

Scarlet letter:
ambiguous
characters essay
sample



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The Scarlet letter is a book filled with mystery, deep thought and symbolism left for interpretation. This book of romance contains acts of crime, revenge, and sins for the ones that we love. This book written by the classic author Nathaniel Hawthorne has a lot of ambiguous characters. Hawthorne used his characters to portray irony and moral ambiguity. The most intriguing character I chose that displays moral ambiguity is Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale. His character is fairly interesting being that he is a reverend minister and an adulterer.

We learn that Dimmesdale is a prime example of an ambiguous character because he doesn't have the courage to be the right person and do the right thing. He lacked so much courage he couldn't come out to the public and confess his wrong doing. His non courageous spirit lead to him watching the community taunt and mistreat Hester for her sin of adultery. As he watched them shoot her down, he was being lifted up and being praised for something he wasn't. Him hiding the truth resulted of being known for someone who he really didn't want to be.

In this case, he is morally ambiguous because after this , as readers we never felt he was the “ bad guy”. Instead we feel bad for him and sympathize for him. Maybe we sympathize because he punishes himself. Dimmesdale is full of guilt after watching the way society put Hester down, so he decides to punish himself for not confessing his wrong doing . He tortures himself and holds ceremonies where prior Hester suffered for committing her sin.

He punishes himself but he also takes full responsibility for his sins when he didn't really have to do so. He loved Hester and Pearl and always had that "A" in his skin even though he didn't show it to the public. He couldn't keep his pain locked up forever, it would be sooner or later where he would just need to be true to himself and to the public.

He is morally ambiguous because confessing to a sin such as adultery after being so highly looked upon takes a lot of strength. From Dimmesdale being true to his name the public can see weakness, lack of insight, and lack of will, but it shows the biggest act of courage that could possibly be expressed.

Dimmesdale's complex character leads readers puzzled not being able to dismiss him as one or the other. Although we see his actions to be bad, we can't help but to sympathize with him on his internal struggles. The morally ambiguous characters in *The Scarlet Letter* cause readers' minds to be open to their own interpretation. In Dimmesdale's case, he is a character that can win the reader's sympathy but also gain their disapproval. It's your moral ambiguous interpretation.