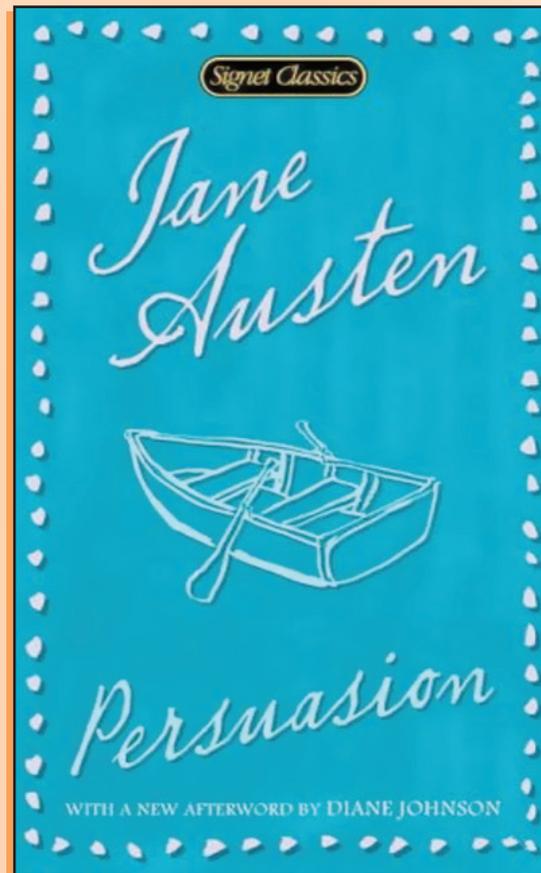




A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE PENGUIN EDITION OF

JANE AUSTEN'S
PERSUASION

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S E R I E S E D I T O R S :

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INTRODUCTION

Persuasion by Jane Austen is a novel rich in intrigue and romance. Although Austen's focus seems to be the manners and morals of the time, this concern is embedded in the tentative relationship between Anne Elliot and Captain Frederick Wentworth and in whether the relationship will flower again to the heights of the love they once had.

On the most basic level *Persuasion* is a love story, both interesting and entertaining. On a deeper level it examines human foibles and societal flaws. The question of the importance of propriety is raised frequently as is the issue of appearance vs. reality.

Family relationships and duty to family are both foci of the story. Within this family context relationships between men and women are examined, and it is interesting to see how male and female relationships have changed since the late 18th century. Of course, love and marriage are at the center of the story since it is through love that Austen brings into play most of the other issues.

For fans of television soap operas, the subtleties of the novel will leap to life. For those raised on action/adventure stories, the plot will seem slow. The novel's lack of action and antiquated language and mores will probably be the biggest hurdles teachers will face in involving students in reading Austen's novel. This teacher's guide encourages student involvement through activities that help students explore the subtleties of the novel.

Too often teachers overwhelm students with background knowledge when teaching classics like *Persuasion*. Explaining the time period and differences in customs and place, providing background on the author, and highlighting vocabulary and concepts overloads students with information rather than whetting their appetites to read the book. When the teacher is the authority, the student is removed from the exciting role of discoverer and placed in the very unexciting role of passive receiver of information. Sharing information with students as they raise questions is more effective than overwhelming them with information out of context.

The goal of this guide is to help you establish an interactive classroom in which students share written responses in small groups and then with the whole class. Its emphasis is on discovery and involvement. Discussing and debating issues and opinions encourages students to return to the text to support their assertions. This delving into the novel for information important to the student is infinitely more motivating than digging through to answer teacher-made questions.

Although this guide has an abundance of activities and questions, the intent is to give teachers and students choices. It is not important or even desirable to have students respond to every chapter. More realistically, you might ask students to respond to one suggestion for every four or five chapters read. Students can share their work in small groups, raising the interest of other students. It is important to vary the activities and keep the work interesting by letting students use their imaginations as they demonstrate their involvement in the book.

This guide is divided into three sections. The first section provides background information to assist you in answering student questions. The Overview contains a brief biographical sketch of Jane Austen, historical background for the novel, and information on Bath, the setting for much of the book. The second or Teaching section of the guide contains activities arranged for use either before, during, or after reading the novel. The third section provides ideas for Extending the Students' Learning beyond the novel.

OVERVIEW

SUMMARY OF CHARACTERS

The following summary of characters in *Persuasion* is meant to provide a brief overview. No plot summary is included here because chapter summaries are given later.

Persuasion centers on the Elliot family—Sir Walter and his three daughters Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary. Told mainly from Anne's perspective, it is the story of her father's reaction to his overspending, Elizabeth's responses to those she views as less important than herself, Mary's settling into married life with a family she feels is socially inferior, and Anne's quest to rekindle the romance she once had with Frederick Wentworth. Minor characters all have a definite purpose in the novel: Mrs. Russell is the family confidante; Mr. Shepherd handles the family's legal affairs; while his daughter Mrs. Clay is vying for the affections of the widowed Sir Walter Elliot. The whole Musgrove family, from Mr. and Mrs. to Charles and Henrietta and Louisa, are able to enjoy themselves without suffering unduly over their places in society. Admiral and Mrs. Croft exemplify true love in a happy marriage. Mrs. Smith, Anne's friend, provides important information on other

characters while showing off Anne's true character. Through the characters of Captain Harville and Captain Benwick, readers see another side of Captain Wentworth and are also provided with a solution to Wentworth's entangled relationship with Louisa. Each character is necessary to keep the threads of the plot closely intertwined around the affairs of Anne and Captain Wentworth.

HISTORICAL COMMENTARY

This brief commentary points out some basic differences between 18th century society and 20th century society that can become topics for classroom discussion.

The Austens were members of the landed gentry, part of the hereditary ruling class of England along with the aristocracy. Although many of the landed gentry simply lived from the profits of their estates, younger brothers did not inherit and often had to turn to careers in the army or navy or to respectable occupations in banking, law, or government. Identity was not based on occupation, but on class.

Although Jane Austen recognized some of the flaws of her society, many aspects of it go unquestioned. The right to be part of the gentry and to have privileges simply by virtue of birth is never raised as an issue. Also unquestioned is the belief that Englishmen and English institutions were superior to any others in the world. War is also taken for granted as one way to make a fortune—no questions are ever raised about whether or not this is ethical.

