



Northanger Abbey

Jane Austen

Context

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, in the village of Steventon in Hampshire. She was the seventh of eight children, and was educated mostly at home. As a young woman, Austen enjoyed dancing, reading, and walks around the Hampshire countryside—all of which activities appear in many of her novels. She had many friends in Hampshire and was upset when her parents announced their intention to move to Bath in 1801. Austen never warmed to the town. In 1805 Austen's father died, leaving his wife and two daughters to depend on the Austen sons for financial support.

After her father's death, Austen, her mother, and her sister spent several years in dire financial straits. In 1809, Austen's brother Edward gave his mother and sisters his old estate in Chawton, Hampshire, where Austen spent the rest of her life. Austen revised three of her novels and wrote three more while at Chawton: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), and *Emma* (1815). In 1816, Austen contracted Addison's Disease, a tubercular disease of the kidneys. She died on July 18,

1817. Two of her novels were published after her death: *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (both 1817).

Austen was one of the earliest British female novelists, and became the most well-known in her time. Her novels were (and are) popular for their satirical portrayal of upper class England. Austen's chief weapon was her ironic wit, which she honed to a razor-sharp edge as her career progressed. Her books were published anonymously, since at the time she wrote, women who became public figures often lost respectability. Austen wrote during a time of political turmoil. In the early 1800s, the Napoleonic Wars were making many monarchies nervous, and government censorship of literature sometimes occurred.

Austen's life as a writer often took a backseat to the more practical details of her life, at least until the move to Chawton. As a teenager, Austen had written several small satirical pieces, and in the late 1890s she had started her first novel, originally titled *Susan*, the name of the main character. By the her earliest novel was published in 1817, Austen had published almost all of her other novels. In revising *Susan*, she renamed the protagonist "Catherine," and ultimately changed the title of the novel *Northanger Abbey*.

In her later novels, Austen perfects her distinctive style, satirizing the world of the British upper classes, using ironic humor to expose their follies, and creating enjoyable, ostensibly romantic plots. *Northanger Abbey*, as Austen's earliest novel, is not always as masterfully executed as Austen's later work. Her trademark irony is often relatively obvious, and exaggerated so that it becomes light sarcasm. *Northanger Abbey* also differs from Austen's other novels in its explicit derivation from other works. Book II contains two elaborate parodies of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, a novel by Gothic

writer Anne Radcliffe, who was very popular when Austen wrote her novels. *Northanger Abbey* is generally an ironic parody of both Gothic novels and unsophisticated romances that were popular in this period. It also satirizes the conduct books of the 1700s, books that informed children and young people how to behave in society.

In terms of British literary development, Jane Austen occupies no one position. She does not belong to the Neo-Classical movement, which was the major literary movement of the 1700s. She is too early to be a Romantic, and her plots are too involved with society and human interaction to fit tidily within the Romantic genre. Austen's emphasis on manners and on the positive and negative aspects of rigid British social norms, is similar to the emphasis of the Victorian authors half a century later. Austen's novels, while part of the progressive development of British fiction, cannot be classified as belonging to any particular literary movement.

Plot Overview

Northanger Abbey is the coming-of-age story of a young woman named Catherine Morland. It is divided into two sections, Book I and Book II. The two Books differ significantly from each other in setting and, to a degree, in tone.

Book I begins when the Allens, family friends of the Morlands, offer to take Catherine with them to Bath, a resort for the wealthier members of British society. The 17-year-old Catherine eagerly accepts the Allens' invitation. Catherine is young and naïve. Her life has been relatively sheltered, so Bath is a new world for her. In Bath, Catherine is introduced to Henry Tilney, a young clergyman who impresses Catherine with his wit and pleasant conversation. Catherine quickly falls for Henry, but after their first meeting she

does not see him again for some time. Mrs. Allen runs into an old acquaintance, Mrs. Thorpe, and her three young daughters, including Isabella, who is slightly older than Catherine. Catherine and Isabella are soon best friends. Isabella, superficial and fond of gossip, inducts Catherine into the social world of Bath, with all its balls, dances, shows, fashion, and its gossip.

Just when Catherine and Isabella have settled into a close friendship, they are met with the arrival of James Morland, Catherine's brother, and John Thorpe, Isabella's brother. James and John are friends at Oxford University. Isabella wastes no time in flirting with James, and soon it is obvious to everyone except Catherine that James and Isabella are in love. Taking a cue from James, John tries to woo Catherine, asking her to be his dance partner. But at a ball, Catherine sees Henry Tilney again and is more interested in Henry than in John. John's bragging and his arrogant nature put off Catherine.

Soon all of Isabella's time is taken up with James. Without Isabella to spend her time with and saddled with the unpleasant John Thorpe, Catherine decides to become friends with Eleanor Tilney, Henry's sister. Eleanor quickly sees that Catherine has feelings for Henry, but does not say anything. After rain seems to wash out her plans for a walk with Henry and Eleanor, Catherine is pressured by James and Isabella into riding with John, much to her dismay. On the way, she spots Henry and Eleanor walking toward her house for the planned walk. John refuses to stop, angering Catherine.

Catherine apologizes to Eleanor and Henry, and plans are made for another walk. John, Isabella, and James again intervene, pressuring Catherine into another outing. Catherine firmly refuses this time and joins Eleanor and Henry in a walk around Beechen Cliff. They discuss novels, and Catherine is delighted to find that Henry and

Eleanor love books as much as she does. Catherine returns home to discover that James and Isabella have become engaged. She briefly meets with John, who is leaving Bath for several weeks. John leaves with the false impression that Catherine is in love with him, although Catherine does not realize this.

Book II begins with the arrival of Henry's older brother, Captain Frederick Tilney. Isabella quickly catches the eye of the captain and, dismayed by the discovery of James's modest income, begins to flirt with Frederick. Eleanor invites Catherine to visit the Tilney home in Northanger Abbey. The invitation is seconded by Eleanor's father, General Tilney. Catherine eagerly accepts the invitation, delighted at the prospect of visiting a real abbey and at seeing more of Henry. Before Catherine leaves, Isabella tells her that John is planning to propose to Catherine. Catherine tells Isabella to write him and tell him, with her apologies, that he is mistaken. Frederick appears and flirts with Isabella, who returns his attentions. Dismayed by this behavior, Catherine asks Henry to convince Frederick to leave Isabella alone. Henry refuses, knowing that Isabella is at least as guilty as the captain, but he tells Catherine that Frederick will probably leave Bath with his regiment soon anyway.

Catherine leaves with the Tilneys for Northanger Abbey. On the way, Catherine tells Henry how she imagines the Abbey to resemble the haunted ruins of the Gothic novels she loves. Henry, amused, responds by giving a hypothetical account of her first night at the Abbey, complete with mysterious chests, violent storms, and secret passages. Northanger Abbey turns out to be quite dull, having been fixed up by General Tilney. Due to her overactive imagination, Catherine entertains all sorts of frightening ideas about the place, each of which is thwarted. For instance, a strange bureau in Catherine's room turns out to contain nothing more mysterious than

receipts. Catherine becomes intrigued by the death of Eleanor and Henry's mother years earlier. Her mind full of Gothic plots, Catherine suspects that General Tilney of murdering his wife. Catherine sneaks into the mother's old chamber and discovers nothing. She is caught by Henry, who guesses her thoughts and scolds her. Mortified and ashamed, Catherine quickly resumes her good behavior.

Catherine receives a letter from her brother telling her that his engagement to Isabella has been called off. Catherine thinks that Frederick forced himself between them, but Henry convinces her that it was as much Isabella's fault as Frederick's. Catherine visits Henry's house at Woodston. The General drops hints about Catherine marrying Henry. Catherine gets another letter, this time from Isabella, telling her that Frederick has left her, and asking Catherine to apologize to James for her. Angry at being manipulated, Catherine wishes she had never known Isabella. The General leaves on a business trip, and Henry goes back to Woodston for several days. The General then returns unexpectedly and tells Eleanor to send Catherine away the next morning. Though she is very embarrassed, Eleanor has no choice but to send Catherine to her home in Fullerton.

Catherine's family is irritated by the General's rudeness, but is glad to have her home. Catherine mopes around, despondent, until suddenly Henry arrives in Fullerton and proposes to her. Henry explains that his father's behavior was due to John Thorpe. In Bath, when John thought Catherine loved him, he had told General Tilney that Catherine was from a very wealthy family. When the General ran into John much later, after Isabella had told John about Catherine's true feelings, John had angrily told the General that the Morlands were almost poor. Mortified, the General had sent

Catherine away, furious that his hopes for John to make a wealthy match were to be frustrated. Henry and Catherine decide to wait until the General gives his consent to their marriage. Within a few months, Eleanor marries a very wealthy and important man, which puts the General in a good mood. Once he is told of the true nature of the Morland's financial situation, which is moderate, he gives his consent, and the novel ends with the marriage of Henry and Catherine.

Character List

Catherine Morland - The protagonist of *Northanger Abbey*. Catherine is seventeen years old, and has spent all her life in her family's modest home in the rural area of Fullerton. While Catherine has read many novels (particularly Gothic novels), she is very inexperienced at reading people. Her naiveté about the world and about the motivations and character of the people she meets is an endless source of confusion and frustration for her. Nonetheless, Catherine is very intelligent and learns from her mistakes, and can also be witty. Her strongest attributes are her integrity and caring nature.

Henry Tilney - Henry Tilney is a 26-year-old parson in a small village called Woodston. He is intelligent, well-tempered, and attuned to the motivations and behavior of those around him. He is very well read, and enjoys novels as much as history books. He is good natured, but has a wry cynical view of human behavior. He is often amused at the folly of others, but he takes care to gently instruct them properly, if possible, particularly in the case of the naïve Catherine.

Eleanor Tilney - Henry's younger sister, Eleanor is a shy, quiet young woman. She shares an interest in reading with her brother, but for the most part, her reserve prevents her from having many friends. Like her

brothers, Eleanor is often subject to the somewhat tyrannical behavior of her father, General Tilney.

General Tilney - The domineering father of Henry, Eleanor and Captain Tilney. He is a widower. Like several characters in the novel (such as Mrs. Allen), the General is very concerned with material things. He takes great pride in his home, Northanger Abbey, which he has refurbished himself. He is preoccupied with both earning money and spending it. He enjoys eating a large dinner and having the best of everything, and he wants his children to marry wealthy people. He has a gruff nature which make some, such as Catherine Morland, think poorly of him.

Isabella Thorpe - One Mrs. Thorpe's three daughters, and the sister of John Thorpe. She is Catherine's best friend for the first half of the novel. Isabella is attractive and very spirited, but like her mother, she is a gossip and often concerned with superficial things. She enjoys flirting with many young men, which bothers the more reserved Catherine. Ultimately, Isabella's nature causes her to lose both James and her other boyfriend, Frederick Tilney.

