

# Good research paper on symbolism in the scarlet letter

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The aim of this essay is to present you with an analysis of the symbolism lying in the book 'The Scarlet Letter' which belongs to the genre of romantic novels and was published in 1850. Barlow (2000) refers to this book as 'The magnum opus' of Nathaneal. (Barlow, 2000). 'The Scarlet Letter' is a story of love, adultery, betrayal, faith, belief and social criticism. It is a story that has a little bit of all these elements which can attribute to a piece of writing the characterization being a romantic novel.

The historical context of the novel's plot is the social environment of the society living and developing in the area of Puritan Salem, in Massachusetts during the years 1642 to 1649. This is a socio-historical context of great significance since this context is the reason why the protagonist of the novel fell in the tortures of being strictly criticized and condemned to social rejection on behalf of almost everybody due to her actions which if performed nowadays, they would probably remain in the dark of ignorance, provoking nothing else but just a kind of social criticism in the terms of plain gossiping.

The thematic core of the novel is the love which the female protagonist of the novel, Hester Prynne has for another man and not the one she is married to. Her husband has been away on business for so much time that everyone has started suspecting that since they have not heard from him, something bad must have happened to him. The majority of the town probably considers him dead but it is still too early for any kind of conclusions to be drawn since they ought to wait for his return. This kind of obligation is according to the ethical and social principles of that era necessary to be kept on behalf of Hester who is his wife. The social role of women in the 17th

century was a role condemned to permanent imprisonment in way of their free will and free choices. Even if a woman was tired to be waiting for her husband's return, she was not allowed to be. Even more that woman was not allowed to show her feeling tired or desiring a change in her life. All these kinds of reactions were not allowed according to the status -quo of that era. That period was a period which was stuck to narrow minded opinions wanting people or demanding from them to leave in such a compromising way that no innovative way of thinking could ever be accepted. Nothing opposite to the established rules could be acceptable.

The additional trait of that era which made things even worse in the interpersonal relationships was the fact that there was a very strange relationship with the concept of ethical. Ethical and unethical were two concepts which were perceived and defined on behalf of people according to their relationship with religion. People were mostly uneducated and stuck to the religious principles of austerity and must-behaviors which were supposed to provide them with their entering the paradise upon their entering eternity. Due to being mostly uneducated people were victimized by the ones who had authority and imposed on them the principles which were obligatory to be kept and respected in such a way that their authority would not be threatened. In other words people were sentenced to the darkness of ignorance.

Hester Prynne turns into the hands of her creator, the author Nathaniel Hawthorne, into the symbol of free will and free choice and behavior she is a courageous woman who falls in love with another man, other than her husband and accepts to be wearing the scarlet letter , the A letter which is

the initial of the word Adultery as a way of showing that she has accepted her mistake and she accepts her punishment by the society. When Hester is asked to reveal her lover's name she denies strongly and she keeps her promise up to the end.

Hester is the symbol of faith into the principles and feelings one stands for and believes in. She is the symbol of the free will who knows how to respect other's freedom and not to take advantage of others' mistakes in order to save herself any kind of punishment. She is the symbol of true, genuine love since she knows how to protect the ones she loves who are her lover and her daughter. She does not appear in the process of the thematic plot of the novel to experience any kind of second thoughts or remorse on what she experienced and felt.

Hester is characterized by dignity. She is a descent woman who knows that she dared to act otherwise than the social status quo of her era could accept. She is the woman who in a way could be symbolized as Eve from the Bible who was sent out from paradise since she disobeyed God's orders. The question on who Adam is supposed to be in the novel is an easy one to be answered. Adam is the man who remains hidden up to the end of the novel and who was her lover. Hester's lover is the symbol of Adam, a weak man who although treated with respect and trust due to his authority by his social group, he turns out to be too weak to admit to who he really is. It could be the fear he has for losing power the real reason why he seems unable to admit to his loving Hester and to him being the father of Hester's daughter. The society of the Puritan town of Salem is the miniature of the world of paradise but this is a depiction carrying lots of irony. How could common

mortals be the depiction of God's paradise? No one is unmistakable. Therefore it can be easily drawn that Hawthorne wishes to show the hypocrisy of his era and condemn it.

The Scarlet Letter is a social criticism on behalf of the writer towards his era, his society and the social beliefs and principles of his time. Hawthorne uses the literary device of this female figure to show that it is time people were awakened and became aware of what would really make their souls feel full, happy and calm without imposing any restrictions on others and without becoming austere critics of others without having looked into themselves at first.

The Scarlet Letter is a novel which can offer lots of opportunities to its readers for personal reflections on issues of common social concern.

## **Works cited**

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