

Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

3 weekly sessions: Saturdays, March 24, April 7, April 14 | 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Tuition: \$150

Susan Lear Weisgrau is a retired English teacher who taught for 30 years at Akiba Hebrew Academy. She's on the board of the Regional Chapter of JASNA. Susan was smitten with Austen long before Colin Firth jumped into a pond. *Persuasion* is her favorite Austen novel.

Session 1 March 24

Read to Chapter X. I'll be using the Norton Critical Edition of *Persuasion*. It would be preferable if we all had the same edition, but if you own another one, that's fine too.

Who is Jane Austen, and what's the big deal about her? Virginia Woolf said of her, "...of all great writers, she is the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness." We'll try to catch her in the act..

What are the important things to know about Austen's life, and where does *Persuasion* fit in?

How does the age she lived in — 18th century — give some context to her works?

We'll do a close reading of first few chapters.

We'll watch film clips of adaptations of *Persuasion*. If you want to watch a film, for my money you can't beat the 1996 version with Ciaran Hinds and Amanda Root.

Session 2 April 7

Read to Chapter XX

How does Anne move around in the book? She takes quite a few walks, but she doesn't dance. What is the importance of dancing in the novels?

What is the significance of sister relationships in the novel —the Musgrove girls and the Elliot girls?

Was Lady Russell right to advise Anne? Do we judge advice by the intentions or by the results?

What roles do "giving advice" and "persuasion" play?

More close reading. If a passage or sentence interests you or makes you laugh, bring it in.

Watch film clips of adaptations of middle section of book.

Session 3 April 14

Finish the book, including the alternate ending. Why did she choose the ending she did?

Importance of Mrs. Smith. Is she there as a plot device, or does she serve some larger purpose?

Discuss the role of letter writing in *Persuasion* and in Austen's other novels.

After finishing *Persuasion*, Austen left us with a fragment of an unfinished novel called "Sanditon." We'll take a look at it.

Where do we think Austen might have gone with her novels after *Persuasion*?

Final discussion of the novel.

Watch film clips of the ending.

I look forward to discussing my favorite Jane Austen novel with you. After our rewarding discussions, I hope you'll want to come to Jane Austen day on April 21st. It's an all day event at the Merion Cricket Club given by the Regional Chapter of JASNA. There will be wonderful speakers, including Whit Stillman, who wrote and directed "Love and Friendship," the recent film with Kate Beckinsale, based on Austen's *Lady Susan*. Susannah Fullerton from Australia will be there and Austen scholars. More on that later. Even more fun will be available in Kansas City in October when the national JASNA will hold its AGM on the topic *Persuasion*.