

Northanger Abbey

1. Gothic novels were the pop culture of Jane Austen's time. The parents and educators of her era worried about the effect of this new cultural form on young people. How does Catherine's reading of gothic novels affect her thinking and behavior? Do you think certain aspects of contemporary pop culture are particularly harmful? Why?
2. Why is Catherine unable to see that Isabella Thorpe is not a true friend? What else does she fail to see and understand? What dangers does she imagine, and what dangers are real? How do the two compare?
3. Near the end of the film, Henry tells Catherine, "The worst crimes are the crimes of the heart." Who are the "criminals" in *Northanger Abbey*? What motivates their actions?
4. Henry Tilney is a controversial hero. Patronizing and misogynistic, or gentle, caring and perceptive? What is your opinion? Why do you think he chooses Catherine? Do you think he will be able to love her? Why or why not?
5. Catherine is younger and more naïve than other Austen heroines. How might the situations in which she finds herself, and her resulting behavior and emotions, be reminiscent of teenagers in any era?
6. *Northanger Abbey* contains a famous "defence of the novel"—narrative aside about fiction, particularly that read and written by women. Why do you think so many women like romance novels and the currently popular genre called "chick lit"? Is there a male equivalent of this kind of escapist fiction? To what extent do you think Austen's novels belong in the "chick lit" or "romance" categories?
7. *Northanger Abbey* was Austen's first published novel, and some feel it is less polished than the others. Do you agree? If so, in what ways do you think it falls short of her other work? Or, why is it just as strong as her other novels?