

Summary of the Work:

With a gift of perception exceeded only by her powers of description, Austen returns to her archetypal narrative: a struggling heroine's efforts at self-definition in a world which offers her the choice of playing either confined daughter or constrained wife.

First published in 1818, *Persuasion* was Austen's last work. Its mellow character and autumnal tone have long made it a favorite with readers. Set in Somersetshire and Bath, the novel revolves around the lives and love affairs of Sir Walter Elliot, his daughters Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary, and various in-laws, friends, suitors, and other characters. In Anne Elliot, the author creates perhaps her most commendable, appealing heroine.

(borrowed from Dover Thrift Edition)

Rationale:

Persuasion works well for a class like AP Literature, which focuses on literary techniques, older syntax, and themes like "the cannibalism among women in their competition for masculine affirmation, the snake-pit marriage market, the commodification of love, and the inescapable economic dependency of wives on their husbands and daughters on their fathers."

The AP Literature course requires students to be capable readers of 19th century literature. To prepare for the test, students need to read a variety of 19th century literature, written by as diverse a range of authors as possible. *Persuasion* fits this category, while also being a book that is written by a female author, and most importantly, a satirical treatise. Past students have remarked that all the books in this course are dark and depressing, so the lighter tone and classic romantic structure of this book helps to round out the course offerings. *Persuasion* is an accessible novel for discussing gender roles and class division both in society and in the writing/publication world of the early 1800s. It also allows for productive discussion of societal norms, expectations and limitations of today's society.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

In *Persuasion*, as in such novels as *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma*, Austen limned the plight of young women who could escape the constraints of family life only by marrying and suggests the foolishness of women who believed they were free and not dependent on the financial and social resources of men. At the same time *Persuasion* offers an ironic and subtle paean to the true love that enables one woman to rise above straitened economic circumstances and the stifling social conventions that restricted women to narrowly circumscribed lives in the common sitting room.

"To read and absorb Austen's works is to understand virtue and vice, as her characters aide the reader in identifying good and bad habits which either redeem or condemn them." Payton Bry. "Why Reading Jane Austen is Essential to Understanding Virtue and Vice" *The Federalist*, 24 August, 2018.

Noted Distinction: Jane Austen's last novel. Readability

- Lexile Score: 1120

Learning Resources Guidelines

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

.

Connection to the Curriculum:

Persuasion lends itself well to application of literary critical theories such as Feminist and Reader-Response, which makes it a great fit for practicing the AP Lit Q3 open question essay.

