Baker Street Readers

Great reads for all ages

The time has come for an unlikely heroine to have a real adventure.

Catherine Morland has little experience of the world. When a neighbour takes her to visit the fashionable city of Bath, her naiveté leaves her vulnerable. Who should Catherine trust? Whose friendship is genuine and whose will be harmful?

Catherine's adventure becomes sinister when she visits Northanger Abbey. What is hidden in the locked cabinet? Why are the General's children afraid of him? What terrible secrets does he keep in his dead wife's bedroom?

Guided only by the gothic horror stories she so loves reading, Catherine stumbles through her adventures. Will hers be a happy ending? Will she find a hero to share her 'happily ever after'?

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Word count: 5,656

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"Miniature masterpieces"
- BBC R4, Open Book

NORTHANGER ABBEY JANE AUSTEN

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TEACHER'S EDITION ONLY

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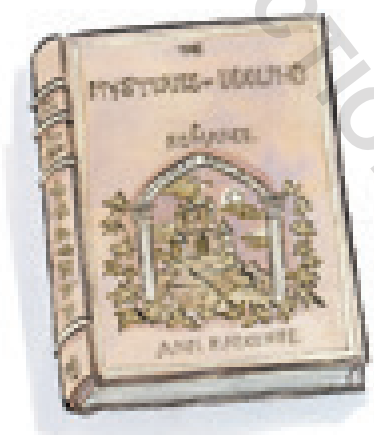
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THE CHARACTERS



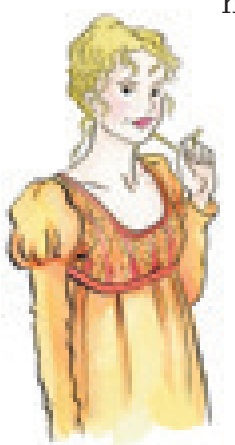
Catherine Morland

Catherine is an unlikely heroine. Is she strong enough for the challenges that lie ahead? Will she live happily ever after?



James Morland

James is Catherine's brother. Will his friendship with John Thorpe lead him and Catherine to happiness or heartbreak?



Isabella Thorpe

At twenty-one years old, Isabella is beautiful, fashionable and more experienced than Catherine. Is she a true friend? Can Catherine and James trust her?



John Thorpe

Isabella's brother and James's friend. Will he be the hero of Catherine's story, or the villain?



Henry Tilney

Henry is an intelligent, pleasant clergyman. Can such a man be a hero? Why is he afraid of his father? What does he think of Catherine?



Eleanor Tilney

Henry's younger sister is shy and gentle. How did her mother die? Why is she afraid of her father?



General Tilney

Henry and Eleanor's father is both charming and frightening. Why are his children afraid of him? What dreadful secrets is he hiding in Northanger Abbey?

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NORTHANGER ABBEY

To be a true heroine, a girl must be beautiful and brave. She needs a wicked stepmother, like poor Cinderella, or a cruel father who locks her in a dark tower, or at least something that requires her to show her true mettle.

Our heroine, however, is different; perhaps even unique. Catherine Morland's appearance, like her name, was not likely to catch anybody's attention. Lively and playful as a child, Catherine did not pass lonely days gazing longingly through dusty windows, awaiting her handsome prince. Instead, she spent her childhood rolling down the green slope outside her house and playing happily with her nine brothers and sisters. Most surprisingly of all, Catherine's parents, in spite of having so many children to care for, were not only still living, but were happy and healthy. Although they were not very rich, neither were they very poor, and within the means available to them they

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loved all their children equally. However great the temptation must sometimes have been, they had never locked a child in a tower or sold a single baby to a passing witch.

Having survived unscathed to the age of seventeen, Catherine was ready to seek adventure. Her only experience of the world consisted of the small community around her parents' home and the worlds she imagined as she sat enthralled by her books. No hero had ever galloped up to her house or leapt from the pages of her book. Even Catherine's parents agreed that the time had come for their daughter to experience new places and new faces.

When their neighbour, Mrs Allen, offered to take Catherine to the fashionable city of Bath for a few weeks, everybody was delighted. As Catherine sat in the carriage ready to depart, her mother gave her advice which would be valuable for any heroine setting out on her first

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adventure: 'Make sure you keep account of the money you spend.' Catherine nodded, kissed her parents, and turned her eyes towards Bath.



Bath's Pump Rooms were the place to see and be seen. Understanding that a heroine ought to make a strong first impression, Mrs Allen was very particular about the gown Catherine should wear for her first appearance. Therefore, on her first full day in Bath, the finely-dressed Catherine stepped, wide-eyed, into the bustling Lower Rooms. Astonishingly, silence did not fall upon the crowd, and no gentleman gazed in rapturous wonder. One man, yawning, did comment to his friend that a girl who was 'almost pretty' had just entered the room. Almost unnoticed and almost pretty, our heroine took her first tentative steps into society.

Poor Catherine was overwhelmed by the largest crowd of people she had ever seen,

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- General Tilney is not present when Catherine receives her letter from James, and he himself does not receive a letter. The General bumps into John Thorpe on a business visit to London. This is when Thorpe tells him the truth about Catherine's wealth.
- Isabella is soon abandoned by Frederick Tilney.
- The insult to Catherine in being sent away is immense. General Tilney does not even allow a servant to accompany her.
- General Tilney's attitude towards Catherine and Henry softens when Eleanor marries a wealthy man.

Back in time

Northanger Abbey is Jane Austen's earliest major novel, but was only published after her death.

Like Catherine, Jane Austen visited Bath as a young woman. Bath was then a highly fashionable place to visit: a place for amusement, romance and adventure for the upper classes. The Pump Rooms and the Upper and Lower Rooms were places of public assembly. The role of the Master of Ceremonies was to introduce well-suited people for friendship or romance.

In Jane Austen's time, the relationship between marriage and money was very important. Women

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were neither expected nor adequately educated to work for a living. Marrying a wealthy man was the most respectable way to gain independence and achieve comfort. Isabella is guided by this consideration when she ends her engagement to James Morland. John Thorpe, too, hopes to improve his social status by marriage. Henry and Catherine, however, will marry for love.

Reading books was one way for people to both better and entertain themselves. Gothic horror fictions became extremely popular in the 1790s. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe would have been well-known. Such works, considered 'light fiction', were bringing novels into disrepute, so much so that people might be tempted to deny that they enjoyed novels. Even Catherine, however, distinguishes between these and what she calls 'better books'. Jane Austen would probably have advocated extensive reading so that, like Henry Tilney, a reader could judge for themselves the value of different books.

Finding out more

We recommend the following books, websites and films to gain a greater understanding of Jane Austen's England:

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