Northanger Abbey Study Guide

Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

The young Catherine Morland accompanies The Allens, her older neighbors, to Bath for a month of vacation and healthful rest. There, she meets her brother's love interest Isabella Thorpe. While Isabella pursues her relationship with Catherine's brother, Isabella's own brother John Thorpe unsuccessfully courts Catherine. Instead, Catherine meets and falls in love with the older Henry Tilney and is befriended by Henry's sister Eleanor. From Bath, Catherine accompanies Eleanor to the Tilney family estate at Northanger Abbey where she spends about a month in happy pursuits. Due to an innocent misunderstanding with Eleanor's father, Catherine is forced to depart Northanger Abbey, but the resolute Henry pursues her to her modest family home and proposes marriage—which is eagerly accepted.

Catherine Morland is a seventeen-year-old woman living with her parents and siblings in Fullerton. Previously a gawky tomboy, she has recently emerged as a beautiful young woman with proper behavior and burgeoning social skills. The Allens are a childless but affluent local couple who invite Catherine to attend them on their summer holiday to Bath for a month of healthful rest. With her parents' consent, Catherine accompanies the Allens to Bath. There, she attends various social functions and gradually widens her circle of acquaintances. Early in her stay, Catherine meets and befriends Isabella Thorpe. It develops that Isabella is enamored with Catherine's brother James. Further, Isabella's brother, John, takes a fancy to Catherine and deludes himself into thinking his feelings are reciprocated. In fact, Catherine finds John irritating and instead develops feelings for Henry Tilney, a wealthy young clergyman of considerable reputation.

While Catherine attempts to befriend Henry's sister Eleanor, James and Isabella pursue their relationship and become engaged. Meanwhile, John attempts to drive off Henry and claim Catherine as his betrothed. A series of John's egregious misrepresentations almost causes Henry to recede but a determined and heroic Catherine sets matters aright. Catherine receives an invitation to accompany the Tilney family to their considerable estate known as Northanger Abbey. Just as they leave Bath, Isabella begins to flirt with another suitor who is richer than James. At Northanger Abbey, Henry and Catherine fall in love while Catherine develops some rather peculiar but humorous theories about various people because she is emotionally overwrought from reading Gothic romance novels. Henry, fortunately, sets the record straight. After a month at Northanger Abbey, Catherine and Eleanor are fast friends and Catherine and Henry are in love.

Then, John again intrudes and viciously maligns Catherine to Henry's father. Henry's father reacts by ejecting Catherine from his home and she travels in shame back to her family in Fullerton. An angry Henry defends Catherine to his father and then pursues her to Fullerton where he proposes; the marriage awaits only Henry's father's approval. Meanwhile, Eleanor marries her secret love, a wealthy nobleman. Her good fortune encourages her father and finally he assents to Henry and Catherine's marriage. The novel ends with the two protagonists entering into the state of marriage.

Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Catherine Morland, the protagonist of the novel, is a seventeen-year-old girl belonging to a family with modest income. The Morlands are in nearly all respects a typical family of the era. They live in the rural town of Fullerton, in Hampshire, England. As a youth, Catherine pursued varied interests including piano-playing, cricket, and basic art. Typical of most children, she lacked the persistence necessary to develop advanced skills in any one area. Something of a hoyden, she was cheerful, loved, and even-tempered. As Catherine entered her teenage years her image developed into the gracious good looks of a young woman; simultaneously, she was forced to give up her tomboyish pursuits in preference for reading and other more proper pursuits. As a young woman, Catherine is cheerful, affectionate, and devoid of deceit; however, she is quite uninformed and generally ignorant about societal mores and usage.

Catherine is a good-looking and vivacious teenager, eager for new experiences and without any prior love interest. A neighboring childless couple, Mr. and Mrs. Allen, are family friends of the Morlands. The Allens invite Catherine to accompany them to the nearby resort town of Bath—about sixty miles distance—for a stay of about a month. With her parents' easily-offered permission, Catherine accepts the Allens' exciting and generous invitation. Mrs. Morland is confident in the Allens' oversight and her own daughter's values and seems particularly unconcerned about the trip. Mr. Morland gives Catherine a modest sum of money for personal use during the trip. Upon arriving in Bath, the Allens and Catherine attend a ball. Catherine is surprised at the number of people present and, as is only proper, follows Mrs. Allen about all night. Mr. Allen spends his time in the card room, drinking, smoking, and gaming. Mrs. Allen spends her time conserving her dresses from any perceived abuse. Catherine spends her time—dull, as it turns out—wishing unsuccessfully to be asked to dance. As she leaves the ball her spirits are somewhat lifted when she overhears a passerby commenting to his friend on her good looks.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

As with any narrative fiction, the initial chapters of the novel are critical. Catherine Morland, the protagonist and dominant character of the novel, is introduced and her background provided. Additionally, the initial setting of Fullerton is introduced and developed nearly as completely. Catherine's family is introduced and their background considered. Given the social milieu of the remainder of the novel, the information about Catherine's father's financial situation is critical. Note the remarkable humor which is used in the presentation of Catherine as the "unlikely" hero—this enjoyable attitude is carried throughout the construction of the narrative and is notably successful.

After grounding Catherine in a lightly urbanized center of a rural district and establishing her identity as an inexperienced—in fact, naïve—young girl without prior romantic attachments, the narrative proceeds to the setting of Bath. Bath is the dominant setting of the first half of the novel, and consists of numerous rental tenements as well as a social center focused on the Pump House. While Bath was most famous for its hot springs, the characters in the novel do not visit the health spas but pass their time in conversation, dance, and playing cards. Catherine enjoys the exciting change but is clearly out of her usual surroundings. Her acquaintance with the Allen family has allowed her an unusual opportunity. The narrator provides obvious foreshadowing of Catherine's central role in the novel and ultimate success by stating that she is an unlikely heroine. The initial chapters, like the remainder of the novel, feature rich and enjoyable language, interesting and varying sentences, and well-written paragraphs. One of the novel's dominant themes—coming of age—is firmly established in the initial chapters.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 Summary

Catherine and Mrs. Allen again attend the nearly-nightly ball in the lower rooms of the Pump House. Catherine is introduced to Henry Tilney, a good-looking and intelligent young man who entertains her with his unusual humor. Henry gently pokes fun at the Bath social milieu and Catherine finds him very attractive. At the end of the evening Catherine returns to the Allens' apartment feeling as though she has fallen in love with Henry. That evening, Mr. Allen discreetly inquires about Henry and learns that he is a clergyman with a solid financial situation and from a reputable family in Gloucestershire.

The next day, Catherine tours the various social gathering places for Henry but does not find him. Instead, she spends time with Mrs. Allen. Catherine and Mrs. Allen are generally bored and spend their time talking about banal subjects such as the durability of various types of materials. Then, Mrs. Allen meets Mrs. Thorpe, a passing acquaintance. This new society expands their circle of friends and makes their time more enjoyable. Mrs. Thorpe introduces her daughter, Isabella, to Catherine. Isabella is talkative, attractive, and friendly, and within a few hours Catherine has decided that Isabella is her best friend. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of Mrs. Thorpe's financial situation—a widow, she pursues a tenuous financial existence, though she and her children present their circumstances as extravagantly secured.

Over the next few days Catherine and Isabella meet and develop their friendship. Catherine confides her feelings for Henry and Isabella encourages her friend's feelings; however, Henry cannot be located. The two young women pass much of their time reading romantic novels and discussing their various sensationalist plots. A lengthy narrative intrusion occurs wherein novels, novel-reading, and novel-writing are strongly defended. Meanwhile, Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe develop their relationship. Mrs. Thorpe finds Mrs. Allen's banal conversation somewhat boring; Mrs. Allen finds Mrs. Thorpe's constant bragging somewhat irritating.

One day Catherine meets Isabella after spending nearly all the night reading the Gothic novel The Mysteries of Udolpho. They discuss the plot in ephemeral detail—Catherine is agitated about a black veil which conceals some secret (she is certain it must be a skeleton). Catherine's focus on Gothic elements and mysterious plots will continue until late in the novel. In the afternoon Catherine and Isabella discuss another girl. Isabella's vacant over-praising of the girl should allow Catherine to determine a strong strain of falsity in Isabella's personality—but it does not. Their talk then turns to men and suddenly Isabella determines that two men are watching them. Pretending to be outraged at their insolence, Isabella instead pursues them out of the building and onto the street, Catherine at her elbow.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 Analysis

These few chapters introduce nearly all of the remaining significant characters in the novel as well as establishes the central plot and dramatic tension of the narrative. Catherine's introduction to Henry Tilney is presented as happenstance, but Henry becomes a protagonist and likable character second only to Catherine. Their relationship gets off to a bumpy start but will dominant the plot development throughout the remainder of the novel. Catherine's initial attraction to the older Henry heavily foreshadows her future. Henry is portrayed as a highly educated, well-read, and witty man with a rather cynical but friendly attitude. He enjoys poking mild fun at others' mistakes of grammar and attitude, but never goes so far as to offend. The naïve Catherine misses nearly all of Henry's allusions and comments but finds him attractive anyway. Mr. Allen's inquiry about Henry divulges further good news; in any event, Mr. Allen's behavior indicates him to be a conscientious ward.

The next major development is the chance meeting of Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe, old-time school mates. The relationship is carefully crafted as very tenuous and distant, such that Mrs. Allen's introduction of Catherine to the Thorpe's does not carry narrative problems—that is, Mrs. Allen's behavior is entirely correct. The fact that the Thorpes turn out to be a disagreeable lot does not reflect poorly on the Allens. Isabella Thorpe is introduced and she and Catherine become fast friends—though Isabella proves to be a false friend. Isabella is presented as scatter-brained and self-centered from the very first few scenes, which stands in contrast to Catherine's inexperienced appraisal of her. Perhaps the strongest early indication of Isabella's self-serving character is presented when she announces two men are watching them. Pretending to be outraged and suggesting they must avoid contacting such rude swains, in fact Isabella pursues them onto the street in flagrant disregard of propriety. Catherine, always believing the best of everyone, finds Isabella's actions hard to square with her stated intentions.

Catherine and Isabella begin reading period Gothic novels, including The Mysteries of Udolpho by Ann Radcliffe. Catherine discusses a few other novels with Isabella throughout the narrative, and then discusses some other novels with Henry and Eleanor Tilney. The Gothic novel creates a dominant theme in the narrative. Catherine's enthusiastic and constant reading leads her to mistakenly believe that real-life must mimic the novel, and when she ultimately goes to Northanger Abbey her experiences are far from her expectations. It is interesting that all of the novels mentioned are actually published titles from the period.

Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Catherine protests that Isabella's route must surely bring them into contact with the two insolent young men whom Isabella claims she is determined to avoid. Isabella ignores Catherine's observations, falsely insisting she is fleeing from the men, and continues to pursue them down the street in a socially improper manner. Their momentary meeting is avoided when the two women meet by happenstance their two brothers—James Morland and John Thorpe. It develops that James and John are fast friends from school and that James and Isabella are in love and nearly engaged, though Catherine does not yet know this. Catherine is amazed at their circumstantial meeting and overjoyed with meeting her beloved older brother whom she supposes has come to Bath to visit her. The four young people spend much time in conversation, though the infatuated James and Isabella are generally unaware of John and Catherine. James broadly hints at his infatuation with Isabella but Catherine does not understand him. Catherine then spends the evening reading novels before attending the nightly dance.

