

How Valancourt Taught Her to Say No:

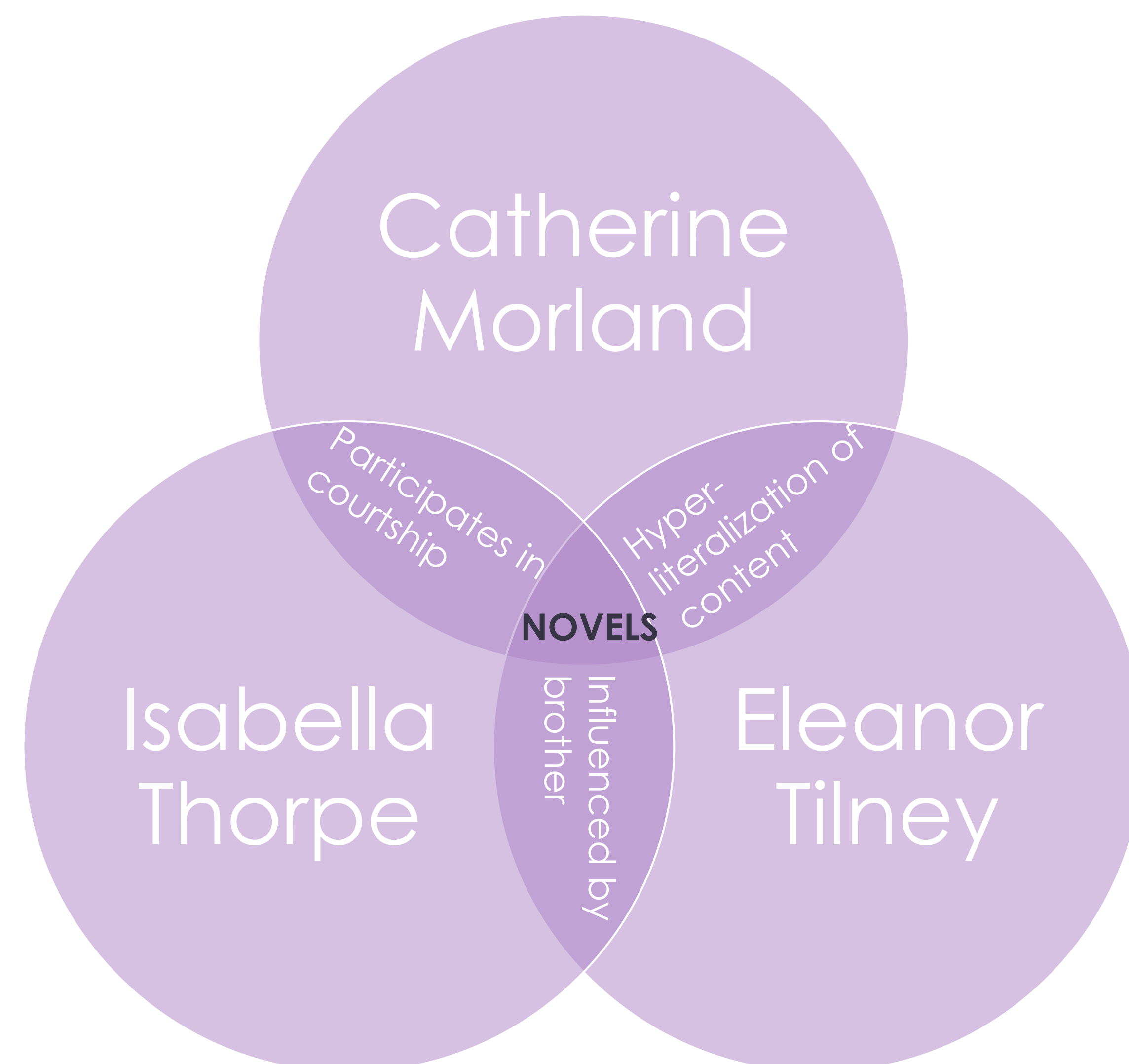
How Literacy Inspires Consent and Autonomy in the Women of *Northanger Abbey*