John Thorpe - The brother of Isabella, he is conceited, arrogant, and given to boasting and exaggeration. He talks endlessly and rarely listens. Like his sister, John is given to superficiality. John tries to woo Catherine, but his arrogance quickly turns her against him.

James Morland - The brother of Catherine and a fellow student of John Thorpe at Oxford University. James is mild-mannered and very caring, like his sister. James falls for Isabella Thorpe and becomes engaged to her, but breaks off the engagement when she begins a flirtation with Frederick Tilney.

Frederick Tilney - Captain Frederick Tilney (often referred to simply as "Captain Tilney") is the oldest sibling in the Tilney family. Unlike his brother Henry or his sister Eleanor, Frederick is a flirt and given to mischief. Austen suggests that Frederick is the Tilney child closest in character to General Tilney by identifying both men by their ranks rather than by their names. Frederick flirts with Isabella Thorpe and leads her to break off her engagement with James Morland, then abandons her in Bath.

Mr. and Mrs. Allen - The couple that invites Catherine to go to Bath with them. Like Catherine's family, the Allens live in the rural town of Fullerton. They are older and wealthier than the Morlands, but they are childless, and they see Catherine as a kind of surrogate daughter. Mr. Allen is a practical man who spends most of his time in Bath playing cards; Mrs. Allen is greatly concerned with fashion, and spends her time either shopping, knitting, or talking to Mrs. Thorpe.

Mrs. Thorpe - Mrs. Thorpe is the widowed mother of Isabella and of two other daughters. Like her daughter, she is concerned primarily with gossip, fashion, and money. In conversation with her friend Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Thorpe talks mostly about her pride in her children (Mrs. Allen has no children) while Mrs. Allen talks about her gowns (Mrs. Thorpe is not nearly as wealthy as the Allens).

Mr. and Mrs. Morland and family - The family, which includes Catherine and James, is from the rural town of Fullerton. We visit the Morlands only briefly, at the beginning and end of the novel. Mr. and Mrs. Morland are relatively simple, practical folk, especially compared to people like Mrs. Thorpe and General Tilney. Both James and Catherine must get the

approval of their parents before they can marry their prospective spouses.

Analysis of Major Characters

Catherine Morland

Northanger Abbey was the first novel Jane Austen wrote. It is also the novel most closely related to the novels that influenced her reading, and parodies some of those novels, particularly Anne Radcliffe's Gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In creating Catherine, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, Austen creates the heroine of a Gothic novel. Both Austen and Catherine portray Catherine's life in heroic terms—Austen humorously, and Catherine seriously, especially when she suspects General Tilney of murdering his wife. Because Austen couches her portrayal of Catherine in irony, Catherine is realistically portrayed as deficient in experience and perception, unlike the heroines of Gothic and romance novels. Catherine fails to recognize the obvious developing relationship between her brother James and her friend Isabella; she fails to recognize Isabella's true nature until long after it has hurt her brother; she accidentally leads John Thorpe into thinking she loves him; and most significantly, she embarrasses herself in front of Henry Tilney when he finds out she suspects his father of murder. While Catherine is an avid reader of novels, she is inexperienced at reading people, and this is what causes many of the problems she encounters. By the end of the novel, she has become a much better judge of character, having learned from her mistakes with Isabella and General Tilney. She is also, perhaps, a bit more cynical about

people, as Henry is. Ultimately, it is her integrity and caring nature that win Henry's heart and bring her happiness.

Henry Tilney

Critics argue over Henry's role in the novel. Some critics criticize Henry for patronizing Catherine, for telling her how to see the world and mocking her naiveté. This criticism is partially accurate. Henry is often amused by Catherine's naïve nature, and playfully guides her to a better understanding, as can be seen during their walk around Beechen Cliff and on the ride to Northanger Abbey. But his behavior, especially when compared to that of the boorish John Thorpe, is always gentle and caring. He adores his sister, Eleanor, and loves his father, although he often disagrees with him. Though less than ten years older than Catherine, Henry is far more perceptive than she. He is probably the most perceptive figure in the novel. Henry has read hundreds of books and, as a clergyman, hundreds of people, and this has given him an understanding of human interaction far superior to that of his friends and relatives.

General Tilney

General Tilney comes the closest of any character to being an antagonist in *Northanger Abbey*, though that term is too strong to describe his role. When Catherine suspects Tilney of murdering his wife, she perceives him as a villain. In fact, the General's true crimes consist of being too concerned with wealth and finery, and perhaps of robbing Catherine of her imaginative vision of a real Gothic abbey. Tilney is not a storybook villain, or even a villain from a Gothic novel. He is realistic man, a wealth-obsessed real estate developer who gets in the way of his children's happiness. Like John

Thorpe, he is given to boasting and preoccupied with himself when he is not meddling in his children's lives.

Isabella Thorpe

Although Isabella cannot be called a villain, she causes many problems over the course of the novel. Isabella manages to weasel a marriage proposal out of James, but when she discovers that he is not as rich as she assumed, she begins flirting with Frederick Tilney. Isabella can be seen as a gold-digger interested only in money, as an attractive girl who cannot refuse the attention of a young man, particularly a wealthy or well-known one, or as someone who simply can't figure out what she wants. But most modern interpretations of Isabella analyze her as one of Austen's ironic caricatures, an exaggeration of the emphasis on wealth and position that often preoccupied high society.

Themes

Gothic novels

Most literary critics refer to *Northanger Abbey* as Jane Austen's "Gothic parody" because it satirizes the form and conventions of the Gothic novels that were popular during the time when Austen wrote *Northanger Abbey*. In particular, Austen is said to have targeted Anne Radcliffe, the author of gothic novels such as *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Catherine reads *Udolpho* during her time at Bath, and it is implied that she has read similar novels before, and Isabella has a library of other Gothic novels that the women plan to read once Catherine has finished *Udolpho*.

Gothic novels and their conventions occur throughout the novel. On the ride from Bath to Northanger Abbey, Henry invents a humorous hypothetical story about Catherine's first night in Bath, making subtle references to several different Gothic novels, most of which were well-known at the time (consult an annotated edition of *Northanger Abbey* for a list of the references and the works they come from).

Aside from Henry's parody of gothic novels on the way to Northanger Abbey, two other sequences poke fun at the genre. In one, Catherine unlocks the mysterious cabinet, expecting it to contain something horrible, and finds only laundry bills. In another, Catherine imagines that the General is a wife-murderer and goes to investigate the late Mrs. Tilney's bedroom. When Henry catches her at this task and scolds her, it is not amusing, as is Catherine's discovery of the laundry bills. We feel sympathy for Catherine, who is terribly embarrassed in front of Henry. In the scenes leading up to the confrontation with Henry, it is almost disturbing to read of Catherine's paranoid assumptions that everything the General does stems from a guilty conscience. Catherine becomes almost unhinged by her own imagination. Although the actual crime turns out to be nonexistent, Austen captures some of the psychological tension typical of Gothic novels by chronicling Catherine's delusions. So although she parodies the gothic genre, Austen also makes use of some of its techniques. Some of the novel has nothing to do with Gothic novels and conventions. The first half of *Northanger Abbey* takes place entirely at the resort town of Bath, and has nothing to do with Gothic novels. This first half resembles *Emma* or *Mansfield Park* more than it does *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

Youth

Northanger Abbey is concerned with young people and their feelings. Heroines in other Austen novels—Elizabeth Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* and Emma Woodhouse in *Emma*, for example—are a little older than Catherine, and are not as naïveté as she. *Northanger Abbey* portrays Catherine in situations common to teenagers: she faces peer pressure when James, Isabella and John urge her to join them on their carriage trips, for example, and must contend with the bullying John Thorpe. Austen plays the youthful Catherine against the older, more experienced Henry Tilney. There are several instances in which the adults comment on the young people, either chuckling at their behavior or criticizing it. Many readers can sympathize with Catherine once she returns home and immediately becomes sulky and obstinate with her parents—particularly her mother, who starts gently nagging her daughter right away.

Motifs

Reading

There are two kinds of reading in *Northanger Abbey*: reading books and letters, and reading people. Catherine Morland is young and naïve, and she has a hard time distinguishing between the two types of reading. Before Catherine can really enter the world of adulthood, she needs to improve her ability to read people as well as novels. Throughout *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine finds herself unable to "read between the lines." She does not notice the obvious romance developing between James and Isabella, she does not understand why Frederick Tilney gets involved, she has no idea why the General is so kind to her. All of these behaviors and motivations are

clear to the reader and to the characters surrounding Catherine. When Catherine finally tries to do some of her own analysis, she gets her perceptions mixed up with those encouraged by her novel-reading: she recognizes General Tilney's grumpiness and the tyrannical control he tries to exert over his children, but she attributes his attitude to the grisly murder of his wife, since such a plot twist occurs frequently in Gothic novels.

One defining moment for Catherine comes as a result of reading text. She receives a letter from Isabella, and its contents open Catherine's eyes to Isabella's manipulative, ambitious ways. It would be going a bit too far to say that Catherine is an expert at reading people by the end of the novel, but she does become better at it, and she has learned when imagination can aid perception, and when it can hurt it.

Wealth and ostentation

In Austen's novels, characters are often partly defined by their wealth and status. In *Northanger Abbey*, several characters are preoccupied with material longings. Isabella wants to marry someone rich, and forsakes James in favor of the richer Frederick. Mrs. Allen is obsessed with clothing and shopping, and when talking to Mrs. Thorpe, she feels less bad about her own childlessness when she notices the shabbiness of Mrs. Thorpe's clothes. The General wants his children to marry into rich and wealthy families, and his personal obsession is with remodeling and landscaping. While giving a guided tour of Northanger Abbey, the General constantly asks Catherine to compare his home and gardens to those of Mr. Allen, and is always pleased to find that his belongings are larger or more impressive. In her later novels, Austen linked character's personalities with the particular items they loved.

In this early novel, she makes wealth itself the goal and passion of characters like Isabella and General Tilney.

Symbols

Northanger Abbey

Austen draws her portrait of Bath society from her own experience. Northanger Abbey, however, is probably as much a product of the Gothic novels that Austen read as it is a product of her own experience. A crumbling old building is often found in Gothic works, some of which feature an abbey, once used to house nuns or monks, then sold or abandoned and later purchased by some lord or baron who is generally a villain. The holy nature of the abbey becomes ironic in these Gothic novels, since terrible things go on there once the lord or baron takes possession.

For Catherine, Northanger Abbey symbolizes an imagined ideal. As soon as she enters the abbey, she begins to think of herself as the heroine of a Gothic novel. Unlike Bath, which is simply a pleasant tourist town, the Abbey is a place of mystery and perhaps even adventure, at least in Catherine's mind. When the Abbey turns out to be disappointingly normal, Catherine uses her memory of the abbeys from her novel-reading to make it more frightening.