At the dance Catherine is naturally paired with John, though he quickly deserts her for the card room. James and Isabella desert Catherine for the dance floor. The solitary Catherine sits, downcast, hoping that John will shortly return and dance with her. Then Henry appears with his sister Eleanor. Catherine is delighted to speak to Henry but must decline his invitation to dance as she is awaiting John's return. John eventually returns and dances with Catherine but she finds him fairly irritating in manner. Again, John quickly deserts Catherine. Throughout nearly the remainder of the evening Catherine dejectedly joins Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe as Isabella and James dance, John plays at cards, and Henry is not to be seen. At the end of the evening Henry again approaches Catherine but John momentarily appears and Henry withdraws. Catherine excuses herself somewhat early and returns home.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

The chapters continue the plot development and provide additional characterization of Catherine and Isabella. While Isabella states one course of action, she pursues another entirely. Catherine views this as confusing but does not suspect that Isabella is generally false. Their pursuit of the two young men is interrupted by the appearance of both of their brothers—friends, as it develops—in what is the least believable "coincidence" in the narrative development. James Morland is Catherine's older brother and, throughout the narrative, he is nearly entirely oblivious to Catherine's situation. To be fair, James is addled by his feverish desire of Isabella and her putative reciprocity. Anyone but Catherine would easily determine James and Isabella are pursuing an affectionate relationship. John Thorpe, also introduced during this section of the novel, is one of the more humorous, if stereotyped, characters presented. He is obviously a swaggering braggart without substance, and nearly everything he says he says loudly

and in such a way as to make it nearly nonsensical. Even the polite Catherine soon finds him tiring and even irritating—though as usual she does not identify his laughably brusque attempts at flirting for what they are.

The next chapter focuses on an evening at the dances. John and Catherine are naturally paired, but John deserts her frequently for the card room. Catherine again meets Henry and finds him very agreeable company but is prevented from spending much time with him by John's constant but ephemeral appearances. The narrative tension between Catherine, John, and Henry—a sort of lopsided love triangle—continues to build through the first chapters of the novel and will not be fully resolved until the end of the narrative.

Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In the morning Catherine wonders how she may become better acquainted with Eleanor but then Isabella, John, and James arrive at the Allens' apartment. They pressure Catherine into taking a carriage ride. James drives Isabella and John drives Catherine. Throughout the ride John maintains a blustering monologue about his own putatively magnificent abilities, vast wealth, and worldly charm. Catherine is bewildered by his self-centeredness and his numerous contradictions. By the time the drive concludes, Catherine finds John not entirely agreeable in character. Catherine is further dismayed to learn that during her unpleasant outing, Mr. Allen has run into the Tilney family and has made the acquaintance of General Tilney, Henry's distinguished father.

A few days later Catherine engages Eleanor in conversation at the Pump Room. She is accompanied by Isabella and John, though the two are hardly aware of her presence—amazingly, the naïve Catherine has still not guessed at the burgeoning relationship between her brother and her friend. Catherine praises Henry's skill at dancing to Eleanor and the older woman quickly grasps Catherine's deeper meaning although Catherine believes herself to have been entirely discreet. Catherine and Eleanor seem to have much more in common than Isabella, who remains distracted and scatter-brained. That night Catherine attends the dances and manages to avoid John, meet Henry, and dance with the object of her infatuation. John acts quite a boor, however, by barging into Henry and Catherine's dance and rudely and stupidly attempting to sell Henry a horse, and in general behaving like a lout. Even so, Catherine and Henry manage to enjoy a few dances which Henry humorously compares to marriage. Catherine sees a very distinguished and handsome man observing her and Henry tells her it is his father, General Tilney. At the end of the evening Catherine delightedly accepts an invitation from Eleanor to have an afternoon walk around the town, accompanied by Henry.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Catherine withstands a carriage ride with John through the country though she finds it disagreeable. The garrulous John is presented as little more than an idiot for most of the voyage, contradicting himself nearly with every sentence and making very little sense beside. Even Catherine's patience is tried by John's never-ceasing monologue of self-praise, though of course she remains polite to a fault. The third-person point of view used for the novel here allows Catherine to be presented as nearly a saint in her perseverance on behalf of her friend and brother in the other carriage. In latter chapters, the memory of the disagreeable carriage ride will prevent Catherine from accepting further rides without enticement.

The second chapter continues to develop the tension between John and Henry as potential suitors. Catherine has no social means of properly accessing Henry directly, so her only course of action is to befriend Eleanor. Catherine sets about this with a single-minded purpose; clearly a trait of a heroine. Catherine attempts to discreetly inquire about Henry in her discussions with Eleanor. The older—and much more insightful—Eleanor quickly deduces Catherine's purpose. Henry soon enters the scene again and, as before, Catherine's desires are thwarted by John's self-aggrandizing behavior. This section of the novel features a considerable amount of discussion about clothing and styles, and is notably rich in literary merit. The walk which Catherine and Eleanor arrange will not go as planned, and the incident, described in subsequent chapters, is a major turning point in the novel.

Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Catherine is distraught to find the next morning overcast and rainy. Mrs. Allen suggests the day is notably unsuitable for a walk around town and Catherine fears she will not get to walk with Eleanor and Henry. While she waits, Isabella, James, and John appear and request her to once again go driving with them. Catherine refuses, noting she is still hoping Eleanor and Henry will arrive. John then concocts a false story about having seen Henry leaving town earlier in the day and promises Catherine they will visit a remote castle on their drive. Catherine believes the castle will be much like an adventure in her Gothic novels and, as she believes Henry to be out of town, agrees.

No sooner does she board the carriage, however, than she sees Eleanor and Henry walking down the street toward the Allens' apartment. She cries to John to let her down but he drives the horses forward with gusto. Eleanor and Henry watch Catherine drive by with surprise—Catherine begs John to stop but he will not, and she forlornly watches her new friends recede into the distance. The remainder of the day is spent in a long ride while John delivers a lengthy monologue full of vapid blustering and posturing—no castle is visited and Catherine is distraught about what Eleanor will think of her. In the evening the four young people spend their time at the Thorpe's apartment. James and Isabella paw each other while Catherine frets.

In the morning a resolute Catherine attempts to visit the Tilney residence to explain to Eleanor what had happened. She is informed that Eleanor is away—but moments later she spies Eleanor quickly leaving the apartment. That evening Catherine attends the theater and sees Henry, though he appears to deliberately ignore her. Nevertheless, after the show Henry calls on Catherine. She explains herself to him and he is greatly relieved. Henry seems particularly happy to hear Catherine's indifference to John. While Henry and Catherine exchange pleasantries, she noticed that across the theater John is speaking with General Tilney. Later, John confides in Catherine that General Tilney is very impressed with her.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

The rainy weather of the day threatens to make Catherine's planned walk impossible. Mrs. Allen feels the mud is unbearable, though the tomboyish Catherine would not mind it if she were able to walk with Henry. In fact, Henry apparently would not mind it if he were able to walk with Catherine, his young and beautiful admirer. But they are prevented by enjoying one another's company by—who else?—the antagonist John. John, James, and Isabella appear to take Catherine on another drive. Catherine demurs until John tells blatant lies, making Catherine doubt Henry's intentions. John also promises a visit to a castle. Catherine desires to see a castle such as is featured in her novels and, led on also by the lies, allows herself to be tempted out for another

agonizing day in the company of John. She learns she has been deceived almost immediately by passing Henry on the street, but by then the selfish John has her captive in a moving carriage. Later, Mr. Allen confirms the reader's suspicions that the proposed castle is far more distant than possible in a single day's touring drive. John's fabrications are of the whole cloth. Once again, the carriage ride is disagreeable and pointless for Catherine. John somehow manages to interpret her silent reticence as admiration.

Catherine's heroic character is again manifested in the morning when she goes directly to Eleanor's rented house with the intent of explaining herself to her new friend. By chance, Eleanor must shortly leave and Catherine is thus prevented from making amends. The narrative development of Catherine and Henry's relationship appears to be stalled at this point, though momentary developments prove it is not. Henry approaches Catherine directly and the difficult situation is explained and reversed. Plans are again made for the following day.

Chapters 13, 14, and 15

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 Summary

Catherine once again makes plans to go walking with Eleanor and Henry. As before, Isabella, James, and John demand instead that she go driving with them. She declines even as all three harangue her with considerable force. Isabella becomes mildly abusive and John delivers his usual vacant bluster, but Catherine remains resolute to her prior engagement. While James and Isabella continue to argue with Catherine, John brazenly walks off. When he returns a several minutes later he announces that he has just spoken with Eleanor and canceled Catherine's engagement. Catherine is flabbergasted at his audacity and immediately departs to the Tilney's amidst declarations that she is obstinate and peculiar. Eleanor receives Catherine's explanation with obvious relief. Later that evening, Mrs. and Mr. Allen both express disapproval of the Thorpes' behavior and urge Catherine to distance herself from them.

The next day Catherine indeed goes for a walk with Eleanor and Henry. She has a delightful time and is happy to learn that Henry likes to read novels. In fact, Henry is well-read and widely-read and is able to discuss Gothic and romantic novels with notable acumen. When Catherine disparages history, however, Henry resists and defends historians as a goodly sort. Various discussions of art and literature ensue as the walk develops and Catherine is greatly impressed with Henry and Eleanor's superior education.

Later still, Catherine receives a note from Isabella which requests her company. Catherine visits her friend and finally receives the formal announcement that Isabella and James are engaged. Whereas Catherine should have deduced this weeks ago, she is delighted with the news and is enthusiastic about receiving Isabella as her sister-in-law. James departs for home while Catherine exults with the Thorpe family. Isabella and Mrs. Thorpe speculate about James's financial situation but Catherine, fairly naïve about money, cannot supply many details. The next day a letter arrives announcing that Mr. and Mrs. Moreland approve of James's decision to marry Isabella. The chapter ends with John leaving Bath for a few weeks. He has a brief conversation with Catherine with will prove disastrous—John, never observant, believes Catherine has agreed to marry him; Catherine, always naïve, believes John has been his usual bombastic self.

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 Analysis

As previously, John, James, and Isabella appear to thwart Catherine's walk with Henry. By now the repetitive use of the similar names James and John, compounded with their constant appearance as a duo, conflates their respective identities into one. They begin to share each other's poorer qualities and Catherine trusts her brother's opinion less frequently and far less fully than before. Having experienced John's lies directly on the previous occasion, Catherine is this time not swayed from her purpose regardless of the

cajoling, posturing, and near threatening of her brother and her friend. John then takes one of the most blatantly disrespectful actions in the entire novel by intervening directly to cancel Catherine's appointment. Needless to say, such behavior is monstrous. Catherine immediately responds as a heroine by speaking directly to the injured Eleanor, defaming John's action, and setting the record straight. By this time, Catherine has seen John for the man he is, though she is still uninformed about Isabella. As before, the Allens prove themselves capable wards by approving Catherine's actions and suggesting that she deliberately distance herself from the Thorpes in the future.