People's place in society was also viewed differently. Humans were not seen as individuals, but rather as social beings judged by their conduct toward each other. Individual desires and accomplishments were not of major importance. Manners were looked upon as another aspect of morals, and politeness was elevated to a virtue. Social interaction was the expression of 18th-century society much as individualism is the expression of 20th-century society.

Being civilized and having good sense were vitally important attributes. The emphasis on being part of society carried over into views of family life. Family duties were especially emphasized because the family was seen as the natural unit around which society was built and maintained. This notion of duty to family and society may be difficult for today's students to understand because they have been brought up in a society that views individual happiness as a major goal.

The common view was that women were in charge of private life, while men were in charge of public life. Because women were not in public life, they could not own property or inherit from their fathers—they had no legal rights. Thus the only route to financial stability open to women was through marriage.

A NOTE ON THE CITY OF BATH

The city of Bath was the most popular place for the aristocracy to vacation in the early part of the 18th century. It was a beautiful, planned city with wide streets laid out in an orderly fashion. Bath was named for its hot, healing waters that had been enclosed in buildings by the Romans.

By the end of the 18th century, the time period of *Persuasion*, there was not as much activity in Bath, since the nobility preferred seaside towns like Brighton for their holidays. Bath, however, was still frequented by the landed gentry, who often viewed it as a good retirement city. Social activities in the Pump Room and the Assembly Rooms were not as frequent as in years past, but they were still the scenes of social gatherings.

It is easy to understand why people of any century find Bath a pleasant place. Hills surround the city, a river runs alongside it, and the town itself is inviting. At the top of the hill sits the Royal Crescent, a long group of townhouses built in a crescent shape, and still the city's most prestigious address. Sloping down the hill in front of the Royal Crescent are beautiful gardens with walking paths. On the hill not far from the Royal Crescent are the Assembly Rooms, renovated in the late 20th-century to give visitors a glimpse of the way they looked in their glory days. Lining both sides of Pulteney Bridge are shops built into the bridge itself. Beyond the bridge is the beautiful Laura Place where Lady Dalrymple lived.

Today, the baths have been restored and the Pump Room turned into an elegant restaurant. Outside the Pump Room is a large, cobbled courtyard. It is easy to imagine the characters in Jane Austen's novels promenading up and down to see and be seen. The center of the city is crowded with little shops on narrow, cobbled streets. Walking around the city is as pleasant today as it must have been in Jane Austen's day.

AUSTEN'S LIFE

Jane Austen, born in 1775 in Hampshire, England, was the seventh of eight children. As a parson's daughter she saw many aspects of life, including poverty and death. Through her father's work and her travels with her family, she had a wider variety of experiences in life than her depiction of herself as an isolated spinster would imply. Educated by her father, she began to write as a child and continued this practice throughout her life.

Jane had a rich inner life nourished by the many books she read, the plays she attended, and the people she knew. Because life for women was so centered around home and family and community, social activities held a prominent place in her life. Jane was very observant and her keen eye and ear allowed her to capture the intricacies of human interactions as well as the manners that surrounded those relationships on paper.

In 1802 it is thought that Jane experienced a deep love affair, but that the young man died a few weeks later. Within the year she refused a proposal from a family friend and never married. Jane gave most of her energy to her large, extended family and to her writing. Her novels include: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, and *Northanger Abbey*.

BEFORE READING

Although the plot of this novel is simple, Austen's antiquated language may make reading the novel cumbersome for many students. Read the first several chapters aloud so students get familiar with speech patterns and vocabulary usage. After students feel comfortable with the language, they should be able to read the novel with no trouble, assuming that they are avid, mature readers.

In order to get students involved in and thinking about the issues, the characters, and the setting of the novel, select several of the following activities or questions for student response.

1. What do you believe you owe your family?
2. Respond to this scenario. You introduce to your family the person you would like to marry. They reject your choice of a marriage partner and explain all their reasons, including the temperament of the person as well as his or her economic, educational, and family background. How would you react to their advice?
3. On the topic of marriage describe the kind of person you would consider as a marriage partner. To what extent are education, economic stability, family background, temperament, race, religion, ethnicity, or language important to you? Explain.
4. The following words are used to describe people in the novel *Persuasion*: benevolent, charitable, delicate sense of honor, cultivated mind, honest, sensible, amiable, vain, conceited, silly, steady character, sweet, elegance of mind, disloyal, sense of duty, rational, discrete, polished, open-hearted, frank, sincere, confident, brilliant, headstrong, affectionate, good-natured, ambitious, good-hearted, friendly, faithful, gentle, energetic, patient, competent, responsible, happy, good mannered, of sound judgment, observant, moderate, shrewd, and unaffected.

Read through the list and decide which ten characteristics you would most like and which ten you would least like to possess. Compare and discuss your selections and reasons for them within a small group. Make two lists. In one, list all the characteristics that are considered admirable in a female, in the other, admirable male characteristics. The same may be used in both lists. Discuss the reasons for your selections. As you read the novel, watch for these characteristics and the gender to which they are attributed. Discuss your findings after reading the entire novel.

5. Make a collage from magazines showing the kinds of clothing both men and women wear today. How would you describe someone who would wear the kind of clothes shown in the picture? What judgments might you make about them? As you read the novel, keep the collage in mind. Then write how the people wearing the clothes might be described by the characters in *Persuasion*.
 6. Persuasion—letting others gently influence decisions you make—is a big issue in this novel. On what matters in your life would you be open to family opinions or persuasion? Which matters or issues do you feel should be solely up to you?
 7. What do you know about the lives of women in the late 18th century? What were they allowed to do? How did they spend their time? How did they dress? Did they have any economic power or resources?
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8. If through some quirk of fate, your family and friends found out they would never have to work again but would be able to continue at the same economic level as today, how would they spend their time? After a couple of years, how do you think your family would organize itself? What would be important to them?
9. Most members of the gentry during Austen's time did not have "careers" or jobs but lived off of the income of their estates. Do we still have members of society who don't work and live off of inherited wealth? What are society's attitudes toward them? Compare those attitudes to the attitudes our society has toward people who can't or don't work and are on welfare.

WHILE READING

Select one or more of the following activities to do THROUGHOUT your reading of the novel.

