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## HENRY TILNEY

### WHO IS HENRY TILNEY?

- Henry is a clergyman, the second son of General Tilney and brother to Eleanor and Frederick.
- He meets and courts Catherine in Bath and becomes her mentor before eventually marrying her.

### AN UNCONVENTIONAL HERO

Henry is as unconventional a hero as Catherine is an unconventional heroine. He is not quite handsome, is dominated by his father, rather odd in the **ironic** playfulness of his conversation, and perhaps somewhat feminised: consider his knowledge about Gothic novels and muslins. His knowledge of the **Gothic** is more knowing than Catherine's, based on an understanding of its conventions rather than on naive enthusiasm.

### CLERGYMAN AND MANLINESS

Henry may also seem an unusual hero in that he is a clergyman, but Austen's heroes – consider Edward in *Sense and Sensibility*, Edmund in *Mansfield Park* – often are. And this goes against the idea that Henry is feminised since Austen, as Robert Miles notes in *Jane Austen* (2003), associates the clergy with manly behaviour because 'manly behaviour for her was ... connected to social responsibility rather than such qualities as physical prowess' (p. 113).

### STUDY FOCUS: THE VOICE OF REASON?

A04

Critical opinion is strongly divided on the question of Henry. Some find him the voice of good sense and reason, teaching Catherine through play, and encouraging her development through posing questions and puzzles she must work out for herself. Others consider he is a more refined version of the bully embodied in John Thorpe, putting words into Catherine's mouth and frequently silencing her. Which position do you find most convincing?

### HENRY AS IRONIC COMMENTATOR

Henry affects the distanced and yet tolerant and often jocular tone of the **narrator**, and he has sometimes been considered to speak for the author (see also **Part Four: Form**, on **Irony**). The similarity between them is strengthened by some of the opinions that Henry expresses: like the narrator, for example, he offers a defence of the novel. But none of her characters can ever be said to speak directly for Austen. In his 'niceness' about language he may be too pedantic and, in his rebuke to Catherine, too dogmatic. His idea of an England ruled by light and reason is as much a fiction as Catherine's assumptions about dark Gothic deeds at Northanger. Henry too has things to learn.

### KEY QUOTATIONS: HENRY

A01

- Catherine on Henry: "How can you," said Catherine, laughing, "be so –" she had almost said, strange' (p. 28).
- Henry on the analogy between dancing and matrimony: 'in both, man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal' (p. 74).
- Rebuking Catherine: 'Remember the country and the age in which we live' (p. 186).

#### GRADE BOOSTER

A01

In *Northanger Abbey*, many characters say one thing while they mean quite another. You should be able to carefully distinguish, however, Isabella's duplicity from Henry's irony, even though both depend on a kind of double-speak.

## ELEANOR TILNEY

### WHO IS ELEANOR TILNEY?

- Eleanor is the sister of Henry and the daughter of General Tilney.
- Her unexpected marriage in the final chapter paves the way for the marriage of Henry and Catherine.

### ELEANOR AND FRIENDSHIP

Eleanor functions in part as a contrast to Isabella. Like Isabella, Eleanor is older and wiser than Catherine; unlike Isabella, she does not take advantage and try to manipulate her. If Isabella is the false friend of Volume One, always putting self-interest first, Eleanor is the true friend of Volume Two, defending Catherine when Henry teases her. Although Eleanor is powerless to stop her father evicting Catherine from Northanger, she helps as much as she can by lending her money.

### GOOD BREEDING

Eleanor, full of 'good sense and good breeding' (p. 54), is also set in opposition to Isabella through descriptions of her manners. If Isabella is constantly going against social convention, chasing young men, going on unchaperoned carriage rides, Eleanor is the epitome of propriety. In the move from Isabella to Eleanor, we see fictional poses being replaced by social manners. The word most frequently applied to Eleanor is 'elegant', forming a contrast with the vulgarity of Isabella and suggesting the difference in their rank and wealth.

### STUDY FOCUS: WOMEN AND POWER

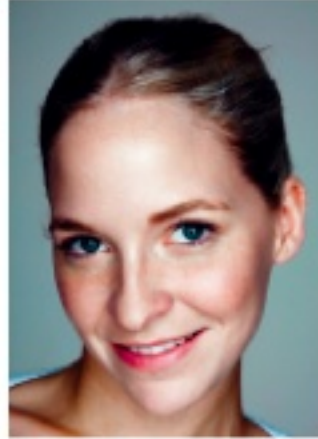
A03

Eleanor, however, is completely powerless, indeed, ultimately as powerless as Isabella to effect any changes in her situation, and much more passive in accepting her fate than Isabella. Eleanor may possess all the virtues valued in Austen's world, but her rank and wealth put her too far above the man she loves. Inheritances for women like Eleanor are there to promote their marriages and to ally their families with others of at least equal rank and wealth. Consequently, she can only ultimately marry when the man she loves miraculously inherits a fortune and a title. Catherine may play the Gothic heroine, but Eleanor, in a sense, turns out to be one. Her mother is dead, and, under the domination of her father, Eleanor is isolated and basically confined to the abbey until released 'from all the evils of such a home as Northanger' (p. 233) through marriage. Notice the Gothic inflections here in the use of that term 'evil'. However, Eleanor is a very passive version of the Gothic heroine. Catherine, in contrast, shows the curiosity and spark that are associated with such Radcliffean heroines as Emily.