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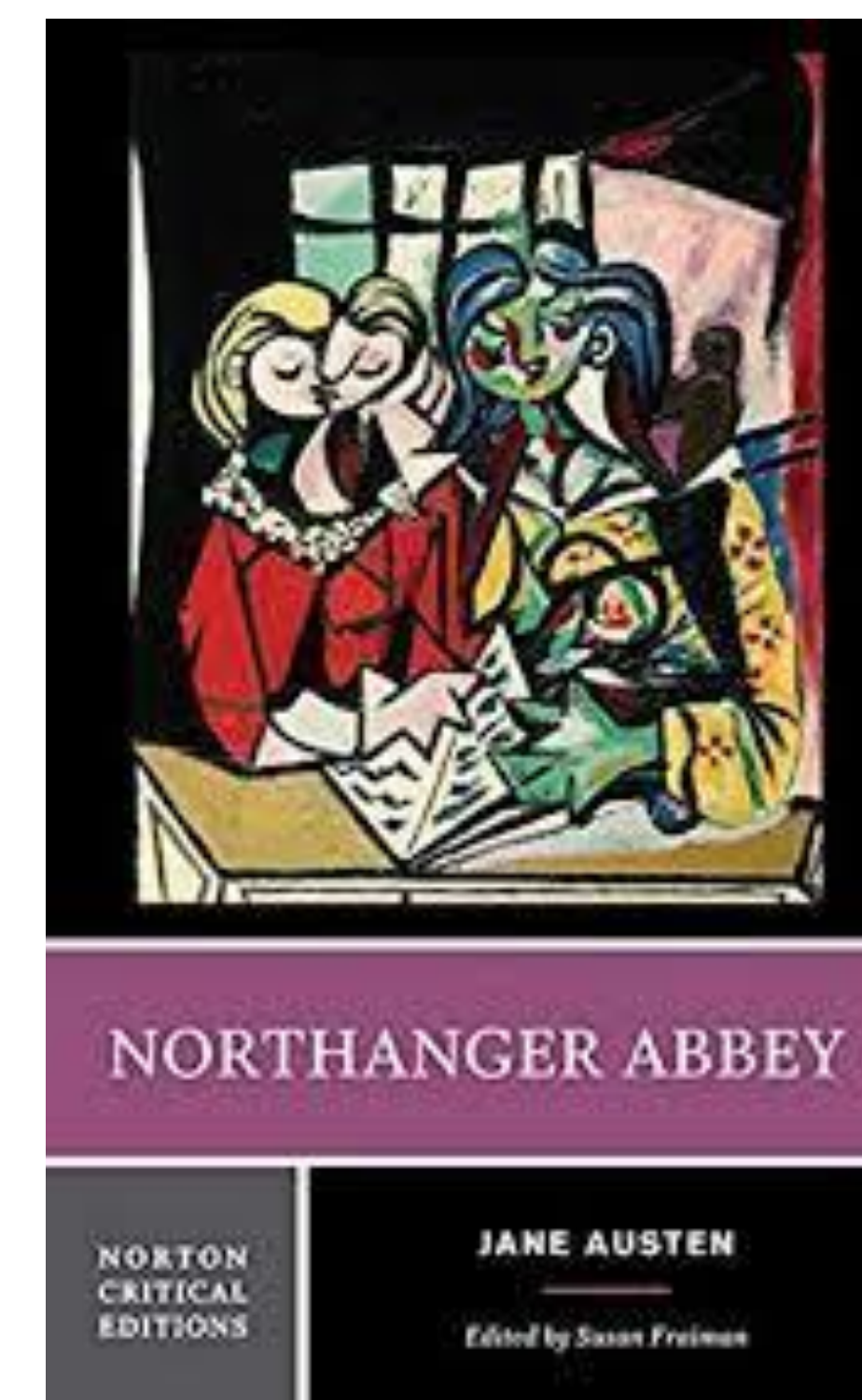
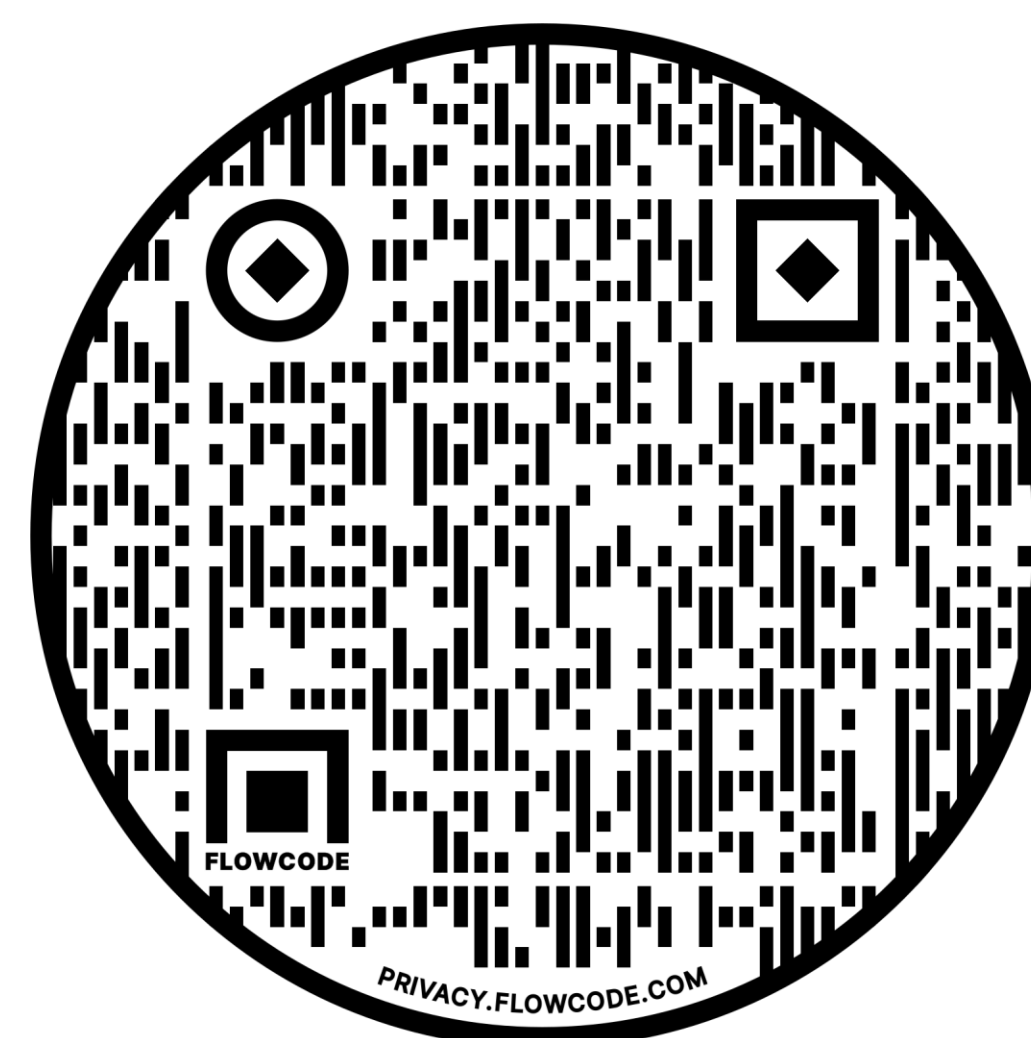
Introduction

How does the social act of reading impact how nineteenth-century women view consent and their right to it?

Women Analyzed



Northanger Abbey shows how widespread literacy amongst women taught bodily autonomy and consent.



This image from Norton Publishers

Understanding & Education

- Lack of knowledge for women about consent
- Women didn't see harassment for what it was
- Examples from stories allowed discourse on the topic

Power & Rebellion

- Autonomy an act of resistance against societal expectations
- Divert the power hierarchy in their favor
- Moral panic over novels stemmed from the recognition of newly acknowledged women's rights and abilities

Character & Reader

- Both characters and women readers of *Northanger Abbey* benefit
- Meta exemplification of ideals
- Communal bonding over shared experiences
- Fiction mirroring reality shows Austen's approach to discussing sociopolitical issues in her novels