



Quicklet on Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (CliffsNotes-like Book Summary)

Mary Snyder

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ABOUT THE BOOK

During my first semester of graduate school, I took a course entitled Pre-Romantic Literature, which encompassed the study of British literature immediately preceding the Romantic Period, considered to have ranged roughly from 1798 to 1830. The main focus of this course was the Gothic novel. Midway through the course, we'd just finished reading and analyzing *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe. Radcliffe is still considered the pioneer of the Gothic novel. Gothic novels gained popularity and were widely read beginning in the late eighteenth century. However, they were read for entertainment and used to discount the literary value of the novel.

In addition, young women were discouraged from reading Gothic novels, since it was believed they couldn't differentiate between fantasy and reality, and they'd see the wildly imaginative plots as mirroring reality. I found *Udolpho* to be a difficult read and dark in its depictions of villains, whose victims are primarily women. Reading *Northanger Abbey*, a parody of the Gothic novel and especially of Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, was a treat.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen defends not only the novel as genre itself, but the Gothic novel as well, and does so using comedy and realism. It's an enjoyable read, but at the same time, it dispenses lessons for its readers that still resonate today. And, as suspenseful as *Udolpho* was at its time, Austen's *Northanger Abbey* must have been just as much of a page turner, due to its fluid prose and its engaging plot that mirrors real life.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

It is at this point in her life that Mr. Allen, who owns most of the property in Fullerton where the Morlands live, and Mrs. Allen, who is fond of Catherine, invite her to accompany them to Bath. Mr. Allen has been ordered there for the sake of his health. When they first arrive in Bath, Mrs. Allen and Catherine feel out of place at the gatherings because they don't know anyone. Catherine then meets Henry Tilney; they dance and get to know one another, but it is a while before she sees him again.

She does find out that Henry is a clergyman and from a respectable family. Meanwhile, Mrs. Allen runs into an old friend of hers, Mrs. Thorpe. Mrs. Thorpe introduces Catherine to her daughter, Isabella. Both mother and daughter know of Catherine because James Morland, Catherine's brother, is a good friend of John Thorpe, Mrs. Thorpe's son.

Isabella and Catherine soon become close friends, and James and John arrive only a few days later. Isabella takes a liking to James, neglecting Catherine. Catherine gets stuck with John, who isn't very attractive and talks too much, most of which is bragging. Catherine is polite to him nonetheless. Catherine runs into Henry Tilney again and meets his sister, Eleanor. They plan a walk for the next day that is later thwarted by John,

unknown to Catherine. When she finds out about John's interference, she directly apologizes to Henry and his sister at their home, meeting their father, General Tilney, in the process...

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

Quicklet On Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen

+ Northanger Abbey and the Gothic Novel

+ Jane Austen: No Life of Ease for Our Favorite Female Novelist of All Time

+ About Northanger Abbey

+ Overall Summary of Northanger Abbey

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