

The scarlet letter socratic seminar questions essay

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



English Protestants created a large group of people in the 16th and 17th centuries called the Puritans.

These people advocated strict religious dullness along with a strong beliefs and worshipping. The Scarlet Letter reflected on Puritan Society in several ways, from religion to discipline and punishment. Religion seemed to control everyone, the reverend was the person that everyone looked up to, and the community, as a whole, believed in fate and destiny. Puritan relationships were very restricted, therefore making adultery a terrible sin In the eyes of the community. In the 17th century, Boston was extremely strict and the laws were strongly enforced, making Hester S sin a great example of the consequences the Puritans suffered. Public displays of punishment were used to both teach the criminal a lesson and to show the other members of the community that what was done shouldn't be repeated.

Question 2: Complete a character analysis of the three main characters: Hester, Arthur, and Roger. Hester: In this novel, Hester is the protagonist. She is also the mother of Pearl. Due to her adulterous affair with Arthur Timescale, she is forced to wear the Scarlet A on her chest as a punishment. Roger Chlorinating is Hester" s husband, but when he is away in Amsterdam is when Hester has her affair with Arthur, and Pearl is conceived. Hester never fully comes to terms with her punishment because she doesn't understand how she can lose everything including her home, her love, and her religion, all for following her heart.

Arthur: A well respected man and minister of Boston who also happens to be the father of Pearl. While Hester is suffering her adulterous consequences,

Arthur sits back quietly because nobody knows that he is Pearl's father. Throughout the novel, he is reminded of the guilt and shame of the affair by Hester's husband. At the end of the book, he confesses to being the father and also admits that he has the letter A branded onto his flesh. He most likely did this because he couldn't handle the guilt of Hester wearing the Scarlet A on her chest as public humiliation and knowing that he should have consequences as well. Roger: Roger is Hester's husband, and he actually arrived back into town on the day that Hester is biblically shamed and forced to wear the scarlet letter. Roger claims that he will get revenge on the father of Pearl, for having an affair with Hester.

Roger moves in with Arthur knowing he committed the sin. At the end of the novel, Chillingworth lost the point of his hatred and dies shortly after Arthur.

Question 3: Discuss the novel in terms of its three themes and explain how the novel can be important to you today. Points to ponder: alienation, appearances vs. Reality, breaking collective rules, examples from your own personal life, your community, your country, or our world. In the Scarlet Letter, there are many apparent themes. One of them being alienation, in which is shown by Hester throughout the novel.

Hester struggles to fit in after her adulterous affair. The main reason that her community alienates her is because she is forced to wear the scarlet A. This constantly reminds both Hester and everyone around her that she committed a sin. Another very obvious theme is appearance vs. Reality. To me, Hester can represent that very well. Hester looks as if inside she is an

extremely caring and loving mother, along with being a great woman. No has been through a lot in her life.

The last theme that is very clear in the *Scarlet Letter* is breaking society's rules. It is very evident that Hester has gone against the laws of the Puritan society and she suffers consequences. As noted before, she had an affair with a man that was not her husband, and that is a sin that should be shamed upon.

From these themes you can learn a lot of things. For example, sometimes people aren't really who they seem, and breaking rules do have consequences. Question 4: Critics have commented that Hawthorne's narrator seems to be two minds. Sometimes this narrator seems to adopt an opinion that they must repent for and atone for what they have done. At other times, the narrator seems to adopt the opinion that Dimmesdale's and Hester's actions are understandable given the circumstances, and that love such as theirs represents something truly sacred. "Where does the narrator stand, or is he of two minds? Where do you stand on the issue? I believe that the narrator in the *Scarlet Letter* has two different opinions. I am led to believe this due to the fact that the narrator is trying to sympathize with Hester because the narrator most likely feels sorry for her and can't do anything about it. I feel sorry for Hester as well because she was doing what she thought was right, but due to the society she lives in, she isn't able to follow her heart.

At the same time, the narrator probably has a strong personal opinion and realizes that what Hester did was wrong and she should face her consequences. I also agree with that because she knew that she was a

married woman and if you are committed in a marriage you should stay loyal, especially if you live in a strict Puritan society. Question 5: Human nature is to love more readily than to hate: Thoughts? After reading the quote mentioned, I noticed something very quickly. That would be that it really depends on the human. Everybody is different, and in many cases that quote is incorrect. For example, both gender and age could affect love vs..

Hate. Gender may affect it because females tend to be loving and nurturing naturally, as opposed to males. Age may also affect it because elders and infants seem to love more, whereas other age groups such as teenagers can vary. Again, everyone is different so this wouldn't go for everyone, it is just a generalization. Question 6: In what way do the Puritan characters (or Puritan society) exemplify hypocrisy? How do certain characters' actions or the narrator's commentary reveal both individual and societal hypocrisy? The Puritan society itself was an example in hypocrisy.

They claim to be firm believers in the Bible, but the Bible encourages forgiveness and acceptance. The "holier" society was based on religious education. So why was the first thing to be built in Boston a prison? A prison is a place of punishment not a place of mercy and compassion. Another example of religious hypocrisy happened early in the book. The author described some conversing between housewives that were talking about Hester's crime and her consequences.

Each one of the housewives was encouraging harsher punishment for her. Housewife 36 said, "At the very least, they should have put the brand of a

hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead. Madam Hester would have minced at that, I warrant me." Hypocrisy and religion tend to go hand in hand.

Really believe in a religion, and feel right in assassination or maltreating of others. Hypocrisy was present in Puritan society then and it can still be found today. Question 7: Each of the three main adult characters has a different kind of guilt, and each handles his or her guilt differently. What are the reasons behind Dimmesdale's, Hester and Chillingworth's guilt? The three main characters in the Scarlet Letter carry a lot of guilt, for several different reasons. Hester Prynne is guilty because she had an affair with a man that was not her husband, and they conceived a child together. Hester was punished for her actions.

