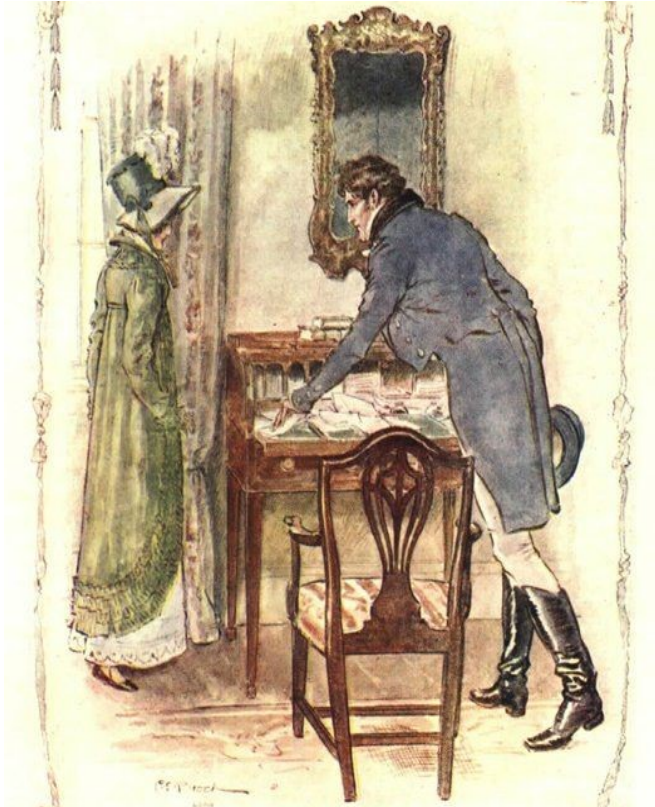


Jane Austen's *Persuasion*



**A study morning
led by
Dr Richard Moore
Friday 6 December 2019
from 10-12 noon
William Elder Building,
56-58, Castlegate,
Berwick,
TD15 1JT**

Persuasion is in some ways the most intimate and psychologically penetrating of Jane Austen's novels. Some regard it as a culmination but in fact, when she died, she was working on her unfinished more boisterous *Sanditon*, which exudes the high spirits of *Pride and Prejudice*. In Jane Austen's time to be persuaded had two meanings, the modern one (to be made by reason, charm or pressure, to do something which one might otherwise resist) and a different one: *to be convinced*. The subtle treatment of these two interpretations forms the basis to a moving love-story with strong seasonal implications.

The novel is essentially a love-story. Captain Wentworth has a firm persuasion (conviction) that, in rejecting him as a husband, Anne Elliott had let him - and herself - down. Actually, she had only wanted to do what was right. The arguments of her friend Lady Russell may not have been those of Anne's own heart but the social dimension could not be ignored. At nineteen years old, a naturally conciliating girl had been persuaded (pressured into conformity) by someone she respected - someone whose outlook was more geared than hers to the socio-materialistic and the conventional hierarchies.

The subtlety of the novel is indicated by the fact that Lady Russell is no haughty tyrant like Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Her affections are warm and tender, and even at the end Anne claims that it is only with hindsight that her advice has proved to be mistaken. It was one of those cases where the outcome alone could determine the rightness or wrongness of the decision. Had the Captain not risen to fortune and position, his early confidence might have come to seem misguided and arrogant. At the time Lady Russell genuinely thought that a man of doubtful future and limited income would not make for a good marriage partner. In other words, her opinion was not merely mercenary or shallow. Her genuine view was that the marriage would be socially and *personally* unwise. Like many of us, she was judging what was right for Anne by the standard of what would be right for *herself*.

In this study session we shall examine the central core while also relating the novel to Jane Austen's life and times. Issues of naval warfare, snobbery and social hierarchy lie behind the novel and it is enriched by a knowledge of the background ambience.

Tickets £6, including refreshments. All are welcome and no previous knowledge is assumed.

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