Persuasion Study Guide

Persuasion by Jane Austen

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Contents

Introduction

When *Persuasion* was published posthumously in 1818, only a small circle of people knew of and admired Jane Austen's novels. Since that date, however, Austen has come to be one of the world's most widely read and most beloved authors. She claimed once to her nephew, who would later write her biography, "the little bit (two inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush produces little effect after much labour." Scholars and readers, however, have overwhelmingly disagreed with her assessment that her work produces "little effect," finding her to be a conscious artist and astute social critic. In *Persuasion*, her last novel, Austen continues to present in minute detail the daily lives of her characters, upper-middle-class men and women living in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This novel perhaps is her most romantic, centering on postponed but enduring love. Anne Elliot, the story's heroine, suffers from a decision that was forced upon her several years ago□to break off a relationship with the man she deeply loved. As Austen examines the causes and consequences of this action, she offers a penetrating critique of the standards of the British class system and the narrow-mindedness of those who strictly subscribe to them. The novel's witty realism helped guarantee Austen's position as one of the finest novelists.

Author Biography

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, in England, to George and Cassandra (Leigh) Austen. Her father was a clergyman in Steventon, a small town in Hampshire County. Her mother, whose ancestors were titled, was born into a higher social class. She and her husband settled into a comfortable but modest life, associating with the local gentry and raising eight children. Jane's close relationship with her siblings and her family's relationship with the local gentry would provide her with material for her plots and influence her creation of the settings and characterizations in her novels.

Austen received only five years of formal schooling; however, she continued her education at home. When she was in her teens, she wrote plays, verses, short novels, and other prose works, which were primarily parodies of sentimental fiction. Soon she began writing *Elinor and Marianne*, an early version of *Sense and Sensibility*, and after that, *First Impressions*, which later became *Pride and Prejudice*. Even though a London publishing house rejected the draft of the latter work after her father had submitted it, the novel was heartily enjoyed by her family and a wide circle of acquaintances.

Scholars divide Austen's literary career into an early and a late period separated by a writing hiatus of eight years. The first includes her early writings, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* (both published in 1811), and *Northanger Abbey* (written in 1803 but published posthumously in 1818). Her late period includes *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), and *Persuasion* (published posthumously along with *Northanger Abbey* in 1818. During the eight-year hiatus, Austen moved frequently with her family, staying in Bath, London, Clifton, Warwickshire, and Southampton, where they moved after her father died in 1805.

Austen started writing her last novel, which the family would later title *Sandition*, in 1817. She had not completed the novel when she died, most likely of Addison's disease, on July 18, 1817, in Winchester, England.

During her lifetime, Austen's works were well received, especially *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, yet since all her works were published anonymously, she was not well known by the public. After her death, when her brother revealed her authorship, scholars began critiquing her work. By the end of the nineteenth century, she came to be regarded as one of the most important English novelists, a position she retains today.

Plot Summary

Volume I

The novel opens in the summer of 1814 with Sir Walter Elliot, widower and father of three daughters, Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary, in Kellynch Hall, his estate in Somersetshire, England. Sir Walter's greatest pleasure is to pick up the Baronetage, a book that documents his and his family's history and social standing. He is very close to his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, who shares his vanity and class consciousness, and who has been the mistress of Kellynch Hall for the past thirteen years since her mother died. Elizabeth has struck up a friendship with Mrs. Clay, the daughter of the family lawyer, which troubles Anne, who does not trust Mrs. Clay's motives.

Sir Walter's extravagant spending habits have placed the family into considerable debt. Neither he nor Elizabeth has been able to devise any means of easing their financial burdens without compromising their dignity or relinquishing the comforts they regard as necessities for anyone of their breeding and social position. As a result, Sir Walter begs their close family friend, Lady Russell, to advise them, along with Mr. Shepherd, their lawyer.

Kind-hearted and generally rational, Lady Russell draws up, with Anne's help, a plan for them to economize. However, her father can not approve the suggestions Lady Russell has made for changes in his lifestyle. He decides that he would rather leave his home than live in a manner that he considers undignified. As a result, he determines to find a smaller but comfortable house in Bath and rent out Kellynch Hall, even though he is bothered by the gossip the move might generate. Anne becomes distressed over the thought of leaving her home and moving to a city where she thinks she will not know anyone.

When Admiral Croft, a native of Somersetshire, shows interest in Kellynch Hall, Sir Walter notes his considerable wealth and determines that he and his wife would be suitable tenants. Anne also approves of the couple, especially since several years ago, she had fallen deeply in love with Mrs. Croft's brother, Captain Frederick Wentworth. She hopes that Wentworth might visit his sister, which would afford Anne the opportunity to see him again.

Several years before in the summer of 1806, Wentworth lived at his brother's home near Kellynch Hall and soon fell in love with Anne. Her father, however, did not approve of the match, considering it to be "a very degrading alliance." Lady Russell shared Sir Walter's disapproval, noting that Wentworth had no money. She also considered "his sanguine temper, and fearlessness of mind," a dangerous combination and so strongly advised Anne against marrying him. Anne could not ignore the displeasure felt by her father and Lady Russell, who had become a surrogate mother to her. Lady Russell eventually convinced her that her engagement to Wentworth was improper for both Anne and Wentworth. After Anne broke off the engagement, Wentworth determined that he had

been "ill-used" and left the country. The break caused Anne a great deal of suffering, clouding "every enjoyment of youth" and causing an "early loss of [her] bloom and spirits."

During the next seven years, Anne never found anyone to compare with Captain Wentworth "as he stood in her memory." Charles Musgrove, a wellrespected local man, had asked Anne to marry him, but she turned him down, and eventually he married her sister Mary. Anne has come to regret her decision to break off her relationship with Wentworth, blaming it on her "over-anxious caution."

As the Elliots plan their move, Mary decides that she is in bad health and insists that Anne come to stay with her before relocating to Bath. Mary frequently complains of ill health, most often to gain the attention of her family. Anne gives in to her sister since she is not looking forward to the move to Bath. In addition, her sister lives near Kellynch Hall where she hopes Wentworth will visit. Her patience and good nature soon cure Mary's "illness."

While at Mary's, Anne becomes well acquainted with Charles's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove, who are considerably less elegant and orderly than the Elliots but whose hospitality and kindness soon endear them to Anne. The Musgroves' spirited and good-natured daughters, Henrietta and Louisa, also are welcome guests in Mary's home.

Anne soon runs into Wentworth through her association with the Musgroves and the Crofts. Although he and Anne are frequently in each other's company, they do not engage in any conversation and speak only to each other when it is necessary to be polite. His coldness toward her upsets Anne. All of the others are quite impressed with the captain, especially the Musgroves' daughters. Henrietta seems to have forgotten her attachment to Charles Hayter, a young man she had become close to before she was introduced to Wentworth. Henrietta's attentions, however, soon return to Charles, and the others now assume Wentworth and Louisa will make a match.

One day, as Anne plays with her young nephew, he jumps on her back and refuses to get off. When Wentworth immediately rescues her, she becomes speechless at his kindness. Through this incident, she comes to understand that while he has not been able to forgive her, "he could not be unfeeling" toward her. Though he resented what she had done to him, "he could not see her suffer without the desire of giving her relief . . . an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship." This act becomes proof of his "warm and amiable heart," the acknowledgement of which fills Anne with strong feelings of both pleasure and pain.

Wentworth organizes a trip for all of them to Lyme to visit his friend Captain Harville. While there, they meet Captain Benwick, who has been mourning the death of his fiancée, Harville's sister. Right before they leave Lyme, they take a walk along the Cobb, a long stone pier at the water's edge. Louisa demands that Wentworth catch her as she jumps down the steps, but she moves before he has a chance to prepare and falls on the pavement, knocking herself unconscious. They take Louisa to the Harville's house where she stays to recuperate.

Volume II

After Anne moves to Bath, she becomes friendly with William Elliot, her cousin and the heir presumptive to the Elliot estate, who has been accepted back into the family after a period of estrangement. She also renews her friendship with Mrs. Smith, a widowed schoolmate of hers, who suffers from ill-health and financial problems.

A month later, Anne is thrilled over the news that Louisa and Benwick are engaged, which puts to rest her fears over her friend's attachment to Wentworth. Wentworth soon comes to Bath to visit the Crofts, who have come for a short stay. One evening, when they are all gathered together at a party, Anne begins to suspect that he still has feelings for her after he appears jealous over Mr. Elliot's attentions towards her. The next morning, Anne visits Mrs. Smith who tells her that Mr. Elliot is a man "without heart or conscience," who had led her husband into debt.

The next day Anne discusses with Harville the difference between men's and women's emotions, both claiming that their own sex retains feelings of love the longest. During this conversation, Wentworth writes a letter, which everyone assumes is to Captain Benwick. As they leave, Wentworth leaves the letter where only Anne will discover it. The letter reveals how much he still loves her and his hopes that she returns his affections. Anne becomes overwhelmed with emotion. Later, when they meet on the street, they both declare their love for each other. Anne admits that although Lady Russell was not reasonable in her previous assessment of Wentworth, Anne felt that it was her duty to follow her father's and Lady Russell's wishes.

Lady Elliot and Sir Walter now accept Wentworth as a suitable match for Anne, due to his distinguished military career and his wealth. Wentworth helps Mrs. Smith get some of her husband's money back. The novel ends happily for all.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Persuasion, by Jane Austen, begins by introducing Sir Walter Elliot. He is a handsome, vain 54-year-old man. His favorite story and book, literally, is that of his own life. It begins with dates of the births, deaths and marriages of his family members and it chronicles their accomplishments. Sir Elliot's wife of 17 years passed away 13 years ago. She left him three daughters, although he only cared for the eldest, Elizabeth. In her, he sees himself and all of the good qualities of his wife. Elizabeth is a very handsome young woman. His youngest daughter, Mary, is of some interest to him since she made a good match for herself in marriage. Anne, the middle daughter, is of no consequence to either Elizabeth or Sir Elliot. Anne lives with the two yet is never consulted. Her family does not place any confidence in her. Sir Elliot does not think Anne is pretty at all. One of Sir Elliot's neighbors, Lady Russell, was the best friend of his late wife. She loves all of his daughters and she holds a special place in her heart for Anne.

Elizabeth has filled the role of lady of the house ever since her mother passed away. Sir Elliot thinks that she is by far his prettiest daughter and knows that she will marry very well. He pays no attention to the fact that she is 29 years old, past the normal marrying age. He believes that Elizabeth has a beauty that only gets better with age. Elizabeth, on the other, hand is very mindful of her advanced age. She has already felt disappointment in her romantic life. When she was a young girl, her parents arranged a marriage for her that would provide Sir Elliot with an excellent heir to his fortune, as he has no sons. However, the young man ended up marrying someone else. Elizabeth's former suitor is now a widower, since the recent death of his wife.

For some time now, Sir Walter Elliot has been having money troubles. Actually, Sir Elliot and Elizabeth have been outspending their income ever since Lady Elliot passed away. She was the one who kept the spending under control. Although their debt is getting quite large and the creditors are calling often, neither Elizabeth nor Sir Elliot is willing to give up any conveniences. They call their two neighbors, Lady Russell and Mr. Shepherd, to ask for advice on what to do.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter One of *Persuasion* is the exposition or introduction of the plot and characters of the book. The reader is introduced to the Elliot family. It is important to note how the rest of the family regards Anne. They believe that she is of little consequence to their lives. The frequent mention of Anne, however, foreshadows that she will be an important character.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Mr. Shepherd is not willing to ruffle any feathers by suggesting cutbacks himself, so the duty falls to Lady Russell, a woman of integrity. After much consideration, she writes a budget for the Elliot family. While doing so, she does something neither Elizabeth nor Sir Elliot would have done. She consults Anne. Anne is honest. She wants a tighter budget so that the family will be out of debt sooner. Lady Russell comes up with a plan that would clear the Elliots of debt within seven years.

After much discussion, the family decides to relocate to Bath and rent out their home, Kellynch Hall, which is very costly to maintain. Mr. Shepherd will search for a renter. Sir Elliot's only stipulation is that the search must be done quietly. He does not want people to know that he has been forced to let out his home because of financial difficulty. Mr. Shepherd promises to be discreet.

Lady Russell hopes that the relocation will end the budding friendship between Elizabeth and Mrs. Clay. Mrs. Clay is one of Mr. Shepherd's daughters, who has come home with two children after an unsuccessful marriage. Lady Russell does not think that Mrs. Clay is a good influence on Elizabeth.

Chapter 2 Analysis

In Chapter Two, the reader is further introduced to the characters of Elizabeth and Sir Elliot. It becomes apparent that they are both antagonists to Anne, the protagonist. Both are extremely vain and they are also unwilling to give up any luxuries in the face of impending financial hardship. Anne's father and sister do not seek her advice or consult her in any manner. They do not value her as a person or part of the family. This chapter provides a deepening knowledge of Anne and the reader should look for changes and growth in Anne's character over the course of the story.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Mr. Shepherd considers renting Kellynch Hall to a navel officer now that the war is over. Naval officers are surely responsible, he reasons. Sir Elliot and Mr. Shepherd discuss how much freedom Sir Elliot will allow his tenant. For example, will Sir Elliot allow the renter access to the gardens or far grounds? This leads to a discussion of the navy as a profession. Sir Elliot looks down on those who choose to join the navy, saying that it makes men look older than their age. Sir Elliot is indeed a vain man. Anne believes that the navy is a noble profession.

The first application to rent Kellynch Hall is from a naval officer. Admiral Croft is a married man without any children who has acquired a large sum of money. Mr. Shepherd guarantees that Admiral Croft is a gentleman and quite handsome for a naval officer. Sir Elliot agrees to rent his house to Admiral Croft. He makes his decision after considering that renting to an admiral surely sounds better than renting to only a Mr., although an admiral is surely lesser than Sir Elliot's stature of baronet.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter Three follows a conversation between the Elliots and their neighbors. The family disregards Anne's opinion and overlooks any attempt that she makes to contribute to the conversation. Because of her family's condescending and vain attitude, the reader becomes more sympathetic to Anne.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

When Chapter Four begins, Anne is 19 and she is in very much in love with Captain Frederick Wentworth. Frederick has no stature, fortune or expectations of attaining either. Anne does not care and believes in Frederick. Sir Walter neither withholds his consent nor approves the match. Lady Russell also does not approve. She thinks that Anne is too young and has not met enough people. She does not think that Captain Wentworth's confidence and luck are enough. Anne cannot bear going against the wishes of Lady Russell, who has always been so good to Anne, but when Anne breaks off her engagement with Captain Wentworth, it is for the Captain's benefit. Anne believes that he will accomplish more without her.