The planned walk is executed with gusto and proves very successful. The narrative foreshadowing of Henry and Catherine's eventual wedding is fairly heavy-handed but enjoyable. The description of the walk and the nature that abounds is intricate and enjoyable. Henry's defense of history and much of Catherine's dialogue are among the most famous passages in the novel. The section concludes with Isabella's announcement of her engagement to James. This is shortly followed by Isabella's pouting about James's limited financial means. Catherine, finally, begins to see a negative side of Isabella—a side that has been consistently displayed since the earliest chapters of the novel. In some publications, chapter fifteen ends a division termed "volume I", and subsequent chapters are presented starting again at chapter one in "volume II". Most modern reproductions dispense with this additional division and present the text as a single "volume" consisting of thirty-one chapters.

Chapters 16, 17, 18, and 19

Chapters 16, 17, 18, and 19 Summary

Catherine has dinner with the Tilney family. She finds the assembled family dynamic to be very restrained. In particular, Eleanor and especially Henry are quite reserved and deferential to General Tilney. The father dominates the conversation and the atmosphere but General Tilney is so solicitous toward Catherine that she finds Henry's acquiescent attitude acceptable, if puzzling. The next day Catherine relates the experience to Isabella, who remarks that the Tilneys are excessively proud. That same day Henry's older brother, Captain Frederick Tilney, arrives in Bath and, making Isabella's acquaintance, flirts with her. Isabella protests that she is engaged but dances with Captain Tilney nonetheless. Later in the evening, Isabella and Catherine hold an intimate conversation at the Thorpe's apartment wherein Isabella confides her disappointment in a recent letter from James—he has informed her that he will be financially unable to marry for a period of about three years. Mrs. Thorpe discusses the situation with Isabella who broadly hints that Mr. Moreland must be very stingy with his money.

Over the next few days Catherine becomes fully smitten with Henry and she fantasizes occasionally that they become engaged. Eleanor tells Catherine that the Tilneys will shortly leave Bath, and Catherine is greatly disappointed. She is overjoyed shortly, however, when General Tilney invites her to accompany the family to Northanger Abbey, their considerable estate. The Allens endorse the invitation and Catherine writes home; her parents, relying upon the Allens' judgment, respond and approve of the visit. An expectant Catherine dreams that Northanger Abbey must be much like a Gothic castle, full of secret passageways, perverse secrets, and dark conspiring.

A few days later Catherine and Isabella again meet at the Pump House. Isabella informs Catherine that she has recently received a letter from John, wherein he states his intention of asking for Catherine's hand in marriage. Catherine is stunned and bluntly informs Isabella that any such offer must be refused. Isabella is only somewhat distraught and remarks strangely "there are more ways than one of our being sisters" (p. 139), which Catherine mistakenly understands to be a reference to Isabella's engagement to James. The discussion is slightly acrimonious but Isabella quickly loses interest when Captain Tilney appears. He openly flirts with Isabella and Catherine is taken aback when Isabella openly flirts with Captain Tilney. Catherine naïvely assumes her friend must be unaware of her untoward behavior and, uneasy, leaves the building. Over the next few days Isabella continues to openly flirt with Captain Tilney and James is very distraught and hurt over her behavior. Catherine fears for Isabella's reputation and asks Henry to intervene in what she rightly perceives to be a scandalous situation. Henry refuses, noting that Captain Tilney must keep his own counsel and informing Catherine that Isabella is not ignorant of her own behavior. Henry does reassure Catherine that, at least, Captain Tilney must shortly leave Bath.

Chapters 16, 17, 18, and 19 Analysis

The narrative undergoes a major turning point in these chapters—Catherine develops an intimate and enjoyable relationship with the Tilney family. Remarkably, she is entirely acceptable to General Tilney, who rules his children with an iron hand and who is also very aware of social and financial standing. Unbeknown to the reader, his favorable opinion of Catherine is founded upon misinformation provided by John. John has characterized Catherine as extremely wealthy and politically significant in an attempt to win favor with General Tilney as, at least so John suspects, Catherine will shortly accept his proposal. This misunderstanding will cause difficulty for Catherine later in the narrative, but when viewed retrospectively actually is invaluable to her in allowing her to enter the Tilney family.

John, as ignorant of the truth as always, then announces his intention of proposing to Catherine—never doubting she will accept. Catherine begs Isabella to intervene to prevent the embarrassing situation, and Isabella proves as self-centered as always. John is disabused of his erroneous ideas and Catherine pursues her friendship with the Tilneys. Meanwhile, Henry's older brother, Captain Frederick Tilney, is introduced in Bath. He immediately focuses on the beautiful, if vain, Isabella as the most attractive woman in the vicinity. Though engaged, she fawns over Captain Tilney and soon determines he is much richer than James. Catherine is typically confused about Isabella's apparent contradictory statements and actions. Henry, a wise student of human behavior, has quickly determined Isabella's faithlessness. Thus, all of the novel's initial relationships are gradually skewed into a more realistic situation given the characters involved. Catherine has cast off nearly all of her false friends and James shortly will be freed of the faithless Isabella. From this point forward, nearly all of Catherine's interaction with other characters will be confined to the Tilney family.

Chapters 20, 21, 22, and 23

Chapters 20, 21, 22, and 23 Summary

Catherine prepares to leave Bath for Northanger Abbey. General Tilney continues to be very solicitous of her and she comes to find his queer behavior somewhat off-putting. They finally leave and Catherine first rides with Eleanor and then rides with Henry, which delights her. Henry discloses that he does not live at Northanger Abbey, but at the nearby town of Woodston, where he is a parson. Catherine effuses over the abbey and Henry, realizing she has serious misconceptions about the nature of the structure, playfully leads her on, spinning an idle fiction about the place. Henry discusses hidden passageways, violent stormy nights, and mysterious chests. When they reach Northanger Abbey Catherine is surprised to find it a modern building in every respect. Although it is richly appointed and impressive, Catherine cannot help but be disappointed. General Tilney shows Catherine about the home and yards with obvious pride, before leaving her to ready for dinner.

Eleanor shows Catherine to the guest chambers. Catherine finds a modern room, richly appointed, and is again disappointed. As she dresses, Catherine spies a large old chest in one corner and decides it must contain some Gothic horror. Fingers trembling, she opens the chest and discovers an old hat inside. Eleanor arrives and escorts Catherine to dinner. General Tilney calls attention to the finery of the house and dinner, obviously proud of his wealth. As usual, his children are submissive and General Tilney does nearly all of the talking. In the evening, severe weather surrounds Northanger Abbey and Catherine becomes slightly frightened by various creaking sounds. She returns to her room and sees an old dark cabinet in another corner of her room. She advances upon it and turns the key, then finds that she is unable to open the cabinet. She fusses about and finally opens the cabinet, realizing that it had originally been unlocked. Within she expects to find some perverse secret and locates a mysterious roll of papers. Before she can read the papers, however, her candle blows out. Frightened, Catherine scatters the papers and leaps into bed, cowering beneath the covers.

In the morning Catherine discovers that the supposedly mysterious papers are simply old laundry bills. Ashamed, she puts the bills back into the cabinet and tells herself not to expect some Gothic plot to develop at Northanger Abbey. She goes down to breakfast and enjoys Henry's company briefly before General Tilney joins them. General Tilney hints broadly that he desires Henry and Catherine to be married—everyone in the room understands his rather obvious hints, except for the typically naïve Catherine. After breakfast Henry departs for Woodston for a few days. General Tilney shows Catherine and Eleanor around the expansive gardens. Eleanor prefers to walk along a particular small pathway through the gardens and General Tilney declines to accompany the girls on that particular pathway. Later, Eleanor explains the pathway had been her late mother's favorite walk—the novel-agitated Catherine concludes that General Tilney's behavior is suspicious and sinister. Later that day, General Tilney

leaves on business and requests that Eleanor not show Catherine more of Northanger Abbey until he is able to return—a request that further agitates Catherine.

Catherine's imagination then runs away with her and she comes to believe that General Tilney has either secretly imprisoned his wife or that he had poisoned or otherwise murdered her. Catherine seizes upon various random facts to buttress her thesis; as Northanger Abbey has not proved a Gothic structure, surely its inhabitants must live a Gothic life. Catherine focuses on the late Mrs. Tilney's chambers, which she has not yet toured, as necessarily harboring some deep secret. Catherine plans to stay up late and sneak through the portions of the house she has not yet visited, convinced she must find some dank dungeon wherein Eleanor's mother is either imprisoned or entombed alongside damming evidence of foul murder. Instead, Catherine falls asleep in spite of her plans.

Chapters 20, 21, 22, and 23 Analysis

General Tilney continues to treat Catherine as though she were very wealthy, based on his misinformation provided by the boasting John. On the ride, Catherine leaves Bath in the carriage with Eleanor but at the first carriage stop General Tilney moves her into Henry's carriage. Catherine is delighted and feels that if such a gentleman as Captain Tilney approves of her driving alone in a carriage with a man then it must be socially acceptable. In fact, it is provocative as was determined earlier by the Allens. General Tilney is clearly attempting to interest Henry and Catherine in each other. The dominant feature of the remainder of the ride concerns the witty and enjoyable conversation between Catherine and Henry. Catherine is so addled by her Gothic novel reading that she supposes Northanger Abbey—based solely upon its name—to be a brooding, foreboding Gothic structure lying in ruins and filled with perverse secrets. Henry plays along, gently teasing her, by weaving a tall tale of mystery. The most ironic portion of the narrative lies in the fact that nearly all of Henry's fantastic yarn in fact does come true—though of course not in the Gothic way he presents it.

At Northanger Abbey, General Tilney continues to be very solicitous of Catherine's well-being. He shows her about the house and yards with surprising grace and clear affection. Catherine is disappointed to find the structure modern, well-appointed, and in good repair. Her overwrought imagination thus begins to focus beyond the building itself and on the inhabitants. Deciding that Mrs. Tilney could not have died of natural causes, Catherine begins to imagine a story of perfidy and murder involving none other than General Tilney as the foul perpetrator. Various insignificant details are seized upon to bolster the gradually-developing fantasy. At the highest moment of frenzied imagination Catherine discovers a black cabinet in her room. It is unlocked but she supposes it must be locked and turns the key, locking the cabinet, and then spends considerable time trying to force her way into the locked openings. Finally she unlocks the cabinet and finds a roll of papers in a far recess. Supposing them to be secrets reveling foul crimes she seizes them at the very moment her light flickers out! Catherine has indeed crafted her own Gothic experience—she leaps into bed and cowers under the covers as the remainder of the night passes in blackness. Note that in the surprise ending of the

novel, the papers are revealed to be nothing more than the washing bills of Eleanor's secret lover—certainly a delightful twist in the fiction.

Chapters 24 and 25

Chapters 24 and 25 Summary

On Sunday morning Catherine accompanies the Tilneys to church services where she sees a memorial of Mrs. Tilney on the family pew. Instead of causing her to realize her fantastic theories are spurious, the memorial appears to Catherine to confirm General Tilney's murderous guilt. On Monday, General Tilney goes for a walk around the grounds and Catherine asks Eleanor to escort her to the late Mrs. Tilney's chambers. Eleanor agrees, but just as they begin to enter General Tilney unexpectedly calls out to Eleanor. Catherine guiltily flees to her own chamber and awaits the General's suspected momentary wrath. It never comes—instead, General Tilney has called to Eleanor to receive some unexpected guests. Using the visitors as a distraction, Catherine again attempts to enter the late Mrs. Tilney's chambers to inspect them for clues to the purported Gothic mystery. She is flabbergasted to discern that the rooms contain absolutely nothing out of the ordinary. Disappointed yet still convinced that General Tilney must be wicked and perverse, Catherine retreats from the singularly non-mysterious rooms but is intercepted by Henry, momentarily returned from Woodston.

