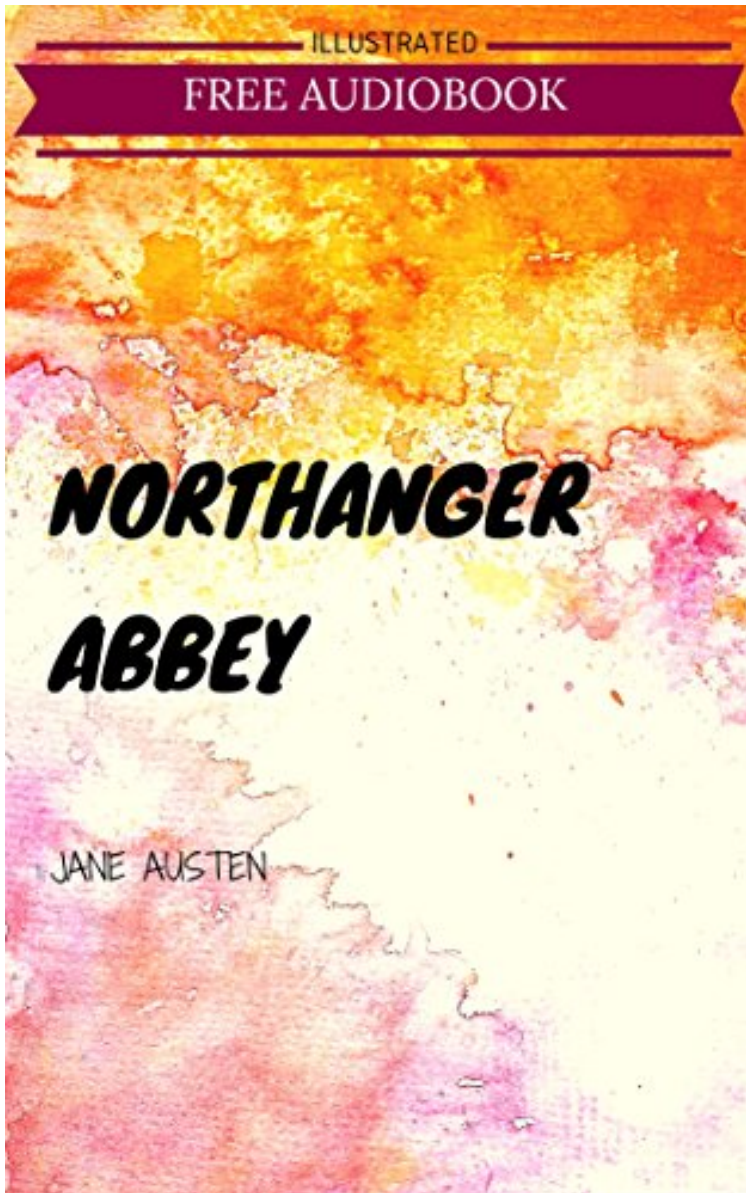


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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurNorthanger Abbey by Jane AustenHow is this book unique?Tablet and e-reader formattedOriginal Unabridged EditionAuthor Biography includedIllustrated versionNorthanger Abbey /nrr/ was the first of Jane Austen's novels to be completed for publication, though she had previously made a start on Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice. According to Cassandra Austen's Memorandum, Susan (as it was first called) was written circa 179899. It was revised by Austen for the press in 1803, and sold in the

same year for 10 to a London bookseller, Crosby Co., who decided against publishing. In the spring of 1816, the bookseller was content to sell it back to the novelist's brother, Henry Austen, for the exact sum¹⁰ that he had paid for it at the beginning, not knowing that the writer was by then the author of four popular novels. The novel was further revised by Austen in 1816/17, with the intention of having it published. Among other changes, the lead character's name was changed from Susan to Catherine, and Austen retitled the book Catherine as a result. Austen died in July 1817. *Northanger Abbey* (as the novel was now called) was brought out posthumously in late December 1817 (1818 given on the title page), as the first two volumes of a four-volume set that also featured another previously unpublished Austen novel, *Persuasion*. Neither novel was published under the title Jane Austen had given it; the title *Northanger Abbey* is presumed to have been the invention of Henry Austen, who had arranged for the book's publication..com

Though *Northanger Abbey* is one of Jane Austen's earliest novels, it was not published until after her death--well after she'd established her reputation with works such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. Of all her novels, this one is the most explicitly literary in that it is primarily concerned with books and with readers. In it, Austen skewers the novelistic excesses of her day made popular in such 18th-century Gothic potboilers as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Decrepit castles, locked rooms, mysterious chests, cryptic notes, and tyrannical fathers all figure into *Northanger Abbey*, but with a decidedly satirical twist. Consider Austen's introduction of her heroine: we are told on the very first page that "no one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine." The author goes on to explain that Miss Morland's father is a clergyman with "a considerable independence, besides two good livings--and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters." Furthermore, her mother does not die giving birth to her, and Catherine herself, far from engaging in "the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush" vastly prefers playing cricket with her brothers to any girlish pastimes. Catherine grows up to be a passably pretty girl and is invited to spend a few weeks in Bath with a family friend. While there she meets Henry Tilney and his sister Eleanor, who invite her to visit their family estate, *Northanger Abbey*. Once there, Austen amuses herself and us as Catherine, a great reader of Gothic romances, allows her imagination to run wild, finding dreadful portents in the most wonderfully prosaic events. But Austen is after something more than mere parody; she uses her rapier wit to mock not only the essential silliness of "horrid" novels, but to expose the even more horrid workings of polite society, for nothing Catherine imagines could possibly rival the hypocrisy she experiences at the hands of her supposed friends. In many respects *Northanger Abbey* is the most lighthearted of Jane Austen's novels, yet at its core is a serious, unsentimental commentary on love and marriage, 19th-century British style. --Alix Wilber