Since the broken engagement, Anne has never been interested in another man. She has been courted by other men, including the man her sister later married, but she has never found the same joy she experienced over seven years ago with Frederick. Over the years, Captain Wentworth has made good on all of his predictions. He has gained stature and wealth. Anne learns that Frederick's sister is Admiral Croft's wife and she is reminded of the time that she was with him.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The story of Anne and Captain Wentworth is another story of a failed engagement, but here the similarities to Elizabeth's engagement end. Anne and Captain Wentworth are very much in love. Anne's family's attitude toward her, as well as Lady Russell's opinion, prevents Anne from marrying Captain Wentworth. Lady Russell persuades Anne that the marriage would not be a good match and for her own good she should end the engagement. Anne ends up breaking the engagement, not for her own good, but for Captain Wentworth's benefit. Anne's flashback describes a significant conflict in her life. The conflict is both internal and interpersonal, since she battles her own feelings as well as Lady Russell's efforts at persuasion. This persuasion is the first important appearance of the central theme of the book, a theme that is also the title. The author uses the plot element of coincidence to once again bring Captain Wentworth and Anne together and creates suspense for the reader. What will happen when they do meet?

The family's disinterest in Anne is further revealed in this chapter. Neither Sir Elliot nor Elizabeth immediately remembers Captain Wentworth or his association with Anne. Since the renters of Kellynch are connected to Captain Wentworth, the reader is led to believe that he will be a new character in Anne's life.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The Crofts meet Sir Elliot and Elizabeth and quickly agree to rent Kellynch. Sir Walter Elliot thinks that Admiral Croft is the most hansom sailor he has seen and tells him so. Although the rental agreement goes smoothly, Anne's plans to leave for Bath are interrupted. Mary, Sir Elliot's youngest daughter, often claims to be ill and looks to Anne for help She orders Anne to come to her home, Uppercross Cottage, instead of going to Bath with Sir Elliot and Elizabeth. Elizabeth agrees, saying that, "nobody will want [Anne] in Bath."

Lady Russell is happy that Anne will stay nearby until she is able to take Anne to Bath herself. However, she is suddenly distressed when she realizes that Mrs. Clay intends to go with Sir Elliot and Elizabeth to Bath under the pretense of helping Elizabeth set up their house. Sir Elliot, Elizabeth and Mrs. Clay leave for Bath and Anne goes to take care of Mary at Uppercross Cottage. Mary is a very needy woman. She cannot stand being alone for long. She resents her husband when he leaves for too long and her children annoy her. Anne keeps upbeat and tries to improve Mary's mood.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter Five builds upon the vain sensibilities of Sir Elliot. He only rents to the Crofts after approving of their looks. This chapter also continues the ongoing conflict between Anne and her family. Anne is the compassionate one who does her best to make people happy. Elizabeth is much like her father, vain and obsessed with wealth. Anne's sister Mary is also self-centered and unconcerned with Anne's feelings.

Everyone except Elizabeth and Sir Elliot is surprised that Mrs. Clay is planning go to Bath with the family. Mrs. Clay has returned to her father's house after an "unsuccessful marriage." The reader does not know what problems there were in Mrs. Clay's marriage or what happened to her husband. Mrs. Clay does not bring her two children to Bath and we do not learn who will take care of them.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Anne is unsettled by the upheaval from her home, but Mary is not as unkind to her as Elizabeth was. Mary's husband is also agreeable and Anne's nephews respect her more than they respect their own mother. Anne often thinks that if her brother-in-law Charles had married a better match, he would have been a better man. Charles seems to handle the children better than Mary. Anne is often put in the middle of their disagreements. She is also put in the middle of problems between Mary and her mother in law Mrs. Musgrove.

The day comes when the Crofts are to move into Kellynch Hall. Mary and Anne go to visit them. During their conversation, the Crofts mention that they are expecting Mrs. Croft's brother. Anne wonders which brother will visit, Edward or Frederick. She soon finds that the expected guest is Captain Frederick Wentworth.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Mary, the only daughter with a husband, is extremely needy. Although she treats Anne slightly better then Elizabeth has, she does not feel any qualms over ordering her sister about. The reader is given hints at a transformation in Anne's character. Away from her father and sister, Anne is more open and her opinion is taken seriously. Although Mary does not show Anne much respect, the rest of the Musgroves do respect her.

Chapter Six shows the anxiousness and anticipation Anne feels over the possibility of seeing her former fiancé. The action of the plot is rising. Anne is in greater crisis. There is continued suspense leading toward her inevitable meeting with Captain Wentworth. Although Anne's relationship with Captain Wentworth is central to her feelings, there is no indication that either the Crofts or Musgroves know anything about it.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

A few days later, Captain Wentworth arrives at Kellynch Hall. In a week, he will dine at Uppercross. The day before the planned dinner, Mary's eldest boy has a bad fall. Although there are some tense moments, the boy shows signs of improvement and will be fine after all. He does, however, require a lot of bed rest. Charles believes that nursing children back to health is women's work, so he goes to the dinner. Mary feels that she will do no good at the boy's side (and she is right), so Anne volunteers to stay with her nephew while Mary also joins the dinner.

The next day, Anne briefly meets Frederick. Their first reunion is nothing more than a curtsy and a bow. Captain Frederick Wentworth has never forgiven Anne for throwing what they had away. Although he has never met anyone who compared to her, Frederick does not want Anne anymore. He wishes to find an agreeable young woman, marry and settle down.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Again, this chapter shows Anne in the caretaker role. For Anne, her nephew's fall creates a good excuse to put off seeing Captain Wentworth again, increasing the suspense of anticipating their meeting. Although she still has feelings for Frederick and is curious to see him, she is afraid of what he must think of her. Anne experiences great internal conflict. Nothing is revealed in Anne and Frederick's first meeting except perhaps polite indifference. The reader learns that Captain Wentworth wants to settle down soon and is therefore looking for a suitable wife. He does not believe that woman to be Anne.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Anne and Captain Wentworth are now engaged in the same social circle. They are often in the same room, but never speak. Anne remembers their relationship being so different many years before, when they never ran out of things to talk about. Captain Wentworth continues to treat her with "cold politeness." Anne watches the young Miss Musgroves flirt with him and it reminds her of her younger self.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Chapter Eight puts Anne in frequent contact with Captain Wentworth. As Anne spends more time in his presence, her emotional conflict rises. Anne is constantly reminded of what she had and what she gave up. She chose to give Captain Wentworth a chance to achieve greater status by leaving him, but she deprived him and herself, of love. Was her decision wrong? Is love more important than status? Again, no one displays knowledge of the relationship Captain Wentworth had with Anne over eight years ago, so Anne's regret remains internal.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Captain Wentworth's sister and her husband invite him to stay at Kellynch. He initially intended to stay for a short time before heading to his brother's house, but the warm reception at Uppercross convinces him to stay. Captain Wentworth has spent time with both of Mary's sisters-in-law, Henrietta and Louisa. Charles Hayter, who has returned after a brief absence, is not happy with Captain Wentworth's presence. Charles Hayter and Henrietta Musgrove had previously formed an attachment. Now it seems that Henrietta favors Captain Wentworth. Mary and her husband debate whether Captain Wentworth is more interested in Henrietta or Louisa. Anne has the same silent debate but does not share her feelings.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Anne witnesses the bizarre love triangle, of sorts, between Captain Wentworth and the two Musgrove sisters. Charles Hayter brings another element of conflict to the situation, a second 'triangle' between Captain Wentworth, Henrietta and Charles Hayter. Anne's feelings toward Captain Wentworth are not overt. She does experience longing when she sees him with the other girls, but she does not act on her feelings.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Anne has many chances to observe Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove with Captain Wentworth. She believes that Louisa is Captain Wentworth's favorite, although she does not believe Frederick is in love with either of the girls. She also does not believe that either of them is in love with him, only enamored.

One day, Anne finds herself on a walk with Henrietta, Louisa, Mary, Charles and Frederick. They take quite a long walk and end up at Charles Hayter's house. It seems as if that was Henrietta and Louisa's plan all along. After some discussion, the group agrees that Charles and Henrietta will call on Hayter while the rest wait.

Mary wanders off, as do Captain Wentworth and Louisa. Anne finds a place to sit while she waits. While she is waiting, she overhears Captain Wentworth tell Louisa that he prefers women whose convictions are strong and cannot be easily changed. This is very painful for Anne to hear, reminding her that she allowed her family and friends to convince her not to marry Captain Wentworth. Anne also hears Louisa tell Captain Wentworth that Charles Musgrove asked Anne to marry him and she refused, before he married Mary. Louisa confides to Captain Wentworth that she prefers Anne to Mary.

Once Charles and Henrietta rejoin the group, they all head back home. Halfway back to the cottage, they meet the Crofts riding in their buggy. Captain Wentworth notices Anne's fatigue and has her take the ride back. At that moment, Anne feels she understands Frederick. He is not truly cold toward her, but he will also never be able to forgive her.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Anne can clearly dissect the feelings that Captain Wentworth has towards both Henrietta and Louisa. She has insight into his character and knew him very well when they were together. By planning to call on Charles Hayter, Henrietta seems to be making a choice. While Captain Wentworth goes off with Louisa, Henrietta goes to visit Hayter. The group is pairing off into couples, leaving Anne alone.

Both Louisa and Mrs. Musgrove genuinely value Anne. Only Anne's immediate family feel that Anne is insignificant. The reader continues to be sympathetic toward Anne as protagonist. The connection between Captain Wentworth and Anne is still evident in their reading of each other's expressions as he is putting her in the carriage. She understands that he was deeply hurt by her.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Lady Russell will soon bring Anne to stay with her until they proceeded to Bath. Anne thinks of the advantages and disadvantages of living with Lady Russell instead of Mary. Lady Russell is a good friend and much less demanding than Mary and Lady Russell's house is in the same town as Kellynch. She will be closer to Captain Wentworth and they will surely see each other in town frequently. On the other hand, Anne reasons, Captain Wentworth does spend a lot of time at Uppercross and she will no longer see him during those visits. Anne is certainly not looking forward to a meeting between Lady Russell and Captain Wentworth, since they do not like each other.

Before Anne leaves Uppercross, she joins Charles, Mary, Henrietta, Louisa and Captain Wentworth on a trip to a neighboring seaside town to visit Captain Harville, Mrs. Harville and Captain Benwick, friends of Frederick. Anne thinks the three are very nice, although it saddens her to think that they would have been her friends too if she had married Frederick.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Once again, Anne spends time with Captain Wentworth when they travel to Lyme. There, she is deeply saddened after imagining what her life would have been like had she never left Captain Wentworth. He has such good friends and Anne has only Lady Russell to truly call her friend. Anne's regret is deepening. The reader senses that a conflict resulting from her crisis is inevitable.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

While walking back from the beach on their second morning away, the group passes a gentleman who seems to think Anne is a very handsome young woman. Captain Wentworth sees the look the gentleman gives Anne and agrees that Anne looks quite good. The man they pass turns out to be Mr. Elliot, Sir Walter Elliot's heir, who refused to marry Elizabeth. The group does not learn the man's identity until after he leaves the inn.

After breakfast, the group goes for one last walk along the sea. Captain Harville, Mrs. Harville and Captain Benwick join them. At every staircase they descend, Louisa runs around and Captain Wentworth catches her as she hops from higher ground. The last time she does this, Captain Wentworth warns her that it is not a good idea. She jumps anyway and falls hard to the ground. Her body is suddenly lifeless. The whole group believes that she is dead. Henrietta and Mary quickly become hysterical. Charles sobs over his sister's body and everyone looks toward Anne for directions. On her suggestion, Captain Benwick goes to town to search for a surgeon and Captain and Mrs. Harville insist that Louisa be carried to their house. Captain Benwick arrives quickly with the surgeon, who examines Louisa and says that she will not die. Louisa has a severe concussion but will eventually recover.

Henrietta, Charles and Captain Wentworth decide that someone needs to go back to Uppercross to tell Louisa's parents what happened. Already, the group has stayed longer than they intended. Henrietta confesses that she would be of no help at the sickbed and Charles refuses to leave his sister. Captain Wentworth decides to take Henrietta and Mary home. Anne plans to stay and help take care of Louisa. Mary objects to the plan. She is upset that not she but Anne will care for her sister-in-law when Anne was "nothing to Louisa." In the end, Captain Wentworth leaves for Uppercross with Henrietta and Anne. Anne is very disappointed that she was not allowed to care for Louisa, although she does sense a feeling of friendship between herself and Captain Wentworth after the tragedy. Upon dropping off Henrietta and Anne, Captain Wentworth returns to assist Charles and Mary.

Chapter 12 Analysis

In this chapter, another man sees Anne as beautiful. This man had rejected Anne's sister Elizabeth, who was always considered more beautiful by their father (and by Elizabeth herself). This reinforces the idea that Anne's family's view is not reliable. Captain Wentworth pays Anne the ultimate compliment, in her mind, when he shows confidence in her ability to handle a crisis. Louisa's accident marks a turning point in the novel. Anne and Captain Wentworth may be able to rekindle their relationship. Anne's character also develops further as the marked changes in Anne continue. The accident

places Anne in a position of strength and respect. Physically, Anne is also changing. As the way she is treated improves, so does her appearance. Inner beauty becomes outer beauty.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Anne spends her remaining two days at Uppercross comforting and assisting Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove. She is happy that she is truly needed. Then Lady Russell arrives to take Anne back to the apartments on the Kellynch grounds where Anne will stay before continuing on to Bath. Anne admits to herself that it is hard to keep up with Lady Russell's musings on Bath, her father and Elizabeth, when she would much rather think of Louisa and Captain Wentworth's friends. Anne has not thought much of either her father or Elizabeth while she has been at Uppercross. Lady Russell says that Anne is looking quite lovely. There is a new healthful glow to the young woman.