Confronted with her beloved, Catherine confesses her morbid theory to Henry. Henry finds Catherine's flight of fancy amusing but a little disturbing. He completes the story of his mother's death, making Catherine realize that she has mistakenly interpreted all of the facts at her disposal. Nothing mysterious abounds, and no wicked Gothic plot of imprisonment or murder ever occurred. Catherine, embarrassed and ashamed, flees to her chamber in tears. She is certain that her ridiculous accusations have ended all possibilities of romance with Henry. When Catherine descends to dinner, however, she finds Henry entirely unaffected by her recent disclosure. She realizes the full extent of her self-created delusions and internally blames her flight of morbid fancy upon the Gothic novels she has lately been reading. After some hours, Catherine analyzes her own strange behavior and determines to put it in the past. Henry never again mentions it.

Some days later Catherine receives a sad letter from James, informing her that his engagement with Isabella is broken off. The letter heavily insinuates that Isabella is now engaged to Captain Tilney. Catherine is devastated and shares the news with Henry and Eleanor—she weeps for James but finds the loss of Isabella rather inconsequential. Henry calms her and discreetly suggests that James's loss of Isabella is perhaps rather fortunate. Henry and Eleanor rather doubt that Captain Tilney is factually engaged, but if he is they both view it with incredulity.

Chapters 24 and 25 Analysis

Catherine continues to imagine her Gothic plot until her frenzy culminates in a snooping expedition through the house while the Tilneys entertain other guests. She is caught

snooping by Henry who returns to visit her. She confesses her suppositions, apparently expecting to somehow enlighten Henry. Instead, he dismisses her wild speculations, provides the solid facts about his mother's death, and sets her to rights. Notice how level-headed and accepting Henry is portrayed as being—never again will he mention Catherine's bizarre notion. After a brief period of agitation, Catherine ponders her behavior and realizes how foolish she has been. This completes the major theme within the novel of the Gothic novel being compared, unfavorably, to real life.

The chapter also introduces a narrative construction technique by including the text of a letter from James which Catherine receives. The letter informs her of recent developments which must have transpired while Catherine was engaged with her friends at Northanger Abbey. As expected—indeed, as predicted by Henry—Isabella has dismissed James in favor of the much wealthier and more influential Captain Tilney. James, apparently as naïve as Catherine, believes Captain Tilney has offered his hand in marriage to Isabella and conveys this information in his letter. This fact alone causes Henry some trepidation. He realizes that his class-conscious father will never approve of such a union. Henry's unvoiced supposition is that his older brother is simply playing a game of lechery; in this as in nearly all things, Henry is exactly right.

Chapters 26, 27, and 28

Chapters 26, 27, and 28 Summary

Over the next hours and days, Catherine, Henry, and Eleanor ponder Captain Tilney's putative engagement to Isabella. Henry and Eleanor doubt that General Tilney will allow any such marriage to go forward based on Isabella's reputation and nearly destitute financial situation. The talk of money and finances makes Catherine troubled, however—her situation is superior to Isabella's, but not by much. Nevertheless, General Tilney's constant attentions and kindness reassures her of his good intentions toward her. Later, General Tilney suggests a group visit to Henry's house at Woodston. In a rather humorous roundabout method, General Tilney informs Henry of the day and hour of their arrival and the entertainment which he would prefer. On the arranged day, General Tilney accompanies Catherine and Eleanor to Woodston where they are entertained. Catherine finds the house charming and deeply appealing, though it is smaller than Northanger Abbey. She is particularly fond of the sprawling meadows and orchards which surround the structure. General Tilney shows Catherine about the area, making broad hints that she will marry Henry—his suggestions are so blunt that even Catherine understands their meaning. Although Catherine is sure of General Tilney's intentions, she vacillates in her understanding of Henry.

Some time later Catherine receives a letter from Isabella. It is full of pretention and double-speak; in a nutshell, Isabella states that Captain Tilney is a scoundrel of no mean proportion, and then claims James has been the victim of a serious misunderstanding. Shrugging off all wrongdoing and personal responsibility, she begs Catherine to intervene with James to salvage their previous engagement. Catherine rightly interprets the letter as grasping and self-serving and immediately determines she will never speak of it to James. She communicates the contents to Henry and Eleanor and then denounces Isabella in front of them. Henry subtly comments that, after all, Captain Tilney has behaved in a mischievous but predictable manner—perhaps James is fortunate to be rid of such a woman as Isabella after all.

Catherine's stay at Northanger Abbey has extended beyond a full month. Catherine and Eleanor talk and Eleanor extends an invitation to remain for at least another month—an invitation which Catherine eagerly accepts. General Tilney goes out on a several day long business trip, leaving Henry and Eleanor unrestrained. Henry, too, must leave for Woodston for a few days. Catherine finds the time alone with Eleanor delightful. But then General Tilney returns early, summons Eleanor, and goes to bed. Eleanor is left with the rather unpleasant duty of informing Catherine that the Tilney family must honor an apparently forgotten previous engagement. Catherine's visit must necessarily end the very next day, early in the morning. The entire hurried process is rude and socially insulting and Eleanor suffers greatly in carrying out General Tilney's unprecedented demands. Early the next morning, Catherine is escorted to the carriage by Eleanor and is then sent off alone. It is monstrous behavior from a presumably cultured gentleman such as General Tilney.

Chapters 26, 27, and 28 Analysis

Henry is sent to Woodston by General Tilney to prepare for a visit there. General Tilney's obvious intention is to present Henry's home to Catherine so she may inspect it prior to agreeing to matrimony. Everyone is aware of this except the redoubtably naïve Catherine, who supposes the visit to be nothing more than a fun excursion. The conversation between General Tilney and Henry about fixing the date, time, and nature of the visit is perhaps the best dialogue in a novel notable for excellent dialogue. Henry, as well as Eleanor, both come away with a perfect understanding of General Tilney's expectations and schedule, whereas Catherine remains entirely ignorant of any salient fact about the upcoming visit except that it will happen. The trip is a glowing success and Henry proves an able entertainer at Woodston. Catherine finds the house agreeable and is unusually fond of the orchards and lands surrounding the home. The writing about nature in this segment of the novel achieves a transcendent quality which is timeless.

Again, using the construction technique of an included letter, Catherine learns that Isabella's infatuation with Captain Tilney has ended. Finally, Catherine "reads between the lines" and is disgusted with Isabella's rather stupid attempt to manipulate the situation to her own advantage. The cast-off spoiled woman claims the entire affair to be a simple misunderstanding—true enough—but then claims the duped party to have been James. Henry receives the news with resignation as he is apparently all too aware of his brother's predilections. He comforts Catherine by noting that James is certainly better off without a woman such as Isabella. Catherine cannot argue the point.

The novel then enters a new phase in the narrative which leads to the surprise ending. A new tension is introduced when General Tilney's heretofore gentle opinion of Catherine is suddenly altered to be quite the opposite. His behavior really is quite monstrous as he demands Catherine be dismissed immediately and literally sends her packing across country to her parents' house unannounced and—worse—unattended. Eleanor offers her condolences but, as always, is not willing to oppose her father in anything. This sudden change of events is clearly a major turning point in the novel and will put Henry to a strong test. To this point, Catherine has proved herself a young heroine—will Henry now prove himself a hero?

Chapters 29, 30, and 31

Chapters 29, 30, and 31 Summary

On her solitary voyage home Catherine weeps and is in anguish about what she could possibly have done to so anger General Tilney. After considering the matter she is unable to offer any explanation. Upon her arrival at home her parents receive her with pleasant surprise but after the initial moments pass they become troubled and even outraged at General Tilney's untoward behavior in sending Catherine off in such a manner. Mrs. Moreland interprets Catherine's agitation as indignation at being so handled, little dreaming that her seventeen-year-old daughter is mourning an apparently lost love. However, Catherine continues her sullen brooding for two days.

Then, however, Henry arrives at Fullerton. Henry states his visit's purpose is to ascertain Catherine's safety. He then suggests a combined visit to the Allens' home, and Catherine accepts. As they walk, he explains what has happened. In Bath, John had represented to General Tilney that Catherine was exceptionally wealthy—largely because at the time John harbored the illusion that Catherine would accept his marriage proposal. Thus, John vastly inflated Catherine's wealth so that he, John, would be similarly inflated in the opinion of General Tilney. Based on this, General Tilney took every opportunity to encourage Catherine's interest in Henry. On General Tilney's latest business venture he had by chance again spoken with John. Now disabused of his silly expectations and embittered, John cast Catherine in another light altogether, claiming her to be penniless and a conniving schemer and social climber. General Tilney thereupon hastened home and ejected Catherine, whom he suspected of perfidy, from his estate. When Henry had returned from Woodston he learned what had happened and had a confrontation with General Tilney. When Henry announced his intention to propose marriage to Catherine, General Tilney become agitated and the father and son had parted on poor terms. With Henry's explanation, he is reconciled to Catherine.

After visiting the Allens, Henry asks Mr. and Mrs. Moreland for permission to marry their daughter. They are stunned, but readily acquiesce as it is Catherine's obvious desire and Henry is clearly a man of substance. They do demand, however, that General Tilney must also give consent—even if it is only for social propriety. Henry and Catherine determine to wed and await future developments. The narrative then moves into a summarization mode; a few months later Eleanor marries a wealthy nobleman—in fact, her secret love all these past months. General Tilney reacts to this stroke of fortune with aplomb and in his vigorous mood accepts Eleanor's intervention on behalf of Henry and Catherine. After doing some more investigating, General Tilney realizes that John's characterization of Catherine and the Morland family was entirely fictitious and more than allowing the union, he begrudgingly blesses it. Shortly after Mr. Morland receives General Tilney's written consent to the marriage, Henry and Catherine are wed.

Chapters 29, 30, and 31 Analysis

The final three chapters include the pleasant surprise ending for which the novel is so famous. Catherine considers her plight on her solitary voyage but is honestly unable to offer a rationale for General Tilney's sudden and bitter turn of heart. Her parents receive her with pleasant surprise, but once the shock of her return wears off they begin to feel the shame of such shabby treatment. This condition continues for some days. Catherine's mother appears as naïve as her own daughter and she fails to guess that Catherine's moping is more about losing Henry and less about being shamed by General Tilney.

Then, happily, Henry proves to be the hero he obviously must be to so charm the heroine Catherine. He appears and informs her of the entire situation. As before, General Tilney had been informed by the malicious John. Disabused of his notion that Catherine would soon marry him, John had maligned and vituperated Catherine and the Morlands to General Tilney. Rather than consider the situation, General Tilney simply reacted and ejected Catherine from his home. Upon his next visit, Henry objected to his father's misdeed and, finally, stood up to General Tilney. The two men parted with acrimonious words. Henry, the hero, has taken his own counsel and pursued Catherine to her home. He then proposes to Catherine and she accepts, completing the pleasant surprise ending of the novel. All that remains is to secure the blessing of General Tilney to the union.

