

Chapter 1 : SparkNotes: The Scarlet Letter

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In June , in Puritan Boston, Massachusetts, a crowd gathers to witness the punishment of Hester Prynne, a young woman who has given birth to a baby of unknown parentage. She is required to wear a scarlet "A" on her dress when she is in front of the townspeople to shame her. The letter "A" stands for adulteress, although this is never said explicitly in the novel. Her sentence required her to stand on the scaffold for three hours, exposed to public humiliation, and to wear the scarlet "A" for the rest of her life. As Hester approaches the scaffold , many of the women in the crowd are angered by her beauty and quiet dignity. When demanded and cajoled to name the father of her child, Hester refuses. As Hester looks out over the crowd, she notices a small, misshapen man and recognizes him as her long-lost husband, who has been presumed lost at sea. He chooses a new name, Roger Chillingworth, to aid him in his plan. After she returns to her prison cell, the jailer brings in Roger Chillingworth, a physician, to calm Hester and her child with his roots and herbs. He and Hester have an open conversation regarding their marriage and the fact that they were both in the wrong. Her lover, however, is another matter and he demands to know who it is; Hester refuses to divulge such information. He accepts this, stating that he will find out anyway, and forces her to hide that he is her husband. Following her release from prison, Hester settles in a cottage at the edge of town and earns a meager living with her needlework, which is of extraordinary quality. She lives a quiet, somber life with her daughter, Pearl, and performs acts of charity for the poor. The shunning of Hester also extends to Pearl, who has no playmates or friends except her mother. As she grows older, Pearl becomes capricious and unruly. Her conduct starts rumours, and, not surprisingly, the church members suggest Pearl be taken away from Hester. Hester, hearing rumors that she may lose Pearl, goes to speak to Governor Bellingham. With him are ministers Wilson and Dimmesdale. Tormented by his guilty conscience, Dimmesdale goes to the square where Hester was punished years earlier. Climbing the scaffold, he admits his guilt but cannot find the courage to do so publicly. Several days later, Hester meets Dimmesdale in the forest and tells him of her husband and his desire for revenge. She convinces Dimmesdale to leave Boston in secret on a ship to Europe where they can start life anew. Renewed by this plan, the minister seems to gain new energy. On Election Day, Dimmesdale gives what is called one of his most inspired sermons. Later, most witnesses swear that they saw a stigma in the form of a scarlet "A" upon his chest, although some deny this statement. Chillingworth, losing his will for revenge, dies shortly thereafter and leaves Pearl a substantial inheritance. After several years, Hester returns to her cottage and resumes wearing the scarlet letter. When she dies, she is buried near the grave of Dimmesdale, and they share a simple slate tombstone engraved with an escutcheon described as: Major theme[edit] This section possibly contains original research. Please improve it by verifying the claims made and adding inline citations. Statements consisting only of original research should be removed. This combination of "dreaminess" and realism gave the author space to explore major themes. But it also results in knowledge " specifically, in knowledge of what it means to be immoral. For Hester, the Scarlet Letter is a physical manifestation of her sin and reminder of her painful solitude. She contemplates casting it off to obtain her freedom from an oppressive society and a checkered past as well as the absence of God. Because the society excludes her, she considers the possibility that many of the traditions held up by the Puritan culture are untrue and are not designed to bring her happiness. As for Dimmesdale, the "cheating minister", his sin gives him "sympathies so intimate with the sinful brotherhood of mankind, so that his chest vibrate[s] in unison with theirs. Throughout the work, the nature images contrast with the stark darkness of the Puritans and their systems. The outward man reflects the condition of the heart; an observation thought inspired by the deterioration of Edgar Allan Poe , whom Hawthorne "much admired". Hester was rejected by the villagers even though she spent her life doing what she could to help the sick and the poor. Because of the social shunning , she spent her life mostly in solitude, and would not go to church. As a result, she retreats into her own mind and her own thinking. Her thoughts

begin to stretch and go beyond what would be considered by the Puritans as safe or even Christian. She still sees her sin, but begins to look on it differently than the villagers ever have. She even goes so far as to tell Dimmesdale that their sin has been paid for by their daily penance and that their sin will not keep them from getting to heaven, however, the Puritans believed that such a sin surely condemns. Her thinking is free from religious bounds and she has established her own different moral standards and beliefs. Fields persuaded Hawthorne to publish *The Scarlet Letter* along with the earlier-completed "Custom House" essay but he had nothing to do with the length of the story. It was the last Salem home where the Hawthorne family lived. A 2, copy second edition included a preface by Hawthorne dated March 30, , that stated he had decided to reprint his Introduction "without the change of a word The only remarkable features of the sketch are its frank and genuine good-humor As to enmity, or ill-feeling of any kind, personal or political, he utterly disclaims such motives". In the mid-nineteenth century, bookbinders of home-grown literature typically hand-made their books and sold them in small quantities. The first mechanized printing of *The Scarlet Letter*, 2, volumes, sold out within ten days, [11] and was widely read and discussed to an extent not much experienced in the young country up until that time. Lawrence said that there could not be a more perfect work of the American imagination than *The Scarlet Letter*. One can often return to it; it supports familiarity and has the inexhaustible charm and mystery of great works of art. In the s she was excommunicated by the Puritans and exiled from Boston and moved to Rhode Island. Martin Luther " was a leader of the Protestant Reformation in Germany. Increase Mather , , a powerful leader of the early Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was a Puritan minister involved with the government of the colony, and also the Salem Witch Trials. Sir Thomas Overbury and Dr. Forman were the subjects of an adultery scandal in in England. Forman was charged with trying to poison his adulterous wife and her lover. Overbury was a friend of the lover and was perhaps poisoned. John Winthrop " , second governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The story of King David and Bathsheba is depicted in the tapestry in Mr. See II Samuel for the Biblical story. Symbols[edit] The following are symbols that are embedded in *The Scarlet Letter*: The Scarlet Letter A: However, as time progresses, the meaning of the letter changed. It now represented, to some, able. Such helpfulness was found in her"so much power to do, and power to sympathize"that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. The meteor shaped as an A serves as another symbol in the book. To Reverend Dimmesdale the meteor is a sign from God who is revealing his sin to everyone and causes him to be ridden with guilt. However, others perceived the letter to be a symbol for angel. His name contains the root word "dim" which evokes the feeling of faint, weak, and gloom. This represents the constant state Dimmesdale finds himself in. His life has dimmed itself every since his sin causing his light of life to fade and dim. The rosebush is mentioned twice within the course of the story. At the beginning, it is first viewed as nature's way of offering beauty to those who leave and enter the prison as well with a glimmer of hope to those who inhabit it. The rosebush is perceived as a symbol of brightness in a story filled with human sorrow. The scaffold is mentioned three times throughout the novel. It can be viewed as separating the book into the beginning, middle, and end. It symbolizes shame, revelation of sin, and guilt for it is where Hester received her scarlet letter as punishment and where Dimmesdale experience his revelation through the meteor.

Chapter 2 : The Scarlet Letter (Tor Classics): Nathaniel Hawthorne: www.nxgvision.com: Books

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Chapter 3 : The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne | www.nxgvision.com

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a classic which is the main reason I chose to read it. But, besides being a classic, it is also a very good book, and I enjoyed it immensely, though the ending was disappointing in that it was a little vague as to the fates of some of the characters.