Biographical Notice and Advertisement

Summary

Northanger Abbey begins with a "biographical notice" of Jane Austen's life written by Henry Austen, one of Jane's older brothers, after Jane Austen's death. The notice gives some details of her life

and describes her character. It also quotes from several of Austen's letters. It paints a picture of an elegant, mature, and happy woman.

The advertisement, written by Austen herself before her death, tells the reader that the novel was originally written in 1803, and asks them to remember that the book is more than thirteen years old and "places, manners, books, and opinions have undergone considerable changes" since that time.

Analysis

Henry Austen's biographical notice of Jane is similar to a eulogy. The notice gives Austen's true name, rather than maintaining her anonymity. Her true name was used after her death. The notice gives information about Austen's life and character and also describes some of the hardships she went through, particularly in the sale and publication of her novels. The biographical notice has little to do with the actual novels it prefaces, but it sets up an image of the author that can only play on the reader's sympathies. It is interesting that this notice (which was used to preface a four-volume set of both *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*) was written by Henry, the namesake of the character Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*. Henry was one of Austen's favorite brothers.

It seems likely that Austen wrote the advertisement because she was concerned that, in the thirteen years that had passed since she had completed *Northanger Abbey*, many of the "places, manners, books, and opinions" had changed, making her book dated. Since Austen's books were generally published shortly after she finished them, they had always seemed timely and up-to-date to her readers—the fashions and the topics of conversation were all things her readers would have seen and talked about recently. But since *Northanger*

Abbey was older, Austen felt her readers should be warned, lest they think she wrote an outdated book.

Volume I, Chapters I & II

Summary

Chapter I

The first chapter introduces the reader to the protagonist of the novel, Catherine Morland. Seventeen years old, Catherine has grown up in a family of modest wealth in the rural town Fullerton in Hampshire, England. As a young girl, we are told, Catherine had many interests, including piano-playing and drawing, but she was never interested enough to be accomplished at anything. She was a cheerful child with a good temper. But she was also something of a tomboy: "she was...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." As she became a teenager, says the narrator, Catherine began to grow more beautiful, and eventually she turned from her athletic pursuits, such as cricket and horseback riding, to reading books. Catherine became a voracious reader. She has never had a love interest. At the end of the chapter, the Allens, a wealthy, childless couple who are friends of the Morlands, offer to take Catherine with them on a trip to the resort town of Bath. With her parents' permission, Catherine accepts.

Chapter II

The chapter begins with the narrator's expansion on Catherine's character: "her heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without conceit or affectation of any kind...her person

pleasing, and, when in looks, pretty - and her mind about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is."

Catherine prepares for her departure to Bath. Catherine's mother, defying convention, is not overly worried about her daughter's impending departure. Catherine's father gives Catherine a modest sum of money to take with her. As the party departs, the narrator describes Mrs. Allen, saying she has "neither beauty, genius, accomplishment, nor manner," but a quiet, good-tempered nature that helped her attract a "sensible, intelligent man" like Mr. Allen.

Once the three arrive in Bath, they attend a ball. Catherine remains close to Mrs. Allen, who constantly laments the lack of an acquaintance in Bath. Mrs. Allen takes pains to protect her gown, while Catherine hopes in vain to be asked to dance. Mr. Allen spends most of his time in the card-room. The ball ends without Catherine having been asked to dance, but she is pleased to hear two men say she is pretty before she leaves.

Analysis

The novel's first sentence is significant: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine." It sets up two ideas: first, that Catherine Morland is, or is going to be, a heroine; second, that she is an unlikely one. The first chapter focuses on the Catherine's practicality, her intelligent but not brilliant mind, and her lack of experience in the world. Austen introduces Catherine as a realistic character, while contrasting that realism to her role as the heroine of a novel.

Catherine does not have the childhood of a refined, elegant woman. Instead, she is a tomboy until the age of fifteen. Catherine's

childhood is marked by energy, vitality, and good temper. Eventually, she comes to love reading. Like Austen, Catherine is a young woman fascinated by books, particularly novels. The theme of reading, and novels in general, is very important throughout *Northanger Abbey*. Catherine is a voracious reader, particularly of Gothic novels, and at times this colors her perception of the world. She has an overactive imagination that interferes with all her attempts to read people.

Chapter II introduces the satirical irony that the narrator will often employ. In describing the state of Catherine's mother prior to her daughter's departure, the narrator says, "when the hour of departure drew near, the maternal anxiety of Mrs. Morland will naturally be supposed to be most severe...cautions against the violence of such noblemen and baronets as delight in forcing young ladies away to some remote farm-house must, at such a moment, relieve the fulness of her heart." With her sarcasm, the narrator suggests that Mrs. Morland defies expectations by not minding that her daughter is leaving. These sentences also play on the conventional plots of Gothic novels, as well mainstream works such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, in which a young lady's virtue is tested by a lecherous nobleman. Austen creates a comic effect by contrasting her imagined reader's expectations with the pedestrian truth of the matter: Mrs. Morland, a relatively simple and practical woman, has no inclination to deluge her daughter with cautionary advice. Thus, there is no dark presentiment of danger, as there might be in a standard Gothic novel's plot.

The rest of the chapter introduces Mrs. Allen and gives the reader Catherine's first impressions of Bath. Mrs. Allen is greatly concerned with fashion, with gowns and dresses and what others are wearing in comparison to her own clothes. She is a passive

character, making little or no effort to meet new people, but simply (and repeatedly) lamenting her lack of friends in Bath. Aside from a light conversation with a nameless gentleman, the women are left with no one to talk to until Mr. Allen returns from the card-room. The chapter ends happily when Catherine hears two young men admiring her. The narrator again draws our attention to the difference between sweet, innocent Catherine and the heroines of novels, saying "[Catherine] felt more obliged to the two young men for this simple praise than a true quality heroine would have been for fifteen sonnets in celebration of her charms."

Volume I, Chapters III & IV

Summary

Chapter III

Catherine and Mrs. Allen attend the Lower Rooms, a gathering place for socialites. Since Catherine has no dance partner, the master of ceremonies introduces her to a young man named Henry Tilney, whose charm and good looks impress Catherine. They dance and then talk. Henry amuses Catherine by affecting a simpering attitude and asking her questions that mock boring small talk: "How long have you been in Bath?" and "Have you been to the concert?" Henry then hypothesizes what Catherine will write about him in her journal. He supposes she would write a very dry critique. She protests, and he invents a more flattering entry. The discussion turns to letter-writing. Henry claims that women are better letter-writers than men, except for three problems: "a general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and a very frequent ignorance of grammar." Henry turns his wit on Mrs. Allen's obsession with clothing, describing how he bought muslin at a good price for his sister Eleanor. Henry and Catherine dance a second time, then part.

Catherine goes to bed thinking of Henry, and the narrator warns us (ironically) that Catherine has committed a grave mistake—she has fallen in love with a man before she knows he is in love with her. Mr. Allen has briefly checked into Henry's background, and found him to be a clergyman of respectable family in Gloucestershire.

Chapter IV

The next day, Catherine searches the social meeting places for Henry, but she does not see him again. A woman, Mrs. Thorpe, recognizes Mrs. Allen, and it turns out they are former schoolmates. Both women are greatly relieved to find an acquaintance in Bath, and they immediately begin talking, each of them impatient to talk, and neither of them eager to listen. Mrs. Thorpe has the advantage of children to talk about, while Mrs. Allen is wealthier than the widowed Mrs. Thorpe. Mrs. Thorpe introduces Mrs. Allen and Catherine to her three daughters. The eldest daughter, Isabella, quickly takes to Catherine, and within a few hours they are best friends. Isabella tells Catherine about Bath society, discussing fashion, flirtations, and the attractiveness of young men and women. By the time she escorts Catherine home, Isabella has won her admiration. The chapter ends with the narrator telling us that Mrs. Thorpe was a widow of only very modest wealth. It ends with a satirical admission that the narrator's account of the Thorpe family history is quite a bit shorter than the way Mrs. Thorpe would have presented it.

Analysis

The chemistry between Catherine and Henry is immediately evident. Catherine has to resist laughing as Henry makes fun of the conventions of small talk, fixing his face in a "simpering

countenance" and asking banal questions in an affected voice. Henry is playing a game with Catherine, and she easily plays along. Henry flirts with Catherine, outlining a hypothetical journal entry for her. Catherine is charmed by his playfulness, though she is both amused and dismayed by Henry's gentle fun at Mrs. Allen's expense. This chapter sets up the dynamic that will exist between Henry and Catherine for most of the novel. Henry's wit and urbanity puts him one step ahead of Catherine, and he is a much better judge of character than she is.

In this chapter, Austen makes the meeting between her "heroine" and Henry to occur primarily through dialogue. Henry supplies the ironic wit that is usually the province of the narrator. It is only at the end of the chapter, with commentary on how women should wait for men to fall in love with them, that the narration resumes its ironic tone. Austen generally employed three methods of presenting her story: narration, dialogue, and free indirect discourse, which will be discussed in the Analysis for Volume I, Chapter X.

Chapter IV introduces Isabella. Like Henry, Isabella will be a teacher to Catherine, but of a different sort. Isabella instructs Catherine in all the ways of society that Henry gently mocks. She teaches Catherine about fashion, about where to see and be seen, about flirting with men, and about all the other societal conventions Catherine needs to survive in Bath.

Volume I, Chapters V & VI

Summary

Chapter V

Catherine and Isabella spend more time together in Bath. Catherine tells Isabella about Henry Tilney, and Isabella encourages her friend's crush. Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe continue their acquaintance, continually sparring with one another. Mrs. Allen brags about her wealth, and Mrs. Thorpe brags about her children.

In describing the friendship between Catherine and Isabella, the narrator mentions that the women occasionally spend their time reading novels. The narrator then gives a long defense of novel-reading. The narrator suggests that the reader ignore the groans of reviewers and support her heroine in her love of novels. After all, if the heroine of a novel spurns novels (as the heroines of some other British novelists have), who will support them? The narrator claims that novels are works "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 loveliest effusions of wit and humor are conveyed to the world." The chapter ends by criticizing the "yellow press," the sensationalist newspapers that were very popular in this period.

Chapter VI

This chapter consists primarily of a discussion between Catherine and Isabella. The two have arranged to meet one morning, and Catherine arrives late. She has been up all night reading the Gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which Isabella had recommended

to her. Catherine breathlessly tells Isabella how much she enjoys the novel. She is particularly eager to discover what lies behind the black veil in the novel; she is certain it is a skeleton. Isabella lists nearly a dozen other Gothic novels the pair can read once Catherine has finished *Udolpho*. The subject turns to Miss Andrews, a friend of Isabella's. Isabella makes a point of informing Catherine that she considers Miss Andrews to be one of the loveliest girls she has ever met, and often threatens not to dance with young men who say otherwise. The impression left on both Catherine and the reader is that Miss Andrews is probably not a very pretty girl, and that Isabella thinks well of herself for saying otherwise. Isabella tells Catherine she would make the same claim if anyone said anything negative about her, since Isabella believes Catherine to be "just the kind of girl to be a great favorite with the men."