Using a deux-ex-machina mechanism, the narrative then moves into a new method of construction and covers many months within just a few pages. It develops that Eleanor has, all along, harbored a secret love for a young gentleman—the very gentleman who left a roll of washing bills in a certain black cabinet in a guest chamber at Northanger Abbey. Having secured his fortune, the young man marries Eleanor. General Tilney is so pleased with his daughter's unexpected rise in wealth and prestige that he allows her to intervene on Henry's behalf and he eventually approves the wedding of Henry and Catherine. The happy story thus concludes.

Characters

Catherine Morland

Catherine Morland is the protagonist of the novel and by any standard the dominant character. At the opening of the novel, she is a seventeen-year-old girl belonging to a family with modest income. The Morlands are in nearly all respects a typical family of the era. They live in the rural town of Fullerton, in Hampshire, England. As a youth, Catherine pursued varied interests including piano-playing, cricket, and basic art. Typical of most children, she lacked the persistence necessary to develop advanced skills in any one area. Something of a hoyden, she was cheerful, loved, and even-tempered. As Catherine entered her teenage years her image developed into the gracious good looks of a young woman; simultaneously, she was forced to give up her tomboyish pursuits in preference for reading and other more-proper pursuits. As a young woman, Catherine is cheerful, affectionate, and devoid of deceit—however, she is quite uninformed and generally ignorant about societal mores and usage.

At the opening of the novel, Catherine is a good-looking and vivacious teenager, eager for new experiences and without any prior love interest. As she journeys to Bath she meets other characters and develops relationships with them. Her first friend is Isabella Thorpe, and Catherine lacks the experience to determine that Isabella is a false friend of little worth. Catherine is early pursued by the odious John Thorpe, though she manages finally to deflect his attentions. Later, Catherine meets Eleanor Tilney, and though her makes the acquaintance of Henry Tilney, who becomes her love interest as the novel progresses. By the conclusion of the novel Catherine has demonstrated her worth and ability and happily marries her love, Henry.

The novel can be easily interpreted as the coming-of-age story of Catherine. She moves from the burgeoning young woman to the accomplished wife as the novel progresses, and nearly every scene focuses on her development as an adult. She is confident without being overbearing, aware of her weaknesses and deficiencies without being overly self-conscious, and is willing to listen to her elders and take their good advice. Although a remarkably poor judge of character, this fault arises rather from her generous attitude toward others than from deficient powers of observation. Catherine is one of the more memorable characters in the modern literary canon and is, as the narrator states in the introductory paragraph of the novel, "an heroine" (p. 21).

Henry Tilney

Henry Tilney is the second of the three children of General Tilney and is twenty-six years old during the period of time considered by the novel. His mother died when he was seventeen and he was since raised by his father. Several years older than Catherine Morland, Henry nevertheless develops a true friendship with the younger woman and subsequently falls in love with her. Henry is everything that the obnoxious

John Thorpe is not—wealthy, of true character, and worthwhile as a friend and partner. Henry has a jovially cynical view of human nature and takes pleasure in gently teasing others when they use a word incorrectly or speak out of place. He finds Catherine's naivety on virtually all subjects endearing and quickly moves beyond friendship and admiration to love for her.

Henry is well- and widely-read and enjoys novels as much as Catherine, though he also enjoys reading history while she does not. Henry's defense of historians is an often-quoted passage of the novel and demonstrates that his education is balanced and complete. Henry is the parson of Woodston, a town for which his house is named. His home and lands were bequeathed by General Tilney, and Henry allows himself to be ruled in nearly all things by his father. Henry's retiring personality is not as passive as is that of Eleanor, however, and Henry will contradict General Tilney when he deems it necessary. Catherine and others describe Henry as very attractive, tall, handsomely dressed, and an excellent dancer. Additionally, he is a capable driver and brilliant conversationalist—both qualities in marked contrast to John, his typical foil. Within the novel, Henry succeeds completely at everything he attempts and is a memorable protagonist and hero even though he naturally plays second fiddle to the brilliant and memorable Catherine Morland.

General Tilney

General Tilney is a wealthy widower and father of three children: Captain Frederick Tilney, Henry Tilney, and Eleanor Tilney. General Tilney rules his family with strict discipline and makes most of his children's decisions, including forming their public opinions about various events. In this controlling and overbearing regard he is generally unlikable, though he does have some endearing qualities. He is vainly proud about his vast wealth and endeavors to showcase it in a favorable light. He has modernized and repaired Northanger Abbey, for example, and the refurbished structure sports all of the most modern conveniences. General Tilney can exhibit quirky behavior from time to time. For example, he forbids Eleanor to show Catherine Northanger Abbey in his absence. Catherine seizes upon General Tilney's idiosyncrasies and formulates a delusional theory that he murdered his wife. In fact, she had died of a sudden illness. General Tilney can also behave in an impetuous and improper manner as, for example, when he ejected Catherine from his home without a proper escort. Though present in many scenes in the latter portion of the novel, General Tilney is a fairly minor character and serves more as a plot device than a character. His domineering relationship with his two younger children is an unusually harsh element and is somewhat akin to the relationships of Gothic novels parodied in the opening chapter of the novel.

Eleanor Tilney

Eleanor Tilney is the youngest of the three children of General Tilney and is twenty-two years old during the period of time considered by the novel. Her mother died when she was only thirteen and she has since been raised by her father. Several years older than

Catherine Morland, Eleanor nevertheless develops a true friendship with the younger woman and treats her with respect and kindness. Eleanor is everything that Isabella Thorpe is not—wealthy, of true character, and worthwhile as a friend. Within the narrative Eleanor functions usually as a passive character. She is approached by Catherine and befriended through the younger woman's efforts. Eleanor later receives Catherine with grace but restraint and, even when offended, usually takes pains to be restrained and passive. This is in keeping with her upbringing under the dominating hand of General Tilney. Eleanor is very insightful and quickly discovers that Catherine is enchanted by Henry, and likewise believes Isabella to be flighty and dishonest. Henceforth, Eleanor endeavors to assist Henry and Catherine develop a relationship.

Prior to the novel's dominant timeline, Eleanor had developed a secret love with an unnamed gentleman whose means were apparently complicated. After the novel's dominant timeline the gentleman's means were secured and his position advanced, whereupon General Tilney allowed the man to marry Eleanor. This surprise ending allows Eleanor, now a wealthy lady in her own right, to intervene on behalf of her brother and her friend to secure General Tilney's permission to for the two to marry. Though somewhat a minor character, Eleanor appears with frequency in the latter half of the novel and always acts the part of a gracious hostess and true friend. She is one of the most positive characters in the novel.

Isabella Thorpe

Isabella Thorpe is John's brother and the girlfriend—then fiancé—of James Morland. As a casual friend, Isabella is perhaps an agreeable sort. She is beautiful and wily, draws the attention of young men, and knows a great deal about dress, fashion, and popular culture—though her knowledge is not deep. Upon first meeting, Catherine and Isabella enjoy each other's company at the social dances and other functions. But even from the first days it is evident that Isabella is more style than substance and cares far more for herself than for anyone else. She and Catherine discuss Gothic novels, watch young men, and talk of fashion. Catherine finds her company enjoyable. Isabella's relationship with James continues to develop through the early chapters of the novel until they reach a sort of understanding that they will get married. James goes home and secures his parents' consent as well as a pledge of upkeep from Mr. Morland. Though the pledged sum is adequate—even appreciable given the circumstances—Isabella is disappointed in the amount and does not bother to hide the fact from Catherine, instead suggesting that Mr. Morland is stingy. As the weeks in Bath progress, Catherine very slowly comes to realize that Isabella is something of a false friend. As Catherine befriends Eleanor Tilney, Isabella fades into the background.

When Isabella meets Captain Frederick Tilney she begins to flirt with him gradually, and then openly, even going so far as publicly to ignore James in preference for Captain Tilney. Catherine is angered and hurt—as is James—but generously allows that Isabella is possibly ignorant of her behavior. Later, however, Isabella rejects James for Captain Tilney and is in turn rejected by Captain Tilney. Isabella then writes a bizarre letter to Catherine, claiming that James is a victim of misunderstanding. Isabella suggests that

Catherine intervene with James to salvage their engagement. Fortunately, Catherine has deduced what sort of person Isabella is and refuses. Isabella is a dominant character in the first dozen chapters of the novel but then quickly fades into a minor role as Catherine moves beyond her circle of influence.

John Thorpe

John Thorpe is Isabella's brother and the school friend of James Morland. John accidentally introduced James to Isabella during a home visit. With Isabella, John is the early antagonist in the novel and pursues Catherine with unwanted attention. John is a boor and speaks unceasingly about his own putative abilities and intelligence. In fact, he is normal in nearly all respects save only his inflated regard for his own accomplishments. Even the polite and retiring Catherine tires of his bombastic self-promotion after a single afternoon and, upon spending a second day with him, finds him irritating and seeks to avoid him. John believes what he wants to believe, though, and becomes convinced that Catherine's cold shoulder indicates a warm heart awaiting his proposal. While developing his fantasy of reciprocated affection, John presents Catherine as a woman of vast substance and import during a casual conversation with General Tilney. This has a profound effect on General Tilney, of course. Later, after Catherine has unambiguously rejected his advances, he presents Catherine as a fallen woman of ill repute during another casual conversation with General Tilney. This, too, has a profound effect. Because of John's loud-mouthed behavior, Catherine has the opportunity to fall in love with Henry and, also because of John's loud-mouthed behavior, Henry has the opportunity to demonstrate his heroism.

John fancies himself an excellent driver and superb judge of horseflesh—though he is neither. He usually speaks of large sums of money and frequently uses profanity to drive home his dubious point. Most of his talk is self-contradictory and usually verges on the nonsensical. He is very apt to promise things impossible to deliver, relying upon his bluster to carry him through. He is not averse to lying to gain his goals and does not hesitate to intrude into other's personal affairs. In general, John is a disagreeable and unlikable character who provides much comedy and acts as a sort of personified plot device. He occurs in many scenes in the first half of the novel but thereafter nearly disappears from the narrative.

James Morland

James Morland is the oldest of the numerous Morland siblings and is probably in his early twenties during the time considered in the novel. Like Catherine, James is a poor judge of character and believes the buffoonery of John Thorpe to signal real friendship and the coquettish behavior of Isabella Thorpe to signify real devotion and love. James has been away at school for perhaps a year before the opening of the novel; at school he has befriended John. Accompanying John to his home, James has met Isabella and fallen in love with her. James's feelings are sincere and uncomplicated. The destitute Thorpes, however, value James rather more for his father's wealth than for his own

characteristics. Isabella pursues a relationship with James based upon the apparent misconception that his father is wealthy. It can be inferred that the loudmouthed John has grossly inflated James's wealth via meaningless boasting. Thus, Isabella and James mutually pursue a relationship which ends in an accepted proposal of marriage. However, when Isabella learns of James's meager inheritance she rejects him in favor of another suitor. James watches in horror as his relationship disintegrates and, once fully cast off, he returns home to Fullerton and writes Catherine a despondent letter. James is somewhat pitiable during the narrative but, as Henry Tilney points out, he is fortunate to be rid of such a climber as Isabella Thorpe. James is, in reality, a minor character in the novel.

