



Persuasion Reader's Guide

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READERS GUIDE

Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Lady Russell persuades Anne to break off her engagement to avoid "youth-killing dependence." Does she ultimately succeed in sheltering Anne from this?
2. Persuasion is the aim of rhetoric, yet in this book it often hinders lives and harms feelings. What is Austen commenting on? Consider what happens when Lady Russell or Mrs. Clay persuade others as opposed to what happens when Anne persuades others.
3. Look at how Anne's feelings and perceptions are shown-never through her direct words or thoughts but through an approximate report of these through a distant narrator. What does Austen accomplish by doing this?
4. Consider how sailors such as Wentworth and Admiral Croft have made their fortunes-by capturing enemy ships and enjoying the spoils. With their newfound wealth, they re-join English society in higher social standings. What is Austen's opinion of this? In what ways and situations does she relay this opinion?
5. Many of Austen's earlier works take place in the spring, but this story plays out in autumn. Very often, the characters and narrator notice the colorful leaves and cool air around them. How does the season promote this story?
6. The narrator describes the Christmas scene at the Musgroves' as a "fine-family piece." What is Austen implying with her sarcasm? Do you think she is antifamily?

7. Admiral and Mrs. Croft have the most successful and loving relationship in the novel, even though they are unromantic, eccentric, and deeply rooted in realism. Yet many of the idyllic lovers look to their marriage as a model. What is Austen commenting upon with this ironic reversal?

8. Mr. Elliot is the catalyst for the reunion of Anne and Captain Wentworth, provoking jealousy in Wentworth, which in turn prompts him to reconsider his love for Anne. However, Austen chooses not merely to make Mr. Elliot Anne's unwanted lover but instead to reveal him as a rich and immoral scoundrel, to be cast out of the story. What does Austen accomplish by doing this? What is she saying about the world of property and rank?

9. Compare the original ending chapters and the "real" ending chapters. Why did Austen make these changes? What did she accomplish with them?
