

QUESTIONS ON *NORTHANGER ABBEY*
(Please bring these questions with you on October 10)

NOTE: Though it wasn't published until after her death, *Northanger Abbey* is Jane Austen's first completed novel. Austen began writing at the age of 12, and much of her early work—including *Northanger Abbey*—pokes fun at the bad novels she read as a girl. But *Northanger Abbey* is more than just a parody. It is the story of a young lady's introduction into the world (Catherine Morland is 17 when she arrives at Bath), the story of her journey from naivete to experience, an account of the mistakes she makes and the lessons she learns.

1. The novel begins as follows: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine." Why not? What is a heroine supposed to be like (at least if you're a reader of popular fiction), and how is the young Catherine different? Draw on material in the first chapter to answer this question.
2. Like all young people, Catherine must learn to judge other people accurately and to choose her friends wisely. How well does she do with Isabella Thorpe? Think back to when you were 17. Did you have any friends who turned out to be unworthy of your trust and affection? Were you misled for the same reasons Catherine is?
3. Then there's John Thorpe, Catherine's potential love interest, who gallops into the book at the beginning of chapter 7 bragging about the speed of his horse. How is Thorpe similar to the boys you encountered in your formative years?
4. But the real villain of the story—the character who poses the greatest threat to Catherine's well being—is General Tilney. In the beginning he is polite, almost obsequious, in his dealings with Catherine, but even so, she never really likes him. Why not? After she arrives at Northanger Abbey, her imagination runs wild and she convinces herself that he has committed a horrible crime. He hasn't, of course, but his real crime—committed against Catherine herself—is certainly egregious. What is it, and why is his action so reprehensible?
5. By the end of the story, what has Catherine learned and how has she grown? Do you think she has achieved the intellectual and moral stature to be ranked with the heroines of Austen's later novels? Or is she too much of a lightweight to be placed alongside Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, Fanny Price, and Emma Woodhouse?