The topic then turns to men, and Isabella hints that she would be attracted to a man of fair complexion and light eyes. Isabella notices two men eyeing the girls, and complains to Catherine about this scandalous behavior. The two men leave, and Isabella proposes they go for a walk. When Catherine points out that this walk would cause them to overtake the two men, Isabella sniffs that she wouldn't give them the satisfaction, and so, the narrator tells us, "to show the independence of Miss Thorpe, and he resolution of humbling [the two men], they set off immediately as fast as they could walk, in pursuit of the two young men."

Analysis

The important passage in Chapter V is the narrator's direct defense of novel-reading. At the time in England when Austen was writing, novels had a negative connotation for many people, particularly people belonging to the higher classes. The horrific events featured

in Gothic novels, and the lurid details of books such as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* caused the novel, as a form, to gain a poor reputation. Novels were considered a diversion for the lower class. By the late 1790s, this opinion was beginning to change, but novelists, especially female novelists, were still scorned. When Austen began *Northanger Abbey*, the most famous woman author was Anne Radcliffe, writer of the Gothic horror novels people so disparaged. Here the narrator issues a call to arms, asking us to ignore the snide opinions of the reviewers, and listing the merits of the novel.

Chapter VI is a character study. It consists almost entirely of dialogue between Catherine and Isabella, and can be read as a companion chapter to Chapter III, which has Henry and Catherine interacting in the same style. In Chapter VI we see the development of the dynamic between Catherine and Isabella that will last for all of Book I. Isabella assumes control of their conversations while appearing subservient to Catherine's opinions. Like her mother, Isabella talks *at* people, not *with* them. This is fine for Mrs. Thorpe when she is talking to Mrs. Allen, who is similarly fond of talking at people, but it is difficult for Catherine to deal with. She often becomes confused by Isabella's talk, which leads to misunderstandings. Catherine cannot see Isabella's fake earnestness for what it is.

Isabella does have kindly feelings for Catherine, and she seems genuinely to regard Catherine as a good friend, perhaps even as her best friend. But Isabella is one of Austen's classic self-absorbed characters, and her friendship with Catherine is calculated to do herself good. The chapter concludes with the comic scene in which Isabella, after protesting outrage at the audacity of the two young men who stare at Catherine and Isabella, insists on setting off in

pursuit of them. Catherine has yet to fully grasp Isabella's habit of saying one thing and doing another, but she is beginning to question Isabella's behavior.

Volume I, Chapters VII & VIII

Summary

Chapter VII

Catherine and Isabella pursue two young men down the street. They are surprised to see their brothers, James Morland and John Thorpe, coming down the street in a carriage. James and John join their sisters. James pays his respects to Isabella. He seems romantically interested in her, which Catherine does not notice. John tries to show off to Catherine by bragging about his horse and carriage, but she is only mildly impressed. John offers to take Catherine for rides in his carriage, an offer she accepts timidly, for she is uncertain whether such a thing is proper. Catherine is dismayed to find that John does not like novels, but she is also slightly ashamed of herself for reading them. John asks Catherine to dance with him at the ball, thus "engaging" Catherine for that night, which greatly pleases her.

James and Catherine then discuss the Thorpes, and James clearly hints at his love for Isabella, but Catherine misses the clues entirely. In fact, Catherine thanks James for coming to Bath to visit *her*. Catherine reads the Gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in the brief time she has before the ball, engrossed to the exclusion of everything around her.

Chapter VIII

Catherine goes to the dance, happy to have a prearranged partner in John Thorpe. She arrives at the ball with John, James, and Isabella. John immediately runs off to the card room. Isabella tries to wait with Catherine until John returns to dance, but James pressures her so much that she eventually gives in, with her apologies to Catherine. Catherine is disappointed and irritated with John Thorpe. She is still waiting for him when Henry Tilney appears, this time with his sister, Eleanor Tilney. Henry asks Catherine to dance, but to her disappointment, she is forced to refuse him because of her prior arrangement with John Thorpe. John returns from the card-room and the two dance, but Catherine is now annoyed with him for being late. During the dance, Catherine is introduced to Eleanor. After the dance John wanders off while Catherine points out Eleanor to Isabella, and tries to find Henry too. Isabella acts interested, but quickly abandons her friend to flirt with James. Catherine cannot help but feel slightly suspicious at her friend's lack of interest in Henry Tilney. James pressures Isabella into a second dance, despite her protests at the "scandal" of it. Alone again, Catherine returns to her seat with Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe. She tries to speak with Henry Tilney, but she never gets the chance to. John tries to flirt with Catherine, but she politely excuses herself.

Analysis

Some critics suggest that Isabella engineered her friendship with Catherine so that she could romance James. She knew the Allens were going to visit Bath with Catherine, and she knew making Catherine's acquaintance would help catch James; perhaps she even arranged for her brother John to bring James with him to Bath. Even if Isabella is not the scheming tactician this interpretation suggests,

there is a distinct sense that something was brewing between her and James before they came to Bath. James does not come to Bath to see Catherine, and seems surprised to see Catherine at all; the narrator hints that James comes to Bath to see Isabella. Catherine, in her innocence, has once again failed to read the people around her. She is unaware of the flirtation between James and Isabella, she does not get James's drift when he tells her how much he thinks of Isabella, and she truly believes that James came to Bath to visit her. Catherine also fails to read John accurately, discounting her initially negative impression of him because he asks her to dance at the ball.

Before the ball, Catherine once again dives into *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Catherine has a great imagination, but she has not yet learned to use it in concert with her perception, especially in understanding the interaction of people. Chapter VIII takes place almost entirely at the ball. The narrator makes few comments. Instead, Austen's uses her distinctive technique of free indirect discourse to reveal Catherine's thoughts. This technique involves staying in third person narration, but using the style and tone that reflect the way a certain character is thinking. The narrator describes Eleanor Tilney, for example, from Catherine's perspective: "Miss Tilney had a good figure, a pretty face, and a very agreeable countenance." The narrator articulates Catherine's thoughts more eloquently than Catherine could, perhaps, but she voices Catherine's perceptions.

Volume I, Chapters IX & X

Summary

Chapter IX

Catherine wakes with the intention of becoming better acquainted with Eleanor Tilney. Before she has the chance, however, John Thorpe arrives at the Allens' with his sister Isabella and Catherine's brother James. The trio pressure Catherine into joining them for a carriage ride—James and Isabella in one carriage, and Catherine and John in the other. During the carriage ride, Catherine attempts to divert John's self-interested monologue, but always fails. She is particularly perplexed by his tendency to exaggerate. One minute he claims that James's carriage is far inferior to John's own and is about to break apart; the next minute, to quiet Catherine's alarm, he claims James's carriage is more than solid enough for the trip. Having been raised by straightforward parents, Catherine is perplexed by John's manipulations, as she is by those of his sister. Still, she decides that despite her brother's approval of John, she does not find John "entirely agreeable."

The group returns to the Allens', and Isabella protests that their trip could not have been three hours long because the time flew by so pleasantly. Catherine speaks to Mrs. Allen and discovers that Henry's father (General Tilney) is in town. Catherine decides that had she known Mrs. Allen was going to run into the Tilneys, she would not have gone on the carriage ride.

Chapter X

Catherine, James, the Allens, and the Thorpes go to the theater. Isabella is her tiresome self, talking Catherine's head off. Isabella chats senselessly about her time with James on the carriage trip. She cannot believe that Catherine is still oblivious to the romance developing between Isabella and James.

The next day, Catherine heads to the Pump-room, a social meeting place, with the intention of finding Eleanor Tilney and becoming better acquainted with her. She spends some time with James and Isabella but gets sick of their whispering, giggling talk (she still hasn't caught on to their flirtation). Catherine finally gets her desired meeting with Eleanor. The two seem to be more similar than Catherine and Isabella are. During the course of the conversation, Catherine praises Henry's dancing skills, asks who he had been dancing with the previous night, and even asks if Eleanor thought Henry's dancing partner was pretty. By the time the two separate, Eleanor is aware that Catherine likes Henry, although Catherine is unaware that she has revealed this.

The following night, Catherine excitedly prepares for the ball, hoping to meet Henry there. She successfully avoids John Thorpe until Henry arrives and asks her to dance. Just as the dance starts, John finds her and acts a bit annoyed. John is not worried when he finds Catherine is dancing with Henry Tilney, for he is sure that Catherine could not like any man but himself. He asks whether Henry might be interested in buying a horse. The dance pulls Catherine away, but Henry meets her once more, indignant at John Thorpe's behavior. He suggests to Catherine that dancing is like a brief marriage, with a set of responsibilities on both sides for the duration of the dance. Catherine does not entirely accept this theory,

but she sees his point. Henry tells her not to be so enchanted with Bath, saying eventually she will tire of it. Before the dance ends, he points out his father, General Tilney. The chapter ends with Henry and Eleanor arranging to meet Catherine for a walk the next day, much to Catherine's delight.

Analysis

In these chapters, Catherine begins to make judgments of character at last, even grasping the odiousness of John. The ride with John is predictable. He blathers about his own business, never asking for any opinions from Catherine, expecting only exclamations of wonder or praise. In his egotism, John is as blind to Catherine's indifference toward him as Catherine is unaware of the imminent engagement of James and Isabella, who are flirting in the carriage behind them. Finally, after a carriage ride which would have driven most to a frenzy of irritation, Catherine decides she does not like John Thorpe much, despite his kinship with Isabella and the praises of James. Catherine is not perceptive about motives, or she would understand that Isabella and James praise John to her because they are hoping that she and John will fall in love.

This recognition of John's unpleasantness marks a new level of independence for Catherine. Unable to rely on the perceptive powers of her friend Isabella, who has become attached at the hip to James, Catherine must perceive things on her own.

There is a good example of free indirect discourse (mentioned in the analysis of the last two chapters) in Chapter IX. After returning from the carriage trip, Isabella discovers that it is already past three in the afternoon. The narrator says, "the astonishment of Isabella was hardly to be expressed... 'Past three o'clock!' it was inconceivable,

incredible, impossible!" This last phrase is not dialogue, and Isabella did not actually utter it, but it mimics the tone that Isabella would have used in referring to the event. This use of free indirect narration is one of Austen's best tools for conveying irony and for satirizing her targets.