After a few days, Lady Russell and Anne call on the Crofts at Anne's former home. Anne feels as if no one could have cared for the home better. She likes the Croft's informal and congenial attitude. Lady Russell is not as receptive to their tone. The group discusses the tragedy that happened to Louisa and the fact that her recovery seems to be going as expected. The Crofts announce that they are going away for a few weeks, so Anne will not have to worry about seeing Captain Wentworth at Kellynch.

Chapter 13 Analysis

In this chapter, Anne is uprooted again. The development of Anne's character is clear through her continued attachment to Louisa and the friends that she has made in Uppercross and Lyme. Her new friends are contrasted to Lady Russell, who embodies Anne's old life. Lady Russell also makes us more aware of the changes in Anne. Lady Russell notes the physical changes in Anne and the contrast between the two characters' attitudes toward the Crofts shows the inner changes in Anne's character.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Charles and Mary return to Uppercross after the Musgroves take a trip to visit Louisa. Charles and Mary call on Lady Russell and Anne soon after their return. They speak of Louisa's condition. She is doing much better and is sitting up by herself. The talk quickly turns to Captain Benwick. Anne has formed a friendship with Captain Benwick, who is mourning the death of his fiancé. Captain Benwick could not stop speaking of Anne and the books that she recommended. Charles likes him very much and he and Anne agree that Lady Russell would like him too. Mary, on the other hand, does not like Captain Benwick. She is upset by the fact that Captain Benwick seems to like her sister more than he likes her. Lady Russell will soon have the opportunity to form her own opinion, since Charles tells the group that Captain Benwick intends to call on Anne soon.

A week has passed without the arrival of Captain Benwick. Christmas is fast approaching. The Musgroves come back to Uppercross to greet their younger children who have come back from school. They bring the Harville's children with them to lessen any burden on the Harville's, since Louisa is still recovering at their house and Henrietta is still at Louisa's bedside.

Lady Russell and Anne visit Uppercross one last time before going to Bath. The house is filled with children and seasonal cheer. Elizabeth writes to Anne that Mr. Elliot has called at Camden-place, Sir Elliot's new residence in Bath, several times. Both Lady Russell and Anne are curious to meet Mr. Elliot. When they reach Bath, Lady Russell drops Anne off at Camden-place before heading to her residence.

Chapter 14 Analysis

This chapter marks the reemergence of Mr. Elliot in the lives of Sir Elliot's family. Yet another man, Captain Benwick, shows his interest in Anne. The disappearance of Captain Wentworth builds suspense as to when he will next appear.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Anne has long dreaded moving to Bath. Surprisingly, her father and Elizabeth are excited at her arrival. However, their excitement is because they want to show off their new house, which they are both quite proud of and remark on how sought after they are in Bath. They both think Bath is much more exciting than Kellynch. The two are also enthusiastic about the reappearance of Mr. Elliot in their lives. He has called on them several times and apologized for his previous actions toward the family. Sir Elliot and Elizabeth quickly forgave him and are once again on good terms with their cousin and heir. Elizabeth hopes that Mr. Elliot will focus his attention on her as a potential second wife.

Just as Elizabeth, Anne and Sir Elliot are speaking of Mr. Elliot, he knocks on their door. Anne recognizes Mr. Elliot as the man that she passed by while traveling to the seaside village where Louisa was injured. At their introduction, Mr. Elliot's expression shows that he too recognizes Anne from their brief encounter. He still seems to find Anne pleasing in appearance and Anne also finds him very good looking and extremely polite. He joins in their conversation and stays for over an hour. He is interested in hearing of Anne's trip to the village where they had seen each other. Through the description of her trip, Anne is forced to explain Louisa's accident in detail. At the end of the evening, Anne is pleasantly surprised that her first evening in Bath has gone quite well.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Mr. Elliot reenters Elizabeth's life, just as Captain Wentworth reentered Anne's. However, it seems that Mr. Elliot may be interested in Anne instead of Elizabeth. Neither Elizabeth nor Sir Elliot is aware of this development. Elizabeth and Anne are very different women and they function as literary foils, purposefully displaying opposite traits.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

On her second day at Bath, Anne tries to find out whether or not her father is in love with Mrs. Clay. She overhears Mrs. Clay telling Sir Elliot and Elizabeth that she will probably leave soon, since Anne has now arrived. Sir Elliot and Elizabeth quickly persuade her to stay. Sir Elliot tells her not to go and Elizabeth tells her that she cares much more for her than for Anne. Later that morning, Sir Elliot tells Anne in private that she is looking very good. She looks less thin and her complexion has improved. It is very unusual for Sir Elliot to give any compliment to his youngest daughter.

Lady Russell is troubled over Mrs. Clay's continued stay at the Elliot household. Her worry, however, is almost completely overshadowed by her strong approval of Mr. Elliot. Anne learns more about Mr. Elliot. He does not like Mrs. Clay very much and that pleases Anne, who likes Mr. Elliot although she thinks that he may have an ulterior motive for getting back in Sir Elliot's good graces. Mr. Elliot puts more value into social standing than Anne does, causing them to have thoughtful discussions.

Chapter 16 Analysis

This chapter generates speculation about Mrs. Clay and her extended stay with the Elliots. Both Sir Elliot and Elizabeth like Mrs. Clay and beg her to stay. Since Sir Elliot and Elizabeth have both been depicted as vain and self-centered, the reader does not trust their opinions. The other characters dislike Mrs. Clay.

Anne's improving looks are emphasized yet again. Her healthier appearance is a sign of the transformation of her character in the story. Although her family never appreciated inner strength and beauty, they appreciate outer beauty and Anne's father comments on her changed appearance. Her experience with people who value her, like the Musgroves and Captain Wentworth, lead to positive changes in Anne. Will these changes remain with her, now that she is back with her family? There is also continued suspense concerning what will happen between Captain Wentworth and Anne, as Anne builds a friendship with Mr. Elliot. Their discussions about social standing reveal one of the major underlying themes of the work.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Anne pays a visit to her old governess, Mrs. Smith, who now lives in Bath. Mrs. Smith, formerly Miss Hamilton, was only a few years older than Anne, but her life has gone very differently in the twelve years since they last saw each other. Mrs. Smith married a wealthy but financially irresponsible man and her husband died, leaving her poor and in bad health.

The next evening, the Elliot family and Lady Russell receive an invitation from Lady Dalrymple, a royal cousin of Sir Elliot. Anne refuses the invitation, since she has plans to visit Mrs. Smith. Her father and Elizabeth disapprove of her going to such a poor area to call on a feeble woman instead of accepting the invitation from Lady Dalrymple.

The next day, Lady Russell tells Anne about the evening at Lady Dalrymple's house. During the gathering, Mr. Elliot talked about Anne's kindness in calling on an old friend who is now impoverished and unwell. In fact, Lady Russell announces, he could not stop talking about how fine Anne was. Lady Russell thinks that Mr. Elliot would make a good match for Anne and she believes that he will begin to show his interest soon, since his wife's death was quite a while ago. Anne believes and tells Lady Russell, that Mr. Elliot would not be a good match for her. Lady Russell tells Anne that nothing would make her happier than to see Anne become the next Lady Elliot and preside over Kellynch Hall. Anne, however, does not think that she will change her mind.

Anne still cares for only one man, Captain Wentworth and she believes Mr. Elliot may not be all that he claims to be. She does not completely trust his perfect manners and lack of human emotion. Anne is still suspicious of Mr. Elliot's sudden return to their lives.

Chapter 17 Analysis

The difference between the direction that life has taken Mrs. Smith and Anne is striking. The renewal of their friendship shows that Mrs. Smith will be a constant in Anne's life for as long as they are both in Bath. Mrs. Smith brings out the theme of class again in the novel. Anne visits Mrs. Smith instead of Lady Dalrymple, over Lady Russell's objections, choosing friendship and human kindness over social status.

It is apparent to Lady Russell that Mr. Elliot has eyes for Anne. The theme of persuasion is revisited. Lady Russell again attempts to interfere with Anne's romantic life, this time by trying to convince Anne that Mr. Elliot would be a good match for her. Lady Russell's qualifications for a good match are social status and wealth. She wants Anne to be Lady Elliot and preside over an estate. Anne acknowledges Lady Russell's arguments, but she does not quite trust Mr. Elliot. Anne's suspicion creates suspense for the reader concerning Mr. Elliot's true character and motivations. Sir Elliot and Elizabeth are blind to Mr. Elliot's interest in Anne and continue to believe that he wishes to marry Elizabeth.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

After living in Bath for a month, Anne receives a letter from Mary via the Crofts, who are in Bath. Mary's tone is very negative and complaining, as is Mary's attitude toward life. Louisa has finally traveled back home to Uppercross. While Louisa was recovering, she and Captain Benwick fell in love. They are now engaged to be married. Everyone at Uppercross is very surprised. Anne, too, is surprised.

While walking, Anne runs into Admiral Croft. They walk together while Admiral Croft recounts the surprising engagement between Louisa and Captain Benwick. Admiral Croft thought that Louisa would marry his brother-in-law, Frederick, but it seems that Frederick had not called on Louisa for some months. Frederick holds no animosity toward his friend, Captain Benwick and hopes the couple is happy. Admiral Croft's only thought is that now Captain Wentworth will have to find another young woman. He proposes asking Captain Wentworth to come to Bath and asks Anne if she thinks that is a good idea.

Chapter 18 Analysis

The engagement of Captain Benwick and Louisa is a great surprise to both the characters and the reader. The event cements another consistent element throughout the book, that of marriages, engagements and matches. Almost all of the characters who are not already married are actively engaged in either a relationship that promises the future of marriage or are searching for their match. The idea of marriages and matches goes hand in hand with the theme of social status. A marriage can raise or lower your social status. It can lower a woman into poverty (as with Mrs. Smith) or raise a woman to the status of lady (as is Lady Russell's wish for Anne). The pull of social status in marriage conflicts with a spiritual match of love and respect.

No one seems to know or remember that Captain Wentworth and Anne had once been engaged and no one considers her a match for him now. Ironically, she is put in the position of consultant as to whether Captain Wentworth might have luck finding a mate in Bath. The author does not reveal how Anne answers the question put forth by Admiral Croft: whether they should invite Captain Wentworth for a visit. This chapter foreshadows the possibility of Captain Wentworth's reemergence in the story and in Anne's life.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Admiral Croft does not need to invite Captain Wentworth to Bath, since he was already on his way. He runs into Anne on a rainy day shortly after his arrival. He is very surprised to see her. They exchange pleasantries and Captain Wentworth offers her his umbrella. Anne refuses and Mr. Elliot arrives to escort her back. Captain Wentworth's group sees that Mr. Elliot fancies Anne. They all have good things to say about her.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Captain Wentworth was on his way to Bath at the very moment that Admiral Croft was talking about inviting him. Is this an element of coincidence in the plot, showing a force of coincidence bringing Captain Wentworth and Anne together? Or is it possible that Captain Wentworth comes to Bath with the thought that he may meet Anne again? This is the first time that Captain Wentworth shows marked nervousness at seeing Anne.

Captain Wentworth's mood quickly changes when he sees that Mr. Elliot will escort Anne home. His attitude seems to show that he is jealous. Although Anne rejects Captain Wentworth's umbrella and allows Mr. Elliot to bring her home, Anne has also rejected, to Lady Russell, the idea that she might marry Mr. Elliot. A future relationship between Anne and Captain Wentworth seems more possible.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Anne, Elizabeth, Sir Elliot and Mrs. Clay attend a concert held by Lady Dalrymple. Captain Wentworth is also at the concert and speaks with Anne for some time before the music begins. Anne is so overjoyed by that simple conversation that she is glowing. Anne believes that Captain Wentworth is in love with her. Captain Wentworth tells Anne that Louisa is not as well rounded as Captain Benwick, but that he wishes them well. Anne infers from this slight criticism that Captain Wentworth never truly loved Louisa. He also mentions that one never gets over a true love and Anne believes that he may be referring to their lost love.

Mr. Elliot finagles a seat next to Anne and tries to engage her in conversation. Anne wishes that Mr. Elliot were not so close. Finally, Captain Wentworth approaches Anne again, but this time his mood has changed. He seems more distant than he was before the concert. Just when Captain Wentworth warms up and Anne believes that he will take the empty seat next to her, Mr. Elliot interrupts, asking if she could translate the Italian song for him. Captain Wentworth makes a hasty exit from the concert. Anne believes that he is jealous of Mr. Elliot.

Chapter 20 Analysis

This is the first time that Anne suspects that Captain Wentworth is still in love with her. Louisa's accident seemed to bring the two closer together and then they were separated by Anne's trip to Bath. Captain Wentworth's trip to Bath and his new attitude toward Anne represent a major turning point in their relationship. When Anne sees the change in Frederick, she can fully admit to herself that she loves him. Their relationship is complicated by the presence of Mr. Elliot. Although Anne is not attracted to him, Mr. Elliot tries to prevent Anne and Captain Wentworth from getting closer to each other.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Anne visits Mrs. Smith the next day to tell her about the concert. Mrs. Smith mistakenly thinks that Anne's happiness and glow is the affect of Mr. Elliot. Mrs. Smith has heard rumors that Mr. Elliot and Anne intend to marry. Anne denies the rumors and at first Mrs. Smith tries to convince her that she should change her mind. Then Mrs. Smith reverses her position, telling Anne that Mr. Elliot is a cold-hearted, calculating man who should not be trusted. Mr. Elliot was a very good friend of Mrs. Smith's husband. At the time, Mr. Elliot was the poorest of the group. Mrs. Smith's brother often helped Mr. Elliot financially.

Then, Mr. Elliot married his first wife for money. With his wife dead, Mr. Elliot wants to retain his status as heir to Kellynch Hall. He came to Bath to make sure that Sir Walter Elliot did not plan to marry Mrs. Clay, since that would make her the lady of the house and a potential mother to male heirs. Upon seeing Anne, he decided to marry her to secure his position as heir.

