Baker Street Readers

Great reads for all ages

After eight years of heartache, can anyone love again?

Eight years ago, Anne Elliot was persuaded that her family's honour was more important than her own happiness. She has suffered ever since. Now the man she turned away has returned.

Can Captain Wentworth forgive Anne, or will he be charmed instead by the beautiful Louisa? Will Anne be persuaded to marry her cousin, or will she find the strength to follow her heart?

The extravagance of Anne's foolish father, the greedy plotting of false friends, and a near-fatal accident bring danger into Anne's safe world. Their hearts assailed by resentment, regrets and rivals, can Anne and Captain Wentworth now reach across the void that separates them to love each other again?

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- BBC R4, Open Book

PERSUASION JANE AUSTEN

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TEACHER'S INSPECTION ONLY

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THE CHARACTERS



Anne Elliot

Eight years ago Anne was persuaded to reject the man she loved. Will she now have a second chance to find true love and happiness?

Sir Walter Elliot and Miss Elizabeth Elliot



Anne's father and sister are proud – some think too proud – of their family name. Is their vanity the greatest threat to their future comfort?



Lady Russell

Lady Russell loves Anne like a daughter. Although she is kind, is she wise? Will her persuasive powers once again lead Anne towards heartbreak?

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Captain Wentworth

This is the gallant man whose heart Anne broke many years ago. Can he love her again, or will he be charmed by the young and beautiful Louisa Musgrove?





Louisa and Henrietta Musgrove

These two beautiful, lively sisters are in search of husbands. Can either of them mend Captain Wentworth's broken heart?

Mr William Elliot

Why is the handsome heir to Sir Walter Elliot's estate seeking Anne's father's friendship? What are his intentions regarding Anne? Can he be trusted?





Mrs Clay

Why has this young widow befriended Sir Walter and Elizabeth? Are Anne and Lady Russell right to distrust her?



PERSUASION

'Captain Wentworth is nobody!' exclaimed Sir Walter Elliot, the grand owner of Kellynch Hall. He placed on the table his huge book in which all the gentry of England were listed. 'I challenge you to find his family's name in here.' Anne didn't try. She knew it wasn't in the book's well-worn pages. Her father continued, 'Marriage to a mere naval officer, with neither wealth nor connections, would be degrading for our family. Isn't that so, Lady Russell?'

Anne looked up at their neighbour, who had been as a mother to her since her own mother's death five years ago.

'It would indeed be a most unfortunate alliance,' said Lady Russell softly.

Although Anne Elliot was now a beautiful nineteen-year-old, she felt like a small child as she stood before these two proud defenders of rank and honour. Listening to them, she felt her heart break.

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'Anne, you are free to do as you wish,' added Sir Walter, looking into his small hand-mirror and carefully adjusting a stray hair. Pleased with his fine appearance, he continued, 'but if you do degrade the name of Elliot, you shall receive nothing from me. I am astonished that you should even consider marrying such a man.' With a cold look at Anne, he left the room. His haughty eldest daughter, Elizabeth, followed him.

Lady Russell gently took Anne aside. It was true that the proposed marriage threatened the Elliot family name, but she was also concerned about Anne's happiness. Captain Wentworth seemed headstrong and determined – inappropriate characteristics, she felt, for a man of his low standing. Lady Russell needed to prevent the wedding if she could, but she also needed to consider Anne's feelings.

Within a week, Anne had been persuaded that to marry the man she loved and who was deeply in love with her, would be improper,

foolish and selfish. Her duty to her family was of paramount importance. Now she had the task of persuading Frederick Wentworth that her refusing his hand was for the best.

That afternoon, Captain Wentworth stared at Anne in dismay and disbelief. 'You have always known that I have only myself to offer. I thought that was enough for you.' Anne could not look at him. 'Anne, I am confident of further success in the navy. We will be rich both in love and in wealth.'



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after the death of his fiancée. This allows Anne to make the comment that women's affections survive longer than those of men.

Back in time

Finished in 1816, *Persuasion* was Jane Austen's last completed novel. She died the following year.

When reading any of Jane Austen's novels, it is important to understand the relationship between marriage and wealth. As Anne will not inherit any of her father's wealth, her best chance of an independent and comfortable future is to marry well. Though this may be one of Lady Russell's concerns in persuading Anne to reject Captain Wentworth's offer of marriage, it is certainly not Sir Walter's prime concern.

Sir Walter objects to naval officers because they are not from families of consequence. The navy at the time offered men from modest backgrounds the opportunity to achieve a good reputation and make their fortune. Sir Walter considers this a threat. Jane Austen, however, had great respect for the men who served in the navy.

More than any of her other novels, *Persuasion*

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is set at a very specific time in history. A short period of peace during the Napoleonic Wars with France allowed naval officers to return home. Readers at the time would have understood that *Persuasion*'s happy ending is overshadowed by the fact that Captain Wentworth, Admiral Croft and Captain Benwick would soon have had to return to war.

There are three main locations in *Persuasion* – Kellynch, Bath and Lyme Regis. Sir Walter's move to Bath was typical of the time. Bath was then a highly fashionable place to visit, a place for amusement, romance and adventure for the upper classes.

Finding out more

We recommend the following books and websites to gain a greater understanding of Jane Austen's England:

Books

- Gill Hornby, *Who was Jane Austen? The Girl with the Magic Pen*, Short Books, 2005.
- Jon Spence, *Becoming Jane Austen*, Hambledon Continuum, 2007.

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