1. Keep a dialog journal. In one column write down what is happening and in the other column write your reaction. Which lines, ideas, and/or actions resonate with you or repulse you?
2. Keep a character journal. Choose one of the major characters. After every chapter in which he or she appears, write down how you imagine the character would react to the events in the chapter.
3. Note who is telling the story. How does Austen want you to view each character? Jot down this information and see if the teller of the story changes his/her view on individuals throughout the novel. In what ways does the narrator move the plot along, build suspense, or confuse the reader? Discuss your views.
4. Create a web to illustrate the relationships among the characters. Put Anne at the center of the web. When all of the characters have been introduced, indicate who has the power in each relationship by coloring the line between the characters and adding an arrow pointing to the character who has the least power in the relationship. What gives some characters power over others? Has this changed today?
5. Subtext is that which is implied but not said. Choose a scene that seems heavy with unspoken thoughts, and write it into a script using modern English. Turn those unspoken thoughts into spoken words.
6. Collect physical descriptions of both male and female characters. How do these descriptions differ from the way characters are described in today's novels? Are the same physical characteristics noted? Are men or women described differently today than they were in Austen's day? Are concepts of beauty and good looks the same?

CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND SUGGESTED RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

These very brief chapter summaries are intended to provide a glimpse of major events. The summaries are accompanied by questions to involve readers more deeply in the story. The questions should be used sparingly to engage students in the novel, not overwhelm them with a myriad of questions.

VOLUME ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Sir Walter Elliot and his daughters Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary are introduced along with family confidantes Lady Russell and Mr. Shepherd. Memories of the deceased Lady Elliot are also mentioned. Readers learn about Sir Walter's character, his expectations for his daughters, and his poor financial health.

1. What can you infer about Sir Walter by the additions he makes to the book containing the family's history?
2. Compare Sir Walter's expectations for each of his three daughters.
3. In Chapter One the reader briefly meets Sir Walter and his oldest daughter Elizabeth. What do you learn about each of them? What about them is appealing or repulsive to you?
4. The narrator seems to have strong opinions about some characters. Where and how do you notice the narrator coloring your view of a character?
5. Sir Walter is disturbed because he doesn't like the way his "heir presumptive" has acted in the past. Why can't he just leave his money, title, and estate to his daughters?

CHAPTER TWO

Sir Walter deals with his financial realities, as well as the options suggested by Mrs. Russell and Mr. Shepherd. Sir Walter agrees to move out of Kellynch to apartments in Bath. We learn more about Anne and why she dislikes the idea of moving to Bath, and meet Mr. Shepherd's daughter, Mrs. Clay.

1. To what extent do you agree with Sir Walter on the value of rank and consequence? Explain.
2. What do you learn about Sir Walter by his reaction to Mrs. Russell's first proposal?
3. Sir Walter is not managing his money well and cannot keep spending at his current rate or he will be bankrupt. He assigns Mrs. Russell and Mr. Shepherd the task of figuring out what to do. They make suggestions, and he fumes. Try to get into the mind of Sir Walter and adopt his attitudes as you write a stream-of-consciousness reaction (an uninterrupted flow of his thoughts) to the necessity of cutting back. At the end write the advice Mother Teresa (or some other person who shuns material goods) might give him.

CHAPTER THREE

Sir Walter, Mr. Shepherd, and we see Mrs. Russell discuss how to rent Sir Walter's estate. Sir Walter shares his views on men in the navy, and Mrs. Clay's penchant for flattering Sir Walter surfaces. A discussion of Admiral Croft, a potential tenant, reveals that his wife has brothers with the last name of Wentworth.

1. What does Sir Walter reveal about himself and his attitudes in this chapter?
2. What attitudes expressed in this chapter are very different/very similar to attitudes in present-day society?

CHAPTER FOUR

In this chapter we learn of the relationship that Anne and Captain Frederick Wentworth had seven years earlier, as well as how and why she was persuaded not to marry him.

1. What qualities are Mrs. Russell and Sir Walter looking for in a husband for Anne?
2. What do you think led Anne to acquiesce to her family's wishes? Should families have a say in whom their children marry? Explain.
3. Script the scene where Anne tells Frederick she cannot marry him.
4. The intrigue begins in this chapter. For this chapter and any other chapters in which the intrigue and tension build, assume you are a radio announcer who wants to keep his/her audience tuning in every day. What questions could you raise that would get others to want to read the next chapter? Example: Will Anne ever see Frederick again? Will their paths cross if the Crofts lease the Elliot estate? Will they speak to each other after all these years? Tune in tomorrow for Chapter Five to see if any of your questions are answered.

CHAPTER FIVE

Kellynch is let to the Crofts, and Sir Walter and Elizabeth move immediately to Bath, taking Elizabeth's friend, Mrs. Clay, with them. Anne is to stay at her sister Mary's at Uppercross for a long visit. Here we meet Mary's in-laws, the Musgroves.

1. In this chapter Mrs. Clay's appearance is described and found to be lacking. What kind of evidence is given? How do we judge appearance today?
 2. From Mary and Louisa and Henrietta's actions what are females of this class expected to do? How do they spend their time?
 3. Write a diary entry from Anne's point of view about her arrival at Mary's.
 4. What do these people who do not work do to keep their lives interesting?
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CHAPTER SIX

Anne settles in at Uppercross and notices the realities of her sister's relationship with her husband and children. Through Louisa and Henrietta Musgrove she hears about her sister's behavior as she becomes immersed in the family, their evening dances, and other social activities. When the Crofts move into Kellynch, they call on the Musgroves and impart the news that Mrs. Croft's brother will soon be visiting. At this point we hear of the unfortunate demise of the Musgrove's oldest son, Richard, who had at one time worked on the ship commanded by Captain Wentworth.