Mrs. Smith tells Anne that when Mr. Elliot married and became wealthy, he encouraged Mr. Smith to spend more than he could afford and lead them into poverty. Mr. Smith appointed Mr. Elliot executor of his will, but Mr. Elliot never preformed his duties, causing Mrs. Smith many hardships. Mrs. Smith initially tried to persuade Anne to marry Mr. Elliot, so that Anne would be in a position to help Mrs. Smith convince Mr. Elliot to perform his duties as executor.. Mrs. Smith had thought that two would eventually be married in any case and that with Anne's help, she could recoup some of her husband's wealth from Mr. Elliot. Anne resolves to be more firm with Mr. Elliot now that she is aware of his true character.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Mrs. Smith proves to be an important character. She continues the theme of persuasion by first trying to convince Anne that she would be happy in marrying Mr. Elliot. She then reveals Mr. Elliot's true atrocious character. By remaining steadfast in her decision, Anne avoids a potentially disastrous marriage and learns about Mr. Elliot. Anne's suspicions concerning Mr. Elliot prove correct. This is a turning point in the story. Anne exercises a consistency in her own beliefs, contrasted with her inconsistency in breaking her engagement to Captain Wentworth. While she eventually regrets her early inconsistency, her staunchness is immediately rewarded by information confirming her beliefs. The potential for correcting the past, for a reunion between Anne and Captain Wentworth, begins to seem inevitable. Note that the character traits that Anne abhors in Mr. Elliot are a desire for money and a desire for social standing.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Mary and her husband Charles travel to Bath with Mrs. Musgrove, Captain Harville and Henrietta and their arrival surprises the Elliots. They bring news that Henrietta and Charles Hayter are engaged. Anne is excited to see her old friends once again. Captain Wentworth joins the group in conversation. Mary spots Mrs. Clay outside speaking with Mr. Elliot, but Mr. Elliot had told everyone that he would be out of town on business. Elizabeth and Sir Elliot interrupt the happy group to invite them all to a small gathering at their house the next evening. Elizabeth makes certain that she personally invites Captain Wentworth. She now believes he is someone she should know.

Chapter 22 Analysis

The engagement of Henrietta and Charles Hayter continues the theme of marriages, engagements and matches. All of the people in Anne's life come together in this chapter. Her family, from the first stage of her life, meets the friends who helped Anne change. This union of elements will lead to a climax in Anne's development. Elizabeth's interest in Captain Wentworth hints at another potential conflict in the future, before Anne and Frederick can be reunited.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Anne wishes to visit Lady Russell and tell her of Mr. Elliot's true character, but she is obligated to visit with the Musgroves all day. Upon arriving to meet the party, Anne learns that Mary and Henrietta have gone out. Captain Wentworth is busy with Captain Harville and Mrs. Musgrove and Mrs. Croft are talking about how much they disdain the uncertainty of long engagements. At that moment, Anne looks toward Captain Wentworth, who stops writing and looks toward her for just an instant. Captain Wentworth, Captain Harville and Mrs. Croft take their leave from the group. Very discreetly, Captain Wentworth places a letter in front of Anne.

Anne sits down to read the letter and is overwhelmed. Captain Wentworth professes his love for her, a love that has lasted since their initial engagement. Anne was his reason for coming to Bath. He wishes for a moment alone with her to learn whether she feels the same way. Anne is overcome by shock as Charles, Mary and Henrietta join her and Mrs. Musgrove. They all think that Anne has been taken suddenly ill. Charles decides to take her home. On the way, they run into Captain Wentworth. Charles asks Frederick to take Anne the rest of the way home so that he may keep an appointment. Anne and Captain Wentworth find themselves alone together. They talk the entire way back to Anne's home about their mutual feelings of love for one another. Neither of them had stopped loving the other or had seriously considered another match.

That night at her father's gathering, Anne apologizes to Captain Wentworth for breaking their engagement. She followed Lady Russell's advice because Lady Russell had always been good to her and was the closest to a real parental figure that she had. Captain Wentworth believes that in time he will be able to forgive Lady Russell. He also apologizes for letting his pride get in the way of expressing his feelings much sooner.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Captain Wentworth's feelings finally become clear. Simply by telling Anne that he loves her, he reunites with her. During their short conversation, they discover that neither ever stopped loving the other. This is the climax of the book. The highest point of emotion for the principle characters is reached through Frederick's letter. The letter is only effective because the characters' feelings have never changed. Only external pressures and events have kept them apart.

Anne's apology to Captain Wentworth again touches on the theme of persuasion. Everyone has been persuaded in some way. Anne was persuaded by Lady Russell to leave Captain Wentworth. Years later, Lady Russell and Mrs. Smith tried to persuade Anne to consider Mr. Elliot a good match. Men have tried to persuade her to marry

them. Her father and sister tried to persuade her that she was insignificant. Finally, Captain Wentworth persuaded her that he loved her.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

In this chapter, the narrative voice changes from Anne's point of view, rooted in the present, to a more neutral narrator, recalling from a future point in time the events that close the story. Captain Wentworth and Anne soon marry. Sir Walter has no objections, after considering that the name Wentworth sounds nice and Captain Wentworth is a handsome man. Elizabeth shows indifference to the announcement. Mary is quite pleased that her sister is marrying Captain Wentworth and not either of her husband's sisters. Lady Russell has to reconcile with herself that she made an incorrect assessment of Captain Wentworth's character. Upon doing so, she is kind to him since he makes Anne happy. Mr. Elliot, hearing of Anne's engagement, leaves Bath. Mrs. Clay joins him and the two become a couple. Elizabeth is shocked that her friend betrays her.

Chapter 24 Analysis

The last chapter is told in the voice of a narrator some time after the last chapter's events. The narrator sums up the ending to the story and everyone's feelings and reactions. The final match between Captain Wentworth and Anne is the fulfillment of what a good match should be, based on respect and love instead of social status and money. The protagonist found her own strength of character and through her newfound strength, achieved a true match. She triumphs over the antagonists, including Elizabeth, her character foil. Anne transforms from being unloved and unappreciated, relegated to staying in the background, to having a great number of friends and champions, marrying the man she had loved for so long and having her opinion fully appreciated.

Characters

Captain Benwick

Benwick, "an excellent young man," had been engaged to Captain Harville's sister. Anne meets him when she and her group travel to Lyme to visit Harville, Wentworth's friend. Harville's sister died the preceding summer while Benwick was at sea, and he has been in mourning ever since. Anne notes his "melancholy air" and his withdrawal from conversation. When she strikes up a friendship with him, she finds that his need to be useful prompts him to keep busy, constructing toys for the children and fixing things for the Harvilles. He and Anne discuss poetry, but she warns him of its power to stir the emotions and so suggests that he read it sparingly.

Mrs. Clay

Elizabeth strikes up a friendship with Mrs. Clay, the daughter of Mr. Shepherd, the family's lawyer. Mrs. Clay has returned to her father's house with her children after an unprosperous marriage. She has a sharp mind and "understood the art of pleasing," which makes her untrustworthy to Anne and Lady Russell, who consider her friendship with Elizabeth "dangerous." They both believe that she would like to form a romantic relationship with Sir Walter.

Admiral Croft

Admiral Croft and his wife rent Kellynch Hall after the Elliots move to Bath. His "goodness of heart and simplicity of character" are "irresistible" to Anne.

Mrs. Croft

Mrs. Croft is a "well-spoken, genteel, shrewd lady," who appears older than her thirty-eight years, due to her spending so much time at sea with her husband. Anne admires her for her open and easy manners and her devotion to being with her husband, even under the harsh conditions at sea.

Anne Elliot

Anne Elliot, Sir Elliot's middle daughter, possesses an elegant mind and sweet character recognized by all but her father and sister, who regard her as ordinary and so do not pay her much attention. Years ago, during her relationship with Wentworth, Anne had been quite attractive, but the pain she suffered after their split caused her "bloom" to vanish early.

Anne's loyalty and sense of family duty emerged as she forced herself to follow her father's and Lady Russell's advice concerning her engagement to Wentworth. Her naïve and gentle nature could not stand up to these two powerful influences in her life. She especially trusted Lady Russell's good council and so was persuaded to admit that a marriage to Wentworth would be improper and imprudent. Her unselfishness extended to Wentworth, whom she was convinced would also benefit from the breaking of their engagement, a belief that helped her endure their painful split.

Years later, Anne displays her maturity and levelheadedness as she constructs a plan with Lady Russell to help her father economize. Mary and her friends recognize her responsible nature and her kind heart, which emerges as she nurses her sister and takes charge after Louisa falls from the Cobb. All, except her father and sister, look to Anne for direction when a problem arises.

Over the years, Anne develops a keen understanding of human nature and so recognizes her father's and sister's shallow class consciousness. As she meets and enjoys the company of the Crofts and the Musgroves, she comes to relax her own strict standards of behavior and situation. This change becomes apparent when everyone but Anne makes a fuss when her cousins, the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple and her daughter, the Honorable Miss Carteret, come to Bath. Anne finds them boring, preferring "the company of clever, well-informed people who have a great deal of conversation." She ignores William's observation that the family's association with them would be good for their position in society. She feels that those whose sincerity sometimes caused them to be imprudent or to lack decorum should be trusted more than those whose guardedness never allowed them to make a social mistake.

Her maturity also contributes to her understanding that while she should not yield to another's persuasion, she must retain her loyalty to her friends and family, even at the expense of her own desires.

Elizabeth Elliot

Elizabeth, the eldest Elliot daughter, has been the mistress of Kellynch Hall for the past thirteen years since her mother died, "presiding and directing with a self-possession and decision." She shares her father's vanity and class snobbery and ignores Anne, for the most part, considering her not worthy of her time or attention.

Mary Elliot

Sir Walter and Elizabeth also did not think much of Mary, the youngest Elliot, but when she married Charles Musgrove, she acquired a measure of importance in their estimation. Exhibiting the same kind of self-involvement as does her sister and father, Mary often complains of being unwell and always insists that her needs take precedence over those of her family. She often turns to Anne to "nurse" her back to health. When she feels that she has been properly attended to, she has high spirits, but when left alone for too long a period, she inevitably comes down with a new series of

complaints. Just as Anne is planning her move to Bath, Mary contracts another aliment and insists that she "cannot possibly do without" Anne's care. While Mary shows none of Anne's compassion nor even temper, Anne frequently agrees to stay with her sister since she was "not so repulsive and unsisterly as Elizabeth, nor so inaccessible to all influence of hers."

Sir Walter Elliot

"Vanity was the beginning and the end" of Sir Walter's character. He spent his time perfecting his personal appearance and reviewing his position in society. His favorite pastime is to reread his entry in the Baronetage, a book that records his and his family's history and social standing. He is quite attached to his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, who shares his temperament, but considers his two other daughters to be of very inferior value. He has lost hope of Anne ever marrying well and so puts his faith in Elizabeth to uphold the honor of the family through a prosperous marriage.

Sir Walter's snobbery had previously prompted him to deny his blessing for Anne's plans to marry Wentworth. He considers a naval career undesirable, insisting that sailors work hard but do not deserve to be raised from an obscure birth into distinction that he considers unmerited. He also finds sailors rather unattractive, due to their weathered features. Sir Walter only appreciates people and things he finds aesthetically pleasing. He reveals his shallowness when, at the end of the novel, he welcomes Wentworth into the family since the captain has amassed over twenty-five thousand pounds and has moved as high in his profession as possible and thus is no longer "nobody." Wentworth is now esteemed "quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish, spendthrift baronet."

William Elliot

William Elliot, Esq., Anne's cousin and the heir presumptive to the Elliot inheritance, had a falling out with the family after his relationship with Elizabeth failed to end in marriage. The family had also discovered that he had "spoken most disrespectfully of them," which they could not forgive. Soon after, he married a rich woman "of inferior birth." After she died, he tried to resume his relationship with Elizabeth, but she would not consider it.

Eventually, he reestablishes his relationship with the family by insisting that his treatment of them had been due to an unfortunate misunderstanding. Sir Walter forgives him, and the family now becomes "delighted" with him, influenced by his charm and the fortune he has amassed through marriage. William now turns his attentions to Anne, who initially is flattered. To all, he appears polished, agreeable, and sensible. His conversations with others reveal "correct opinions" about the world and family honor. He also displays a kind heart and a sense of moderation.

The family assumes that he will marry Anne. While she admits the thought of being able to move back to Kellynch is hard to resist, she decides there is something about his

character that bothers her. She distrusts his past, due to rumors that he had indulged in bad habits. Also, although he appears to be rational and discreet, he is not open. Anne notices that he never displays his emotions□any "warmth of indignation or delight." She becomes suspicious of his guardedness.

Anne's suspicions of William are proven true when Mrs. Smith reveals to her his true character. Elliot is, in reality, "a designing, wary, coldblooded being who thinks only of himself." Mrs. Smith has experienced firsthand his lack of feeling for others when she watched him lead her husband into overwhelming debt. She concludes that he is "black and hollow at heart." Mrs. Smith proves his true nature when she shows Anne a letter he had written, criticizing her family. At the end of the novel, Elliot runs off with Mrs. Clay.

Captain Harville

Anne considers Captain Harville, a good friend of Wentworth's, a perfect gentleman, "unaffected, warm, and obliging."

Mrs. Fanny Harville

Mrs. Harville is "a degree less polished than her husband," yet she displays the same good heart, warmly welcoming the group from Somersetshire to her home. She also insists that Louisa recuperate under her care after her accident.

Charles Hayter

Charles Hayter, a scholar "very superior in cultivation and manners" to the Musgroves, has been involved in a relationship with Henrietta. When Wentworth arrives, Henrietta's attentions and affection are temporarily transferred from Charles to him.

Charles Musgrove

Charles Musgrove, a well-respected local man, had asked Anne to marry him, but she turned him down, and eventually he married her sister Mary. Her marriage to Charles pleases Sir Walter, who appreciates that Charles's standing in society is second only to Sir Walter's.

Charles's good nature allows him to tolerate his wife's frequent bids for attention, a quality Anne admires. She admits that his temperament and common sense make him superior to her sister; however, he is not clever enough in conversation for her to regret turning him down. He spends much of his time involved in sport but in nothing else of consequence, a situation Anne decides would have been improved if he had married a woman of equal understanding who could have helped steer him in a more useful and rational direction.