Chapter X begins with a reminder that Catherine has hardly perfected her powers of perception, for she has not yet caught on to the romance between James and Isabella. Even Isabella is incredulous at Catherine's naiveté. She probably realizes that Catherine will not help urge James to propose, as Isabella had been hoping. Austen makes Isabella's chatter constant and inane, inviting us to wonder how James can stand it. As Isabella and James whisper away, Catherine decides to make new friends of Eleanor and Henry Tilney. During her conversation with Eleanor, Catherine's inexperience with society is evident when she "artlessly," as Austen writes, comments Henry's skill at dancing. Catherine is artless because she blurts out praise of Henry with no ulterior motive other than to lead Eleanor into a discussion of Henry. Unlike those expert in the rules of social intercourse, Catherine does not realize that her attempts to secretly find out about Henry are transparent to Eleanor, who instantly understands Catherine's romantic interest in him. Naïve Catherine has no idea she has revealed her crush. Eleanor is as perceptive as Henry, with the mild earnestness of Catherine and the social savvy of Isabella, and she instantly understands Catherine.

The conversation between Henry and Catherine as they dance is one of the key exchanges in the novel. It is the first real conversation between the two, and the first time Henry treats Catherine not as a fresh acquaintance, but as a friend. It is possible to argue that in this scene, Henry begins to think of Catherine as a potential wife. He tests her by suggesting that dancing is like a marriage: in both cases,

men have the power of choice, women only the power of refusal; it is an engagement between a man and a woman, to the advantage of both; and "once entered into, they belong exclusively to each other until the moment of...dissolution."

Catherine protests at this interpretation of dancing, but gives no reason for her protest. She is shy, and not a practiced flirt, so while she likes Henry, she is uncomfortable even play-acting at marriage with him. Henry satisfies himself that she does not like John and then leads her into a discussion of the merits of Bath. Henry shrewdly investigates whether Catherine is a woman of expensive tastes, or if she would be happy living in a modest country home such as his own home at Woodston. Henry is an accomplished listener and reader of people. He sees the inner value of Catherine, despite her shyness, her naiveté, and the strong personalities that influence her.

Volume I, Chapters XI & XII

Summary

Chapter XI

An early morning rain prevents Catherine's scheduled walk with Eleanor and Henry Tilney. Around noon, John Thorpe, Isabella, and James show up at her door again, with a plan to visit Bristol. Catherine refuses at first, thinking that Eleanor and Henry may still show up, but John entices her by telling her they will visit a castle and in any case, he saw Henry Tilney driving away in a carriage earlier that morning. Catherine joins them, somewhat reluctantly.

As they leave Bath, John points out a girl staring at Catherine, and Catherine is startled to see Henry and Eleanor walking toward her house. She begs John to turn the cart around, but he refuses. She becomes passive and indifferent to him for the rest of the ride. Eventually, Isabella wants to return to Bath without seeing the castle, and John angrily turns his carriage back.

The night is spent at the Thorpes, where Isabella and James continue to fawn over each other, and Catherine sulks. Isabella talks endlessly about how happy she is not to be at that night's ball, in a way that suggests she wishes she were there. Isabella offers Catherine little consolation for the Tilney incident, and the chapter ends with the narrator comparing Catherine's loss to the plight of a great heroine, consigning her to "a sleepless couch, which is the true heroine's portion.

Chapter XII

The next morning, Catherine goes to the place where the Tilneys are staying, planning to explain everything. The servant tells her that Eleanor is not at home, but as Catherine walks away she sees Eleanor exit with her father. Mortified, Catherine fears she has greatly offended the Tilneys.

At the theater that night, Catherine spots Henry. Catherine thinks Henry looks at her angrily. After the play he makes his way to Catherine. Henry was somewhat offended by the incident, but when Catherine tells him that she begged John Thorpe to stop the carriage, and would have joined Henry and Eleanor immediately if he had, Henry's coolness melts. Henry seems most relieved when he discovers how little attachment Catherine feels to John Thorpe. Catherine and Henry talk about the play, and while they speak,

Catherine sees John Thorpe talking to General Tilney, Henry's father. After Henry leaves and John returns to help Catherine out of her seat, John tells her that the General said she was the "finest girl in Bath." Heartened by this news—she had feared that the General would not like her—Catherine quickly slips away from John with the Allens.

Analysis

In these chapters, Catherine's two social spheres begin to conflict with each other. Isabella, John Thorpe, and James become unfriendly, for James and Isabella spend all their time together, and John is unpleasant. Still, they demand Catherine's constant company. Catherine is enticed by the idea of a new set of friends, the Tilneys, but first she must free herself of the old set.

When Catherine accidentally offends Henry and then apologizes, the incident brings the two closer together. Catherine's fear of having offended Henry leads her to gush at him when he arrives, and Henry's interest in Catherine is likely piqued by seeing her in the carriage with John. Both are relieved when the situation is cleared up. While Henry appears to be thinking more actively about the possibility of a match between the two of them, Catherine is quite pleased when she hears the General's praises. Also in these chapters, Catherine gradually becomes confident enough to argue with John Thorpe, and then to be angry at him.

Volume I, Chapters XIII, XIV, & XV

Summary

Chapter XIII

John, James and Isabella have made plans to visit Clifton again. They come to collect Catherine, but she has already made plans to take a walk with Henry and Eleanor. The trio put tremendous pressure on Catherine to go, but she remains steadfast in her refusal. This puts a strain on the friendship between Isabella and Catherine. Although Isabella has ignored Catherine for several days now, she makes her feel guilty for refusing to come. Isabella even makes a snide comment that Catherine has "no great struggle" in choosing between the trio and the Tilneys, a comment that bothers Catherine enough to pull away from Isabella. John takes the initiative and, without Catherine's knowledge, tells Eleanor that Catherine cannot go for the walk. When John tells her this, Catherine is outraged and immediately leaves to join Henry and Eleanor and apologize for John's behavior. John calls Catherine "obstinate," but James restrains him from chasing after her.

Catherine runs to the Tilney's Bath residence and explains what happened, with her apologies. There she meets General Tilney for the first time, and he is very gracious to her. Catherine spends some time talking to Eleanor and the General, and at the end of their conversation, the General invites Catherine to dine with them some day soon. Catherine returns to the Allens'. She uses their disapproval of the Clifton scheme to justify not joining that group. Mr. Allen even advises Catherine not to go out with John Thorpe any more, and Catherine gladly agrees.

Chapter XIV

The morning arrives with no fresh invitations from James, Isabella, and John. Catherine goes on her walk with Henry and Eleanor. Catherine, timid from her encounter with John, mentions novels, but suggests that Henry might not read them since they are not "clever enough" for gentlemen like him. Henry responds that those who have no pleasure in a novel must be "intolerably stupid." Henry allows himself a little vanity by noting the "hundreds and hundreds" of novels that he has read. Henry quibbles with Catherine's use of the word "nice," revealing himself to be a linguistic perfectionist, for which Eleanor playfully chides him. Catherine notes how much she prefers novels to history books, and Henry tries to defend historians and the value of the books they write.

The Tilneys then begin to discuss the landscape in terms of drawing, and Catherine soon finds herself out of her element. She knows none of the artistic terms, and is a little ashamed of her ignorance. The narrator defends Catherine by noting that many men are attracted to well-mannered women with an ignorant mind if they are eager to learn. After Catherine asks many questions, Henry begins teaching her to see the world through the eyes of an artist, and is satisfied that she has "a good deal of natural taste." Catherine notes that something "shocking will soon come out in London," referring to a new Gothic novel; but Eleanor mistakenly thinks Catherine means something like a riot or a conspiracy of war. Henry makes light fun of the intelligence of women. Eleanor assures Catherine that he does not really think this way, but Henry remains playfully defiant. Upon returning to Bath, Catherine discovers from one of Isabella's younger sisters that James, Isabella, and John went to Clifton anyway, with one of the other Thorpe sisters.

Chapter XV

Catherine receives a note from Isabella, bidding her to visit as soon as possible. Catherine goes to Isabella's and discovers that her friend is engaged to James. Isabella praises James, and expresses her worries over his parents' consent to the marriage. Catherine assures her their consent is certain. Isabella expresses some doubt due to her relative poverty compared to James, for she has not yet realized that the Morlands are not that much richer than her own family. Catherine spends the rest of the day discussing the details with the Thorpes, and the next day a letter arrives from James telling of his parents' consent. The chapter ends in a brief scene between Catherine and John Thorpe, who is leaving Bath for several weeks. John hints that he is interested in marrying Catherine, but she is unaware of his intentions. John leaves Bath convinced that Catherine wishes to marry him.

Analysis

In this chapter, Catherine splits definitively from Isabella and begins to strengthen her friendship with Eleanor. Chapter XIII makes us feel tense and worried that Catherine will cave in to the inconsiderate demands of James, Isabella, and John. When John lies to the Tilneys, telling them that Catherine cannot go for a walk, he confirms our opinion of him as a selfish, conceited twit. Of all the characters in the novel, including Isabella, John is the most self-obsessed, and the most oblivious to the feelings of others. Even Isabella can tell how much Catherine likes Henry—although Isabella might be attuned to it because she knows it could cause problems in her relationship with James. Catherine's decision to forego the trip to Clifton is essentially a rejection of Isabella, though she does not think of it in those terms.

The long dialogue between Henry, Catherine and Eleanor during the walk is one of the major set pieces of the book. It allows Henry a chance to flaunt his linguistic wit and to playfully show off a bit. He is flirting, although Catherine does not notice it. The discussion ranges from the virtues of novels to the intricacies of language and the intelligence of women. Henry remains playful throughout, and Catherine is enchanted by him. The dialogue in this section sparkles. Catherine gets to speak much more in the presence of Eleanor and Henry than she ever did with Isabella or John. In fact, except for the discussion of drawing, in which Catherine is out of her element, Catherine speaks more than Eleanor.

The narrator intervenes only at one point, commenting when Catherine is ashamed of her lack of artistic knowledge. When Catherine expresses her desire to learn, Henry is more than happy to instruct her, and it is likely that this instruction makes Catherine and Henry feel closer. But the narrator defends Catherine, saying her ignorance is nothing to be ashamed of and furthermore, it actually makes girls like Catherine more attractive to men "too reasonable and too well-informed themselves to desire any thing more in woman than ignorance." Henry enjoys a young, curious mind.

This brings up one problematic interpretation of Henry Tilney. Literary critic Marilyn Butler points out that many critics have interpreted Henry's tendency to "teach" Catherine as patronizing, perhaps even bullying. People of this opinion say that Henry likes Catherine because she has an empty mind that he can fill as he likes, molding her to his pleasure. This is not the only interpretation, however. Catherine is not a malleable innocent ripe for victimhood. She can be very resistant when she wants, as her interactions with Isabella and John prove. She only goes on the first carriage ride with John because she wants to see a castle, and when she is pushed to go

a second time, she refuses despite their absurd pressure and scheming. Catherine has already partially rejected Henry's theory that dancing is like marriage (see Volume I, Chapter X). In this chapter, Henry is a bit patronizing toward Catherine and Isabella, but he is being playful, and showing off for Catherine.

