

Internal and external conflicts



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The Scarlet Letter: Internal and External Conflicts In the novel, the Scarlet Letter, there are four main characters, Hester Prynne, Pearl Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Prynne Chillingworth. The story goes; Hester Prynne committed the sin of adultery with the minister of their Puritan Community, Arthur Dimmesdale, the community then condemning her to wear the scarlet letter “ A” for the rest of her natural life. Pearl Prynne being the product of the two sinners. In the moment, when Hester is completing the first part of her punishment, her long lost husband, Roger Prynne Chillingworth, arrives.

Not wanting his arrival acknowledge Roger replaces his maiden name for Chillingworth. This situation creates a whole plot of conflicts both external and internal in all of the four main characters. All main characters in the novel interact to create these conflicts, and the community is as well involved in these conflicts. Hester Prynne is pointed out as the protagonist/heroine of the novel. Being one of the main characters in the story she had many conflicts. One internal conflict of hers would be the embarrassment and the realization of her present and future. In chapter 2 paragraph 22 it states, “ Could it be true? she turned her eyes downward at the scarlet letter, and even touched it with her finger, to assure herself that the infant and shame were real. Yes! – these were her realities, - all else had vanished. ” In this quote she realized that everything happening to her was in fact the real deal. Stating the obvious of course, but she had just been in prison and had the birth of her child! This is an internal conflict because this does have her dealing with the pain in her heart of wearing the symbol “ A” or taking care of a child with the father unknown to the public.

This leading to another internal conflict for Madame Prynne, that being having to raise little Pearl all on her own. Living the life of a single mother is quite difficult during that time and in a Puritan Community. Considering how people of the settlement react to Hester's given situation, and how she does not give the father of Pearl a name to the community. This is an internal conflict because Hester is emotionally hurt on raising the product of two as a single mother. She has to face the community by herself for the first few years of the situation. Hence an external conflict for Ms.

Prynne with her own community. The Puritans had isolated her apart from everyone else and had judged her since the moment she had stepped out of the prison doors. Her own peers were judging her for the sin she had done, as if they were not sinful themselves. Yet they judged someone they used to socialize and talk to as dear friends. Friends of hers would think her punishment as injustice that she deserved more than a three hour standing and the natural life bearing of the scarlet letter. The judging of her entire community had caused her to become isolated, leading to be socially inactive.

The scarlet letter was a reminder of all this conflict. Hester also had an external conflict with her husband, Roger Chillingworth. This being how while standing on the platform of the pillory, spotted her husband and the physical body language winced at the look, showing the tension brought on by the first thought "stranger". Terror had coursed through her at the sight of him! Hester Prynne dealt with her internal and external conflicts quite discreetly, made it seem as if she was okay, but really wasn't emotionally. Pearl Prynne is the outcome of the sin committed.

As a young child, she too also had conflicts to deal with. An internal conflict of young Pearl would have to deal with how she was born and how she is being raised. A quote to follow that statement would be in chapter 6 paragraph 1, " We have as yet hardly spoken of the infant, that little creature whose innocent life had sprung... out of the rank luxuriance of a guilty pleasure. " This quote also coincides with an external conflict as well, the conflict being on how the society considers her a " demon child" or " elf-child witch".

She was born in a prison, and is being raised in a cottage that is nowhere near the village where all the other children grow up. When people call her such things, she does hear, so this hurts her emotionally and makes this an internal conflict for she must deal with the feelings of being different and judged by others. Since she is isolated from that part of a normal childhood, her only friend in the novel growing up is her mother. This being another internal conflict because she grew knowing her mother always wears the scarlet letter, and is in a certain community that has rules about women.

Now in the novel, chapter 17, Hester takes off a garment that covers her hair and removes the scarlet letter from her bosom. Pearl seeing this throws a tantrum for her mother to undo this doing. Causing a major internal conflict of how Pearl sees her mother and dealing with what her mother's symbols stand for. Pearl mocks her mother for that. There's an external conflict created by Pearl towards Dimmesdale for when he is conversing with Hester in the forest and he dwells for a kiss, but Pearl refrains. Pearl is a strange child, for she knows something must be going on.