Henrietta Musgrove

Henrietta and Louisa, Charles's sisters, are typical women of their time and station. They live "to be fashionable, happy and merry." They both are high spirited and open but have no time for the more cultivated pursuits that occupy much of Anne's time. Anne appreciates their mutual affection for each other, something she has not enjoyed with her own sisters. Henrietta and Louisa pay Wentworth a great deal of attention and develop a "fever of admiration" for him that Anne fears might turn into love. Henrietta had been in a romantic relationship with another man before she met Captain Wentworth. Her attention and affection, however, soon return to the former man.

Louisa Musgrove

Louisa Musgrove is more incautious than her sister is. Her desire to jump off the Cobb causes her serious injury. While she recuperates, she falls in love with Captain Benwick.

Mr. Musgrove

Mr. Musgrove and his wife live an unordered life. Anne notes that they, "like their houses," always seem to be "in a state of alteration." They are old English in style, whereas their children are devoted to the new, and whereas neither is educated nor elegant, their friendliness and hospitality ensure their popularity; they never lack invitations or visitors.

Mrs. Musgrove

Mrs. Musgrove shares her husband's easy manner.

Lady Russell

The Elliots have relied on Lady Russell's generous support and generally reasonable advice ever since Mrs. Elliot died. Though she possessed a winning combination of benevolence and strict integrity, she was prejudicial against those she deemed of lower rank and consequence. She shared Sir Walter's disapproval of Anne's early attachment to Wentworth, noting that the captain had no money. She also considered "his sanguine temper, and fearlessness of mind," a dangerous combination and so strongly advised Anne against marrying him. Wentworth's behavior had not suited Lady Russell's own ideas, and she was hasty in suspecting them to indicate a character of "dangerous impetuosity." When Anne and Wentworth reestablish their relationship, Lady Russell reveals her magnanimous nature, admitting that she was wrong about him.

Mr. Shepherd

Mr. Shepherd, the Elliot's lawyer and Mrs. Clay's father, presents himself to be "civil and cautious."

Mrs. Smith

Mrs. Smith, Anne's widowed schoolmate, had been kind to her after Anne's mother died. When Anne reestablishes their friendship in Bath, she finds Mrs. Smith in ill health and financial difficulty. Mrs. Smith displays "good sense and agreeable manners" even during her hard times. Anne admires her "elasticity of mind," her lack of selfpity, and her resourcefulness.

Captain Frederick Wentworth

In the summer of 1806, Captain Wentworth, Mrs. Croft's brother, lived near Kellynch Hall and soon fell in love with Anne, who noted his quick mind, fearlessness, and generous spirit. These qualities, however, prompted Lady Russell's disapproval, which led to her advising Anne not to marry him.

When he reappears in Somersetshire years later, however, Wentworth's sterling character again reveals itself to Anne. He shows his compassionate heart as he listens to Mrs. Musgrove's sorrow over her son's early death, and he takes full responsibility for Louisa's accident, even though her impetuosity had been the cause. His stirring conversation about his days at sea prompt all to feel a "warm admiration" for him. While his stubbornness will not allow him to forgive Anne's initial rejection of him, that same quality will not let him give up on her. His generous nature allows him to forgive Sir Walter's and Lady Russell's interference as he becomes a part of the family.

Themes

Class Consciousness

The predominant theme in *Persuasion* focuses on the consciousness of class. Austen defines one main social division□the landed gentry of the upper-middle class□through her realistic portrayals of the Elliot family and those who travel in their sphere. She notes the traditions of this structured social group as well as its restricted vision of those outside the group. The ladies and gentlemen of the landed gentry, as represented by Sir Walter, depend on social hierarchies to ensure their superiority over the lower classes. Sir Walter's favorite pastime is to pore over the Baronetage, reminding himself of his exalted social position. The pride he takes in this position has degenerated into an inflated vanity and aesthetic sense, as he can appreciate only things that, like his own visage, please his eye.

His sense of superiority translates into an arrogance directed at those in lower classes who are presumptuous enough to try to improve their social station. One such interloper is Captain Wentworth, who assumes that his deep love for Anne, coupled with his success as a naval officer, should be enough to earn Sir Walter's blessing of their union. However, Sir Walter, backed by Lady Russell, rejects the captain as a suitable son-in-law, due to his lack of money and his profession, which Sir Walter considers undesirable. He notes that sailors work hard, but he insists that they do not deserve to be raised from an obscure birth into the upper class.

Anne's sister Elizabeth reflects her father's strict rules of etiquette. She devotes her time to "doing the honours, and laying down the domestic law at home . . . opening every ball of credit which a scanty neighbourhood afforded." Mary, Anne's youngest sister, has turned her feelings of superiority of class into a form of hypochondria. When she feels that she has not been paid enough attention, she comes down with an "illness" that must be attended to, preferably by Anne, who displays none of the class snobbery of the rest of the family.

All of the Elliots except Anne illustrate the gentry's limited vision of the realities of the world. They live in comfortable isolation in a privileged community set apart from the unpleasant truths of the social stratification and political system that has enabled them to live an advantaged life. Their restricted view does not recognize women like Mrs. Smith who have fallen on hard times, even if one of their class (as was the case with Mrs. Smith) has been the cause.

Sir Walter's change of heart, when Anne asks for his blessing the second time Captain Wentworth asks her to marry him, is the result of several factors. Wentworth has amassed a small fortune and so can afford to provide an even more comfortable life for Anne than the one she enjoyed with her economically- challenged father. Wentworth has also risen to the top of his profession, which, in the early part of the nineteenth century, was becoming highly honored. Thus Sir Walter is able to welcome the captain

into the family and proudly record his name in the Baronetage without suffering the shame of Anne marrying someone unworthy of her social position.

Courtship and Marriage

The rituals of courtship and marriage are determined and strictly enforced within each class. They are governed by a sense of order, decorum, and self-control according to the rigid roles that women are expected to fulfill. A young woman is duty bound to obey her father's authority in all matters, submitting without question to the restrictions placed on her. When fathers forbade their daughters from marrying unacceptable men, they expected and got obedience. Sir Walter made a similar decree, with Lady Russell's support, which Anne felt she must obey, even though she would suffer greatly over her break from Wentworth. The novel ends happily only after Sir Walter changes his opinion about Wentworth and so gives his permission for Anne to marry him.

Style

Austen helped create the domestic comedy of middle-class manners, a genre that is concerned with family situations and problems. This type of novel focuses on the manners and conventions of the British middle class□in Austen's work, specifically the landed gentry. The plot is structured around problems that arise within the family concerning the particular fashions and outlook of this structured social group. The point of view is often satirical, as it illuminates and critiques the idiosyncrasies of its members. Although the plot can offer clever solutions to the family's conflicts, it is less important than the characterizations and the dialogue. In *Persuasion*, Austen's plot revolves around the conflicts within her family and their desire to keep those they deem undesirable out. Though some characters, such as Lady Russell and Mrs. Clay, are decidedly flat, most of the Elliot family is carefully drawn to reflect the realities of upper-middle-class life in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As the plot evolves, Austen critiques the snobbery and arrogance of the landed gentry in her depiction of Sir Walter. All conflicts are worked out by the end of the novel, signaled by Anne's happy marriage to Wentworth.

Historical Context

Sentimental Novel

The sentimental novel was a popular form of fiction in England at the end of the eighteenth century. This type of fiction focuses on the problems encountered by virtuous men and women as they strive to lead exemplary lives. By the end of the novel, characters who displayed a sense of honor and behaved in a moral fashion were able to solve their problems and regain a sense of order in their world. The didactic plot promoted accepted standards of morality, encouraging readers to believe that such behavior would be justly rewarded in time. Characters in these novels did not check their emotions, which suggested their benevolence and compassion. The most well-known example of this genre is Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, published in 1740, which chronicled the life of the title character, a servant girl who survived continuous assaults on her honor. Other novels in this genre include Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1776), Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), and Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800). Austen broke from this form in her novels, which concentrate on realistic depictions of the tensions between her heroines and their society.

A Woman's Place

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, women were confined to the classes into which they were born, unless their fathers or husbands moved up or down in the social hierarchy. The strict rules for each social class defined the women and their lives. Women in the upper classes had the leisure to educate themselves; however, they, like their counterparts in the lower classes, were not expected to think for themselves and were not often listened to when they did. Urges for independence and self-determination were suppressed in women from all classes. The strict social morality of the period demanded that women exhibit the standards of polite femininity, culminating in the ideals of marriage and motherhood. Jane Austen's novels both reflect and challenge the period's attitudes toward women. Her heroines must operate within the confines of the middle class, yet their quick minds and independent spirits make them yearn for at least a measure of autonomy. Brian Southam, in his article on Austen for *British Writers*, comments that each of Austen's heroines must "practice the morality of compromise and discover her own way of accepting the demands of society while preserving the integrity of her own values and beliefs."

Social Revolution

Austen's novels describe how British society was divided at the end of the eighteenth century into three classes: the aristocracy, the gentry, and the yeoman class. Yet, the revolutionary fervor at the end of this century and the beginning of the next, exemplified

by the American and French revolutions, was seeping into the social fabric of England. During this period, class distinctions began to relax and to be redefined. As the lower-middle classes became more prosperous, they began to emulate their social "betters," as did the landed gentry of the upper-middle class. The middle classes became absorbed with a cultivation of the "proper" manners, dress, and décor practiced by the aristocracy.

Critical Overview

By the time *Persuasion* was published in 1818, Austen's novels had gained a limited reading audience that was dramatically expanded in 1833, when her novels were republished in the Bentley's Standard Novels series. Scholars began to pay attention to *Persuasion* and Austen's other novels in 1870, after the publication of *Memoir of Jane Austen*, the first major biography of her, written by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh. The biography triggered several articles on her works, including some by critics Margaret Oliphant and Richard Simpson. Scholarly attention to her novels increased at the end of the century and continued into the twentieth, especially after the publication of Mary Lascelles's *Jane Austen and Her Art* in 1939.

Persuasion, like her other novels, was praised for its realistic depiction of character and society. In his article on Austen for *British Writers*, Brian Southam applauds the "semantic drama" of the novel, commenting that within the novel "we can follow the scheme of characterization that brings the meaning of [the title] to life in the complexities and contradictions of human nature." Margaret Drabble, in her introduction to the Signet publication of the novel, praises its "strong anti-romantic tendencies," its "unexpected generosities," and its "welcoming of the possibility of a new order." These scholars have helped cement the novel's reputation as a literary classic.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Perkins is an associate professor of English and American literature and film at Prince George's Community College and has published several articles on British and American authors. In this essay, she argues that Austen's novel is a reflection of its revolutionary age.

In an article in *British Writers*, Brian Southam presents an overview of Jane Austen's work and concludes that her fiction reveals a firm sense of time and place. He argues that Austen's novels "communicate a profound sense" of England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, "when the old Georgian world of the eighteenth century was being carried uneasily and reluctantly into the new world of Regency England, the Augustan world into the romantic." Gary Kelly, in his critique of Austen's works for *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, notes that British society was influenced by the revolutionary fervor surrounding the American and French battles for independence during this age and finds that zeitgeist was represented "as a progressive dialectic of gentry and professionals."

Austen's novels join this dialectical discussion, for they focus specifically on the changes in the country's social fabric as strict hierarchies of class were being challenged. The sense of this historical moment as a period of transition becomes most evident in her last novel, *Persuasion*. In her depiction of the members of the Elliot family and their circle, Austen not only chronicles the changes that were occurring in the British class system during this period, but she also appears to support them.

Austen begins the novel with a description of Sir Walter, the patriarch of the Elliot family, and his class obsession, evident in his constant perusal of the Baronetage, where he notes the description of the social standing and history of his family. Sir Walter is a traditional gentleman of the landed gentry, the upper-middle level of the British class system. Through his characterization, Austen records all that she finds pretentious and shallow in the most conservatively rigid members of this group. In her detailed depiction of Sir Walter's manners and fashionable pursuits, Austen lays the groundwork for her critique of the superficialities of the middle class.

In Sir Walter's structured society, the harmony of the group depends on each individual complying with its fixed rules. The appearance of wealth and propriety are sacrosanct in his world, and Sir Walter is a firm devotee of its conventions. As a result, when his extravagant spending habits threaten to bring him to the brink of financial ruin, he cannot come up with a plan to economize. He insists that he can endure no changes to his lifestyle that will compromise his dignity or comfort or that will place him in too close proximity to the lower classes. Fortunately, Lady Russell convinces him to find a less expensive dwelling in Bath, where he can appear to be enjoying a change of scenery and retain his social position.

The shallowness of the upper classes is reflected in the attitudes Sir Walter and his eldest daughter Elizabeth harbor regarding Anne. Unable to place value on her

intellectual and moral merit, they find her loss of "bloom" after suffering through her break from Wentworth evidence of her inferiority.

Sir Walter's sense of superiority is epitomized in his overweening vanity, which is "the beginning and the end" of his character, and his arrogant dismissal of anyone from the lower classes who is presumptuous enough to try to gain entry into his circle. This attitude causes his daughter Anne to suffer greatly when it results in his refusal to approve of her marriage to Wentworth, who does not enjoy the benefits of a noble birth nor, initially, of the leisure class.

Austen's critique of this society develops a harder edge in her depiction of William Elliot, their self-serving cousin who reveals himself to be "black and hollow at heart." Austen illustrates the blindness of the middle class to the faults of its own privileged and "dignified" members when the Elliot family quickly allows him back into the family after a troubled past relationship with him. When they permit him to reestablish himself in their good graces, most find his character sterling. Anne, however, with her astute powers of perception that do not depend on social standing, suspects a duplicitous nature, which her friend Mrs. Smith confirms. The narrative soon reveals that he has come to Bath and reintegrated himself with the family only to insure his inheritance.

Austen's illustration of the age's spirit of change is centered in Anne. Her openness reflects the transitional nature of Regency England, when class distinctions began to blur. As the lower-middle classes became more prosperous, successful professionals were eager to share the privileges of the gentry and so began to imitate their manners and fashions. As a result, the traditional distinction between the two groups□a noble bloodline□began to ease. Anne embraces this change when she falls in love with Wentworth, a sailor who, when they first meet, is professionally but not economically successful. She also reveals her democratic spirit when she reestablishes her friendship with Mrs. Smith, an old schoolmate, who has fallen on hard times. Mrs. Smith represents the economic realities of the lower classes, which the gentry successfully ignored.