Chapter XV contains one of the most amusing scenes in the novel. When Catherine goes to Isabella's and discovers the engagement, she waits outside for a few minutes, chatting with Isabella's sister. Then Isabella floats in, glowing, and seeing Catherine's surprised face, she says, "Yes, my dear Catherine, it is so indeed; your penetration has not deceived you. -Oh! That arch eye of yours!—it sees through everything." We know Catherine well by now, and know that the chances of her guessing anything are slim. Indeed, she has not guessed at the engagement. This ignorance is due to her innocence of mind and her lack of life experience. Leaps of intuition, such as the idea of James and Isabella becoming engaged, are out of her experience. It is not a problem of her intelligence, and the narrator never suggests that it is. Catherine simply has a long way to go in terms of reading people.

Volume II, Chapters I & II

Summary

Chapter I

Catherine has dinner with the Tilneys—Henry, Eleanor, and their father, General Tilney. She is surprised by how little Henry speaks, and the manner in which both children are quiet and reserved. But the General is so nice to her, she does not believe the constrained atmosphere is his fault. Isabella, upon hearing of the sour nature of

the dinner meeting, claims that it was due to the Tilneys' pride, but this answer does not satisfy Catherine. That day, Henry's older brother, Captain Frederick Tilney, arrives in Bath. Frederick flirts with Isabella, and although she informs him that she is engaged, she agrees to dance with him.

Later, the girls meet again to discuss a letter Isabella received from James. He writes that they could not marry for three years, at which point James would inherit a yearly living of about four hundred pounds. Isabella is disappointed, though Catherine does not see it. Mrs. Thorpe does notice Isabella's disappointment, and she worriedly tries to assure Isabella that it is a good living. Isabella darkly hints that she thinks Catherine's father is being stingy with his money. She quickly drops the idea when Catherine expresses dismay at the idea.

Chapter II

Catherine has now become enamored of Henry Tilney, and even allows herself to occasionally indulge in the idea that she and Henry might become engaged. She is very upset when Eleanor tells her that her family will soon be leaving Bath, only to be deliriously happy when General Tilney invites her to join them at the Tilney home, Northanger Abbey. Catherine is not only thrilled at the prospect of continuing her acquaintance with the Tilneys, she is excited by the idea of seeing a real abbey like the ones she has read about in her beloved Gothic novels. Catherine writes home and quickly gets the assent of her parents. The Allens' also endorse the plan.

Analysis

In Chapter I, Henry directly comments on Catherine's naiveté, perhaps a bit rudely. When she says how nice it was of Frederick to offer to dance with Isabella, though she had told Catherine she had no plans to dance, Henry responds with, "How very little trouble it can give you to understand the motive of other people's actions." He points out that Catherine always ascribes her own motivations to other people. Henry says that if she can attribute Frederick's offer to dance to mere good nature, she must be the most good-natured person in the world. Catherine's naiveté and innocence are very attractive to Henry.

Austen's use of free indirect narration increases in these chapters. Now, the narrator rarely steps out of Catherine's perspective, presenting most things as Catherine would perceive them. When Catherine is excited about the prospect of a visit to the abbey, for example, the narration sounds almost like a transcript of what Catherine might say excitedly about her trip.

These two chapters begin the second volume of the novel, which is quite different from the first. James, Isabella, John, and the Allens all cease to appear in the events of the story, although many of them will continue to have an effect on the plot. The novel now tightens its focus and hones in on the trio of Catherine, Henry and Eleanor; General Tilney hovers over the proceedings. The tone of the second volume is slightly darker than the tone of the first. Austen begins to perform her gentle parody of Gothic novels, and darkens the tone to match the tone of her target of parody.

Volume II, Chapters III & IV

Summary

Chapter III

Catherine meets with Isabella for the first time in three days. Isabella tells Catherine that she has received a letter from John, stating his intention to propose to Catherine. Catherine is quite shocked, and tells Isabella that she must write John and tell him the truth, that she does not love him—with her apologies if she misled him accidentally. Isabella briefly defends her brother, then agrees. Catherine points out that they will still be sisters, and Isabella makes the odd comment that "there are more ways than one of our being sisters." This is an allusion to the possibility that they might both marry a Tilney, since Isabella is now flirting with Frederick Tilney, and Catherine is falling in love with Henry Tilney. Catherine misses the remark and its meaning. Isabella says she is not angry with Catherine for refusing John, and that she could not guess Catherine's mind in the past. Isabella assumes that although Catherine flirted with John once, she has now changed her mind about him.

Frederick Tilney arrives and begins to flirt with Isabella, who flirts back. This bothers Catherine. She believes that Frederick is falling in love with Isabella, who is unconsciously encouraging him. Catherine does not think that Isabella is consciously encouraging him, because in her innocence she believes that Isabella would never cheat on James. Catherine gets tired of their flirting and, uneasy, leaves them alone.

Chapter IV

Catherine keeps her eye on Isabella for several days and discovers that Isabella gives Tilney as much attention as she does James. James begins to suffer visibly, but Isabella seems to take no notice. Catherine becomes concerned for James, for Isabella, who is being scandalous by flirting with Frederick, and even for Frederick himself, because she thinks he is falling in love with a girl he can never have.

Catherine asks Henry to convince Frederick to leave Isabella alone, but Henry refuses, suggesting that Isabella is aware of what she is doing. He also suggests that her brother might be offended by her request, since James would probably like to think that he could keep Isabella's affection with or without Frederick's presence. Henry consoles Catherine, reminding her of her confidence in her brother and Isabella's love and assuring her that Frederick will soon leave Bath.

Analysis

Again, Catherine's inability to read people causes her to miss important developments. When Isabella tells Catherine that she is not angry with her for refusing John, and that sometimes women flirt and then change their minds, she makes insinuations that Catherine misses. Catherine says that her opinion never changed because she never felt anything for John, but Isabella ignores this and says she would never think of rushing Catherine into an engagement merely to make her brother happy. Catherine does not pick up the parallel Isabella is drawing: just as Isabella would not want to pressure Catherine, the comparison goes, Catherine should not pressure Isabella to marry James. Isabella is also speaking for

herself when she says that women often flirt and then change their minds. Isabella wants to make Catherine feel guilty for leading John on, so that when Isabella breaks off her engagement to James, Catherine will have no grounds for complaint. This plan fails, however, because Catherine is still too innocent to understand Isabella's insinuations.

In Chapter IV, Catherine's innocence leads to a mistaken understanding of the motivations of Isabella and Frederick. She even feels bad for Frederick because she assumes that the engagement between Isabella and James is unbreakable. Henry finds this innocence endearing, but he warns her that Isabella and Frederick will do as they please. Catherine comes to realize that perhaps Isabella is not truly attached to James. She tries to get Henry to tell her what he thinks, but he refuses, perhaps because he does not want to hurt Catherine by telling her the truth.

Volume II, Chapters V & VI

Summary

Chapter V

Catherine prepares to leave for Northanger Abbey with the Tilneys. She is nervous and tries to be on her best behavior. General Tilney does his utmost to make her comfortable, but his constant ministrations actually begin to bother Catherine. She is also troubled when the General harshly scolds his son Frederick. When Frederick whispers to his sister Eleanor that he will be glad when they have all left, Catherine thinks this is due to the General's tendency to be rude to his children.

The party leaves with Catherine and Eleanor in one carriage, and the General and Henry in the other. After a brief stop, the General suggests that Catherine ride with Henry instead, an invitation she is more than happy to accept. Catherine and Henry have a long discussion during the ride. He tells her that he does not actually live at Northanger Abbey, but in a house twenty miles away in the town of Woodston, where he is a parson. Catherine tells him how excited she is to see the Abbey, and Henry, amused, teases her, asking if she is prepared for the horrors she will meet there. He then tells a hypothetical story about Catherine's visit, complete with mysterious chests, violent storms, and hidden passages. Catherine is enthralled, but at the end of the story she is ashamed of her eagerness and says she is sure the Abbey is not so terrible.

They reach the Abbey, and it turns out to be modern, to Catherine's disappointment. General Tilney has fixed up everything and even replaced an entire wing of the building. Only a few of the original touches of the old structure remain, such as the arched windows. The General quickly sets about describing everything in the Abbey to Catherine in painful detail, then halts abruptly when he realizes it is time for dinner. Eleanor takes Catherine to the visitor's chamber.

Chapter VI

Catherine finds that her chamber is pleasant, and nothing like the haunted one Henry described in his story. She discovers a large chest in one corner and, curious, opens it, only to find some of Eleanor's old hats. Eleanor arrives and hurries Catherine down to dinner, nervous about displeasing the General by being late. When they get downstairs, the General loudly calls for dinner, and Catherine nearly trembles from fear of his ornery behavior. He quickly resumes his pleasant attitude toward Catherine, however.

The General comments on the size of his dining parlour and notes that Catherine must be used to a larger one at the Allens. Catherine responds that Mr. Allen's parlour is not half the size of the General's, which pleases him.

That night, a violent storm strikes the Abbey, causing creaks and groans that frighten Catherine. She discovers an odd cabinet at one end of her room and, intensely curious, opens all the drawers. In the story Henry told, Catherine discovered a strange manuscript; in actual fact, Catherine discovers a pile of papers. Before she can read them, however, her candle goes out, and she hears the patter of footsteps. She drops the papers and jumps into bed, tossing and turning the rest of the night in burning curiosity.

Analysis

Henry's hypothetical tale of Catherine's first night at Northanger Abbey is an elaborate parody of the conventions of Gothic novels, and is filled with references to actual novels. It is one of three major scenes that parody Gothic novels, along with the cabinet scene and the later scene in which Catherine sneaks into the late Mrs. Tilney's old bedroom. Henry is teasing Catherine a little, but also indulging her imagination. He enjoys weaving together the elements of several different Gothic novels in order to impress Catherine. In a way, Henry gives Catherine the Abbey he knows she wants and cannot have. We are disappointed along with Catherine at the discovery that the Abbey is boring.

However, part of Henry's story does come true. In the second parody of the Gothic genre, Austen provides her heroine with a mysterious chest nearly identical to the one described in Henry's story.

Catherine clings to the few items in the Abbey that strike her as satisfyingly Gothic, and her imagination does the rest.

Austen's use of free indirect discourse, in which the language of the narrator reflects the perspective and the language of a character, increases and becomes tighter. The focus has shifted almost entirely to Catherine, and it moves to other characters only at those times when Henry has a long dialogue with Catherine—and sometimes not even then. The technique becomes more and more focused with each chapter, and almost all of the second half of the book is told from Catherine's perspective. Also, the narrator has stopped interrupting the story to make comments on Catherine or her situation. The last few pages of chapter VI are good examples of Austen's free indirect form of narration.

