

TEXT	NORTHANGER ABBEY (1817)
AUTHOR	Jane Austen
THEMES	Emotions, problems (unit 4), history (unit 5), old buildings (unit 14)
VOCABULARY	Describing a room, emotions, bravery, fear
WRITING	Students describe a room.
SPEAKING	Ranking activity explaining and justifying opinions

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jane Austen (1775–1817) was an English novelist who wrote six major novels, which interpret and comment on the British social world of the upper middle-class at the end of the 18th century. Austen's books remain extremely popular and have been turned into successful films and TV series and have inspired numerous spin-offs such as *Lost in Austen* and *Pride and Prejudice and Vampires*. Her popularity might seem strange, considering that the world of her novels is so restricted, but she explores universal themes about human social interaction with wit, irony and profound observation. *Northanger Abbey* reflects, in part, the popularity of the Gothic novel at this time, a genre that began with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and which is as relevant today as it was then.

WARMER

Find some pictures of typical Gothic settings – an abbey, an old castle, a large, imposing country house, etc. Ask students to describe them and suggest what kind of stories happen in settings such as these.

ABOUT YOU

The questions further develop the themes of the Warmer. Ask students to tell each other about a time they slept in a strange room by suggesting possible situations – on holiday, on a school trip, visiting family, on a summer course, etc.

Use the introduction to explain the Gothic genre – it appeared around the same time as Austen was writing and became the genre we are familiar with today, thanks to books like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*.

- 1 Students read silently or you read the text out loud. Check vocabulary comprehension and use the glossary, giving more examples, if necessary. Write some words on the board (*afraid, interested, excited, happy, tired, etc.*) and ask students to choose *yes/no/not sure* in order to describe Catherine's feelings. This is a good way of making students aware of how atmosphere in stories tells us as much as specific words – we can have a 'feeling' about a situation through the mood the writer creates. In this way, students can become aware of the difference between a narrative text and other text types.

2

Possible answers

- 1 She is interested in knowing what is inside and probably wants to find something secret.
- 2 Ask students if they think she is brave or cowardly and if they think she is mostly imagining things.
- 3 With the whole class, see what ideas people have.
- 4 As with the previous question, ask for suggestions and compare ideas.

VOCABULARY

3

Answers

- 1 old-fashioned
- 2 an abbey
- 3 seized
- 4 is very brave

4

Answers

- 1 He likes very old-fashioned music.
- 2 The smoke went up the chimney.
- 3 She put a lock on the door.
- 4 He beat the rhythm with his fingers.
- 5 Breathing dirty air is not healthy.

WRITING

- 5 Brainstorm vocabulary for things you can find in a room. Use the questions to provide ideas for the written work.

MIXED ABILITY

If Activity 5 is a collaborative writing activity, ask the weaker students to be the illustrators. This can be a simple floor plan showing the room or, if they are good at drawing, a more artistic illustration. This works well for both levels – the stronger ones have to describe carefully and direct those who are drawing.

SPEAKING

- 6 Explain how a ranking activity works. Read the note together and clarify/elicite the meaning of the word *prisoner*. First of all, students work alone and rank the options from 1-5. This is important as it avoids everyone immediately agreeing with the strongest personalities. Then they work as a group and negotiate a new group order, explaining their reasons. Each group can then explain their ranking to the whole class.