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The Four Sins in The Scarlet Letter Sin is a word that is definitely not universally defined. Sin is relative to a persons religion, or lack there of. Sin also provokes punishment, be direct (by law) or by a moral lesson.

Severity in punishment is also conditional to the society in which the sin is committed. In Puritan society, much like that of TSL, sins are serious and punishment is very severe as compared with our modern standards.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, the author of TSL, was very immersed in the concept of sin. He broke sin down into four categories.

These categories where as follows: Secret sin, unforgiving sin, generational sin, and the “ worst” sin being psychological manipulation. Hawthorne clearly expresses the sins in TSL and one would be ignorant not to notice them due to the books allegorical repetition. Each sin defined by Hawthorne has at least one example for itself in the book. No one alive has not kept a secret from someone before.

Some secrets are harmless, such as a surprise birthday present or gift. But some truths need to be identified to a person, even if they are harmful to the person keeping the secret. In TSL, Hester Prynne cannot keep the fact of her unfaithfulness to her husband from everyone else. At this point her husband is away, and has been for some time now. During this time away Hester became pregnant. Now for Hester to be pregnant with her husbands child was an impossibility due to the time he had been away, so everyone knew that she had cheated on him. But no one knew who she had cheated with. Only Reverend Dimmsdale did, and that was because he was that man.

Dimmsdale knew that he was the father of Pearl, Hesters daughter.

Dimmsdale suffered enormous psychological and physical torment as he held the fact of his sin inside of himself. Dimmsdale, in fact, interrogated Hester while she was on the scaffold and asked her who the father was, because he wanted someone else to take the burden of a secret so large off him, he could not confess.

So he lived on and became weaker and weaker. Dimmsdale was a weak man. Time and time again he attempted to confess his sin but he failed every time.

Only on his death bed was his sin of secrecy lifted. One with the last name of Dahmer or Manson would more than likely be given a strange stare by one who did not know him, this situation best represents generational sin. Sin that passed on through the test of time must first be notoriously known and second be apparent. Generational sin is evidenced in TSL by Pearl. Since Pearl is the product of Hester Prynnes loathsome sin, the mere creation of her life was wrong.

She was, for lack of a better term, an accident. Pearl was undoubtedly discriminated from the beginning and, as she grew up, her red dress and saucy behavior made her yet more notorious.