1. Why do you think poor, dead Richard is brought into the story? Who might we learn more about through his mention in the story?
2. Make a chart or web illustrating all the characters we have met so far and how they are related to each other.
3. From the first six chapters select lines or quotations that best illustrate the character of Anne, Elizabeth, Mary, Sir Walter, and Mrs. Russell. Share these quotations and come to some conclusions about the goals or motivations of these characters.
4. What themes seem to be emerging? In groups, brainstorm possible themes and in what ways you see them emerging.
5. After meeting Mary, who appears to be rather whiny and spoiled, construct a conversation between Mary and someone who would be unsympathetic to her. What might they say to each other?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Captain Wentworth visits the Musgroves and both the daughters are charmed by his looks and manners. Anne is prevented from attending the dinner because little Charles, Mary's son, fell and dislocated his collar bone. The next morning she sees the Captain for a few minutes when he is in company. Henrietta reports an uncomplimentary remark made by the captain about Anne's changed looks. He also makes his intentions of finding a wife clear to his sister, Mrs. Croft.

1. Mary makes many assumptions about Anne and what she should be willing to do. How does she describe the role of mother to Anne? How does she explain why she should go to the party, not Anne? Comment on her actions.
2. How is the narrator in this chapter used to build tension?
3. Write a script that changes what happens between Anne and Mary when Mary insists that she should be the one to go to the party.
4. Write Anne's diary entry after she sees Frederick Wentworth.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Anne and Captain Wentworth are frequently in each other's company when they are with the Musgroves. They speak to each other rarely, but are civil when they do speak. The Musgrove girls dote on the Captain as do their cousins, the Misses Hayter. Admiral Croft, Mrs. Croft, and Captain Wentworth have an extended conversation about whether women should be allowed to travel on ships.

1. What do you learn about Captain Wentworth in this chapter?
2. What do you learn about how naval men view women? What assumptions are they making about women?
3. Captain Wentworth and Anne are constantly in each other's company. What keeps them from speaking honestly to each other? Would we include people today in social gatherings who had once been engaged? Both the Captain and Anne are very polite to each other. How might things be different today?

CHAPTER NINE

Captain Wentworth is so enjoying his visit with his sister, Mrs. Croft, that he decides to stay indefinitely and spend much of his time at Uppercross. The Croft's solid, happy marriage is illustrated, and we meet Charles Hayter, cousin to the Musgroves but their social inferior, who has eyes only for Henrietta. At this point Henrietta is still very taken by Wentworth and Hayter becomes jealous. Mary's husband Charles is a good friend to Hayter and approves of him. Mary, of course, hopes Hayter and Henrietta will not become involved. Anne and Wentworth converse as he deliberately removes her unruly nephew from her back.

1. Why is Charles Hayter's economic and social standing of such interest to Mary? Why is Mary less than enthusiastic about him?
2. In the extended Musgrove family, who has the highest social standing? the lowest? Do we still view and rank people by their social and economic standings?
3. Write the journal entry of Charles Hayter following his morning with Captain Wentworth.

CHAPTER TEN

The Musgrove girls invite Anne and Mary to take a long walk and are soon joined by Charles M. and Captain Wentworth. The Captain walks with the Musgrove girls, and Anne overhears much of their conversation. Because they walk a long distance and are very close to Winthrop, the home of the Hayters, Charles insists on visiting and takes Henrietta with him. At this point Anne is hidden from view as she, Louisa, and Captain Wentworth wait the return of the others. Anne overhears a conversation between Louisa and the Captain which seems infused with warmth and caring. He then finds out from Louisa that Anne had turned down Charles Musgrove when Charles wished to marry her. Meanwhile, after the visit to the Hayters, Charles Hayter joins them, and he and Henrietta seem happy to be together. Through the Captain's actions Anne is convinced that although he will never forgive her refusal to marry, he still has some feelings for her.

1. Charles Hayter never confronts Henrietta about whether she cares for him or for the Captain. What do you think of the way he handles the situation? Does his strategy work?
2. Captain Wentworth doesn't respond much to Mary. What do you think he would like to say to her?
3. What does Captain Wentworth say he admires in women? Why might this be important to him?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Days before Anne is to join Lady Russell at her home, Captain Wentworth returns from a visit to an old friend, Captain Harville, in Lyme. Louisa persuades her parents to let their group go for a visit, so off they go. While in Lyme, they not only meet the Harvilles but also the Harvilles' friend, Captain Benwick, who was engaged to Captain Harville's sister before her death six months earlier. After dinner, Anne finds herself in the company of Benwick who seems to enjoy and appreciate his conversations with her.

1. Captain Benwick is trying to get over the death of his fiancée. What advice would you give him?
2. Does Anne seem interested in Benwick? Do you think they would be good for each other?

CHAPTER TWELVE

Returning from a stroll on the beach, a man unknown to the group casts a long, appreciative glance at Anne. He seems agreeable to Anne, and later she discovers he is her cousin, Mr. Elliot. On a last walk along the beach before the group is to return home, Louisa surprises Wentworth by jumping down from a step. He fails to catch her; she lands on her head and is carried unconscious to the Harville's house. Because a surgeon says she must not be moved, it is decided that she will stay with the Harvilles along with Charles Musgrove and Mary, who insists she also must remain in Lyme. Anne, Henrietta, and Wentworth return to Uppercross.

1. Why do you suspect such great notice is taken of the man on the beach steps who looks at Anne with such great appreciation?
2. If you were Captain Wentworth, how would you feel about the accident? What do you think he will do next?
3. Wentworth's attitude towards Anne seems to have softened. What does he say to her that especially pleases her?

AT THE END OF VOLUME ONE

Because some issues and ideas might be forgotten or not seem of much importance if they are dealt with at the end of the book, stopping after the first volume and inviting students to do one or more of the following activities can help keep interest high.

This activity encourages students to think about the mood of some of the scenes:

1. Look back over the chapters and scenes. Find some background music that captures the mood of a scene or chapter. Share your findings with the class and see if they can figure out why the music fits the scene or chapter you identified.

These activities ask students to delve deeper into characterization, make judgments about the characters, and to extend their learning beyond the novel:

2. Imagine that an expert on parenting could observe Sir Walter interacting with his three daughters and Mary interacting with her two young sons. Write a report from the point of view of the expert. Include the areas of parenting in which there are problems as well as recommendations for strengthening the parenting skills of Sir Walter and Mary.
3. Is Anne too good to be true? Is she just too nice to everyone? Should she think of her own needs and wants more? What do you think she should have learned from her breakup? Write a pep talk you would give Anne.
4. You are invited to a tea by a character you like and a character you despise. You discuss the invitation with a friend explaining why you'd like to spend time with a character and what you'd talk about. Then explain why you don't want to meet the other character and what you fear you'd have to talk about.

