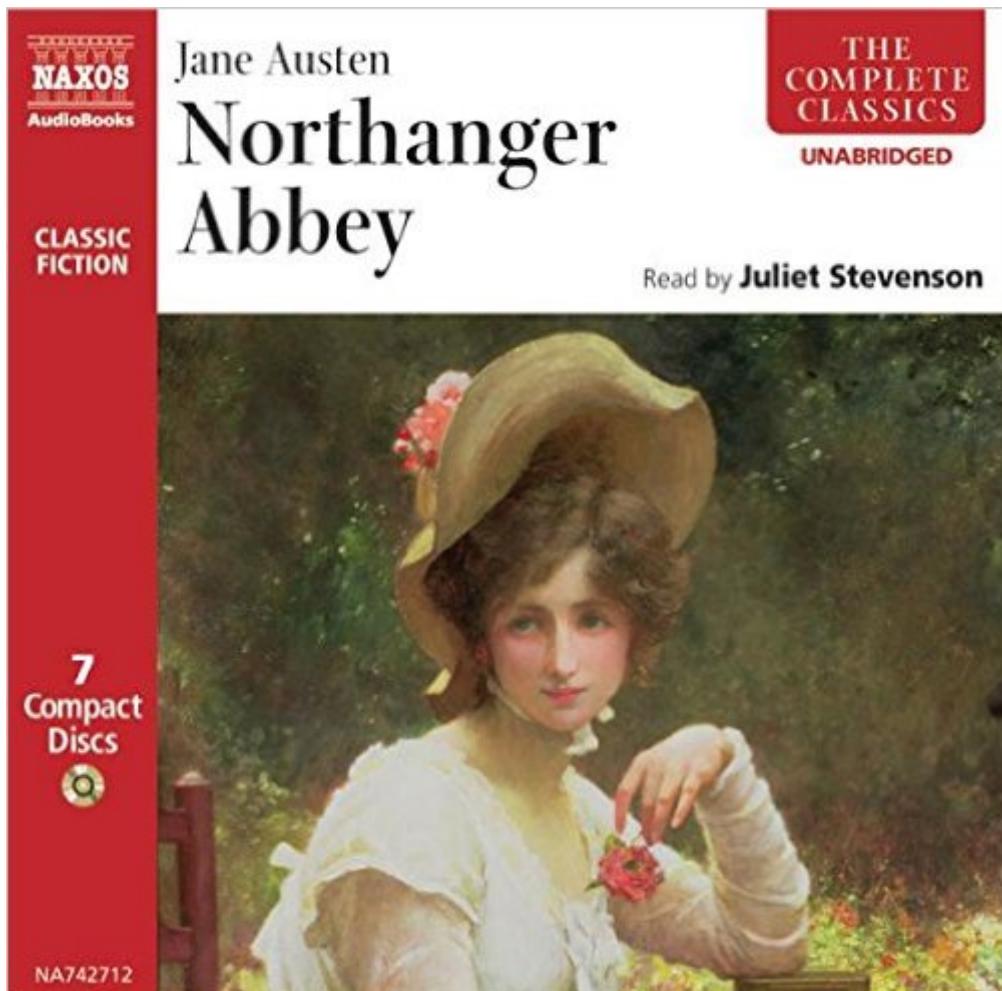


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Northanger Abbey (Naxos AudioBooks)



Synopsis

Northanger Abbey is the earliest of Jane Austen's great comedies of female enlightenment and combines literary burlesque - making fun of the excesses of the Gothic novel - with larger moral, philosophical, and social issues: the folly of letting literature get in the way of life, the inexcusability of not thinking for oneself, and the painful difficulties (especially for women) involved in growing up. Lady Susan and The Watsons are early compositions that reflect many of the qualities of Northanger Abbey. The first is an epistolary novel centring on the intrigues of the villainous Lady Susan; the second is an unfinished example of Jane Austen's most characteristic form - a story where the heroine is outstanding for her sense and goodness, virtues notably lacking in the other characters, who are here part of an altogether bleaker vision. Sanditon, too, is tragically incomplete, and it signals the achievement of a new depth and breadth of comic insight on the part of its author.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I approached this book somewhat warily, knowing that Northanger Abbey was to some degree a satirical take on the immense popularity of Gothic romances such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, a book I dearly love. Happily, Austen's means of poking fun at Gothic horror literature are far from mean-spirited and, as a matter of fact, can be delightfully humorous indeed. Her heroine, Catherine Morland, is by no means the type of heroine to be found in the giant tomes of Radcliffe and her indulgent imitators, as Austen tells her reading audience directly from the very start. "Almost attractive" on a good day, this unintellectual tomboy has reached her fifteenth year without inspiring a young man's fancy, nor would she be able to delight him with musical skill or

even draw his profile in her secret notebooks if she had. Having encountered no strangers who would prove to be a lord or prince in disguise, her heroic ambitions seem stymied at best until fate steps in and grants her a stay of several weeks in the delightful town of Bath. Making her transition from naïve girl to equally naïve young lady, Catherine almost immediately falls quite in love with young Henry Tilney, while at the same time she becomes intimate friends with an older young lady named Isabella, whose inconstancy as both friend and intended beloved of Catherine's own brother eventually brings her much pain. To her intense delight, however, Catherine is invited by General Tilney, Henry's father, to spend some few weeks in his home, Northanger Abbey. Her joy at spending such private time in the company of her beloved and new best friend Eleanor Tilney is immense, but equally exciting to her is the chance to spend time in a mysterious former abbey of the sort she has read so much about.

" "I see what you think of me," said he gravely--"I shall make but a poor figure in your journal tomorrow. ""My journal!""Yes, I know exactly what you will say: Friday, went to the Lower Rooms; wore my sprigged muslin robe with blue trimmings--plain black shoes--appeared to much advantage; but was strangely harassed by a queer, half-witted man, who would make me dance with him, and distressed me by his nonsense. ""Indeed I shall say no such thing. ""Shall I tell you what you ought to say?""If you please. ""I danced with a very agreeable young man, introduced by Mr. King; had a great deal of conversation with him--seems a most extraordinary genius--hope I may know more of him. That, madam, is what I wish you to say."

"~~~~~"Northanger Abbey," the first, shortest, most satiric, and least read of Jane Austen's completed novels, is a delightful treasure that will make you quite literally laugh out loud (so beware bringing the book to the airport, as I did, lest you suffer strange glances for your smothered sniggers). Following the journey of the coming-of-age Catherine Morland and her misadventures in Bath to the "horrid" Abbey, Jane Austen presents us with perhaps her funniest sociological book, that proves not only that teens will be teens in any age, but that an overactive imagination is not always a blessing, and that love is often the result of being loved. Readers should keep on the lookout for the commentaries on novels, feminine wiles and homecomings from Austen herself - a technique subdued in her other novels. The cast also includes Jane Austen's wittiest hero, Henry Tilney (a.k.a.

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