

POCONO MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

HONORS 10 ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS SUMMER READING

***The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne**

Study Guide

Chapter 1 "The Prison Door"

1. What colony is the setting for the novel?
2. Where in the colony does the opening chapter take place?
3. For what two "practical necessities" did the new colony set aside land?
4. Who is Anne Hutchinson? How does Hawthorne feel about her?
5. Explain one possible symbol for the rose?

Chapter 2 "The Market Place"

1. Name three crimes and the punishments that the Puritans might witness.
2. What is the relationship between religion and law in Puritan New England?

3. Describe the Puritan women. What do they look like?

4. What punishments would the Puritan women have given Hester Prynne if it were left to them? What does this tell you about them?

5. Describe the appearance of Hester Prynne.

6. What is Hester's sin? Punishment?

7. What is astonishing about the "A" on her bodice?

8. Why is Hester taken to the scaffold in the market-place?

9. What things does Hester think about while she is on the scaffold?

10. How old is her baby? What detail is given to suggest the baby was born in jail?

Chapter 3 "The Recognition"

1. Describe the man who is standing on the outskirts of the crowd.

2. What reference was made in Chapter 2 that reminds the reader of this man?

3. What gesture does he make to Hester that suggests he knows her?

4. What does the stranger learn from the townsman next to him?

5. What is the usual punishment for adultery? Why is Hester's punishment less severe?

6. What are Hester's feelings toward the stranger?

7. Who is Bellingham? John Wilson?

8. What do Bellingham and Wilson want Hester to do?

9. Describe Dimmesdale.

10. What is his [Dimmesdale) relationship to Hester? What does he ask her to reveal?

11. Why won't Hester name the child's father?

Chapter 4 "The Interview"

1. How does Hester act when she returns to prison? (Why does the jailer call a doctor?)

2. What is the doctor's name?

3. Where did the "doctor" learn his skill?

4. What is the relationship between Chillingworth and Hester?

5. Why should Hester's marriage be a failure?

6. Did Hester ever love her husband?

7. What does Chillingworth vow to do?

8. What secret does Chillingworth ask Hester to keep?

9. What symbol is introduced for Chillingworth in Hester's final lines in this chapter?

Chapter 5 "Hester at Her Needle"

1. What "general symbol" has Hester become?

2. Give two reasons why Hester does not leave the colony.

3. What talent does Hester use to support herself and Pearl?

4. What garments is Hester not allowed to sew?

5. What type of dress does Hester wear? Pearl?

6. What does Hester do that shows she has a charitable nature?

7. How did the poor, the ladies of Boston, the clergy, and the children treat Hester?

8. What special knowledge does Hester feel the Scarlet Letter gives her?

Chapter 6 "Pearl"

1. Why did Hester name her child "Pearl"?

2. What does the Scarlet Letter mean to Pearl?

3. What do the townspeople say about Pearl?

Chapter 7 "The Governor's Hall"

1. Name two reasons Hester visits Governor Bellingham.

2. How are the Scarlet Letter and Pearl alike?

Chapter 8 "The Elf and the Minister":

1. Who are the other visitors at the Governor's house?

2. How much time has elapsed since the opening scene?

3. With what creatures of fantasy is Pearl continually compared?
4. How has Chillingworth changed since Hester last saw him?
5. How has Rev. Dimmesdale changed since Hester's public humiliation?
6. Who pleads successfully for Hester to keep her child?
7. To which visitor does Pearl respond to lovingly?

Chapter 9 "The Leech"

1. What new identity has Chillingworth assumed in Boston? Why is he successful?
2. To whom in the colony does Chillingworth attach himself as a medical advisor?
3. Describe Dimmesdale's health.
4. What gesture has become Dimmesdale's habit?

5. What two opposing views do the townspeople hold about Roger Chillingworth?

Chapter 10 "The Leech and His Patient"

1. What "investigation" consumes Chillingworth?

2. Who is Chillingworth's main suspect and victim?

3. What is a leech? What double meaning does the word "leech" have?

4. What secret does Chillingworth believe is buried in Dimmesdale's heart?

5. Why would Dimmesdale live with guilt and not confess his sin openly?

6. What reaction does Pearl have to Chillingworth when she sees him with Rev. Dimmesdale?

7. What discovery does Chillingworth make when Dimmesdale "fell into a deep, deep slumber"?

Chapter 11 "The Interior of a Heart"

1. What effect does Reverend Dimmesdale's guilt have upon his popularity in the colony?

Chapter 12 "The Minister's Vigil"

1. What is a vigil? Where does Dimmesdale hold his vigil?
2. Why are Hester and Pearl out at midnight?
3. What promise does Dimmesdale refuse to make to Pearl?
4. What is miraculous about the meteor?