This activity asks students to think about point of view:

5. If someone were to write the story of your life and you were not around, name all the people who would be needed to tell the story of the real you. What kind of information could each give about you? How would they characterize your actions and words? How would the telling of the story of your life change if it were told by someone who didn't like you? With this in mind, write a brief statement from each of the main characters explaining how they feel about the way they have been depicted so far. If each of them were telling the story, what would they change about their own characterization?

VOLUME TWO

CHAPTER ONE

Charles returns from Lyme and sends the family's old nursemaid to help Mrs. Harville nurse Louisa. Anne goes to stay with Lady Russell. After a few days she gets enough courage to call on the Crofts, who live in her former home. There she finds that the note she received about Louisa's health had been brought by Captain Wentworth. She also discovers that when he had been at Kellynch he had inquired about her and expressed concern over her exertions at Lyme. Anne enjoys the company of the Crofts, who are very hospitable, and is happy they have made so few changes to the house.

1. Anne is very happy to hear that Captain Wentworth has inquired about her. Her heart is still his, and she hungers for every piece of information about him so she can try to piece together how he feels about her. Go back through the chapters in which he appears and list all his interactions with her. Then write Anne a letter telling her whether you think there is hope for the relationship.
2. The Crofts are portrayed as one of the few happily married couples in the novel. What is there about their relationship that seems so different from the other relationships shown (Mary and Charles, the elder Musgroves)?

CHAPTER TWO

Louisa is making a slow recovery at Lyme. Charles and Mary return to Uppercross with very definite opinions of Captain Benwick. Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove bring the Harville children home with them for the Christmas holidays. Because Anne and Lady Russell are present for the noisy Christmas celebration, Lady Russell is very glad to get away and travel to Bath.

1. What kinds of things seem to make Mary happy? Why might women at the time of the novel have focused on such things?
 2. Why does Charles believe that Captain Benwick is very taken with Anne? What facts does he use to draw this conclusion? What signs do we use today to confirm that someone might be interested in us?
 3. Over the Christmas holiday it is very popular to go to vacation spots. In Jane Austen's day, Bath was a very popular spot with the landed gentry. What would you consider to be a terrific place to go for a vacation? What kinds of things do you like to do when you're on a vacation? Compare your list to 18th-century vacation activities.
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CHAPTER THREE

Anne is warmly greeted by her family, who tell her that their cousin, William Elliot, is also in Bath. Details of his earlier marriage and his widowhood are revealed, but Anne still feels that all is not right with his sudden interest in the family. She discovers from her family, who talk at length about him, that Mr. Elliot has close friends in Bath—Colonel Wallis and his expectant wife. Late that evening Mr. Elliot drops by and seems favorably impressed with Anne.

1. How are Elizabeth and Sir Walter Elliot adapting to their new surroundings? What kind of things do they seem to be focusing on?
2. Austen has mastered the art of understatement. She says of Mr. Elliot's hoped-for interest in her sister, "Most earnestly did she (Anne) wish that he might not be too nice, or too observant, if Elizabeth were his object" (133). Restate this in modern English to make apparent exactly what she means.
3. Appearance is emphasized in this chapter. How are men physically described? How do we describe men differently today? Look at Sir Walter's comments on the looks of the people in Bath. Why is this so important to him? Why do you think the author repeatedly shows Sir Walter's concern with appearance?

CHAPTER FOUR

Lady Russell and Anne become better acquainted with Mr. Elliot. Lady Russell is a bit put out that Mrs. Clay seems more valued by Sir Walter and Elizabeth than Anne. Then Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple, distant cousin of the Elliots, arrives in town and Sir Walter and Elizabeth worry about how to introduce themselves properly.

1. Why is Anne so concerned about whether or not Mrs. Clay has intentions of pursuing her father, Sir Walter?
2. Mr. Elliot says, "Good company [not the best company] requires only birth [to a good family], education, and manner." Do you agree? What do you learn about Mr. Elliot through this conversation with Anne?
3. "Place" in society is seen as very important. Explain what is meant by "place" and what must be done to maintain it. Are many people today still concerned about their "place"? Explain.

CHAPTER FIVE

Anne renews her friendship with Mrs. Smith, a former governess, who was very kind to Anne after Anne's mother's death. She finds Mrs. Smith, who had married well, now poor and in ill health, living in a poor part of town. Mrs. Smith needs nursing help, which Mrs. Rooke, the landlady's sister, has been able to provide. Although she is in a very bad situation, Anne discovers that Mrs. Smith is fairly positive in her thinking. Lady Russell is won over by Mr. Elliot and thinks he would be suitable for Anne.

1. What does Anne's relationship with Mrs. Smith suggest to you about Anne? How does her father react to these visits? Why?
2. Why do you think the character of Mrs. Smith has been introduced into the novel? Predict what part she might play.
3. Lady Russell thinks Mr. Elliot is suitable for Anne; Anne disagrees. Make a list of what each sees in Mr. Elliot. Whose judgment do you think might be correct? Why?

CHAPTER SIX

When the Admiral and Mrs. Croft come to Bath, they bring with them a letter from Mary containing the news that Louisa is well, has returned home, and will marry Captain Benwick! Anne is thrilled at the news that Captain Wentworth is now free.

1. Write Anne's diary entry after she receives the news of Louisa's engagement.
 2. There are many indications throughout the novel that the Crofts are happy in their marriage and well suited to each other. What might Mrs. Croft tell the women of her day about the selection of a marriage partner and about the practice of marrying for position or wealth?
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CHAPTER SEVEN

Anne and Captain Wentworth see each other unexpectedly in a small shop, and appear very flustered. Anne is waiting for Mr. Elliot to walk her home while Elizabeth and her friend are taking a carriage to get out of the rain. Anne has no other contact with Captain Wentworth for several days, only glimpsing him briefly on the street.