### KEY QUOTATIONS: ELEANOR

A01

- The narrator on Eleanor: 'her air, though it had not all the decided pretension, the resolute stiltedness of Miss Thorpe's, had more real elegance' (p. 54).
- Eleanor to Catherine: 'you must have been long enough in this house to see that I am but a nominal mistress of it, that my real power is nothing' (p. 210).



#### CRITICAL VIEWPOINT

A03

In considering the fate of Eleanor, Diane Hoeveler argues in *Gothic Feminism* (1998) that one of the aims of Austen's Gothic **parody** is to 'inflate the importance of issues explored in women's literature under the cover of deflating the excesses of such literature' (p. 125).



## HOW TO WRITE HIGH-QUALITY RESPONSES

The quality of your writing – how you express your ideas – is vital for getting a higher grade, and **AO1** and **AO2** are specifically about **how** you respond.

### FIVE KEY AREAS

The quality of your responses can be broken down into **five** key areas.

#### 1. THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR ANSWER/ESSAY

- **First, get straight to the point in your opening paragraph.** Use a sharp, direct first sentence that deals with a key aspect and then follow up with evidence or a detailed reference.
- **Put forward an argument or point of view** (you won't **always** be able to challenge or take issue with the essay question, but generally, where you can, you are more likely to write in an interesting way).
- **Signpost your ideas** with connectives and references, which help the essay flow.
- **Don't repeat points already made**, not even in the conclusion, unless you have something new to say that adds a further dimension.

#### TARGETING A HIGH GRADE

Consider the following essay question:

**'Catherine has to learn to reject her Gothic fantasies.'** How do you respond to this viewpoint?

Here's an example of an opening paragraph that gets straight to the point:

*Henry's rebuke is often considered the key moment in Catherine's education: his correction of her 'blackest suspicions' (p. 176) about General Tilney leads to her subsequent dismissal of her Gothic fantasies and suggests she has learned her lesson. Soon after, however, when the General unceremoniously evicts Catherine from the abbey, it begins to seem that her instincts about the General, the result of her reading, are not quite as wrong as Henry likes to think.*

Immediate focus on task and key words with example from text

#### EXAMINER'S TIP

Answer the question set, not the question you'd like to have been asked. Examiners say that often students will be set a question on one character (for example, Catherine) but end up writing almost as much about another (such as Henry). Or they write about one aspect from the question (for example, 'manners') but ignore another (such as 'morals'). **Stick to the question**, and answer **all parts of it**.

#### 2. USE OF TITLES, NAMES, ETC.

This is a simple, but important, tip to stay on the right side of the examiners.

- **Make sure that you spell correctly** the titles of the texts, chapters, names of authors and so on. Present them correctly, too, with double quotation marks and capitals as appropriate. For example, *'In Volume One of "Northanger Abbey" ...*
- **Use the full title**, unless there is a good reason not to (e.g. it's very long).
- **Use the terms 'novel' or 'text'** rather than 'book' or 'story'. If you use the word 'story', the examiner may think you mean the plot/action rather than the 'text' as a whole.

### 3. EFFECTIVE QUOTATIONS

Do not 'bolt on' quotations to the points you make. You will get some marks for including them, but examiners will not find your writing very fluent.

The best quotations are:

- Relevant
- Not too long
- Integrated into your argument/sentence

#### TARGETING A HIGH GRADE

Here is an example of a quotation successfully embedded in a sentence:

*The bewildered Catherine simply does not understand Isabella's innuendos and usually responds with 'a look of wondering ignorance' (p. 112).*

Remember – quotations can also be a well-selected set of three or four single words or phrases. These can be easily embedded into a sentence to build a picture or explanation around your point. Or they can be longer quotations that are explored and picked apart.

#### GRADE BOOSTER

**AO2**

Make sure that you devote plenty of space to the close analysis of language. This will show that you have a deep understanding of the text, and the layers of meaning within it.

### 4. TECHNIQUES AND TERMINOLOGY

By all means mention literary terms, techniques, conventions or people (for example, **parody** or **metonymy** or 'Ann Radcliffe' – notice it is *not* Anne but Ann) **but** make sure that you:

- Understand what they mean
- Are able to link them to what you're saying
- Spell them correctly!

### 5. GENERAL WRITING SKILLS

Try to write in a way that sounds professional and uses standard English. This does not mean that your writing will lack personality – just that it will be authoritative.

- Avoid colloquial or everyday expressions such as 'got', 'alright', 'ok' and so on.
- Use terms such as 'convey', 'suggest', 'imply', 'infer' to explain the writer's methods.
- Refer to 'we' when discussing the audience/reader.
- Avoid assertions and generalisations; don't just state a general point of view ('Mrs Allen is obsessed with fashion so this makes her comical'), but analyse closely, with clear evidence and textual detail.

#### TARGETING A HIGH GRADE

Note the professional approach in this example:

*While Mrs Allen's obsession with fashion may seem to make her a comic character, it is perhaps not as 'harmless' (p. 21) as the narrator initially claims and actually functions to make some serious points about the materialism of the age. Her judgements of people are frequently and shallowly based on the evidence dress provides of wealth or class; she is, for example, impressed by Eleanor Tilney's pearls, but smugly scornful of the inferior lace on her friend Mrs Thorpe's pelisse.*

#### EXAMINER'S TIP

Make sure you know how many marks are available for each **AO** in the task you are set. This can help you to divide up your time or decide how much attention to give each aspect.