Volume II, Chapters VII & VIII

Summary

Chapter VII

Catherine wakes in the morning and quickly checks the manuscript she discovered the previous night. To her dismay, it does not contain some secret journal or terrible confession, but only washing bills. Catherine is ashamed, and scolds herself for her letting her wild imagination get the better of her. She dresses and goes down to breakfast, meeting Henry there. They discuss flowers and other things until General Tilney comes in. He talks about his breakfast table set, and tells Catherine that he hopes she will soon have the opportunity of selecting one of her own. Catherine is the only person in the room that does not understand the General's hint: he wants her to marry Henry.

After breakfast, Henry leaves for Woodston for a few days. The General shows Catherine around the Abbey (along with Eleanor). To Catherine's consternation, everything is modern. The General has even rebuilt an entire wing of the Abbey, making it new. On the way back into the Abbey, Eleanor decides to take Catherine on an alternate route through a gloomy path. This path is much more appropriate to a Gothic novel than the rest of the Abbey is. The General does not like the path, and chooses a different one. Eleanor tells Catherine that she used to enjoy walking down the path with her mother, and Catherine asks many questions about the late Mrs. Tilney. Catherine quickly begins to grow suspicious of the General. When their walk ends, Catherine looks somewhat troubled, and the General blames it on the path Eleanor chose. He sends them inside and warns Eleanor not to show Catherine any more of the house until he returns, a command that interests Catherine.

Chapter VIII

The General returns after an hour. Catherine thinks his walks are signs of a troubled conscience. Her imagination is running away with her, and she suspects the General of killing his own wife. The General shows Catherine around the rest of the house, except for one small area. This makes Catherine intensely curious about the forbidden area, especially when she learns that General Tilney's late wife had a room beyond the forbidden doors.

Catherine questions Eleanor about her mother, and discovers that she died suddenly of an illness while Eleanor was away. Catherine sees this as a confirmation of her suspicions. She begins to view everything the General does as more evidence of his troubled conscience. She even imagines that Mrs. Tilney is still alive, locked somewhere in the basement of the Abbey. She decides to stay awake

until midnight to see if Mr. Tilney goes down to the dungeon where Catherine suspects he is keeping his wife. Catherine falls asleep by half past eleven, despite her plans.

Analysis

In these chapters, Austen parodies Gothic novels and also captures Catherine's existence between emerging powers of perception and youthful naïveté. Catherine is expert at reading books, so when she begins to read people, she relies on her novel-reading expertise. She enters Northanger Abbey looking for a dark secret, but the Abbey turns out to be ordinary. Still, Catherine has never read about an abbey that lacks a dark secret, so she invents one for Northanger Abbey. Where Catherine has been remiss before in her effort to understand people, she now reads too deeply into one person—the General—which results in a wild conclusion. Catherine up her mind about the General's guilt, and then begins to interpret his every action as more evidence of his guilt.

The General's grumpy nature and odd habits lend themselves to a negative interpretation of his character. However, Catherine never asks herself what motivation might cause the General to kill his wife. Henry is gone during these chapters, so the only person Catherine can get information from is Eleanor. Eleanor does not guess Catherine's suspicions. She would not think Catherine capable of such a horrid thought. Henry, in contrast, would see through Catherine's clumsy, prodding questions immediately.

When Catherine starts to think that Mrs. Tilney might still be alive and living somewhere in the basement of the Abbey, we begin to realize that Catherine is getting a bit carried away. At this point, Austen employs continual free indirect discourse, narrating the story

in a tone that reflects what Catherine is thinking or feeling. In Chapter VIII, for example, after General Tilney tells Catherine he will be up all night writing pamphlets, she thinks, "To be kept up for hours, after the family were in bed, by stupid pamphlets, was not very likely." It is as if the narrator transcribes Catherine's thoughts. This technique gives Austen more space to work with her story than a first-person narrator would, because she can move the free indirect form from one character to another, and can use it to great effect in making fun of superficial characters such as Isabella.

Volume II, Chapters IX & X

Summary

Chapter IX

Catherine wants to see the old bedroom of the late Mrs. Tilney, but she cannot see it as long as General Tilney is around. There is no time to try and sneak in, because it is Sunday, and everyone has to attend a morning and afternoon church service, and lunch in between. Catherine notices that the Tilney family pew has a memorial to Mrs. Tilney, but this does not reduce her suspicions that the General killed his wife. She decides that if the guilty General could erect such a monument, he could bear to stare it at it each week.

The next day, when the General goes for one of his usual walks, Catherine sees her chance. She asks Eleanor to take her to the room, and Eleanor agrees. Just before they enter, the General appears and calls out to Eleanor. Catherine runs to her room in fright. When she recovers, she goes downstairs to find the General and Eleanor entertaining company. Pleased that she was not caught—or, at least,

that the General was not angry—Catherine decides to investigate again later.

Catherine wants to settle the matter before Henry returns from his home in Woodston, so she sneaks out alone around four o'clock in the afternoon to Mrs. Tilney's old bedroom. When she gets there, she makes a shocking discovery: the room contains nothing of interest. The late Mrs. Tilney's room is actually part of the new wing of the Abbey, and there is nothing mysterious about it.

Disappointed, but still suspicious of the General, Catherine heads back to her room. On the way she is caught by Henry, who has returned early. He asks Catherine some questions, and from her reluctant, honest responses he soon guesses what she has been up to. He tells her the true story. Both Frederick and Henry had been present during their mother's illness and death, and their mother's passing had indeed hurt General Tilney. Henry then scolds her for letting herself think such horrible thoughts. Ashamed and embarrassed, Catherine runs to her room in tears.

Chapter X

Catherine is certain she has ruined all chances for romance with Henry. After sobbing in her room for a half hour, she goes downstairs to dinner. Henry acts no different than usual, except that he pays a bit more attention to her. This makes Catherine feel a little better, and she is soon capable of analyzing herself. She realizes that she suffered from a "voluntary, self-created delusion, each trifling circumstance receiving importance from an imagination resolved on alarm." Catherine blames the whole fiasco on the Gothic novels she had read at Bath. She realizes she is living in modern England, not the imagined world of novelist Anne Radcliffe, and that she is safe.

Having reasoned herself back to the world of rational thinking, Catherine feels better, and her attitude improves as Henry acts more gallantly toward her than ever. Henry never mentions the incident.

Catherine receives a letter from her brother James, telling her that he and Isabella Thorpe are no longer engaged, and implying that Isabella is to be engaged to Frederick Tilney. Catherine does not tell Henry and Eleanor at first, but from a few hints, Henry easily guesses the truth. He does not believe Frederick will really marry Isabella until he reads the letter, and even after reading it, he remains skeptical. Henry laments his brother's apparent loss of sanity. He suggests that Isabella is only in it for the money. Henry asks Catherine whether she feels bad at the loss of a friend like Isabella, since she can hardly remain friends with her now. But Catherine finds, to her mild surprise, that she is hardly upset at the prospect of losing her friend.

Analysis

Catherine's paranoid fantasy about Mrs. Tilney's murder is amusing and disturbing. Her theories are worrisome; at least in the Gothic novels she reads, there really are bad things going on. In Catherine's world, the bad things she imagines do not really exist. *Northanger Abbey* does not have a Gothic novel's terrible people, acts of violence and cruelty, and fog-shrouded castles and crumbling abbeys. It is a realistic coming-of-age story, and we worry for Catherine in these chapters as an imaginative frenzy consumes her. After she is chastised by Henry, Catherine understands what she has done, and vows never to let her imagination run away with her again. She does not blame the novels for her behavior, but recognizes the difference between reality and fantasy.

Henry quickly guesses at Catherine's sinister theories, and soundly admonishes her for dreaming them up. He watches her closely as he scolds her, and pays special attention to her afterward. He does not hold a grudge, and he seems sensitive to the idea that his lecture might have hurt her feelings.

Catherine also begins to realize that real people have an "unequal mixture of good and bad" in them. Her realization reflects the fictional world of Austen, in which characters behave like real people, not cardboard cutouts. General Tilney is not tender with his children, and may have been harsh to his wife, but he loved her and treated her with respect. The fact that Catherine realizes this marks a major step in her growth. She sees that even "good" people can have bad traits and that things are not as black-and-white as they are in Gothic novels. This realization is a loss of innocence, but it is also a gain in maturity.

Volume II, Chapters XI & XII

Summary

Chapter XI

Catherine, Eleanor and Henry try to speculate about how Frederick Tilney will handle his apparent engagement to Isabella. The Tilney siblings are certain their father will not allow Frederick to marry Isabella because she is relatively poor, compared to the Tilneys. This bothers Catherine, since her family is hardly wealthier than Isabella's, but she takes comfort in how pleasant General Tilney has been to her.

The General proposes that the group take a trip to visit Henry at his Woodston home. Henry goes home to prepare for their arrival. In Woodston, Catherine is charmed by the modest house, the pleasant meadows, and the apple orchard. The General makes so many hints about the possibility of Catherine marrying Henry that even Catherine cannot miss them. She is sure of the General's intentions, but not of Henry's. The chapter ends with the group returning to Northanger Abbey.

Chapter XII

Catherine receives a letter from Isabella, who says that Frederick Tilney abandoned Isabella to flirt with another girl before he even left Bath. Isabella clumsily tries to cover up her culpability and asks Catherine to write to James and help her get him back. Catherine angrily decides she will do no such thing, and renounces her friendship to Isabella in front of Henry and Eleanor. But she is still troubled about why Frederick Tilney acted as he did, and Henry suggests just wanted to be mischievous. This annoys Catherine, although Henry points out that if she were truly concerned for her brother, she would be glad that he did not marry a person like Isabella.

Analysis

During the trip to Woodston, Henry does not speak a word to Catherine. The General woos her more than Henry does. The General, who is always concerned with material things, believes Catherine must be convinced of the material gain she will make by joining their family. He talks about the improvements that could be made "by a woman's hand" throughout the Woodston house. He seems to have little faith in Henry's ability to attract Catherine, so he

attempts to make Henry attractive in the only way he knows how—by showing off their wealth. By the end of the trip, even naïve Catherine cannot miss the General's intentions.

Isabella's letter is so blatantly manipulative that the narrator tells us "such a strain of shallow artifice could not impose even on Catherine." At the beginning of the novel, Catherine might have fallen prey to such clumsy manipulation. But now she has some experience, and she can see Isabella for who she is, a "vain coquette" who got what she deserved. Even more importantly, Catherine renounces her friendship with Isabella.