Anne has suffered from the strict code of manners and tightly defined roles thrust upon her by her social class. Her ties to her family must supersede her own desires, and as a result, they prevent her from marrying the man she loves. She believes, even at the end of the novel when she gains her family's approval for her marriage to Wentworth, that it is her duty to obey their wishes when they initially forbid her union with him. Her sense of duty springs from the moral obligation she feels to her family and to Lady Russell, who has become her surrogate mother. Austen juxtaposes this sense of duty with Anne's struggle for individuality and fulfillment, which she achieves in part, at the end of the novel, due to the changes that were beginning to occur in her world. She is finally able to marry Wentworth, not only because of his change in fortune but also as a result of the relaxed definition of a "gentleman." Wentworth has become socially acceptable through the new respect paid his profession. During the early part of the nineteenth century, England held its navy in high regard as a result of its victories at sea and its protection of trading routes.

Austen supports this transitional spirit through her depiction of other characters. While Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove have the breeding that insures their inclusion into Sir Walter's circle, their unconventional behavior strains the boundaries of their class. The Musgroves' unpretentious nature emerges in their encouragement of their daughters' independent spirits and in their lack of concern for traditionally proper mates for them. Anne notes that they live an unordered life and that, "like their houses," they always seemed to be "in a state of alteration."

At first Anne seems put off by their disorder. However, as she gains experience and maturity, she accepts and promotes the relaxation of social norms. When she discovers and comes to an appreciation of the Musgroves' warm hearts and openness, she embraces their differences and includes them in her circle of friends. She welcomes them with open arms when they arrive in Bath, especially after having to suffer the company of her stuffy and dull cousins, Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret. Anne's new openness becomes apparent in her distrust of William Elliot and in her decision that she appreciates spontaneity over formality. She concludes that she could "so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped."

The Harvilles and the Crofts also help educate Anne about the possibilities of a world free from rigid class structures. Although they have cramped accommodations, the Harvilles warmly welcome Anne and her group to Lyme, and after the accident, they insist on nursing Louisa back to health. Anne also appreciates Mrs. Croft's unconventional behavior in her relationship with her husband. Mrs. Croft has redefined the limiting roles for women in her position, as noted when she responds to Captain Wentworth's assertion that naval vessels are no place for ladies. She corrects him sharply, noting, "But I hate to hear you talking so, like a fine gentleman, and as if we were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures."

Austen promotes the concept of women being "rational creatures" as she emphasizes Anne's "strong, mature mind," qualities that become evident in her behavior throughout the novel. Through Anne, Austen challenges traditional notions that fashionable women should only concern themselves with learning to sing and play the piano and to memorize English verse and passages from novels. Women who could present this shallow display of the arts became perfect social ornaments and wives. As a counter to these limited women, Austen presents Anne as rational and witty, able to think for herself. She has developed an interior life independent of those in her class and strives to make her own choices concerning her relationships and her destiny.

Austen reinforces her social critique and her support of change at the end of the novel. Even though Anne admits that she was right in following her father's and Lady Russell's advice in not marrying Wentworth, citing her sense of duty, Austen underlines the fact that Anne and Wentworth have lost several years of happiness due to the narrow-mindedness and overly cautious opinions of others. After Anne and Wentworth reunite, however, Lady Russell also shows signs that she has become more open to new social standards. She admits that because Wentworth's "manners had not suited her own

ideas, she had been too quick in suspecting them to indicate a character of dangerous impetuosity." Now, she concedes that "she had been pretty completely wrong" and determines "to take up a new set of opinions and of hopes." Sir Walter, ever the symbol of the old world, remains at the end of the novel "a foolish, spendthrift baronet, who had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him." Kelly notes Sir Walter's static nature in contrast to the transformations occurring around him when he comments that at the conclusion, his estate, "dangerously overextended morally, socially, and financially, is not so much reinvigorated as superseded by an estate acquired entirely on merit and able to take into itself the neglected best of the older estate."

Persuasion participates in the revolutionary spirit of its age through Austen's penetrating critique of the sacred ideals of the British class system and her documentation and support of the changes that were emerging at the end of the Age of Reason. Through her characterization of her heroine, Anne Elliot, she presents a wise and sympathetic portrait of one woman's shifting perspective of her relation to society and her understanding of herself.

Source: Wendy Perkins, Critical Essay on *Persuasion*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Waldron examines Austen's moral intentions in Persuasion*.*

Of all six completed novels *Persuasion* most resists a late twentieth-century reader's attempts to exonerate Austen from charges of prescriptiveness and didacticism. If Anne Elliot was 'almost too good' for the author, a reading based on an assumption of Austen's attachment to conventional contemporary wisdom will certainly leave her too good for us. Marilyn Butler, among others, avers that 'Anne comes near to being dangerously perfect' and much modern criticism finds her somewhat tediously fault-free. Curiously, though, it is the one work of Austen's which attracted prompt contemporary criticism on moral grounds; in 1818 the following was included in a review in *The British Critic*:

> [The novel] contains parts of very great merit; among them, however, we certainly should not number its *moral*, which seems to be, that young people should always marry according to their own inclinations and upon their own judgement; for that if in consequence of listening to grave counsels, they defer their marriage, till they have wherewith to live upon, they will be laying the foundation for years of misery, such as only the heroes and heroines of novels can reasonably hope ever to see the end of.

These two attitudes, nearly two hundred years apart, provide us with a bewildering paradox□is the novel supporting or rejecting contemporary rules of conduct? What was Austen up to in *Persuasion?* Various answers have been put forward; like *Mansfield Park* it continues to provoke explanations, if not apologies, for its moral stance□most often critics find something wrong with it, some failure of coherence or consistency. If we examine the novel within the framework of the present study, we should be able to come close to an answer to the questions surrounding *Persuasion* without implying that Austen somehow did not quite achieve her aim. The five other novels, and the fragments, have all manoeuvred among available stereotypes to find a new way of presenting in fiction the problems of human interaction in life as Austen perceived it, rather than life as it might, according to contemporary conduct-theory, desirably be lived. *Persuasion* is no exception, but it takes a somewhat different direction.

Emma had come in for a good deal of criticism on the grounds that its heroine was no compliment to the female sex. In 'Opinions of *Emma*', Miss Isabella Herries 'objected to my exposing the sex in the character of the Heroine', and Fanny Knight's current admirer, James Wildman, was apparently of the same opinion. Austen replies:

> Do not oblige him to read any more.□Have mercy on him, tell him the truth & make him an apology.

He & I should not in the least agree of course, in our ideas of Novels and Heroines;□pictures of perfection as you know make me sick & wicked□but there is some good sense in what he says, & I particularly respect him for wishing to think well of all young Ladies; it shews an amiable & delicate Mind.□And he deserves better treatment than to be obliged to read any more of my Works.

There was very little likelihood that Austen would, at this stage, fulfil expectation by writing an exemplary novel or create a 'picture of perfection'. What she did was to invent a character with whom no one could find fault on the grounds of manners or behaviour ('with manners as consciously right as they were invariably gentle'), who fulfils outwardly all the ideals of the conduct books, and subject her to narrow and mindless interpretations of those ideals. This heroine is thereby forced into a pragmatism which throws her back on *feeling* as 'her spring of felicity' and the referencepoint of her judgement. But this novel is not a new, late celebration of sensibility, a *'Woman of Feeling'*. Anne is deeply convinced that reason and feeling are not oppositional but complementary; what goes against feeling goes against reason also. She is more like Marianne than she is like Elinor. But she is not influenced by fashionable moral and social theory. She has come to her conclusions from experience□she has found out that inflexible adherence to rule and precept does not invariably increase the sum of human happiness and may well do the opposite. Who has gained by her sacrifice? As the result of the failure of traditional 'sensible' solutions to make sense of her life, Anne has to go back to first principles, and in the intolerable tension between what she feels is right and what is forced upon her by contemporary judgements, is nearly drained of energy; she almost fails to give her life back its meaning. The novel presents no single solution to any of her problems and the dénouement is a matter of luck rather than judgement. The best we can say of the ending is that time and chance are kind to Anne Elliot. Deserving as she may be, the reader must be aware that she could have remained disappointed and alone for the rest of her life.

In the *Plan of a Novel* of (circa) 1816, Austen postulates a heroine very like Anne: 'a faultless Character herself□perfectly good, with much tenderness & sentiment, & not the least Wit□very highly accomplished, understanding modern Languages & (generally speaking) everything that the most accomplished young Women learn, but particularly excelling in Music□her favourite pursuit □& playing equally well on the Piano Forte & Harp□& singing in the first stile'. Austen adds a modicum of 'Wit' and subtracts the harp and the singing (significantly, in emphasising the waste of Anne's real musical talents□'having no voice, no knowledge of the harp, and no fond parents to sit by and fancy themselves delighted'), but otherwise this is both Austen's rather contemptuous concept of the conventional heroine *and* Anne Elliot to the life. However, what happens to her is not according to that convention. The novel is essentially a critique of the common fictional adventures of such a girl, which were often only one degree removed from the ludicrous junketings described in the *Plan*. Fictional 'cant' is still the author's target.

As we have seen, Austen's admiration for the works of Fanny Burney was becoming a little detached and ironical even in 1796, just after the publication of *Camilla*. She remembers sending her love to 'Mary Harrison' hoping that when she is 'attached to a young Man, some *respectable* Dr. Marchmont may keep them apart for five volumes'. Anne and Captain Wentworth are kept apart for *two*□thus fulfilling a fictional expectation, but without the obsessive moralising of Marchmont and Edgar's most unlikely submission to his opinion and easy conviction of Camilla's guilt. But Burney's later publication, *The Wanderer*, which came out during Austen's confident period after the success of *Pride and Prejudice*, is clearly part of the immediate stimulus for *Plan of a Novel* and more seriously for *Persuasion*, Juliet Granville's adventures as she tries to earn a meagre living and later flies from her brutal pursuers through the English countryside are undeniably the source of the caricature heroine in *Plan:*

often reduced to support herself . . . by her Talents &
work for her Bread;□continually cheated & defrauded
of her hire, worn down to a Skeleton, & now
& then starved to death□.At last, hunted out of civilized
society, denied the poor Shelter of the humblest
Cottage . . . having at least 20 narrow escapes
of falling into the hands of Anti-hero□& at last in
the very nick of time . . . runs into the arms of the
Hero himself . . .

Not an exact parallel, perhaps, but recognisable enough. Burney had many axes to grind in her novel□it is a complex examination of social attitudes which deserves a good deal of respect□but her serious purpose drives her to present thoroughly unlikely characters and situations and inflates her language, which often bears no resemblance to any recognisable human dialogue. The multiplicity and intensity of Juliet's tribulations, from which she surprisingly emerges sweet, modest and clean, producing alternately 'a torrent of tears' and 'mantling blushes', would come for Austen in the category of 'unnnatural conduct and forced difficulties' which she cites as her grounds for finding Sarah Burney's *Clarentine* 'foolish'. In *Persuasion* conduct is to be natural, the difficulties will derive predictably from common rather than extraordinary situations, and the outcome will be satisfactory, but quite independent of anyone's deserts.

At the opening of the novel, Anne has lost her moral bearings. That is not to say that she does not behave according to Christian principles of tolerance and endurance, but that she has no faith in the value of these things. She adopts approved virtues in a rather mechanical, joyless way because she has little alternative. This is due in great part to the chief difference between her and most of the other Austen heroines□her isolation. Not even Fanny Price is so deprived of a companion to whom she can speak. Unlike Elizabeth Bennet and Elinor Dashwood, Anne is caught between two selfish and uncongenial sisters; the only person who appears to care at all whether she lives or dies is Lady Russell, a good woman of limited intelligence who relies on a set of narrow and cautious precepts and rates reason above□not equal to□feeling. In context we can see her as a responsible woman reacting adversely to what she saw as dangerous new ideas. There is more than a hint in the text that she is familiar with the

radical/conservative debate; she 'gets all the new publications' and Elizabeth is bored by her interest in 'new poems and states of the nation'. When Anne accepts her advice and breaks her engagement to Frederick Wentworth, she has literally no one else to turn to, no one else with whom to discuss her life-choices. During the eight years which elapse before she meets Wentworth again, her isolation becomes total, since she can no longer communicate even with Lady Russell. In her own mind she separates her duty to submit to the 'grave counsels' of her elders from *their* duty to make sure their advice will lead to certain good□a hopeless expectation. She forgives herself for her submission, but at the same time blames the system within which she lives for its chill caution and ungenerous prudence. She feels sure that given the chance she would never act according to its precepts□'she felt that were any young person, in similar circumstances, to apply to her for counsel, they would never receive any of such certain immediate wretchedness, such uncertain future good'. So far, she has not had the chance, for her family situation deprives her of all influence and her circle of acquaintance is too narrow. She has adopted a negative and passive view of life in which she allows herself to be either ignored or used for other people's convenience. There is a sense in which she is almost punishing Lady Russell by refusing either to recover or to discuss her situation: 'But in this case [that of Charles Musgrove's proposal], Anne had left nothing for advice to do; and though Lady Russell, as satisfied as ever with her own discretion, never wished the past undone, she began now to have the anxiety which borders on hopelessness for Anne's being tempted, by some man of talents and independence'. Having initially accepted advice, Anne sees no reason to comfort her friend for its effects. She simply does not talk to her about it.

