

# Rhetoric and gender in jane austen's persuasion

Literature



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This paper " Rhetoric and Gender in Jane Austen's Persuasion" is a good example of an outline on literature. Thesis: The book tackles the themes of politics and the decline of socio-economic classism, as well as the feminist view which looks into the place of gender as a distinction in society.

Introduction a. The first perception of the book. Plot summary ii. Thematic analysis a. Change in perceptions of class and socio-economic status.

Feminist Perspectives. Conclusion Literary Analysis of Jane Austen's

Persuasion Jane Austen's book is one that most people have struggled to evaluate or box into a particular theme. The first read often leaves many underwhelmed and wondering exactly what the book entails. However, as many have pointed out over the years, the lessons espoused in the book are becoming continually apparent and important, and surprisingly fitting into various themes of life today. The book tackles the themes of politics and the decline of socio-economic classism, as well as the feminist view which looks into the place of gender as a distinction in society. Persuasion is the story of the Eliott family, a respected family with a title that owns a huge estate. Sir Walter Eliot's wife is said to have died 14 years before, leaving the man with his three children Mary, Elizabeth and Anne. Sir Walter is however used to the lavish lifestyle, prone to overspending and leads the family into debt, which forces them, despite opposition from Sir Walter, to move away from their home and find a cheaper place to live. It is the story of how the daughters and their father cope with this change and the various characters in their life, and how the two generations in the family deal with a life they have not necessarily always been accustomed to "... without compromising their dignity, or relinquishing their comforts in a way not to be borne" (221).

Thematic Analysis Most people who have read Jane Austen's Persuasion,

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especially at school, are left unimpressed by it (Tennant n. p). It is one of those books whose thematic importance strikes one much later in life when they begin to observe the various nuances and the effects of the biggest divisions of all, gender and socio-economic standards. The main character, or at least one of the main characters Anne Eliot, has been described as dismally passive. Her sister Elizabeth seems desperately in wait for a man, or is it a love, that never comes. The third sister Mary seems stuck with a husband that values hunting and shooting more than anything (Tennant n. p). It is an unimpressive story which goes on and on about the dull life of a family, with seemingly no central theme. Reread and critically think about it, though, and one realizes that it is loaded with lessons, most of which creep up on the reader profoundly. Aristocracy and Titles One of the themes that keep emerging from this book is that of the aristocracy, or perhaps more accurately, the perception of the aristocracy. One of the first things that stand out about the family is that they are respected and titled (Austen 216). In the grand scheme of things, the respect and titles do nothing but give them status, which they, or at least their father, certainly milks to the end. Every step or decision made by their father is considered in the lens of this status. For instance, the extravagance that eventually sets them into debt is in huge part because of the need to maintain this status. When they have to move out of their house, their father judges the new occupant, and the whole navy, through the hierarchical eyes. According to him, the navy gives people without titles an unjustified path to affluence. Even the positives that he settles on about the new tenant are as vain as his looks, "vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character: the vanity of person and of the situation" (216). The perspectives of the old Sir Eliot set the stage

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for the contrast between the old aristocracy and the emerging meritocracy, the new bourgeoisie that includes Admiral Croft (Walzer 688). It must not be lost on the reader that everything considered good, or strived for in the book is part of this new generation of successful people in the Navy, who did not necessarily come from a respected titled family but earned their keep, like Captain Wentworth. Gender What seems alarming, though, is the way in which even though the world was changing, the women were not changing, or even being allowed to change. Lady Russell, for instance, recognizes that the world was changing and that given the spending habits of the Eliot family, they had to move to a cheaper location to survive. However, when it comes to advising Elizabeth, she pushes her towards the rejection of the very person or class of person she thinks is good enough to take over the family estate, Kellynch Hall. Indeed, some of the biggest worries in the book refer to the class divide and marriage beneath one's station. Mary, on the other hand, despite being in a family that is loving and happy, complains constantly (Tennant n. p). Conclusively, the theme of socio-economic and class divide is clear, but one of the more profound emerging themes is the way that societal norms such as this, even when they seem outdated, often condemn women into a life of unhappiness and lack of fulfilment.