Captain Frederick Tilney

Captain Frederick Tilney is the oldest of the three children of General Tilney and is perhaps twenty-nine or thirty at the time of the novel. He appears only briefly in the narrative but has a fairly major influence on the plot development. A notorious womanizer, Captain Tilney pursues the beautiful Isabella Thorpe even though she is engaged to James Morland at the time. Because of Captain Tilney's wealth and prestige, Isabella rejects James in favor of the military officer. However, Captain Tilney has no intention of engaging Isabella in a serious relationship, and once he has satisfied his vanity with her he casts her off. Captain Tilney is presented as a man fully conscious of class, wealth, and station. He apparently shares little with his younger siblings Henry and Eleanor, and shares much in common with his rigorous father General Tilney. In general, Captain Tilney is a minor character in the novel.

Mr. and Mrs. Allen

Mr. and Mrs. Allen are a childless couple living in Fullerton. They are friends with the Morlands and invite Catherine to accompany them to Bath on holiday—this invitation initiates the rising action of the novel. They prove to be generous and capable wards of Catherine, allowing her to explore her new surroundings while simultaneously providing gentle advice, which ultimately proves of sound judgment. Mr. Allen makes discreet inquiries about Catherine's friends while Mrs. Allen coaches her on needful topics such as dress and social propriety. In all respects they are a traditional couple aware of society and engaged with their neighbors. They remain, however, fairly minor characters in the novel.

Richard and Mrs. Morland

Richard and his unnamed wife are Catherine's parents. They maintain a comfortable if modest home in Fullerton, and Richard is able to provide for his children ably—though perhaps not to Isabella's satisfaction. They display a remarkable trust in the Allens and their own daughter and the novel bears out that this trust is correctly placed. In general, however, they are minor characters and appear briefly in the opening chapter and then

again in the closing of the novel. They behave as typical parents and, as the novel points out, are notable for being rather mundane as far as parents in novels go.

Objects/Places

Fullerton

Fullerton is a lightly urbanized town center of a rural farming area in southwestern England. In nearly all respects it is a normal town full of large families of socially proper middle-class families. Fullerton is the initial setting in the novel and is the traditional home of the Morlands and the Allens.

Bath

Bath is a health spa resort town in southwestern England, popular because of its naturally occurring hot springs. During the period considered by the novel, Bath was a widely known and appreciated resort. The Allens go to Bath for a month of holidays and healthy recuperation. Their invitation to accompany them, extended to Catherine, initiates the basic rising action of the narrative.

The Pump Room

At Bath the naturally occurring hot springs are controlled via a series of pumps—the water is drawn from the ground and then pumped off to various steam rooms and heated pools. These pumps are nominally housed in the Pump Room at Bath. By the time of the novel this function, however, is secondary to the social gathering place which centers on the Pump House. The Pump House, only lightly described, is the dominant setting for the first third of the novel.

The Mysteries of Udolpho

The Mysteries of Udolpho, by Ann Radcliffe, is a Gothic novel published some years prior to Northanger Abbey. It, along with The Italian by Ann Radcliffe, Castle of Wolfenbach, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries make up the apparent reading list of Catherine and Isabella during their stay in Bath. Catherine finds the Gothic romance compelling and begins to confabulate elements of the fiction with her real life. This obviously leads to problems for the young heroine.

Carriages and Horses

Throughout the novel Catherine rides in a variety of conveyances, all of them a type of carriage drawn by horses. The narrator explains the designs of some of these conveyances and John Thorpe wrongfully claims to be a master driver and infallible

judge of horseflesh. Within the novel, carriages and horses are symbolic of types of wealth, much as various sports cars are today.

Northanger Abbey

Northanger Abbey is the rather misleading name given to General Tilney's family house and estate. Once a real abbey, the building during the time of Catherine's visit is fully restored and modernized, each room featuring the latest conveniences. Catherine is disappointed to discover Northanger Abbey is not a crumbling relic of mysterious days gone by. Northanger Abbey is the dominant setting for most of the second half of the novel.

Woodston

Woodston is the pastoral home of Henry Tilney. It is described in some detail by General Tilney as he shows the house and grounds to Catherine. Although much smaller than Northanger Abbey, Catherine finds Woodston charming and is particularly taken by the orchards and lands surrounding the structure. Woodston is a minor setting within the novel.

The Chest, the Roll of Washing-Bills, and the Portrait

During her early stay at Northanger Abbey, Catherine's frenzied imagination causes her to suspect various mysterious plots to be afoot. Her overwrought fantasy is bolstered by a chest which is presumably somehow inherently mysterious—but contains only a hat; by a roll of strange papers—which turns out to be washing-bills; and by the location of a portrait of the late Mrs. Tilney. All of these spurious symbols of intrigue are in fact common objects made significant only through Catherine's misplaced interpretations.

Letters

The narrative presents a few letters as facsimile texts; Catherine is invariably the recipient. One letter tells of the end of the engagement between James and Isabella. Another letter tells of the end of the relationship between Captain Tilney and Isabella. The letters are used as a common form of narrative construction to allow various events to be presented chronologically out of order without harming the suspension of disbelief while reading the novel.

Wealth

Wealth is considered in the novel in a variety of ways. The frugal Morlands and Allens consider wealth as an item to be conserved, as indicated by Mrs. Allen's constant attention to the prices and durability of various materials. John considers the sum of

wealth to be a good carriage and fast horse. Isabella considers wealth as the be-all and end-all of matrimony. General Tilney considers equivalent wealth to be a prerequisite to marriage. The various types of wealth considered throughout the novel are interesting and inform some of the novel's major themes.

Themes

The Gothic Novel

The Gothic novel was a type of novel widely circulating during the period of time considered by the novel. Indeed, the romantic Gothic novel was all the rage at the time Austen was writing Northanger Abbey and the consideration of the Gothic novel forms one of the novel's most interesting themes. Catherine and Henry, the protagonists, are avid fans of Gothic novels, as is Isabella, the antagonist. In fact, Catherine's confabulation of Gothic fictive elements with real life forms the basis of one of the most humorous sub-plots in the text, as she creeps through Northanger Abbey looking for clues to bolster her theory that General Tilney murdered his wife . . . or imprisoned her, whichever. Henry's shared fondness for novels forms an early point of connection for the two characters, and shared tastes in particular novels serves to bond Catherine to her false friend Isabella. Thus, the characters in the novel are mostly avid readers and generally stoutly defend the Gothic novel as exciting and enjoyable.

The unnamed narrator occasionally intrudes in a meta-fictional way to discuss Gothic novels, also. In this respect, the novel reads somewhat like a comical book review. The narrator, speaking as the author, defends novels in general and claims various benefits derived from novel reading. In this manner the narrator's tastes and the characters' tastes are in a confluence with the reader's tastes—after all, the reader is reading a novel. This theme of the text is particularly enjoyable to think about as the subtle interplay between author, reader, narrator, and character is examined. Given the various titles specified, one might be forgiven for assuming them to be fabrications of the author. They are not. Rigorous research has demonstrated that all of the novels mentioned were in fact contemporaneous publications to Northanger Abbey, though nearly all of them have since vanished into obscurity. As a sort of literary curiosity, however, the gathered referenced novels have been periodically republished alongside new editions of Northanger Abbey.

Social Propriety

A dominant theme within the novel concerns an examination of social propriety. Young Catherine is too naïve to actually know which of her behaviors are potentially scandalous and which are fully acceptable. Thus, she accepts an invitation to ride with John without realizing her behavior might not be completely proper. Later, Mrs. Allen gently suggests that a repeat performance might not be the best thing. Throughout the period spent in Bath, Catherine is always conscious of her own behavior and worries about how others might perceive it—but she has no foundation upon which to accurately judge herself. Other characters, too, are highly concerned with social appearances. For example, consider Henry's early approaches to Catherine and his reaction to John's blustering. Rather than act as one might today, Henry withdraws as was then socially proper. Later, Catherine desires to meet Henry but because of social

convention, she could not directly approach him. Instead, she befriends his younger sister and that relationship leads naturally—and properly—to her introduction to Henry. Virtually all of the first half of the novel is spent in the discharge of various social functions—dancing, walking, riding, theater-going, card-playing, and so forth—and all of the character are concerned or over-concerned with social propriety.

Coming of Age

The novel is a concise coming-of-age story featuring Catherine Morland as the protagonist or, as the novel terms her, the heroine. At the novel's opening she is seventeen years old and recently emerged as a beautiful young woman from a somewhat unpromising youth spent as a tomboy. She is utterly naïve about nearly everything, and especially uninformed about social propriety. She has never been in love and has apparently never been outside of Fullerton. Thus, her visit to Bath is her simultaneous entrance into young adulthood and society. She thereafter pursues friendships with unequal success, valuing Eleanor but rejecting Isabella; pursues family relations with rocky results; and pursues her love interest while in turn pursued by an undesired and undesirable suitor. As would be expected, Catherine makes numerous mistakes in her maturation. What sets her apart as a heroine, however, is her unflagging determination to do right by others, to keep her promises, and to clarify and so far as possible to rectify her mistakes. Thus, she apologizes to Eleanor and Henry on several occasions, rejects John, James, and Isabella's improper suggestions, and comports herself in accordance with her high standards. Throughout the difficult dozen or so weeks considered in the novel's primary timeline, Catherine comes of age. She changes from the naïve country bumpkin into a charming young woman of uneven grace and simultaneously learns to appreciate in others qualities lacking in herself. By the time she is married at eighteen years of age, Catherine has transcended her inauspicious beginnings and is well on her way to becoming a respectable woman of substance.

Style

Point of View

The novel is narrated from the third-person, omniscient point of view by an unnamed narrator. Interior thoughts of characters are frequently revealed, though deep thoughts of only the primary protagonist, Catherine Morland, are considered at any length. The narrator is reliable and frequently intrusive, using the meta-fictional "I" in self-reference: the identity of the narrator is unknown and forms one of the more puzzling but enjoyable aspects of the novel. The narrator has special knowledge of all events and relates the narrative in the past tense, often intruding to provide heavy foreshadowing or explanations of symbolic elements in the text. Although highly reliable, the narrator obviously withholds facts until such a time as they can be delivered with greater impact upon the reader; humorously, the narrator bluntly states that this procedure is deliberate.

The third-person point of view is appropriate for the novel and makes the narrative engaging and appealing. The narrative portrayal of Catherine is sympathetic and likable, and the third-person structure allows Catherine's naïve nature to be presented without unnecessarily complicating the plot development. As a protagonist Catherine is enjoyable, believable, and compelling. The presentation of her outlook on life and her response to love's complications are the focus of the novel and, coupled with the development of plot, provides the basic structure of the novel.

Setting

The novel's general setting is southwestern England, circa 1790, and has the feel of lightly urbanized areas featuring resort spas and pastoral scenes. Within the general setting, four specific locations are developed in greater detail—Fullerton, Bath, Northanger Abbey, and Woodston. Fullerton and Bath are real places, as is Gloucestershire, the surrounding area for Northanger Abbey and Woodston. Fullerton is the least developed of the four principle settings. It is the childhood home of Catherine Morland—indeed, the entire Morland family—as well as the Allen family. It is presented as a lightly urbanized center surrounded by rural farmlands. Fullerton is respectable if unexceptional and projects a distinctly middle-class atmosphere. Families are apparently large and customs conservative, if the Morlands are representative. Indeed, the childless Allens are presented as something of a notable exception. Fullerton briefly appears in the first and final few chapters of the novel and is lightly referenced otherwise.