1. Construct the embarrassed conversation that probably occurred between Wentworth and Anne when they meet each other unexpectedly.
2. Write the journal entry that Captain Wentworth might write after seeing Anne and then realizing she is with Mr. Elliot.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Anne and her family attend a concert as part of Lady Dalrymple's party. While waiting for the Lady, Captain Wentworth arrives, and he and Anne engage in conversation, which turns to the engagement of Louisa and Captain Benwick. Wentworth voices amazement that a man as deeply attached to a woman as superior as Fanny Harville could love another so soon after the death of the first. Anne's heart leaps at this pronouncement, but their conversation is cut short when the Lady arrives. Seated next to Mr. Elliot during the concert, Anne hears from him that he has known of Anne for a long time. Captain Wentworth sees Mr. Elliot's apparent interest in Anne and leaves the concert early.

1. Write the conversation that Captain Wentworth and Anne would really like to have had.
2. Mr. Elliot is very complimentary of Anne and her skills. Would women today respond differently to a compliment like the one he gave her? Explain.

CHAPTER NINE

Anne goes again to visit her friend, Mrs. Smith, and is amazed to hear from her that she believes Anne to be on the verge of an engagement to Mr. Elliot. When Anne assures her this is not the case, Mrs. Smith tells her the story of how she was acquainted with Mr. Elliot and why she loathes him.

1. Which of Mrs. Smith's revelations about Mr. Elliot seem most condemning? Explain.
2. If Anne were to write Mr. Elliot a letter, what would it include?

CHAPTER TEN

The Musgroves, along with Charles, Mary, Henrietta, and Captain Harville, come to Bath. Henrietta is to buy wedding clothes, since Charles Hayter now has a situation that will allow their marriage. At an informal gathering at the Musgroves' rooms, Captain Wentworth appears with Charles, and Anne wishes she could spend time with the Captain. Her sister and father arrive and issue invitations to a get-together at their place the following evening. Captain Wentworth is included in the invitation, although he does not appear impressed by it.

1. Austen writes of Captain Benwick: "His reading has done him no harm, for he has fought as well as read." (206). What does this statement indicate about what was important at this time? To what extent have attitudes changed in our time?
2. Elizabeth gives a long justification for not inviting the Musgroves to a formal dinner. In what sorts of situations today is such justification still given?
3. Anne's father and sister cast a chill on the gathering at the Musgroves. If Mrs. Musgrove were to write a letter to Elizabeth chiding her for her pretentiousness, what would she say?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Anne commits herself to a day with the Musgroves. While there, she talks with Captain Harville about whether men or women are more constant in their love. Because her heartfelt explanations are overheard by Captain Wentworth, he writes her a note professing his love. All he asks from her is a sign so he can know her feelings. A little later, when Anne is escorted home by Charles, they come upon Captain Wentworth, who accompanies Anne home. During this walk they come to an understanding and reveal their deep feelings for each other.

1. Captain Harville claims men do not quickly forget about the women they love while Anne claims the same for women. Do you believe men and women differ in their capacities to love and in remaining true to the one they love?
2. If Captain Wentworth were to write advice to other young men about love, what would he say to them based on his own experience?
3. Anne believes she was right to be “persuaded” by Lady Russell not to marry Captain Wentworth when he proposed years earlier. Explain her reasoning. Do you agree with her?

CHAPTER TWELVE

This last chapter focuses on reactions to the impending marriage of Anne and Captain Wentworth and gives some indications of what happens to Mr. Elliot, Mrs. Clay, and Mrs. Smith.

1. How does Mary react to the news of Anne's engagement? Did you expect this kind of reaction? Why?
2. How does Mr. Elliot react? What do we learn about him through his reaction?

AFTER READING

Students can select from among the several options that follow:

THEME

1. If characters from this novel were on a talk show such as Oprah Winfrey's, what issues would they discuss? What other guests would Oprah invite on the show to provide a lively conversation? Write the script and perform it for your class.
2. What is Austen most critical of in her society? What are you critical of about today's society? Conduct a debate.
3. Much of this novel revolves around Anne and Captain Wentworth looking for signs and signals of the other's possible feelings of caring. What do modern day romantics look for? How can you tell if someone of the opposite sex is interested in you? Write out a list or develop it into an advice column.
4. The 18th century was a time when propriety ruled in society. What is positive about never speaking directly about concerns that may be upsetting when in the company of others? What is negative? How and when do we still seem to observe the rules of propriety? Is our society better or worse for moving away from this type of social constraint? Write and perform a drama that illustrates your point of view.
5. Create a word collage that captures the essence of the novel and gives viewers a good idea of what the book is about. Cut out 30 to 40 words or phrases from magazines or newspapers that describe the novel. Words may describe setting or characters or themes. Write the book title in the center of a blank sheet of paper and then glue all the words on the page, filling the entire sheet. Write about why you chose the words you did.

CHARACTER

6. Think about each main character. What contemporary songs would they identify with, or what songs would you identify with them? Bring in taped excerpts from the songs and see if your classmates can guess which songs fit each character. Example: “You're So Vain” could be associated with Sir Walter.
 7. Construct an episode of “The Dating Game.” Have Captain Wentworth ask questions of Louisa, Elizabeth, and Anne. Then have Anne ask questions of Captain Wentworth, Mr. Elliot, and Captain Benwick.
 8. If Anne were a modern woman, how would she react differently? Find a section in the novel you would like to change and write a script to show Anne with contemporary attitudes and values. How would the action change?
 9. Analyze the characters by trying to identify their goals. Compare your own goals to those of the characters. What are the major differences? What do the comparison of these goals tell you about how things have/have not changed?
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10. Choose several characters and then try to identify their modern day heroes or heroines. Would someone like Donald Trump or Mick Jagger or John Kennedy Jr. be Sir Walter's hero? After identifying who each main character would look up to, write brief explanations of why you made these choices.
11. Who changes by the end of the book? Write an explanation of the ways characters changed. Are there characters who you wished would have changed? Write up a plan for these characters indicating how they can improve their personality or their attitudes.
12. Many of the main characters in this novel do not have careers because they are part of the gentry living off of profits from their estates. Think about the strengths and weaknesses of these characters. What jobs or careers would suit them in our modern world? Select careers for at least five characters and then explain why each character is particularly suited to that job.
13. To think more deeply about the characters, make up a list of personality characteristics (such as most whiny, best manners, friendliest) that could describe characters. Put the list on the board and have the other students suggest a name for each "award." Then have the students choose five of the categories and write about why their "candidate" should get the award. Create a page for a yearbook using this information.
14. The Afterword (pp. 237-250) contains many strong indictments of the characters. Participate in a panel discussion in which two members support what is said about the characters in the Afterword and two oppose the interpretation.

