brother and Mama. I saw Captain Palfrey. He smiled at me. I am sure he is going to the ball at Almack's tonight. I am so excited!

At 10 o'clock, I had breakfast with Mama. After breakfast, we went to the shops. Mama bought me a new green dress.

At 1 o'clock in the afternoon, I went visiting with Mama. We called at cousin Fanny's, and then went on to my aunt's in Chelsea. I can't remember anything anyone said – I am far too excited about the ball!

Sunday, 6th February, 1814

4 a.m.

This evening was wonderful! At 6 in the evening, Colonel James and his wife came for dinner. After dinner, I joined the ladies. The men played cards until 8.30. I could hear them as I got ready for the ball.

Around 10 o'clock, I arrived with my family at the ball. Almack's is my favourite place in London! I am sure my new dress was the most beautiful in the room. Captain Palfrey was there. We danced together until 3 a.m.

Now I must go to bed. I do not know if I will sleep. Captain Palfrey will visit us later today ...



What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.
season marriage proposal lady/ladies average