Bath was and is a famous resort spa town, centered on the site of a series of natural hot springs. Aside from the steam and heat pools, the town at the time of the novel featured at least a few social gathering places, the most-mentioned of which is the Pump House where, presumably, the hot water is captured and pumped from the ground. Ironically,

Catherine and the rest never visit the bathing yards for which Bath was so famous. Instead, they spend time mostly in the so-called lower-rooms where dances and balls were held nearly nightly. An upper balcony surrounds the dance floor and is used for observation. Card rooms—apparently strictly for men—sit to the side of the building's main halls. Bath featured numerous apartments and homes for rent as well as unpaved streets which became very muddy after rainfall. Bath is the setting for the first fifteen or so chapters of the novel.

Northanger Abbey, the structure for which the novel is named, is the dominant setting for most of the concluding chapters of the novel. Before visiting, Catherine imagines it to be a brooding and crumbling structure full of secret passages and perverse secrets. Instead, she is disappointed to find it a wholly modern building with rich and elegant appointments. It is clearly an impressive building on a large estate, and it is kept in perfect repair. Catherine comes to enjoy it as comfortable and appealing. Woodston is the name given to a house and village near to Northanger Abbey where Henry Tilney lives. It was provided for Henry by his father, General Tilney. The house is much smaller than Northanger Abbey but is surrounded by beautiful orchards and fields. Catherine visits the house—it will be her own once she marries—and finds it entirely agreeable.

Language and Meaning

The novel is presented in easily accessible language with modern construction and remarkably modern sentiment. Within this basic construction of meaning the novel uses some anachronistic language and social customs which convey a historic atmosphere and tone. The essentially modern tone of the novel does allow it to be understood by a wide range of readers but its social mores, firmly based in the late eighteenth century, might seem unnecessarily restrictive to modern readers. For example, Catherine's chaperone Mrs. Allen declares that single young women riding with men in an open carriage through the city streets would likely be viewed as slightly scandalous. And, later, Catherine may not get married without her prospective father-in-law's express consent. While many modern-day readers would perhaps not submit to such social customs, Catherine is of course a creature of her environment and views them as not only appropriate but desirable.

The narrative structure itself is highly aware of language and meaning and contains many elements of meta-fictional self-reference. For example, the unnamed narrator intrudes constantly into the narrative to offer advice or proffer foreshadowing. Word choice is delightfully rich and the narrative construction is subtle, creditable, and exceptionally pleasant. The author is obviously a master of language and construction and plays with the idea of meaning through narration, tone, and even dialogue. For example, when Catherine complains that Henry's speech is too complicated to understand, he replies "'Then we are on very unequal terms, for I understand you perfectly well.'" Subsequently comes Catherine's famously funny—though unintentionally so—reply, "'Me? Yes; I cannot speak well enough to be unintelligible.'" (p. 129). That Catherine fails to see the unintentional humor in her reply, even after Henry explains it, makes the exchange so much the more enjoyable.

Structure

The brief novel, written in 1798 and revised in 1803, was originally entitled Memorandum, Susan, but was re-titled prior to its first publication. The novel was the author's first completed work and was sold quickly for a tiny sum to a London bookseller that sat on the text without publishing it for several years. The same bookseller then resold the rights to the author subsequent to her publication of other novels and her meteoric rise in the public eye. Thus, although it was the first-written novel, it was among the last-published novels of the author, appearing posthumously by a few months. The complicated publishing history involved several major revisions and thus disparate versions of the manuscript exist. Further, the novel—though already short—is often presented as two volumes, with the first fifteen chapters comprising the first volume and the latter sixteen chapters comprising the second volume. This summary assumes the novel is presented in a single version composed of thirty-one consecutively numbered chapters.

The 237-page novel is divided into thirty-one enumerated chapters of fairly equal length, though notable exceptions exist. For example, the final chapter is very brief and differs in construction from the remainder of the work. Each chapter describes events in a strictly chronological order which makes the narrative very easy to follow. Indeed, much in contrast to the Gothic novels which the narrative simultaneously emulates and denigrates, narrative access is remarkably and consistently easy. The only exception to this concerns multiple events which happen simultaneously but at different locations. These events are always presented as having happened in the past and are introduced into the narrative via conversation or through the textual presentation of letters received. Thus, the chronology strictly adheres to Catherine Morland's perception of the events.

Quotes

"No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard — and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence besides two good livings — and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on — lived to have six children more — to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. A family of ten children will be always called a fine family, where there are heads and arms and legs enough for the number; but the Morlands had little other right to the word, for they were in general very plain, and Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any. She had a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features — so much for her person; and not less unpropitious for heroism seemed her mind. She was fond of all boy's plays, and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush. Indeed she had no taste for a garden; and if she gathered flowers at all, it was chiefly for the pleasure of mischief — at least so it was conjectured from her always preferring those which she was forbidden to take. Such were her propensities — her abilities were quite as extraordinary. She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught; and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid. Her mother was three months in teaching her only to repeat the 'Beggar's Petition'; and after all, her next sister, Sally, could say it better than she did. Not that Catherine was always stupid — by no means; she learnt the fable of 'The Hare and Many Friends' as quickly as any girl in England. Her mother wished her to learn music; and Catherine was sure she should like it, for she was very fond of tinkling the keys of the old forlorn spinner; so, at eight years old she began. She learnt a year, and could not bear it; and Mrs. Morland, who did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste, allowed her to leave off. The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life. Her taste for drawing was not superior; though whenever she could obtain the outside of a letter from her mother or seize upon any other odd piece of paper, she did what she could in that way, by drawing houses and trees, hens and chickens, all very much like one another. Writing and accounts she was taught by her father; French by her mother: her proficiency in either was not remarkable, and she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could. What a strange, unaccountable character! — for with all these symptoms of profligacy at ten years old, she had neither a bad heart nor a bad temper, was seldom stubborn, scarcely ever quarrelsome, and very kind to the little ones, with few interruptions of tyranny; she was moreover noisy and wild, hated confinement and cleanliness, and loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house." pp. 21-22

"This brief account of the family is intended to supersede the necessity of a long and minute detail from Mrs. Thorpe herself, of her past adventures and sufferings, which might otherwise be expected to occupy the three or four following chapters; in which the worthlessness of lords and attornies might be set forth, and conversations, which had passed twenty years before, be minutely repeated." p. 40

"Yes, novels; for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel-writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding — joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! If the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? I cannot approve of it. Let us leave it to the reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans. Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body. Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers. And while the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the Spectator, and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens — there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them. 'I am no novel-reader — I seldom look into novels — Do not imagine that I often read novels — It is really very well for a novel.' Such is the common cant. 'And what are you reading, Miss — ?' 'Oh! It is only a novel!' replies the young lady, while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame. 'It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda'; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language. Now, had the same young lady been engaged with a volume of the Spectator, instead of such a work, how proudly would she have produced the book, and told its name; though the chances must be against her being occupied by any part of that voluminous publication, of which either the matter or manner would not disgust a young person of taste: the substance of its papers so often consisting in the statement of improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and topics of conversation which no longer concern anyone living; and their language, too, frequently so coarse as to give no very favourable idea of the age that could endure it." pp. 42-43

"Miss Tilney had a good figure, a pretty face, and a very agreeable countenance; and her air, though it had not all the decided pretension, the resolute stylishness of Miss Thorpe's, had more real elegance. Her manners showed good sense and good breeding; they were neither shy nor affectedly open; and she seemed capable of being young, attractive, and at a ball without wanting to fix the attention of every man near her, and without exaggerated feelings of ecstatic delight or inconceivable vexation on every

little trifling occurrence. Catherine, interested at once by her appearance and her relationship to Mr. Tilney, was desirous of being acquainted with her, and readily talked therefore whenever she could think of anything to say, and had courage and leisure for saying it. But the hindrance thrown in the way of a very speedy intimacy, by the frequent want of one or more of these requisites, prevented their doing more than going through the first rudiments of an acquaintance, by informing themselves how well the other liked Bath, how much she admired its buildings and surrounding country, whether she drew, or played, or sang, and whether she was fond of riding on horseback." p. 60

"The morrow brought a very sober-looking morning, the sun making only a few efforts to appear, and Catherine augured from it everything most favourable to her wishes. A bright morning so early in the year, she allowed, would generally turn to rain, but a cloudy one foretold improvement as the day advanced. She applied to Mr. Allen for confirmation of her hopes, but Mr. Allen, not having his own skies and barometer about him, declined giving any absolute promise of sunshine. She applied to Mrs. Allen, and Mrs. Allen's opinion was more positive. 'She had no doubt in the world of its being a very fine day, if the clouds would only go off, and the sun keep out.'
At about eleven o'clock, however, a few specks of small rain upon the windows caught Catherine's watchful eye, and 'Oh! dear, I do believe it will be wet,' broke from her in a most desponding tone.
'I thought how it would be,' said Mrs. Allen.
'No walk for me today,' sighed Catherine; 'but perhaps it may come to nothing, or it may hold up before twelve.'
'Perhaps it may, but then, my dear, it will be so dirty.'
'Oh! That will not signify; I never mind dirt.'
'No,' replied her friend very placidly, 'I know you never mind dirt.'" pp. 84-85

"'That is, I can read poetry and plays, and things of that sort, and do not dislike travels. But history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in. Can you?'
'Yes, I am fond of history.'
'I wish I were too. I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all — it is very tiresome: and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention. The speeches that are put into the heroes' mouths, their thoughts and designs — the chief of all this must be invention, and invention is what delights me in other books.'
'Historians, you think,' said Miss Tilney, 'are not happy in their flights of fancy. They display imagination without raising interest. I am fond of history — and am very well contented to take the false with the true. In the principal facts they have sources of intelligence in former histories and records, which may be as much depended on, I conclude, as anything that does not actually pass under one's own observation; and as for the little embellishments you speak of, they are embellishments, and I like them as such. If a speech be well drawn up, I read it with pleasure, by whomsoever it may be made — and probably with much greater, if the production of Mr. Hume or Mr.

