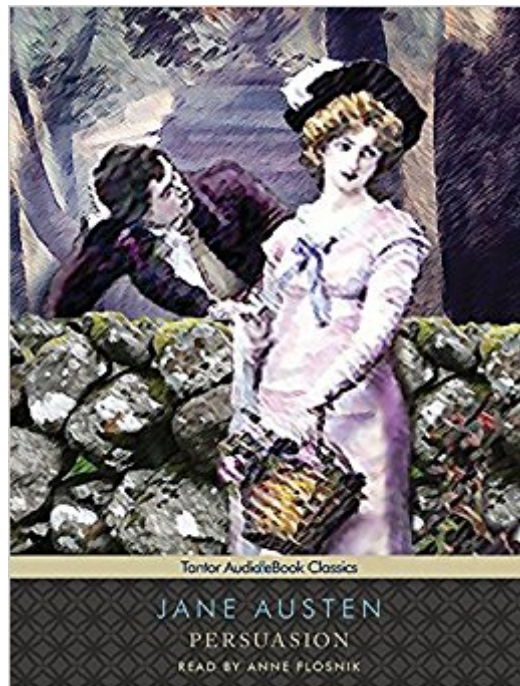


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Persuasion (Tantor Unabridged Classics)



Synopsis

Jane Austen's final novel is the story of Anne Elliot, a woman who gets a second chance. As a teenager she becomes engaged to a man who seems perfect for her, Frederick Wentworth. But she is persuaded to break the engagement off by her friend Lady Russell, who believes that he is too poor to be a suitable match. The episode plunges Anne into a period of bleak disappointment. Eight years later, Frederick returns from the Napoleonic Wars flushed with success. Anne's circumstances have also changed; her father's spendthrift ways mean he has been forced to lease the family home to a naval family. Will Anne and Frederick rediscover their love? Can their changed fortunes inhibit their feelings? Persuasion is a story of self-knowledge and personal regeneration, of social change and emotional politics. It is Austen's most mature work, and also her most wickedly satirical.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Persuasion" is a great literary work, and, to my mind, Jane Austen's finest book. This was her final completed novel before her death, and was published posthumously. As is often the case with Ms. Austen's fiction, "Persuasion" deals with the social issues of the times and paints a fascinating portrait of Regency England, especially when dealing with the class system. Rigid social barriers existed - and everyone wanted to marry "up" to a higher station - and, of course, into wealth. This is also a very poignant and passionate story of love, disappointment, loss and redemption. The point Austen makes here, is that one should not ever be persuaded to abandon core values and beliefs,

especially for ignoble goals. There are consequences, always. Gillian Beer writes a fascinating Introduction in this Penguin Classic Edition, in which she discusses Miss Austen's portrayal of the double-edged nature of persuasion. This complete and unabridged edition also contains a biography of the author, an Afterword, a new chronology and full textual notes. Sir Walter Elliot, Lord of Kellynch Hall, is an extravagant, self-aggrandizing snob, and a bit of a dandy to boot. He has been a widower for many years and spends money beyond his means to increase his social stature. His eldest daughter, who he dotes on, is as conceited and spoiled as he is. The youngest daughter, Anne, is an intelligent, sensitive, capable and unassuming woman in her late twenties when the story opens. She had been quite pretty at one time, but life's disappointments have taken their toll and her looks are fading. She and her sister are both spinsters. Anne had once been very much in love with a young, and as yet untried, naval officer.

This book is one of my favorites of all time. Many people dislike it or don't like it as much when compared to *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma*, but there are many reasons why *Persuasion* should not be compared to Austen's other novels. This novel was the last one that Austen wrote before she died. It is a more mature novel, dealing with many issues not found in Austen's previous novels. One reason why people find faults with the book is that Anne Elliot, the heroine, is not as spunky or witty as an Elizabeth Bennett or an Emma Woodhouse. There is not so much wit flowing in the dialogue between characters, or even dialogue in general. But these differences between the novels make this one so unique. It is a novel of second chances. Anne Elliot, no longer in the bloom of youth, is a grown woman of 27 or 28 years. Eight years ago she had been happily in love with a handsome man named Frederick Wentworth. But, unfortunately, due to his financial status, and Anne under the influence of her family and close friend, was forced to reject his marriage proposal and they parted ways. But now, he is within her closest circle once again. Circumstances led to Anne staying with her married sister, Mrs. Muskgrove, while her own house was being let to Wentworth's sister and husband. Wentworth visits his sister and on calling on the Muskgroves finds Anne among them. Anne finds Wentworth, not only looking as good as he ever did, but is now Captain Wentworth, who has made his fortune. Wentworth, still angry with Anne over being rejected, causes him to treat Anne very coolly. But over many weeks of contact here and there, you catch on that Captain Wentworth isn't all that oblivious to Anne anymore, because of all the little 'glimpses' he throws at Anne. The tension between the two is amazing.

This review is for the Norton Critical Edition of *Persuasion*, and has two parts: a review of

Persuasion itself, and a review of Norton Content. No educated person disputes Austen's contribution to the literary world. While her particular craft may not be palatable to all types (whose is?), I maintain that of all Austen's works, Persuasion is the one to hold the most appeal to those unfamiliar with her literature. It could be a 'gateway drug', introducing the reader to Austen, or it could be a delightful 'one-book stand'; whichever way works for the reader. Concealed within Regency trappings is a universal story: there is a 'mythic' quality to it in the sense that C.S. Lewis defines myth. The story reaches through space and time to grab the heart and attention of the reader, compelling her both on and deeper. When the novel opens, Anne Elliot faces the prospect of meeting once again a man with whom she was compelled to break off an engagement nearly eight years prior. While relatively little outward action takes place, Austen builds tension through Anne's inner conflict. Peripheral issues, such as the nature of the change in social systems in this turbulent time in Britain and the place of women in society, serve as complementary fare that highlights the mounting dilemma that Anne faces. In Austen style, the resolution and denouement are highly satisfying and truly ingenious, and the reader is left with meaty material to savor for days to come. The Norton contribution to Persuasion is indispensable. Though I was previously familiar with Persuasion, a favorite professor of mine introduced me to the commentary and contributions within this edition. The preface lays out a road map of sorts for the rest of the book.

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