Chapter I
No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence, besides two good livings and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as any body might expect, she still lived on lived to have six children more to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. A family of ten children will be always called a fine family, where there are heads and arms and legs enough for the number; but the Morlands had little other right to the word, for they were in general very plain, and Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any. She had a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features; so much for her person; and not less unpropitious for heroism seemed her mind. She was fond of all boys plays, and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush. Indeed she had no taste for a garden; and if she gathered flowers at all, it was chiefly for the pleasure of mischief at least so it was conjectured from her always preferring those which she was forbidden to take. Such were her propensities her abilities were quite as extraordinary. She never could learn or understand any thing before she was taught; and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid. Her mother was three months in teaching her only to repeat the Beggars Petition; and after all, her next sister, Sally, could say it better than she did. Not that Catherine was always stupid, by no means; she learnt the fable of *The Hare and many Friends*, as quickly as any girl in England. Her mother wished her to learn music; and Catherine was sure she should like it, for she was very fond of tinkling the keys of the old forlorn spinnet; so, at eight years

old she began. She learnt a year, and could not bear it; and Mrs. Morland, who did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste, allowed her to leave off. The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life. Her taste for drawing was not superior; though whenever she could obtain the outside of a letter from her mother, or seize upon any other odd piece of paper, she did what she could in that way, by drawing houses and trees, hens and chickens, all very much like one another. Writing and accounts she was taught by her father; French by her mother: her proficiency in either was not remarkable, and she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could. What a strange, unaccountable character! for with all these symptoms of profligacy at ten years old, she had neither a bad heart nor a bad temper; was seldom stubborn, scarcely ever quarrelsome, and very kind to the little ones, with few interruptions of tyranny; she was moreover noisy and wild, hated confinement and cleanliness, and loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house. Such was Catherine Morland at ten. At fifteen, appearances were mending; she began to curl her hair and long for balls; her complexion improved, her features were softened by plumpness and colour, her eyes gained more animation, and her figure more consequence. Her love of dirt gave way to an inclination for finery, and she grew clean as she grew smart; she had now the pleasure of sometimes hearing her father and mother remark on her personal improvement. Catherine grows quite a good-looking girl, she is almost pretty to day, were words which caught her ears now and then; and how welcome were the sounds! To look almost pretty, is an acquisition of higher delight to a girl who has been looking plain the first fifteen years of her life, than a beauty from her cradle can ever receive. Mrs. Morland was a very good woman, and wished to see her children every thing they ought to be; but her time was so much occupied in lying-in and teaching the little ones, that her elder daughters were inevitably left to shift for themselves; and it was not very wonderful that Catherine, who had by nature nothing heroic about her, should prefer cricket, base ball, riding on horseback, and running about the country at the age of fourteen, to books or at least books of information for, provided that nothing like useful knowledge could be gained from them, provided they were all story and no reflection, she had never any objection to books at all. But from fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine; she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives. From Pope, she learnt to censure those who bear about the mockery of woe. From Gray, that Many a flower is born to blush unseen, And waste its fragrance on the desert air. From Thompson, that It is a delightful task To teach the young idea how to shoot. And from Shakspeare she gained a great store of information amongst the rest, that Trifles light as air, Are, to the jealous, confirmation strong, As proofs of Holy Writ. That The poor beetle, which we tread upon, In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great As when a giant dies. And that a young woman in love always looks like Patience on a monument Smiling at Grief. So far her improvement was sufficient and in many other points she came on exceedingly well; for though she could not write sonnets, she brought herself to read them; and though there seemed no chance of her throwing a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the pianoforte, of her own composition, she could listen to other people's performance with very little fatigue. Her greatest deficiency was in the pencil she had no notion of drawing not enough even to attempt a sketch of her lover's profile, that she might be detected in the design. There she fell miserably short of the true heroic height. At present she did not know her own poverty, for she had no lover to portray. She had reached the age of seventeen, without having seen one amiable youth who could call forth her sensibility; without having excited one real passion, and without having excited even any admiration but what was very moderate and very transient. This was strange indeed! But strange things may be generally accounted for if their cause be fairly searched out. There was not one lord in the neighbourhood; nor even a baronet. There was not one family among their acquaintance who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door not one young man whose origin was unknown. Her father had no ward, and the squire of the parish no children. But when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way. Mr. Allen, who owned the chief of the property about Fullerton, the village in Wiltshire where the Morlands lived, was ordered to Bath for the benefit of a gouty constitution; and his lady, a good-humoured woman, fond of Miss Morland, and probably aware that if adventures will not befall a young lady in her own village, she must seek them abroad, invited her to go with them. Mr. and Mrs. Morland were all compliance, and Catherine all happiness.