The man happened to be Arthur Dimmesdale, but nobody in the community knew that. Therefore, he was very guilty knowing that Hester is taking all the blame for something that was also his fault, as he sits back quietly and watches her suffer from her punishment. Although, Dimmesdale isn't the only one quietly watching, because Chillingworth is also aware of what is going on. Chillingworth is Hester's husband, and he came back on the day of her punishment and had been staying in the community as a doctor without anybody knowing who he was, besides Hester.

This made Chillingworth guilty because he knew that he should have spoken up. Throughout the novel, Hester's daughter, Pearl, chipped away at Chillingworth and he finally confessed before he died. Question 8: Conflict is at the heart of the plot. The conflict may be between people, between people and nature, or within a single person.

What conflicts are evident in the Scarlet Letter? In the novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, the most evident conflict to me is that Hester Prynne has an affair with Arthur Dimmesdale who happens to impregnate her. Alone, that form of conflict would be person versus person, but the conflict expands. After Pearl is conceived and birthed, Hester is alienated and condemned by everyone in Boston and is forced to wear the Scarlet A. This makes the conflict person versus community. Another type of conflict present in the *Scarlet Letter* is person versus self, the person being Hester. She suffers both internal and external conflict for several reasons.

Her public humiliation and her protection of Dimmesdale both cause emotional (internal) conflict. Question 9: The most obvious symbol in the novel is the scarlet letter. What other symbols are there? How do they connect to the novel's meaning? The scarlet letter is a very obvious symbol because it symbolizes several things such as sin, adultery, skill and artistry. It showed the sin of adultery because Hester IS forced to wear it as punishment. The "A" also shows skill and artistry because at one point the book goes into great detail about how she embroidered the scarlet A with gold thread and several other details.

Hester's daughter Pearl also serves as a form of symbolism. Much like the letter, Pearl's presence reminds her of her affair, and all the trouble that she had to go through. Hester loves Pearl very much but she gave up everything for her. Question 10: Identify three strong examples of irony. One of the biggest forms of irony in the novel is dramatic irony. It appears in the novel

when the readers know that Dimmesdale committed the sin of adultery, but the townspeople believed that he is the most holy man.

Also, the readers know that examples are dramatic irony, but I also noticed some verbal irony throughout the novel. For example, while Dimmesdale is standing on the pedestal in the courtyard, Dimmesdale tries to get her to tell everyone who the father of Pearl is, but really he is the father. Question 11: What effect does Pearl have on Dimmesdale? What role, if any, does she play in bringing about his confession? Pearl affects Dimmesdale a lot throughout the novel. In my opinion, the greatest role she has on him is making him feel extremely guilty. Pearl does not let her father get away with much and she uses her actions to call him out on his refusal to speak out about her being his daughter. I also believe that Pearl is the leading factor that drives Dimmesdale to confess.

Question 12: The wearing of the scarlet letter was intended to isolate Hester from society and call attention to her sin. Given the way Hester's life ends, does the scarlet letter accomplish what the magistrates intended? Can Hester be considered an early feminist? By the end of the novel, Hester was almost a legend in the colony of Boston. Her triumph and perseverance equaled out into a life she had never expected. The scarlet letter made her what she became, and in the end, she grew stronger and more at peace from her suffering. Nathaniel Hawthorne created a story that illustrates Hester as a strong female character living with her choices, whether they were unethical or not. Hester is a feminist who refuses to accept the minor role of women because she has financial, emotional, and intellectual independence.

She is comparable to a modern feminist because of her admirable actions and brave Choices.

She could also be considered a suffragist. Hester shows that she's a passionate woman and does not let the male authority impact her and her daughter Pearl's life. Hester is comparable to a modern day feminist because she feels passionate for what she believes in, and she doesn't let society define her. Question 13: Hawthorn's novel includes several words of wisdom.

What line/ idea had the most lasting impression on you? Nathaniel

Hawthorne certainly has a way with words and narrowing it down to one quote was rather difficult.

My final decision was a quote in Chapter 5, on page 73. It reads as follows, "But there is a fatality, a feeling so irresistible and inevitable that it has the force of doom, which almost invariably compels human beings to anger around and haunt, ghostlike, the spot where some great and marked event has given the color to their lifetime; and still the more irresistibility the darker the tinge that saddens it. To me, this quote means when a person does something, such as Timescale and Hester with their affair, they will be haunted by a "ghostlike" feeling of guilt. In this case, it would be adultery, but the quote continues on to say that it could be great and one of the most important things in your life (the birth of her daughter, Pearl) but also be a downer and a very negative aspect on life as well (Pearl instantly reminds her of the affair). This quote had a lasting impression on me because a lot of things in life can relate to that and the idea of everything having negative and positive outcomes. Question 14: Throughout America's history, there

have been laws that regulated citizens' personal behavior. Among the Puritans, for example, adultery was a serious crime, as the novel makes clear.

Today we have laws forcing motorcycle riders to wear helmets, laws that make suicide illegal, and laws draw the line between personal and political actions? Should society have the right to tell you how to behave on your own time? Why or why not? I believe that society should control how you behave on your own time, but only to a certain extent. If everyone did what they thought was right, or even just what they wanted, we would all be living in chaos. I also believe that politics should be involved because with the laws put in place and strongly enforced, people still tend to do what they want or 'try' the laws. Many people break laws, even if they know their consequences, so imagine the world without any law. I don't know about you, but I would not feel safe.

That is not a world I am willing to live in.