

"the necessity of identity" essay

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



The community's stern regulations create a habitat which lacks personal expression and leaves little room within its boundaries for one's own identity to be ascertained. Nathaniel Hawthorne demonstrates their austere standards for society throughout his novel, *The Scarlet Letter*.

In a Puritan society dominated by the necessity to conform, only those who isolate themselves from the strict expectations of the community may fully develop their individuality. Hester Prynne, despite the resentment felt for her by the society, is able to find her identity through her isolation. Though there is no punishment preventing her from leaving those who shun her, she would rather stay and accept what they perceive as sin as part of who she is than flee and be forced to conform to a new society. The isolation she faces by remaining allows her to embrace who she truly is: But Hester Prynne, with a mind of native courage and activity, and for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed from society.

She had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness, as vast, as intricate, and shadowy as the untamed forefather intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woodland; the scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. 154) Len being distanced from the other Puritans and their society as a whole, she is able to do what others may not due to the restrictions placed upon them. Ultimately, it is her scarlet letter, her punishment, which grants her the ability to reach out beyond the limitations of Puritan beliefs and fully adapt her identity. The forest in which she and her secret lover, Arthur Dimmesdale, meet is the very symbol of the balance she seeks between the prevailing attitudes of the community and

the individuality of her own person. In its physical isolation from the village and TTS inhabitants, she may be free to speak and act as her true self with her fellow sinner. Her daughter, Pearl, examines that on their way into the forest that the sunshine does not like her mother.

Society had suppressed her true identity, thus allowing no sunshine to fall upon her. But after speaking unreservedly In the forest with the man she loved, that portion of her being once concealed by the expectations of the Puritan community was once again allowed to shine with the sun. Her true self is revealed, for she is finally able to relieve herself of the guilt and anguish that once ere youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back 00 (156). This beauty is a symbol of her persona before the weight of the Puritan society repressed individuality and true self, thus reappearing as she once again welcomes the expression of identity. Unlike Hester, Timescale is unable to break the restraints of the society in which he feels the necessity to conform. As the minister, he is placed upon a pedestal on Inch he can do no harm, while he has secretly sinned with Hester.

His inability to reveal his secret to the citizens demonstrates his unwillingness to submit to the isolation Hester and Pearl must endure. Pearl, in her ability to reveal the truth through her actions and questions, is unable to accept Timescale intimately while he keeps his sin hidden from the community. Even when acknowledged as her father she refuses to kiss him as he asks.

It is not until he proclaims his sin upon his death bed that she will at last kiss him in recognition. She herself has not been restricted by the harsh

standards of the Puritans, thus permitting her to develop freely and Ninth
disregard to what is considered normal in society.