Roger Prynne Chillingworth is the antagonist of the novel. His conflicts would seem different than the other main characters' conflicts. For instance one internal conflict of his would be his thoughts of revenge. Chillingworth has this monomaniacal desire for revenge on the " unknown" father. His plans were dedicated to finding out who the father was, and he always had an eye out for Dimmesdale though. His thoughts of revenge then turned to thoughts of evil and madness. Evil then being another internal conflict created within Chillingworth.

For example in chapter 10 paragraph 3 it states, " This man... pure as they deem him, - all spiritual as he seems, - hath inherited a strong animal nature from his father or his mother. Let us dig a little further in the direction of this vein! " This provides emphasizes on Chillingworth going an extra mile to fully satisfy his needs of torturing Dimmesdale with the truth. With this information this kind of gives Chillingworth a " devil-like figure" in this novel. An external conflict to support the " devil-like figure" would be his dabbling in natural chemicals and medicine.

Even though it seems as harmless as a puppy or kitten it does kill. Naturally that was his cause of death in the end. A further approach to an external conflict would be the one referring back to when Hester was on the pillory. The great tension of their eye contact is a ball buster, and when he touches his lips with a finger verifying her silence, it physically shows he would have a problem with her speaking up of his presence. Arthur Dimmesdale is the minister who commits adultery with Hester Prynne.

This is at upmost worst position he can be in, considering that he is a minister of a Puritan community. An internal conflict that he must deal with

is his guilt. Throughout the novel, he must watch Hester suffer through the public humiliation and feels guilty that he has left her all alone in raising Pearl. He is guilty of sin, but had not paid the price by the magistrates for he did not tell. He dealt with this guilty another way, which leads to an external conflict. The external conflict being he hurt himself physically to let out the guilt and basically punished himself.

For instance in chapter 23 paragraph 23 it says, " With a convulsive motion he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed! But it were irrelevant to describe that revelation. For an instant the gaze of the horror-stricken multitude was concentrated on the ghastly miracle; while the minister stood..., as one who, in the crisis of acutest pain, had won a victory. " This emphasizes the external conflict and internal because he was one full of guilt had come out and finally revealed the truth to the rest of his parishioners, which he could not do in the beginning.

Hence an external conflict with the community. When Dimmesdale would try and attempt to tell the Puritans, it would backfire because all of them thought so highly of him, especially when he said he was not perfect and had done things that weren't so likely of their Lord. Showing how much respect they have for him, but for so long Dimmesdale had kept it in they were all so shocked at his sin in the end. Then explaining another internal conflict that Dimmesdale has, which is how much of a coward and weak he really.

He had so many opportunities to tell the truth and speak out, but never took them because he was afraid of what might happen. In one way it could be that he did it to protect Hester and Pearl, but in another way it would seem

quite selfish he did it to protect himself. On the whole, every character had to deal with their conflicts both internally and externally. For Hester and Pearl was to be treated differently from the community. For Roger Chillingworth it was revenge and his relationship with Hester. For Arthur Dimmesdale was dealing with his guilt. Most of the conflicts however did coincide with other main characters.

Santos, Eliana The Scarlet Letter Essay: Internal and External Conflict Work Cite 1. Hawthorne, Nathaniel. The Scarlet Letter. Mineola, N. Y. : Dover Publications, Inc. , 1994. " Could it be true? ... she turned her eyes downward at the scarlet letter, and even touched it with her finger, to assure herself that the infant and shame were real. Yes! - these were her realities, - all else had vanished. " (Hawthorne 41) " We have as yet hardly spoken of the infant, that little creature whose innocent life had sprung... out of the rank luxuriance of a guilty pleasure. (Hawthorne 61) " This man... pure as they deem him, - all spiritual as he seems, - hath inherited a strong animal nature from his father or his mother. Let us dig a little further in the direction of this vein! " (Hawthorne 89) " With a convulsive motion he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed! But it were irrelevant to describe that revelation. For an instant the gaze of the horror-stricken multitude was concentrated on the ghastly miracle; while the minister stood..., as one who, in the crisis of acutest pain, had won a victory. " (Hawthorne 175)