It is important for our understanding of the novel to examine the background to Lady Russell's advice and its impact on a contemporary reader. Few in 1818 would have argued against the general inadvisability of an almost penniless, though 'gently' reared, girl engaging herself to marry an actually penniless, if optimistic, young sailor on the off-chance that he might one day succeed in making enough money to keep them both□and their children. In general, Lady Russell would have been held to be right. The undesirability of long engagements was received opinion. Older and supposedly wiser heads would not depend on the first flush of love and commitment to last; suppose a girl or young man met someone they liked better? Better not to trust to the vicissitudes of time and change. After eight years, Anne no more believes this in her own case than she had done at nineteen, when she was persuaded that her love would only be a burden to him:

She was persuaded that under every disadvantage of
disapprobation at home, and every anxiety attending
his profession, all their probable fears, delays and disappointments,
she should yet have been a happier
woman in maintaining the engagement, than she had
been in the sacrifice of it; and this, she fully believed,
had the usual share, had even more than a usual share
of all such solicitudes and suspense been theirs

A little later, the authorial voice calls this 'romance', and this description, even in its pejorative sense, would have attracted a good deal of contemporary agreement. But we do not have to identify Anne's beliefs with the author's. Anne could have no means of knowing what the outcome would be; her prudence at nineteen may have been 'unnatural', but is it therefore to be rejected as useless? As usual with an Austen novel the narrative leaves questions open at the same time as appearing to answer them. We can imagine, if we choose, how Anne might have fared if the engagement had continued and Wentworth had not succeeded; had, perhaps, ended up like his friend Harville, disabled on half pay. Anne finds the Harvilles' efforts to be happy in inadequate seaside lodgings charming and cosy□a harder head would call this romance also. How might she have coped, in reality? We are told, significantly, that Mrs Harville is 'a degree less polished than her husband'□hardened perhaps by material deprivations. Anne knows very little about such things, except that the warmth of the Harvilles' domestic life seems to contrast strongly with the coldness of her own family situation. Even a less cautious observer than Lady Russell might easily pronounce her in error. Austen's habit of driving the allegiances of readers against the grain of their convictions is very evident here. And we are not even quite sure that the narrative tilts *against* Anne, for the example of Benwick's engagement to Fanny Harville, undertaken before they had the means to marry, is given as an example of what might have happened in the case of Anne and Wentworth if Sir Walter had been less of a snob and Lady Russell less entrenched in principle. Admiral and Mrs Croft seem to have taken some risk in marrying without much attention to material considerations. No single situation is put forward for reader approval. Anything could have happened.

But Anne's particular situation is aggravated by the unhelpful personality of her lover. We are surely not expected to suppose that Wentworth is justified in demanding that Anne choose between himself and the only other person in the world who cares a fig for her. He compounds her misery by his version of a contemporary expectation of female conduct. Meekness combined with ignorance had long since been rejected by those promulgating the rules; moralists like Hannah More were now constructing even more improbable models like Lucilla Stanley, who were able to impress onlookers with their firmness of opinion in situations which those onlookers approved, while in general keeping a very low profile indeed. Wentworth demonstrates this double expectation□he loves Anne partly for her traditional womanly virtues (her 'gentleness, modesty, taste, and feeling') but expects her to rise up in revolt against those traditions when, and probably only when, it suits him. His confusions on this score are several times made clear; he states as his twin requirements in a wife 'a firm mind, with sweetness of manner'; he seems little interested in how that sweetness can be maintained while she defies the counsels of her family. He is a long time working out what Tony Tanner has called a combination of 'flexibility and firmness, the concessionary and the adamant' which is necessary in all human dealings, and does not recognise the complexity of his demands. His confusion is made specifically evident; he does not wish his putative wife's firmness of mind to extend to insisting on coming to sea with him; his argument with his sister at Uppercross makes this very clear, and his manner of extricating himself from this exchange is symptomatic of unease and uncertainty:

'Now I have done . . .□When once married people
begin to attack me with, 'Oh! you will think very differently,
when you are married.' I can only say, 'No,
I shall not;' and then they say again, 'Yes, you will,'
and there is an end of it.'
He got up and moved away.

Anne is constantly the overhearer of Wentworth's rather desperate attempts to make a consistent structure for his wishes and desires; his conversation about the hazelnut with Louisa contains the same kind of obstinate theorising. His analogy has no validity, for the nut that clings to the tree will rot, while those that fall will germinate. After eight years, he is still an angry man, emotionally confused and refusing to see reason. Much later he admits this.

The story requires the two to meet again, and Austen makes sure that the re-encounter is believable, though entirely the work of chance. Sudden and unpredictable meetings after years of inexplicable silence are legion in the fiction of the time; this one is different. Ironically, Sir Walter's financial difficulties lead directly to it, when the Crofts come to Kellynch as his tenants. To give ample space for further exploration of the couple's attitudes, Anne is typically rejected as a companion in Bath by her elder sister, Elizabeth, (who substitutes the ambitious gold-digger, Mrs Clay) and demanded as support by her discontented sister Mary Musgrove at Uppercross. The social mores of the time would make an exchange of visits between the Musgroves and Crofts inevitable; the shared profession of Admiral Croft and his brother-in-law and the 'peace [which was] turning all our rich Navy Officers ashore' would make a visit from Wentworth very likely.

He comes, and the event gives readers the opportunity to observe even more closely than the narrative has so far allowed, the nature of the relationship between him and Anne. Light is soon thrown on what might be supposed to be the root cause of Lady Russell's uneasiness all those years ago, however she might rationalise it into purely economic consideration. We have already been told that Wentworth and Anne 'were gradually acquainted, and when acquainted, rapidly and deeply in love'. Lady Russell would see this as a dangerous version of the Romeo-Juliet story□'too rash, too ill-advised, too sudden'. 'Rational esteem' may be present, but the chief component of this love is something more basic, and Austen does not flinch from demonstrating it. The necessity for novel heroines (such as Burney's Camilla and Juliet) to be cool in their response to awkward suitors or rejected lovers is here ignored. Twice during this early phase of renewal Anne is shaken to the foundation of her being by his touch; once even through the body of the little child clinging to her back; it 'produced such a confusion of varying, but very painful agitation, as she could not recover from'; and again as he assists her into the carriage of his sister and brother-in-law: 'his will and his hands had done it . . . it was proof of his own warm and amiable heart, which she could not contemplate without emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain, that she knew not which prevailed'. All the time Anne is also aware of his continued 'high and unjust resentment', but this makes no difference. Indeed, the strength of her feeling overcomes what is clearly seen both by herself and by the reader as unscrupulousness and

arrogant petulance in his flirtation with the Musgrove daughters. By all contemporary fictional standards Anne ought to disapprove enough to resolve to have nothing more to do with him. But it never crosses her mind. What we are seeing here is not the anxious internal debate about what is *right* which so often dominates the proceedings in Burney and Edgeworth, for instance, but the unstructured reactions of strong emotion. Without generalising, the narrative comes down heavily in favour of the 'single and constant attachment' which Elinor Dashwood tries so valiantly to reject when she thinks her hopes of Edward are gone forever; her words could easily be Lady Russell's, but they could never issue from the lips of Anne Elliot: 'And after all . . . that is bewitching in the idea . . . and all that can be said of one's happiness depending entirely on any particular person, it is not meant□it is not fit□it is not possible that it should be so'. Though Anne sees that a 'second attachment' is possible for others, even forsees Benwick's and is more tolerant of it than Wentworth is, for herself it is not on the agenda. It is not a moral question; she is not aiming at any '*beau idél*' of female conduct; her 'highwrought love and eternal constancy' are the products of passion, not principle. She simply cannot help herself. But what she does not do for a time is revive within herself the energy to rekindle Wentworth's response. She almost hands him over to Louisa.

By many of Austen's contemporaries her failure to cure herself of this 'ill-placed attachment' might be interpreted as weakness□even obstinacy in thus clinging to the past. We might now rather describe it as a loss of moral energy and recognise it as a destructive form of sublimation; Austen appears in some sort to present it as such. Anne contents herself with defusing the petty disagreements between her sister and her husband and inlaws and indulging the often selfish demands of her more positive companions. She is aware that she is wasted, but tells herself that there is nothing she can do. Her attitude is summed up in her physical response to life□why has she abandoned dancing in order to accompany others? It cannot be that at twenty-seven her joints are too stiff for the exercise. Some of her dejection seems almost wilful□the creation of a desert called 'duty' in which to protect herself from the necessity for positive action.

A change of heart is necessary for the dynamics of the story□Anne must move from passive to active in order to regain a positive purpose in life. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this novel is the way in which the author minutely charts the re-establishment of communication between Anne and Wentworth. It begins at Lyme. Still feeling marginalised, her first encounter with Benwick shows Anne indulging in self-pity and other negative feelings. If we read chapter 11 of the first volume with attention to the depth of reference of its free indirect style, we find her ignoring certain clues to Wentworth's state of mind as if she is afraid even to begin to hope. While contemplating the idea of Benwick, whom she is about to meet, and the tragedy of his loss, she thinks of herself as in worse case: '"he has not, perhaps, a more sorrowing heart than I have. I cannot believe his prospects to be so blighted forever"'; she has missed the purport of Wentworth's account□his acknowledgement of the strength of such a feeling as he supposes Benwick to have had: 'He considered his disposition as of the sort which must suffer heavily, uniting very strong feelings with quiet, serious, and retiring manners, and a decided taste for reading, and sedentary pursuits'. It is open to the reader to wonder whether he has almost inadvertently begun to speak once more to Anne. She begins to

be more obviously the focus of his thought from the time when the as yet unrecognised Mr Elliot admires her during the pre-breakfast walk□'He [Wentworth] gave her a momentary glance,□a glance of brightness, which seemed to say, "That man is struck with you,□and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again'"; this accelerates with the disaster on the Cobb and culminates with his overheard statement at Mrs Harville's: '"but, if Anne will stay, no one so proper, so capable as Anne!'"□an indication, if ever there was one, of his abandonment of his view of her as feeble. But Anne is by no means ready to interpret all this as anything but an effort to get the best nursing for Louisa□now, she teaches herself to suppose, the object of his affection. She cannot yet accept the idea of constancy in a man. (For different reasons, Emma has also shown this kind of obtuseness; perhaps Austen regarded it as more believable than the stoical determination to repress desire which is evident in many contemporary novels). Accustomed to pessimism, she protects herself from hope that she thinks is bound to be unjustified. While she swiftly recognises Benwick's melancholy as an indulgence in an *expected*, theoretical and literary, sensibility rather than real suffering, and wryly comments to herself that she could well do with the same advice as she proffers to him, she fails to notice the resurfacing of Wentworth's powerful attraction to her. She is too ready to accept his flirtation with Louisa as actual courtship. She misinterprets everything because with him she cannot be detached.

The reader should see Wentworth at first exasperated by his permanent emotional commitment to Anne, and gradually coming to perceive that he cannot and does not want to escape; this is invisible to Anne, and incidentally to everyone else, for Wentworth tells her later that he is almost 'entangled' in an engagement with Louisa at this point. The reader is, as so often with Austen, at the third point of the triangle, which shifts the attention outward from the main action and shows the protagonists to be deceived or deceiving, without the direct intervention of a narrator. (There is again a parallel here with Emma and Mr Knightley.) Though Anne's 'second spring' has already begun, some cautious fear in her refuses to believe it. Wentworth has clearly shown his appreciation of her judgement and his instinctive intimacy with her when he seeks her opinion about their encounter with Louisa's parents□('"Do you think this a good plan?'"); but after they have all gone away to Lyme, leaving her to await the advent of Lady Russell, she takes refuge in brooding melancholy, injecting her situation with the poetry of tragic loss:

A few months hence, and the room now so deserted,
occupied but by her silent, pensive self, might be
filled again with all that was happy and gay, all that
was glowing and bright in prosperous love, all that
was most unlike Anne Elliot!An hour's complete leisure for such reflections as
these, on a dark November day, a small thick rain almost
blotting out the very few objects ever to be discerned
from the windows, was enough to make the
sound of Lady Russell's carriage exceedingly welcome;
and yet, though desirous to be gone, she could
not quit the mansion-house, or look an adieu to the
cottage, with its black, dripping, and comfortless veranda,

or even notice through the misty glasses the
last humble tenements of the village, without a saddened
heart.□Scenes had passed in Uppercross,
which made it precious. It stood the record of many
sensations of pain, once severe, but now softened;
and of some instances of relenting feeling, some
breathings of friendship and reconciliation, which
could never be looked for again, and which could
never cease to be dear. She left it all behind her; all
but the recollection that such things had been.

In their way, these thoughts are as literary as Benwick's, who Anne has been so sure will revive to love again, and on whom she has enjoined a more positive effort to 'fortify the mind' by recourse to works other than poetry. Anne is not without a sense of humour, and is herself 'amused at the idea of her coming to Lyme, to preach patience and resignation to a young man whom she had never seen before; nor could she help fearing . . . that, like many other great moralists and preachers, she had been eloquent on a point in which her own conduct would ill bear examination'. But her self-criticism does not prevent her from now indulging in what must be described as a consolatory but also somewhat enjoyable wallow in romantic melancholy much like Benwick's. She too has been reading Byron. We are later informed that she can read Italian □the quotation from Dante which introduces *The Corsair*□'nessun maggior dolore, / Che ricordarsi del tempo felice / Nelle miseria' aptly sums up her state of mind. There are clear structural and narratorial reasons why the time-scale of the novel is the period 1806 to 1814□the absence and wholesale return of naval officers is necessary to the plot□but the fact that it coincides with the publication and frenzied popularity of Byron's Turkish tales is used here by Austen in a similar contrapuntal way to her use of contemporary novels; aware of her immediate readers' inevitable acquaintance with these works, she constantly refers to them in a way that is both ironic and revealing. In the three poems which are mentioned by Anne and Benwick in their conversation at Lyme□*The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair*□a male lover has lost the woman of his heart in sensational circumstances involving abduction, murder and sudden death; the heroes are as a consequence dedicated to lifelong desolation which occasions their withdrawal from the scenes of action and their total resistance to consolation. That Benwick is *not* inconsolable very soon becomes evident □Anne is aware of 'some dawning of tenderness towards herself' and his need to replace Fanny Harville rather than mourn her forever is later proved by his engagement to Louisa. But Anne sees far more of a parallel with Byron's heroes in herself, and her thoughts constantly echo his lines□especially certain passages from *The Giaour*. Her internal monologue quoted above has much in common with his lament:

The keenest pangs the wretched find
Are raptures to the dreary void,
The leafless desert of the mind
The waste of feelings unemploy'd.
Who would be doom'd to gaze upon
A sky without a cloud or sun?

Echoes, more perhaps in the vocabulary than the sense, recur; the Friar muses of the Giaour: 'But sadder still it were to trace / What once were feelings in that face'; Anne notices Wentworth looking at her: '*Once* she felt that he was . . . observing her altered features, perhaps, trying to trace in them the ruins of the face which had once charmed him'. She is only too willing to interpret Mary's rather spiteful report that Wentworth 'should not have known her again' in the light of the Giaour's description of himself:

The wither'd frame, the ruin'd mind,
The wrack by passion left behind.
A shrivell'd scroll, a scatter'd leaf,
Sear'd by the autumn blast of grief!