Catherine's brief argument with Henry about his brother marks a milestone in her path to adulthood. Catherine decides she does not like Frederick because he made mischief, and she partly blames him for James's break-up with Isabella. Henry puts more of the blame on Isabella. Catherine stands up to Henry, although she says it is right that he stands by his brother. In the sophisticated fashion of an adult, Catherine suggests that he is standing by Frederick not because it is just, but out of brotherly duty.

Volume II, Chapters XIII, XIV, XV & XVI

Summary

Chapter XIII

Catherine has been at Northanger Abbey for a month. She expresses concern at overstaying her welcome, but Eleanor assures her there is no problem, and Catherine is quite pleased to stay. General Tilney has to go on a business trip for several days, leaving Catherine, Eleanor and Henry to do as they please. Henry must go to Woodston

for a few days. One night, the General suddenly returns and calls Eleanor to him. When Eleanor returns to Catherine, she is nearly in shock and, mortified, tells Catherine that the General has forgotten an engagement in Hereford, and the whole family must go there in two days' time. Therefore the General has arranged for Catherine to be taken home to her family in Fullerton the very next day, as early as seven in the morning. Herding Catherine out of the house so abruptly is a terribly insulting gesture, which accounts for Eleanor's embarrassment.

Early the next morning, the two women part. Eleanor gives Catherine some money for her journey, and Catherine assures Eleanor that she will write, despite the General and his offense. Catherine is greatly saddened that she cannot say good-bye to Henry, who is still in Woodston.

Chapter XIV

On the way home, Catherine tries to figure out what offence she could have caused the General. He could not have found out that she briefly suspected him of murder, so she has no idea what she did to offend him, especially after he was so nice to her. She returns to Fullerton where she is welcomed by her family. She explains what has happened, and they are confused, but quiet their anger because Catherine asks to. The next day, Catherine sulks around the house. Mrs. Morland has no idea what is upsetting her. She never imagines that her seventeen-year-old daughter, just back from her first trip, might have fallen for a man. Catherine and her mother visit Mrs. Allen, and Mrs. Morland keeps up a steady stream of advice to Catherine.

Chapter XV

Two days later, Catherine is still sulking. Suddenly, Henry arrives in Fullerton. Henry tells Mrs. Morland that the reason for his arrival is to make sure that Catherine made it home all right. Henry suggests that he pay a visit to the Allens, and Catherine joins him. On the walk to the Allens' house, he proposes to her, and she accepts. He explains that his father's bad behavior was due to John Thorpe. In Bath, when John thought Catherine loved him, he told General Tilney that Catherine was from a very wealthy family. The General then ran into John much later on his trip away from Northanger Abbey. John was angry, because he had learned that Catherine did not love him, and he angrily told the General that the Morlands were almost poor. Angered, the General had sent Catherine away to show his contempt for someone so impoverished. When Henry returned to Woodston and found out what happened, he had a big argument with his father and announced his intention to propose to Catherine. The two parted angrily, and the next day Henry set out for Fullerton.

Chapter XVI

Henry asks the Morlands for Catherine's hand in marriage. They are surprised, but they quickly give their consent to the marriage. However, in order to be proper, they refuse to allow the marriage until the General has given his own consent. Henry and Catherine also want the General's consent, but they fear that it will be some time before he will break down and agree to the union. Fortunately, in a few months Eleanor becomes engaged and then married to a wealthy noble. This puts the General in a good mood, and when Eleanor and her husband ask the General to allow Henry's marriage, the General agrees—but only after doing some research and discovering that the Morlands are not at all as poor as John Thorpe

had claimed they were. The General sends a letter to Mr. Morland giving his assent, and Henry and Catherine are married.

Analysis

General Tilney and Catherine clash frequently over the course of the novel. Catherine almost always finds the General grumpy and disagreeable, even if he is not a killer. She also dislikes the way he treats his children. It is possible to argue that the climax of the novel occurs when the General sends Catherine away. There is a sense of finality as Catherine exchanges good-byes with Eleanor and leaves without saying goodbye to Henry. We might suspect that this sense of finality is false. The narrator confirms the falsity in Chapter XVI, saying: "The anxiety...of Henry and Catherine...can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages...that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity").

If we read Catherine's dismissal as the climax of the novel, everything that takes place thereafter is falling action. Henry's proposal is quickly tendered to Catherine when he arrives in Fullerton, and we do not get to read the exchange between Catherine and Henry as they get engaged; the narrator sums up the transaction in a few lines. The tone of the last two chapters suggests that the marriage of Henry and Catherine is a foregone conclusion, a loose end that the author needs to tie up. The narrator makes the frank statement that Henry did not become attracted to Catherine until after he realized she was attracted to him, a circumstance "dreadfully derogatory of an heroine's dignity." In short, the marriage is not nearly as important as Catherine's personal progression. The marriage seems almost a happy ending tacked on

to placate the reader. The true journey of the novel is Catherine's coming of age.

Key Facts

full title · *Northanger Abbey*

author · Jane Austen

type of work · Novel

genre · *Bildungsroman* (novel of education or moral development); parody of Gothic novels

language · English (British, late 1700s/early 1800s)

time and place written · 1798–1799 in Austen's home in Steventon, Hampshire. It was sold to a publisher in 1803 but not published. Later, after Austen's success with other novels, she bought back the manuscript and revised it slightly. *Northanger Abbey* was published posthumously in 1817.

date of first publication · 1817

publisher · John Murray, Albemarle Street

narrator · Third person omniscient; free indirect discourse

point of view · The narrator varies greatly. Sometimes the narrator is contented to simply describe events normally; sometimes the narrator addresses the reader directly; and sometimes (especially in the second half of the novel) Austen uses the technique of free

indirect discourse, in which she describes people and events from a 3rd-person perspective, but in the way that a particular character (in this case, Catherine) sees and understands them.

tone · Light, ironic, satirical; gently fond when talking about Catherine

tense · Immediate past

setting (time) · January–April 1798.

setting (place) · The first half of the novel takes place primarily in Bath, England, which was a big resort town for the upper classes. The second half takes place thirty miles away from Bath in Northanger Abbey, a large stone building, formerly a church, that has been converted into the Tilney's home.

protagonist · Catherine Morland

antagonist · Arguably Isabella Thorpe, her brother John Thorpe, or General Tilney

major conflict · Catherine, enjoying the frisson of fear produced by her own literary imagination, scares herself and displeases the man who loves her

climax · General Tilney sends Catherine away from Northanger Abbey

falling action · Catherine returns home, in misery, to Fullerton. She sulks around the house until Henry arrives and proposes to her.

Several months later, after the General grudgingly gives his consent, the two are married.

themes · Gothic novels; youth

motifs · Reading; wealth and ostentation

symbols · Northanger Abbey

foreshadowing · Foreshadowing often exists in the novel as a parody of Gothic conventions. On the ride to the Abbey, Henry tells Catherine a hypothetical story about her upcoming first night in Bath, complete with mysterious chests, hidden passages, and villainous doings. This foreshadows Catherine's actual night, when she recreates Henry's prophecy with her imagination.

Study Questions

Catherine is inexperienced and innocent at the beginning of the novel. How has she changed by the end of the novel?

Answer for Study Question 1 >>

Northanger Abbey is a *bildungsroman*, a coming-of-age tale in which the heroine or hero sheds his or her naiveté. In the beginning of *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine does not see the obvious flirtation between her brother James and her friend Isabella, and she does not understand what Isabella is doing by flirting with Frederick Tilney. Catherine has difficulty identifying people's motivations, which, as Henry points out, causes her to assume that people do things for the same unimpeachable reasons she would. As a result, Catherine thinks well of almost everyone, and is frequently too charitable to

such people as Isabella and John Thorpe. As the novel progresses, Catherine starts trying to understand people and their motivations, although this pursuit is influenced by her overactive imagination. She attributes General Tilney's grumpiness and odd behavior to guilt over murdering his new wife. After Henry scolds her for this terrible and unfounded suspicion, Catherine comes to a new realization about the nature of people. She understands that people can be both good and bad, because real life is never as black-and-white as it is in the novels she reads.

What makes Catherine think the General murdered his wife? Why does she realize her mistake so quickly?

Answer for Study Question 2 >>

There are several reasons why Catherine starts to believe that the General killed his wife. The first is that she has just read a Gothic novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Anne Radcliffe, and has come to associate old buildings like Northanger Abbey with the mysterious buildings she encounters in her reading. Catherine arrives at the Abbey feeling that she is in a Gothic novel herself. As she later admits to herself, she arrives at the Abbey "craving to be scared," and when she finds it to be a very boring place, she makes up her own secrets. When Catherine finds out that Mrs. Tilney died of a mysterious illness nine years earlier, and that Eleanor was not there at the time of her mother's death, she feels her suspicions of General Tilney are confirmed. After that, every odd quirk of the General's makes Catherine feel certain that he has a guilty conscience. Her desire to be scared becomes a self-fulfilling

prophecy. Soon, Catherine is swept up in a paranoid fantasy, and even entertains the idea that Mrs. Tilney is alive and held captive in a dungeon beneath the Abbey. She does not wonder why the General would murder his wife. She sees him as a cardboard villain from a novel, a purely evil person who would certainly murder his wife without a second thought. Once Henry chastises her for her morbid imaginings, and shows her how illogical her suspicions were, Catherine wakes up from her fantasy and realizes how silly it was. She begins to understand that the General may be gruff and sometimes mean to his children, but he is not evil, and he is not a murderer.

Complicating the matter is the fact that Catherine has imagined the General as a villain from a Gothic horror novel. Since the reader sees the General through Catherine's eyes, the General seems to become a true villain, at least for a few chapters. Even after Catherine realizes her mistake, a lingering doubt about the General and his behavior remains, especially when he sends Catherine home so rudely. Although the General behaves badly, however, he is not indisputably villainous. On one hand, he is greedy, rude to his children, and obsessed with wealth and class. On the other, he is a loving father and capable of being a gracious host to Catherine. An arrogant man like John Thorpe, were he to play a larger part in the novel, could easily become the antagonist. However, no one in the novel actively, constantly works to thwart Catherine or her hopes, which means the novel has no true antagonist.

Is General Tilney the antagonist of the novel? Why or why not?

Answer for Study Question 3 >>

The antagonist of the novel is the character who opposes the protagonist's goals. For most of the novel, General Tilney does his best to make Catherine feel comfortable, because he thinks she is rich and wants her to marry his son, Henry. So to Catherine, the protagonist, he is very pleasant. To his children, the General is alarmingly bossy. He has a generally gruff nature that makes him seem unpleasant. But he does his utmost to make Catherine feel welcome until the end of her stay, when he acts badly by sending her away abruptly, with no explanation. This is the most cruel thing that anyone does to Catherine in the course of the novel. We discover later that the General sent Catherine away because John Thorpe told him that her family had no money. This infuriated the General, who had hoped to marry John into a rich family.

Source: sparknotes