

Essay on scarlett letter essay

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In the novel, *The Scarlett Letter*, the character that is the most striking morally ambiguous character is Reverend Dimmesdale. He can be identified as neither good nor evil because of many reasons, including his monumental secret of being an adulterist, his random acts of saying sweet nothings to the people of the church, his sermons secretly related to his life spreading a powerful message, and ultimately his confession of committing adultery with Hester.

The significance of his moral ambiguity to the novel as a whole can be seen as a theme in the novel, that the ends can justify the means. First, the Reverend has had an illegitimate child with one of the women of the town, Hester Prynne, which is presumptuously seen as an act of evil. On top of committing such an action, Reverend Dimmesdale does not identify himself as the father of the child for a greater part of the novel. One might ask oneself, why would a member of the church commit such a sinful action?

This is an unexplainable question and even ironic. A person of such holy stature would typically never do such a sinful action, assuming his position in the church. On top of his mortal sin of committing adultery, despite being a leader of the church, he commits a venial sin by hiding his wrongful actions to the entire town, which in my personal opinion is just as bad. In retrospect, Reverend Dimmesdale's sinful actions could only lead one to assume that he is indeed a person of evil nature.

Although Dimmesdale's actions have been actions of pure evil, his recognition of his wrongdoings has played an important role in his profession of faith through his sermons, which can ultimately be seen as actions of good nature. In the novel, Reverend Dimmesdale expresses to the community,

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through the power of words, examples of sinners such as himself and their wrongful actions, without telling the townspeople his sins. Despite his sins and his inability to share them, Dimmesdale commits an action that could be seen as pure good by informing the members of the church what not to do.

All in all, it appears that the evil in Dimmesdale is being covered up through the good deeds that have come of them, such as being a teacher to all of the churchgoers. Lastly, the most notable action of Dimmesdale that can be seen as an action of pure good, is his confession of committing adultery with Hester. At the end of the novel, Reverend Dimmesdale admits to the townspeople that he is the father of Hester's daughter, Pearl, by showing the crowd his branded chest, immediately preceding his death.

Although it took the reverend the entire novel to admit to his sins, this shows that he is truly good despite his acts of evil. In conclusion, Reverend Dimmesdale's actions neither define him as good nor evil, but somewhere in between. He is not an evil person because good came from his evil actions, nor is he good because of his horrid sins. Reverend Dimmesdale's undefined character ties to a theme in the novel pertaining to the question: Do the ends justify the means?

In other words, does the end result make the actions taken to get to such a result okay? In relation to the novel, the ends certainly justify the means; Dimmesdale and Hester's love for each other led them to commit adultery which ultimately enabled them to express their fierce love for one another. Furthermore, the ends: expressing their love justifies the means: committing adultery because these actions were the only way that they could be happy together, which is the most important factor.