Chapter 13 "Another View of Hester"

1. How old is Pearl in this chapter?
2. How has the townspeople's view changed toward Hester?

3. How has Hester's appearance changed?

4. What does Hester resolve to do?

Chapter 14 "Hester and the Physician"

1. How has Roger Chillingworth changed in the past 7 years?

2. What does Hester want Chillingworth to do?

3. What revelation is she going to make to Reverend Dimmesdale?

4. What effect has Chillingworth had on Dimmesdale?

Chapter 15 "Hester and Pearl"

1. Read Hester's description of Chillingworth carefully. How does she feel about him?

2. What questions does Pearl ask her mother? Why does this trouble Hester?

Chapter 16 "A Forest Walk"

1. Where does Hester plan to meet Dimmesdale? Why?
2. Describe the scene with Hester and Pearl in the sunlight. What symbolic meaning could the sunlight have? Why does sunlight shine on Pearl and not on Hester?
3. What story has Pearl heard about the "black man"?
4. What does Hester mean when she says, "Once in my life, I met the Black Man. This scarlet letter is his mark."?
5. Why does Pearl think the minister holds his hand over his heart? How is there symbolic truth in what she says?

Chapter 17 "The Pastor and His Parishioner"

1. How has Dimmesdale's secret sin affected his life?
2. What is Dimmesdale's "secret poison his malignity, infecting all air about him?"
3. From what does Hester hope to save Dimmesdale by telling him the truth about Chillingworth?
4. Does Hester still love Dimmesdale?
5. What is Dimmesdale's reaction to the truth? (Hint: His initial reaction is different from his reaction after he's thought about it.)
6. What future plans does Hester suggest to Dimmesdale as a way to escape Chillingworth?

Chapter 18 "A Flood of Sunshine"

1. What is Dimmesdale's decision in response to Hester's plea that they leave the colony?

2. Why is the chapter entitled "A Flood of Sunshine"?
3. What does Hester do that symbolizes putting the past behind them?
4. What does the sunshine symbolize?
5. Near the end of this chapter, the forest creatures are naturally drawn to Pearl and recognize her as "a kindred wildness." How do you explain this wildness in Pearl?

Chapter 19 "The Child at the Brookside"

1. What does Dimmesdale mean when he says, "Oh, Hester, what a thought is that, and how terrible to dread it! That my own features were part repeated in her face, and so strikingly that the world might see them!"
2. Why is Pearl upset when her mother calls her?
3. What is Pearl's reaction to Dimmesdale? How is Pearl a symbol for Hester and Dimmesdale?

Chapter 20 "The Minister in a Maze"

1. Why do Hester and Dimmesdale decide to go to Europe rather than remain in the New World?
2. How does it happen that Hester is acquainted with the captain of the ship now in the harbor?
3. Why does Dimmesdale consider it fortunate that the ship is not to sail for 4 days?

Chapters 21 "The New England Holiday" & Chapter 22 "The Procession"

1. What have the crowds of people gathered in the market-place to witness?
2. What piece of unwelcome news does the master of the ship on which, she, Pearl, and Dimmesdale are to sail have for Hester?
3. What is particularly noticeable about Dimmesdale's manner as he walks in the procession?
4. Where does Hester stand during the procession and during Dimmesdale's sermon in the church?

Chapter 23 "The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter" & Chapter 24 "Conclusion"

1. How does Dimmesdale appear as he leaves the church after his triumphant sermon?

2. How does Pearl react when Dimmesdale calls Hester and her to mount the scaffold with him?

3. Where, according to Chillingworth, is the one place where Dimmesdale could have successfully escaped him?

4. What were some of the conjectures made by parishioners as to the origin of the minister's scarlet letter?

5. What explanation for the events of Election Day is made by the minister's friends to make him seem blameless?

6. Dimmesdale enters the church energetically and upright to give his sermon; he leaves it stooped and tottering. How would you explain each of these quite different ways he carried himself? What might we assume has happened to him during the course of the sermon?

7. What do you think Dimmesdale means when he describes his and Hester's sin as violating "our reverence for each other's soul"?

Character List: Write a brief description of each character.

1. Hester Prynne

3. Reverend Wilson

4. Mistress Hibbins

5. Governor Bellingham

6. Reverend Dimmesdale

8. Roger Chillingworth

9. Pearl