



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Guide

Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen

1. The one character about whom Catherine is inclined to think the worst is General Tilney. Why is this? She is humiliated when Henry realizes how her imagination has run away with her, but how mistaken is she really regarding his general character? Are her powers of imagination more reliable than her powers of observation?
2. Henry Tilney tells Catherine that his father was attached to his mother and greatly afflicted by her death. Do you believe him?
3. Of his father, Henry says that, given his temperament, “he loved . . . as well as it was possible for him to.” How well do you imagine it will be possible for Henry to love? Affectionately? Passionately? Steadfastly?
4. Hidden within Austen’s satire on gothic novels is Eleanor Tilney’s story. Eleanor has a dead mother, an overbearing father, and ends up married to a viscount. Imagine the book if Austen had chosen Eleanor as the heroine. Would it have been a gothic novel?
5. We are told immediately that Catherine does not object to books so long as “nothing like useful knowledge could be gained from them” and they are “all story and no reflection.” Escapist fiction continues to have a bad reputation. Is that reputation deserved?
6. What kind of difficulty level do you like in a book? Think of some books that are just difficult enough for you to enjoy. Think of some books that are too difficult. In your opinion, what makes a good book?
7. Some argue that the romance genre is the most popular form of fiction. Is the romance genre empowering or damaging? Do these fictions have real life implications? Are its antecedents the same novels Austen is poking fun at in *Northanger Abbey*? Or would you trace its lineage back to Austen herself?

The above questions were taken from

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/302057/northanger-abbey-by-jane-austen/9780451530844/readers-guide/> In order to enhance your discussion of the book.

Author Biography

Jane Austen was a Georgian era author known for her social commentary works. Though she was not well-known in her own time, Austen's works gained popularity in the 20th century. It was not until after her death that her brother revealed publicly that his sister was an author.

<https://www.biography.com/writer/jane-austen>

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