Robertson, than if the genuine words of Caractacus, Agricola, or Alfred the Great.'" pp. 109-110

"Early the next day, a note from Isabella, speaking peace and tenderness in every line, and entreating the immediate presence of her friend on a matter of the utmost importance, hastened Catherine, in the happiest state of confidence and curiosity, to Edgar's Buildings. The two youngest Miss Thorpes were by themselves in the parlour; and, on Anne's quitting it to call her sister, Catherine took the opportunity of asking the other for some particulars of their yesterday's party. Maria desired no greater pleasure than to speak of it; and Catherine immediately learnt that it had been altogether the most delightful scheme in the world, that nobody could imagine how charming it had been, and that it had been more delightful than anybody could conceive. Such was the information of the first five minutes; the second unfolded thus much in detail — that they had driven directly to the York Hotel, ate some soup, and bespoke an early dinner, walked down to the pump-room, tasted the water, and laid out some shillings in purses and spars; thence adjoined to eat ice at a pastry-cook's, and hurrying back to the hotel, swallowed their dinner in haste, to prevent being in the dark; and then had a delightful drive back, only the moon was not up, and it rained a little, and Mr. Morland's horse was so tired he could hardly get it along.
Catherine listened with heartfelt satisfaction. It appeared that Blaize Castle had never been thought of; and, as for all the rest, there was nothing to regret for half an instant. Maria's intelligence concluded with a tender effusion of pity for her sister Anne, whom she represented as insupportably cross, from being excluded the party." pp. 116-117

"'Is it my brother's attentions to Miss Thorpe, or Miss Thorpe's admission of them, that gives the pain?'
'Is not it the same thing?'
'I think Mr. Morland would acknowledge a difference. No man is offended by another man's admiration of the woman he loves; it is the woman only who can make it a torment.'
Catherine blushed for her friend, and said, 'Isabella is wrong. But I am sure she cannot mean to torment, for she is very much attached to my brother. She has been in love with him ever since they first met, and while my father's consent was uncertain, she fretted herself almost into a fever. You know she must be attached to him.'
'I understand: she is in love with James, and flirts with Frederick.'
'Oh! no, not flirts. A woman in love with one man cannot flirt with another.'
'It is probable that she will neither love so well, nor flirt so well, as she might do either singly. The gentlemen must each give up a little.'
After a short pause, Catherine resumed with, 'Then you do not believe Isabella so very much attached to my brother?'
'I can have no opinion on that subject.'
'But what can your brother mean? If he knows her engagement, what can he mean by his behaviour?'
'You are a very close questioner.' p. 145

"She looked round the room. The window curtains seemed in motion. It could be nothing but the violence of the wind penetrating through the divisions of the shutters; and she stepped boldly forward, carelessly humming a tune, to assure herself of its being so, peeped courageously behind each curtain, saw nothing on either low window seat to scare her, and on placing a hand against the shutter, felt the strongest conviction of the wind's force. A glance at the old chest, as she turned away from this examination, was not without its use; she scorned the causeless fears of an idle fancy, and began with a most happy indifference to prepare herself for bed. 'She should take her time; she should not hurry herself; she did not care if she were the last person up in the house. But she would not make up her fire; that would seem cowardly, as if she wished for the protection of light after she were in bed.' The fire therefore died away, and Catherine, having spent the best part of an hour in her arrangements, was beginning to think of stepping into bed, when, on giving a parting glance round the room, she was struck by the appearance of a high, old-fashioned black cabinet, which, though in a situation conspicuous enough, had never caught her notice before. Henry's words, his description of the ebony cabinet which was to escape her observation at first, immediately rushed across her; and though there could be nothing really in it, there was something whimsical, it was certainly a very remarkable coincidence! She took her candle and looked closely at the cabinet. It was not absolutely ebony and gold; but it was japan, black and yellow japan of the handsomest kind; and as she held her candle, the yellow had very much the effect of gold. The key was in the door, and she had a strange fancy to look into it; not, however, with the smallest expectation of finding anything, but it was so very odd, after what Henry had said. In short, she could not sleep till she had examined it. So, placing the candle with great caution on a chair, she seized the key with a very tremulous hand and tried to turn it; but it resisted her utmost strength. Alarmed, but not discouraged, she tried it another way; a bolt flew, and she believed herself successful; but how strangely mysterious! The door was still immovable. She paused a moment in breathless wonder. The wind roared down the chimney, the rain beat in torrents against the windows, and everything seemed to speak the awfulness of her situation. To retire to bed, however, unsatisfied on such a point, would be vain, since sleep must be impossible with the consciousness of a cabinet so mysteriously closed in her immediate vicinity. Again, therefore, she applied herself to the key, and after moving it in every possible way for some instants with the determined celerity of hope's last effort, the door suddenly yielded to her hand: her heart leaped with exultation at such a victory, and having thrown open each folding door, the second being secured only by bolts of less wonderful construction than the lock, though in that her eye could not discern anything unusual, a double range of small drawers appeared in view, with some larger drawers above and below them; and in the centre, a small door, closed also with a lock and key, secured in all probability a cavity of importance." pp. 160-162

"The side of the quadrangle, in which she supposed the guilty scene to be acting, being, according to her belief, just opposite her own, it struck her that, if judiciously watched, some rays of light from the general's lamp might glimmer through the lower windows, as he passed to the prison of his wife; and, twice before she stepped into bed, she stole gently from her room to the corresponding window in the gallery, to see if it appeared;

but all abroad was dark, and it must yet be too early. The various ascending noises convinced her that the servants must still be up. Till midnight, she supposed it would be in vain to watch; but then, when the clock had struck twelve, and all was quiet, she would, if not quite appalled by darkness, steal out and look once more. The clock struck twelve — and Catherine had been half an hour asleep." p. 180

"From Saturday to Wednesday, however, they were now to be without Henry. This was the sad finale of every reflection: and Captain Tilney's letter would certainly come in his absence; and Wednesday she was very sure would be wet. The past, present, and future were all equally in gloom. Her brother so unhappy, and her loss in Isabella so great; and Eleanor's spirits always affected by Henry's absence! What was there to interest or amuse her? She was tired of the woods and the shrubberies — always so smooth and so dry; and the abbey in itself was no more to her now than any other house. The painful remembrance of the folly it had helped to nourish and perfect was the only emotion which could spring from a consideration of the building. What a revolution in her ideas! She, who had so longed to be in an abbey! Now, there was nothing so charming to her imagination as the unpretending comfort of a well-connected parsonage, something like Fullerton, but better: Fullerton had its faults, but Woodston probably had none. If Wednesday should ever come!
"It did come, and exactly when it might be reasonably looked for. It came — it was fine — and Catherine trod on air. By ten o'clock, the chaise and four conveyed the two from the abbey; and, after an agreeable drive of almost twenty miles, they entered Woodston, a large and populous village, in a situation not unpleasant. Catherine was ashamed to say how pretty she thought it, as the general seemed to think an apology necessary for the flatness of the country, and the size of the village; but in her heart she preferred it to any place she had ever been at, and looked with great admiration at every neat house above the rank of a cottage, and at all the little chandler's shops which they passed. At the further end of the village, and tolerably disengaged from the rest of it, stood the parsonage, a new-built substantial stone house, with its semicircular sweep and green gates; and, as they drove up to the door, Henry, with the friends of his solitude, a large Newfoundland puppy and two or three terriers, was ready to receive and make much of them." pp. 200-201

"A heroine returning, at the close of her career, to her native village, in all the triumph of recovered reputation, and all the dignity of a countess, with a long train of noble relations in their several phaetons, and three waiting-maids in a travelling chaise and four, behind her, is an event on which the pen of the contriver may well delight to dwell; it gives credit to every conclusion, and the author must share in the glory she so liberally bestows. But my affair is widely different; I bring back my heroine to her home in solitude and disgrace; and no sweet elation of spirits can lead me into minuteness. A heroine in a hack post-chaise is such a blow upon sentiment, as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand. Swiftly therefore shall her post-boy drive through the village, amid the gaze of Sunday groups, and speedy shall be her descent from it." pp. 219-220

"On the strength of this, the general, soon after Eleanor's marriage, permitted his son to return to Northanger, and thence made him the bearer of his consent, very courteously worded in a page full of empty professions to Mr. Morland. The event which it authorized soon followed: Henry and Catherine were married, the bells rang, and everybody smiled; and, as this took place within a twelvemonth from the first day of their meeting, it will not appear, after all the dreadful delays occasioned by the general's cruelty, that they were essentially hurt by it. To begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen is to do pretty well; and professing myself moreover convinced that the general's unjust interference, so far from being really injurious to their felicity, was perhaps rather conducive to it, by improving their knowledge of each other, and adding strength to their attachment, I leave it to be settled, by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience." p. 237

"Miss Tilney, at Catherine's invitation, now read the letter likewise, and, having expressed also her concern and surprise, began to inquire into Miss Thorpe's connections and fortune.
'Her mother is a very good sort of woman,' was Catherine's answer.
'What was her father?'
'A lawyer, I believe. They live at Putney.'
'Are they a wealthy family?'
'No, not very. I do not believe Isabella has any fortune at all: but that will not signify in your family. Your father is so very liberal! He told me the other day that he only valued money as it allowed him to promote the happiness of his children.' The brother and sister looked at each other. 'But,' said Eleanor, after a short pause, 'would it be to promote his happiness, to enable him to marry such a girl? She must be an unprincipled one, or she could not have used your brother so. And how strange an infatuation on Frederick's side! A girl who, before his eyes, is violating an engagement voluntarily entered into with another man! Is not it inconceivable, Henry? Frederick too, who always wore his heart so proudly! Who found no woman good enough to be loved!'" p. 195

Topics for Discussion

Northanger Abbey is Austen's first-written novel. Before final publication, it underwent several major revisions. What aspects of the novel do you imagine Austen would have altered given the fact that she had become a significant literary figure between the original writing and the original publication?

Catherine Morland is presented as a naïve girl of seventeen. Is her character believable? What aspects of her behavior are particularly convincing? Do you find her typical lack of insight into others' motivation to be humorous or frustrating? If the novel did not state her age as seventeen, what age would you guess her to be?

Isabella Thorpe first befriends Catherine and expands Catherine's social sphere. Later, Isabella ignores Catherine and, finally, attempts to manipulate her for her own reasons. Henry remarks at one point that Catherine should be glad to be rid of such a friend as Isabella. Do you agree with Henry? Why or why not?

Catherine reads The Mysteries of Udolpho by Ann Radcliffe. The narrative satirizes Clermont by Regina Maria Roche. Isabella recommends The Italian by Ann Radcliffe as well as Castle of Wolfenbach, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. Would it surprise you to know that all of these titles were actually published novels? Would you like to read any of these so-called "Northanger horrid novels"? Why or why not?

In the opening chapters of the novel John Thorpe pursues Catherine rather indifferently, attempting—apparently—to impress her with bluster and loud-talking. What aspects of Catherine do you think John finds attractive? Later, John comes to believe Catherine has accepted a marriage proposal while in fact she has done no such thing. Who is to blame for this misunderstanding? John, Catherine, or both? Discuss.

James Morland becomes engaged to Isabella but is subsequently spurned for a richer man. Catherine is heartbroken at James's misfortune, but in responding to this situation, Henry muses that James is lucky. Why do you think Henry feels this way? Do you think that James was lucky or unlucky in love?

While driving Catherine to Northanger Abbey, Henry spins a yarn about romantic Gothic events which putatively commonly transpire at the place—until he can't keep from laughing aloud at the ridiculous stories. Review Henry's mini-narrative and determine which events in the narrative relate to each major event in Henry's tall tale. Does it surprise you to discover that Henry's joking actually describes the salient details of Catherine's visit to Northanger Abbey?

During the first days at Northanger Abbey, Catherine confuses her Gothic novels with reality and begins to imagine General Tilney guilty of perverse and monstrous crimes. Have you ever confabulated fantasy with reality in such a way as to miss the entire

thrust of a given situation? Discuss Catherine's reaction when her theories are discarded by Henry.

Why does General Tilney invite Catherine to Northanger Abbey? Why is he so solicitous of her comfort while she is a guest in his home? Why does he then eject her in a most shameful fashion? Discuss how John's blustering lies about Catherine influence her life.

The most "romantically Gothic" moment in the novel arguably concerns the roll of washing-bills that Catherine finds in an unlocked—but oh, so mysterious!—cabinet in her room. Who put the washing-bills there? Does this humorous coincidence fit the tone of the remainder of the novel? Discuss.