

Northanger Abbey Discussion Questions

JASNA E. Washington and N. Idaho Region

1. *Northanger Abbey* is a novel, in part, about Catherine's education in the complexities of the social world. What do you think of Henry's style of teaching? Does Catherine teach Henry in any way? How does Eleanor also serve as a teacher or role model?
2. Does the romance between Catherine and Henry feel realistic? Are there any hints during the novel that Catherine will be able to hold her own with Henry eventually? Do you think that they can have a marriage of equals?
3. *Northanger Abbey* is full of excellent quotations, especially in Austen's "Defense of the Novel" (Vol. I, Chap. 5). Austen also speaks to the reader in her own voice several times in the novel. What do you think Austen is trying to achieve with her narrative style in the novel?
4. What are your thoughts about Isabella and John Thorpe? Why do you think it takes Catherine so long to see Isabella's true nature?
5. *Northanger Abbey* explores the question of whether there are "evil" people in real life as opposed to characters in novels who are pure evil. Henry Tilney criticizes Catherine's imaginings about General Tilney; yet, in the end, General Tilney treats Catherine quite badly and puts her safety at risk by sending her home unattended. What are your thoughts about Austen's treatment of the General?
6. Have you ever read any of the Gothic novels that are mentioned in *Northanger Abbey*? When Henry parodies the Gothic novels to Catherine in their drive to the Abbey, is he also expressing a fondness for the genre that Austen shared?
7. Henry Tilney chooses to stand up to his father in the end and become engaged to Catherine. Although Austen jokes about it, "filial disobedience" was a serious matter at the time the novel was written. What are your thoughts about the ending of the book?

8. If you have seen either of the video adaptations, 2007 ITV with JJ Feild and Felicity Jones or the 1987 BBC/A&E with Peter Firth and Katherine Schlesinger, have they enhanced your appreciation of the novel in any way?
9. This work was accepted for publication in 1803 and not published until 1817. It may have been revised and updated some before Austen died. Does the novel seem like an early work or a mature one in terms of plot, dialogue, narration, etc.?
10. Who are your favorite characters in the novel? Do you find minor characters like John Thorpe and Mrs. Allen to be funny?

Questions by Michele Larrow, Co-RC and Virtual Events Coordinator