Anne is often shown to identify herself with autumnal decay□once even as she notes the evidence that the farmer at Winthrop was 'counteracting the sweets of poetical despondence and meaning to have spring again', and we can be fairly sure that some of the quotations with which she toys on that walk were from Byron.

Source: Mary Waldron, "Rationality and Rebellion: *Persuasion* and the Model Girl," in *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Her Time*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 135-47.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Duckworth explores the "new direction" Austen takes in Persuasion *toward social status and heritage as compared to her earlier novels.*

The success with which *Emma* accommodates its imaginative heroine in a traditional community invites us to read Jane Austen's conservative commitment as a sincere response rather than a conventional cover or camouflage. Unlike *Emma*, however, *Persuasion* (1818) does not bring its heroine to a defined social place and role; and in the last novel the attitude to social heritage differs subtly, if not in the end radically, from that communicated in the earlier novels. Though Anne Elliot becomes the wife of Captain Wentworth and the delighted mistress of a "very pretty landaulette," she has (as her status-obsessed sister Mary observes with satisfaction) "no Uppercrosshall before her, no landed estate, no headship of a family," *Persuasion* marks a new direction in Jane Austen's search for accommodations. Her deliberate decision not to provide Anne with abbey, house, hall, place, park, or cottage on her marriage to a man who has gained a fortune of £25,000 from prize money does not indicate□as the failure to finish *The Watsons* did□an oppressed sense of insurmountable difficulties to be overcome. The nature of the problem has changed, as has the kind of accommodation sought.

One way to describe the new direction of *Persuasion* is to compare Anne Elliot's role with that of Fanny Price. Like Fanny, Anne is often made aware of her "own nothingness." Fanny, however, becomes involved despite herself in issues of social importance at Sotherton, Mansfield, and Thornton Lacey, defending traditional "grounds" from the injuries of selfish improvements, innovative behavior, and materialistic ways. When she becomes the mistress of the Mansfield parsonage, she redeems her society. In *Persuasion*, by contrast, "place" is no longer there to be defended, since Sir Walter Elliot, the "foolish spendthrift baronet, who had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him," has rented his ancestral home and moved to Bath, where, to Anne's sorrow, he feels "no degradation in his change." Kellynch Hall will never be Anne's to "improve," nor is she to find a home like Uppercross (of which she could have been mistress one day, had she accepted Charles Musgrove's proposal of marriage).

Uppercross mansion, with "its high walls, great gates, and old trees, substantial and unmodernized," exists at the heart of the kind of organic community Jane Austen had described in her positive pictures of places like Delaford and Thornton Lacey. But in *Persuasion* the viability of its "old English style" is put in some question. Charles Musgrove, heir to the estate, has introduced improvements in the community in the form of a farmhouse "elevated into a cottage," complete with "veranda, French windows, and other prettinesses." Meanwhile, within the great house the Musgrove girls have created an air of confusion in the oldfashioned, wainscoted parlor, by furnishing it with a pianoforte, harp, flower stands, and "little tables placed in every direction." The ancestral portraits seem "to be staring in astonishment" at "such an overthrow of all order and neatness." Yet despite her exposure of the selfishness of the younger generation, Jane Austen does not adopt a censorious attitude. In this respect,

Persuasion differs from earlier works in which the desire of Mary Crawford to new-furnish Mansfield or of Marianne Dashwood to new-furnish Allenham were suspect signs of "modern manners" to be repudiated by the reader.

Anne's task in *Persuasion* is not, then, to reclaim Kellynch (debased beyond Anne's powers of recovery by her father's extravagance, otiosity, and absurd pride in rank) but to discover new possibilities of accommodation for herself. Thus in conversation with Mr. Elliot, her false suitor, she proclaims herself "too proud to enjoy a welcome which depends so entirely upon place" while later she assures Wentworth that "every fresh place would be interesting to me." The novel provides Anne with a number of "fresh" possibilities of accommodation, which are associated not with the stabilities of the land (Winthrop, the future home of Henrietta Musgrove, is significantly described as an "indifferent" place, "without beauty and without dignity") but with the risks and uncertainties of life at sea or among sailors. Mrs. Croft knows "nothing superior to the accommodations of a man of war," having lived with her husband Admiral Croft in no fewer than five ships, crossed the Atlantic four times, and been once to the East Indies. Ashore, the Crofts are tenants of Kellynch, where their improvements include the removal of a number of large looking glasses from Sir Walter's dressing room. They drive an unfashionable gig and, while in Bath, live in lodgings that are none the worse, as the Admiral tells Anne, "for putting us in mind of those we first had at North Yarmouth. The wind blows through one of the cupboards just in the same way." Described as "generally out of doors together . . . dawdling about in a way not endurable to a third person," the Crofts are the most successful portrait of seasoned "connubial felicity" in Jane Austen's work. Their partnership in life, no less than in their style of driving the gig, provides Anne with a model of marriage, an exemplary way of responding to an existence in which the waters are not always smooth.

A second naval family, the Harvilles, provides another positive example. Anne meets Captain Harville in Lyme shortly before Louisa Musgrove's disastrous leap from the steps on the Cobb calls into question the nature of her "fortitude." Suffering from a severe wound, Harville reveals a more estimable form of fortitude in his modest house near the Cobb. Its rooms are so small that Anne is at first astonished that he can think them "capable of accommodating so many." But her astonishment gives way to pleasure deriving from "all the ingenious contrivances and nice arrangements of Captain Harville, to turn the actual space to the best possible account, to supply the deficiencies of lodging- house furniture, and defend the windows and doors against the winter storms to be expected." In his illness, Captain Harville has at least set his house in order; and we are surely asked to discover in his usefulness, active employment, and positive outlook an exemplary response to reduced social expectations. Like Mrs. Smith in her even worse circumstances in Westgate Buildings, Harville responds not only with resolution and independence but with "elasticity of mind." Without fortune or carriage or spacious accommodations, Harville extends an "uncommon" degree of hospitality to the visitors in Lyme, whereas the Elliots in Bath, in sycophantic pursuit of their aristocratic relations and guiltily aware of their own reduced style of living, have altogether abandoned "old fashioned notions" of "country hospitality."

So consistent is the contrast between the landed and the naval characters in *Persuasion*, and so consistent the preference for the latter, that critics (myself included) have been led to make excessive historical claims concerning the new directions of the novel. We should not see the renting of Kellynch Hall as a doom-laden portent of the decline of the landed order; nor should we see in the energy and initiative of the naval characters implications as to the arrival on the social scene of a new, perhaps "bourgeois," class. As Jane Austen's own family showed, a modest but well-connected gentry family could more than adequately fill both landed and naval roles in the period. Nor should we see *Persuasion*'s new directions as a contradiction of the traditional values embodied in the character of Mr. Knightley. It is true that in her last completed novel, Jane Austen reexamines both the idea of the gentleman and the role of manners. But in repudiating Sir Walter's definition of the gentleman □which excludes sailors on the grounds that they are without property, have to work, and are exposed to inclement weather that ravages their looks□she does not abandon her trust in gentlemanly behavior; and in consistently presenting the hypocritical Mr. Elliot as a man of "polished" manners, she does not renounce her faith in morally informed manners as a medium of social intercourse.

The contrast between land and sea in *Persuasion* works not to announce a new social leadership but rather to open new possibilities of accommodation for the marginal woman. What if our hopes of landed entitlement are disappointed□is this the end of the world? "Desire" is, of course, fulfilled in the marriage of Anne to Wentworth, but the dependence on marriage for the closure of the novel's plot is not escapist, in view of the positive examples of the Crofts, the Harvilles, Mrs. Smith, and Anne herself, who in the lonely period before her rapprochement with Wentworth showed stoicism, self-reliance, and above all "usefulness" in her social relations.

Even the most interesting of *Persuasion*'s new directions, its new attitude to nature, needs careful description. Sister of a great landowner, Jane Austen had always shown (like Fanny on her trip to Sotherton) a proprietary interest in "the appearance of the country, the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle." In her last works, however, nature begins to express states of consciousness, as her heroines respond to atmospheric conditions and seasonal moods. On the walk to Winthrop, for example, Anne's "autumnal" feelings of loss and loneliness find consolation in "the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges." But such "romanticism" is closer to that expressed in the sonnets of Charlotte Smith (1784) and William Lisle Bowles (1789) than to that of Wordsworth or Coleridge, and unlike Captain Benwick's romantic attitudes, it is never allowed to become self-indulgent. Even so, Anne's feelings for the natural scene mark a new emphasis in Jane Austen's response to the land, which is no longer viewed mainly as a place to be inhabited by the heroine in a responsible social role but as a possible source of alternative emotional consolation.

Like *Persuasion*, Jane Austen's unfinished fragment *Sanditon*, written in the winter before her death on 18 July 1817, also shows signs of a more private interest in nature. *Sanditon* describes with remarkable brio the transformation of an old village into a seaside resort for valetudinarians. Mr. Parker and Lady Denham are partners in this

speculative enterprise, which brilliantly captures aspects of the rootless, fashion-seeking Regency era. Mr. Parker makes of his inheritance "his Mine, his Lottery, his Speculation & his Hobby Horse." He moves from his old house□like Donwell Abbey, unfashionably low and sheltered but "rich in . . . Garden, Orchard & Meadows"□to a new house, to which he gives the topical name of Trafalgar House. Trafalgar House lacks a kitchen garden and shade trees, is exposed to winter storms, and is built near a cliff "on the most elevated spot on the Down." Jane Austen's satire is in the eighteenthcentury tradition of Horace Walpole, who, in a letter to Montagu (15 June 1768), wrote: "How our ancestors would laugh at us, who knew there was no being comfortable, unless you had a high hill before your nose, and a thick warm wood at your back! Taste is too freezing a commodity for us, and depend upon it will go out of fashion again." It seems clear that the lofty and precarious location of Mr. Parker's new house was intended to prefigure the crash of his speculative ventures, but what is remarkable about *Sanditon* is Jane Austen's *sang-froid* in face of the "improvements" she describes. Here, after all, is the theme of *Mansfield Park*, but Sanditon's heroine is unlikely to play Fanny's role of social redeemer, or even of social conscience. Like Emma, she responds aesthetically to the external scene, finding "amusement enough in standing at her ample Venetian window, & looking over the miscellaneous foreground of unfinished Building, waving Linen, & tops of Houses, to the Sea, dancing & sparkling in Sunshine & Freshness." Charlotte Heywood is like previous heroines in terms of her emerging from a traditional rural home into the glare of a materialistic world, but her accommodation to this world is more detached, more self-contained; she finds the Sanditon scene "very striking□and very amusing□or very melancholy, just as Satire or Morality might prevail." And rather than being critical of Sanditon's "modern" developments, she views them "with the calmness of amused curiosity." *Sanditon* is a remarkable work by a woman about to move into her last accommodations in College Street, Winchester. In its satire of hypochondria, it announces itself to be on the side of life and health; and in its presentation of the heroine, it arouses our curiosity. Like Mr. Knightley in his early concern for Emma, we "wonder what will become of her." More than in her future husband, we are interested in the home she would have found.

Source: Alistair M. Duckworth, "Austen's Accommodations," in *Critical Essays on Jane Austen*, edited by Laura Mooneyham White, G. K. Hall & Co., 1998, pp. 190-94.

Adaptations

Persuasion was adapted as a film by Roger Michell, starring Amanda Root and Ciaran Hinds, Columbia/Tristar Studios, 1995; available from Columbia Home Video.

The novel was also adapted in an earlier film version by Howard Baker, starring Anne Firbank and Bryan Marshall, BBC Video, 1971.

Topics for Further Study

Observe and listen to a conversation that involves several people. Write a short sketch of the conversation, focusing on the perspective of one of the people involved. Describe not only what is said but also what you imagine the person is thinking during the conversation.

Read Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, written during her first phase, and compare the central character, Elizabeth Bennet, to Anne Elliot. What similarities and differences do you discover?

Research the psychological foundations of the act of persuasion. In what ways could Anne have prevented her father's and Lady Russell's influence over her?

Investigate the lives of the middle-class British at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Discuss how strictly social lines were drawn during that period.

Compare and Contrast

Late 1700s: *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft is published in 1792. The book chronicles the growing sense of dissatisfaction women feel about the unequal treatment they receive in the home and in other institutions.

Today: American women have made major gains in their fight for equality with the passage of many pieces of legislation. Although some notable pieces of legislation, including the 1972 Equal Rights Amendment bill, have not been passed, discrimination against women is now against the law.

Late 1700s: One of the most popular forms of literature during this period is the sentimental novel□a didactic work that promotes and rewards its characters' "proper" moral behavior.

Today: The most popular forms of literature for the general reading public are thrillers and memoirs.

Late 1700s: The American War of Independence is waged from 1775 to 1783. As a result, British domination of America comes to an end.

Today: Catholics in Northern Ireland, backed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), continue their struggle to break free from English rule.

What Do I Read Next?

Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, published in 1811, chronicles the lives of Elinor and Marianne Dashwood as they learn to find a balance between the extremes of the two qualities noted in the title.

Pride and Prejudice, published in 1813 and considered to be Austen's best novel, presents an intimate portrait of Elizabeth Bennet and her struggles with family, social, and romantic problems.

Emma, published in 1816, focuses on one of Austen's most endearing and complex characters as she tries to influence the lives of those in her circle.

Robert B. Cialdini's *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, published in 1993, presents the science of persuasion as it helps readers understand the psychological foundations of this technique.

Further Study

Brown, Lloyd, W., *Bits of Ivory: Narrative Techniques in Jane Austen's Fiction*, Louisiana State University Press, 1973.

Brown presents a penetrating study of how Austen structures the realistic portraits of daily life in her novels.

Butler, Marilyn, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, Clarendon Press, 1975.

This work explores Austen's dominant themes, including an analysis of class consciousness, a central theme in all of her novels.

Litz, A. Walton, *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development*, Oxford University Press, 1965.

Walton places *Persuasion* in Austen's second phase and examines the structure and style of the novel.

Pinion, F. B., *A Jane Austen Companion: A Critical Survey and Reference Book*, Macmillan, 1973.

Pinion presents a comprehensive and useful introduction to the themes and structure of Austen's work.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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