

The scarlet letter: the scaffolds power



The Scarlet Letter: The Scaffold's Power

Recurring events show great significance and elucidate the truth beneath appearances. In *The Scarlet Letter* Nathaniel Hawthorne chooses the scaffold scenes to show powerful differences and similarities. Each scaffold scene foreshadows the next and brings greater understanding of the novel. By beginning with the first, continuing with the middle, and ending with the last platform scene, we can gain a better understanding of this masterpiece.

At the beginning of the book, Hester is brought out with Pearl to stand on the scaffold. Here the scarlet letter is revealed to all. Reverend Dimmesdale, Pearl's Father, is already raised up on a platform to the same height as Hester

and Pearl; and Roger Chillingworth, Hester's lost husband, arrives, stands below

and questions the proceedings. As Hester endures her suffering, Dimmesdale is

told to beseech the woman to confess. It was said " So powerful seemed the ministers appeal that the people could not believe but that Hester Prynne would

speak out the guilty name.” His powerful speech shows Dimmesdale’s need to

confess. This scene sets the stage for the next two scenes.

A few years later the event is again repeated. It is very similar to the other and helps us understand the torment of Dimmesdale. As before the tortured Reverend Dimmesdale goes first on to the platform. He seeks a confession of his sins a second time by calling out into the night. He then sees Hester and Pearl coming down the street from the governor’s house. As before, they are asked to go up on the scaffold and be with the minister. At this time Pearl questions the minister if he will do this at noontide and he answers no. He once again is too much of a coward to confess out in the open.

The similarities continue with a revelation of another scarlet letter. Up in the sky a scarlet “ A” shines forth. Roger Chillingworth arrives and tells the minister to get down from the scaffold. Chillingworth pleads for this so that he can still torment the reverend. As the two men leave, the scene ends and leaves us with additional information. It foreshadows a bigger and more powerful scaffold scene.

The last scaffold scene is the most important and greatest event in the novel. It starts with the end of Dimmesdale's great election speech. When he is

finished, he grows weak and limps towards the scaffold. He can no longer bear

the burden of his sins. He again asks Hester and Pearl to join him.

Chillingworth begs the minister not to do this, but the reverend thanks God for

leading him to a place where he could escape from the leech. Helped by Hester

and Pearl he climbs the scaffold and confesses. One last time a new scarlet

letter is supposedly revealed on his chest. This voluntary confession makes

this time unique. As the scene ends Dimmesdale again leaves Hester and Pearl;

but this time, it is forever into the after life.

These three important events in the novel have great significance. The

first one signifies love. Hester had such strong love that she would not make

Dimmesdale go through what she was going through. The second scaffold scene

signifies cowardice. The reverend was suffering much and yet would not relieve

his suffering through confession. The ending event signifies bravery. Even though he didn't have to confess, Dimmesdale did.

The Scarlet Letter's recurring event was very potent. It gave new aspects and meanings to the story that were integral to the book's power. Truth overcomes deception.