ARCHETYPES

15. Characters in many novels go on journeys and through these journeys learn much about life and about themselves. Both Anne and Captain Wentworth have changed by the end of the novel. Describe the inner or outer journey each of these characters takes and what they learn that brings them to the final point in the novel.
16. Could this story be viewed as a Cinderella story? Who would be Cinderella, the ugly stepmother, the stepsisters, the fairy godmother? Rewrite it as a fairy tale.

SETTING

17. Write up a Guide to Manners as if you were the Miss Manners or the Emily Post of the late 18th century.
18. Do some research on the city of Bath and create a pamphlet aimed at attracting the wealthy to Bath in the late 18th century.

POINT OF VIEW

19. Who is portrayed sympathetically? What about them or their actions causes them to be shown in a positive light? Who is portrayed in an unsympathetic light? How? Do we learn about them from the narrator, their actions, or from what others say about them? Create a soap opera with at least three characters in the cast.
20. Write up a list of whom Captain Wentworth would invite to a party and why he would include each person. Do the same for Sir Walter. Why are the lists so different?
21. Throughout the novel the reader is influenced by the narrator's commentary on characters. Does the narrative voice seem constant? Could you describe this narrative voice as omniscient? What effect does the narrator have on our reading? Try to write a section of a chapter from a different narrator's voice.
22. If this novel were told from the point of view of Elizabeth or Mary, how would it change? Script one scene from Anne's, Elizabeth's, and Mary's points of view.

LANGUAGE

23. The language in the novel is usually muted, understated, and indirect. Construct a modern day conversation between two people who are discovering they like each other, but use the style of language Austen uses. Don't come right out and say something; be discrete and tactful.
 24. Go through the novel and list phrases or words we no longer use. Explain how these each would be said in modern English.
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PLOT

25. Make a list of significant events in the novel and place them on a timeline. Share your timeline with your classmates. Compare them and discuss why they differ.
26. Create a one-page newspaper that covers three events in the story such as Louisa's fall on the beach, the Crofts move to Kellynch, and Mrs. Smith's financial fall. Interview as many of the characters as possible.
27. As a scriptwriter for a television soap opera, you are always looking for new material. Would *Persuasion* provide good material for a soap opera? If you believe it would, sketch out several episodes. If you believe it would not, explain your reasoning and cite soap operas you know to support your opinion.
28. Jane Austen is a master storyteller, often keeping her readers on the edge of their chairs wanting to know what happens next. How does Austen create intrigue? What plot devices does she use to keep reader interest high? Try your hand at using some of these plot devices by creating a chapter of your own.
29. Austen intertwines several plotlines throughout this novel. Identify all the subplots present in the story and explain why you think each one is used. Then work to create a sketch of a plotline which has several subplots.
30. In the Afterword, *Persuasion* is described as a comedy. To test out this assumption, choose a TV family sitcom you know. Write a comparison/contrast between the characters and the situations in the sitcom and the ones in *Persuasion*. Then write briefly about whether or not you believe *Persuasion* is a comedy.

EXTENDED LEARNING

Persuasion, directed by Roger Michell, became available in video stores in April 1996. The strength of the film is in the superb acting and in the wonderful settings that are so evocative of the 18th century. The film brings the characters and the settings to life, however much of the storyline is compressed and illustrated through brief scenes that can be difficult to follow without knowing the plot. Therefore, the movie is best shown after or during the reading of the novel.

Activities based on the movie:

1. Discuss and write about the movie in terms of what was changed or omitted. Why were those parts changed or taken out? What effect do the changes have on the movie?
2. Critique the casting of the movie. Which actors and actresses are different from the way you envisioned them? How is the role played differently than you imagined it? Who would you suggest as alternate cast members?
3. Comment on the settings in the movie. In what ways did the book give clearer descriptions of these places? In what ways is the movie clearer?
4. Advertise the movie. What elements would you emphasize to create print or radio campaigns?
5. Read and compare several reviews of the movie *Persuasion* (many are available on the Internet). Write your own review of the movie.

Through participating in activities and/or research:

1. Read other books by Jane Austen and compare them to *Persuasion*.
2. Conduct research on the changing fashions of women and what statements fashion makes about women's place in society.
3. Compare how much control females had over their own lives in *Persuasion* to how much control females had over their own lives in *Shabanu* by Suzanne Fisher Staples, *Catherine Called Birdy* by Karen Cushman, or *The Midwife's Apprentice* by Karen Cushman.
4. Research how and when women gained some measure of economic control over their lives and could own and inherit property.
5. Read biographical information on Jane Austen and speculate on why she portrayed characters as she did and what she liked and disliked about her society.
6. Skim several poetry books and find poems you think specific characters would like. Explain why you believe each character would like the poem you have picked.

7. Several characters were critical of Captain Benwick's engagement to Louisa less than a year after the death of his fiancée Fanny Harville. Do some research on grieving and see if his behavior was typical and if it was emotionally healthy.
8. In *Persuasion* it is obvious that different sections of Bath are more prestigious than other sections. Cities, suburbs, and neighborhoods are even today identified in terms of prestige. Make a map of your area and identify how different neighborhoods might be labeled. What makes one neighborhood more desirable than another? How has this changed?
9. Read *Remember the Ladies* by Norma Johnston about the Seneca Falls Convention. How do you think Anne Elliot would react to women having the vote? Construct a conversation between Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who is featured in *Remember the Ladies*, and Anne Elliot. What would they agree and disagree on?
10. Imagine that a character from *Persuasion* visited your school. Brainstorm all the things you think they would notice about behavior and politeness. Then either write a letter from the character to another character in the novel in which he or she reacts to manners in today's society OR develop a list of the rules of etiquette this character would compose for the people of today.

THROUGH USING THE INTERNET

Users of the World Wide Web can simply type in Jane Austen's name and an intriguing list will be called up. Starting with James Dawes' Jane Austen Page allows the searcher access to many of the other Austen resources on the Internet. This page cites the Jane Austen Society, the Jane Austen Listserv discussion group, Other Jane Austen Pages and links to the hypertext Jane Austen archive at the University of Texas. Through Dawes' Jane Austen page, users also have access to many recent movie reviews of the film *Persuasion*. Books for further research are suggested on many of these pages.

Other resources include: The Jane Austen Society of North America Home Page and Henry Churchyard's Jane Austen Society Information Page. Several other Jane Austen pages are also mentioned.

The University of Texas Jane Austen Archive has a long list of information on Jane Austen including listings on Jane Austen's Art and Its Reputation and Jane Austen's Literary Influences. Students could do much of their research on the Internet.

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Edwards, Anne-Marie. *In the Steps of Jane Austen*. Southampton: Arcady Books. 1985.

Pool, David. *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: from Fox Hunting to Whits—The Facts of Doing Life in Nineteenth-Century England*. Touchstone Books, 1994.

Persuasion. Dir. Roger Michell. Sony Pictures Classic, 1995.

See the Signet Classic edition of *Persuasion* for a more complete bibliography of works by Jane Austen and biography and criticism about Jane Austen.

SUGGESTED TITLES

In addition to the Signet Classic edition of *Persuasion*, PENGUIN GROUP (USA) also publishes the following works by Jane Austen:

- *Emma*
- *Mansfield Park*
- *Northanger Abbey*
- *Pride & Prejudice*
- *Sense & Sensibility*

Students interested in comparing some of the themes in *Persuasion* to themes in other books may wish to read some of the books that follow.

APPEARANCE VS. REALITY

- Avi. *Nothing But the Truth*. Orchard, 1991.
- Bauer, Joan. *Thwunk*. Dell, 1995.
- Klass, Sheila Solomon. *Rhino*. Scholastic, 1993.
- Foley, June. *Susanna Siegelbaum Gives Up on Guys*. Scholastic, 1991.
- Wersba, Barbara. *Just be Gorgeous*. Harper, 1988.

LIVES OF WOMEN IN DIFFERENT HISTORICAL TIMES

- Brennan, J.H. *Shiva Accused*. Harper, 1992.
- Cushman, Karen. *Catherine Called Birdie*. Clarion, 1994.
- Cushman, Karen. *The Midwife's Apprentice*. Clarion, 1995.
- Gregory, Kristiana. *Earthquake at Dawn*. Harcourt, 1992.
- Hudson, Jan. *Dawn Rider*. Scholastic, 1990.
- Paterson, Katherine. *Lyddie*. Loestar, 1991.
- Patterson, Katherine. *Rebels of the Heavenly Kingdom*. Avon, 1983.
- Pullman, Philip. *The Ruby in the Smoke*. Knopf, 1985.
- Reiss, Katherine. *Dreadful Sorry*. Harcourt, 1993.
- Rinaldi, Anne. *A Stitch in Time*. Scholastic, 1994.
- Staples, Suzanne. *Haveli*. Knopf, 1993.
- Staples, Suzanne. *Shabanu*. Knopf, 1989.
- Temple, Francis. *The Ramsey Scallop*. Harper, 1994.

WOMEN MAKING THEIR OWN DECISIONS:

- Avi. *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. Orchard, 1990.
- Staples, Donna. *Arena Beach*. Houghton, 1993.
- Spinelli, Jerry. *There's a Girl in my Hammerlock*. Simon & Schuster, 1991.
- Plummer, Louise. *My Name is Susan Smith. The 5 is Silent*. Dell, 1991.

FAMILY AND DUTY

- Doherty, Berlie. *White Peak Farm*. Orchard, 1984.
- Garland, Sherry. *Shadow of a Dragon*. Harcourt, 1993.
- Hall, Barbara. *Dixie Storms*. Bantam, 1990.
- Hunter, Mollie. *Cat, Herself*. Harper, 1985.
- Johnston, Norma. *Louisa May*. William Morrow, 1995.
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- Lasky, Kathryn. *Memoirs of a Bookbat*. Harcourt, 1994.
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Namioka, Lensey. *April and the Dragonlady*. Harcourt, 1994.

Terris, Susan. *Nell's Quilt*. Farrar, 1987.

LOVE

Garland, Sherry. *Song of the Buffalo Boy*. Harcourt, 1992.

Newton, Suzanne. *Where Are You When I Need You?* Viking, 1991.

Willey, Margaret. *If Not For You*. Harper, 1988.

Willey, Margaret. *Saving Lenny*. Bantam, 1990.

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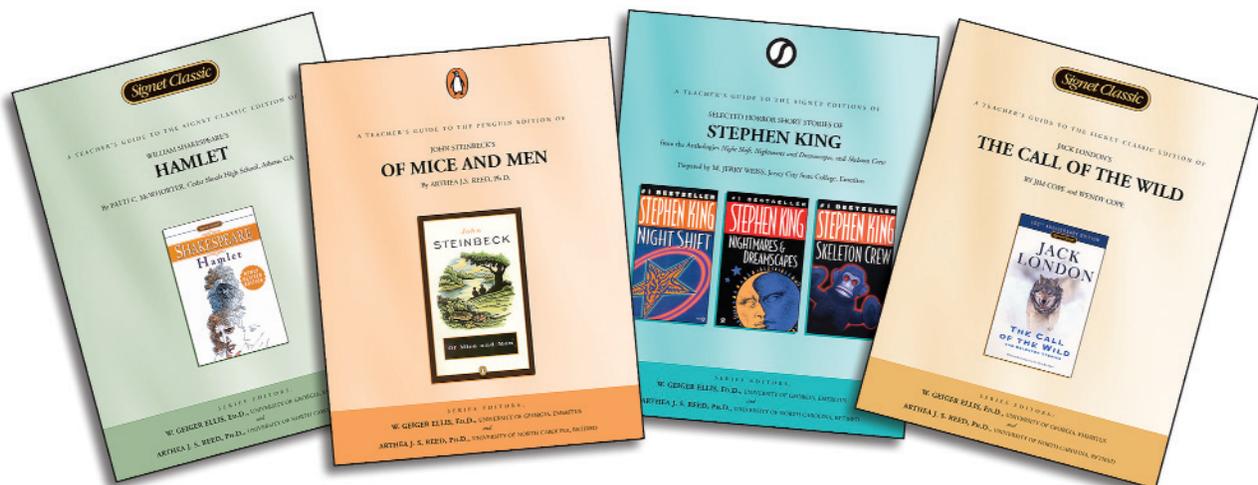
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