

# A problem of sexism in the scarlet letter

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



## Reading Response

In the historical novel, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850), the protagonist Hester Prynne discovers that sexism takes a large role in her life by determining how the public looks and treats her for committing adultery, while on the opposite end of the line, the man whom she slept with was not receiving any sort of shaming. He supports his claim by revealing how much the public can influence our lives and by putting a mark and branding Hester Prynne for a sin that she did, and including her daughter which had almost nothing to do with it, yet the person behind all of this remains hidden and praised by everybody else. And I agree with Nathaniel's claim, but at the same time, I am not all completely for it.

While the public can have a pretty big influence on us, Hester Prynne makes a clear example of how to not let it bother her. She does good deeds towards the poor and unfortunate and does not argue back about the scarlet letter which she bears on her chest. So much so that the council was actually considering removing the mark off of her, realizing that she was not all that corrupt in the first place, and that she is actually trying to make best of her disadvantage. "It was debated whether or no, with safety to the common weal, yonder scarlet letter might be taken off your bosom". However, while the council was debating whether or not to remove it, Hester said it upon herself to leave the mark on her in order to try and change the mark, so it would signify something else instead of having it shame the person who wears it. The public influence was so much for her, that she had gotten used to it. Now that she had it on her, she might as well have changed, not

herself, but the public and the way of their thinking when it comes to shaming others for their sins.

However, the public had shamed her enough to the point where she was practically alone, with the exception of Pearl, her daughter, but she still kept going. But every day, she is reminded about her past sins that she committed, never letting her forget. Had she had moved to another city, she might have broken down and lost her resolve and had had something similar to what happened to Dimmesdale. Even though Dimmesdale had gone through being hidden for the same sins which Hester had committed, he eventually began to lose his mental health and near the final chapters of the novel, he had to confess to the entire town for his sins because he could not accept the punishments. After confessing, he died to heartache on the scaffold. But even after confessing, Dimmesdale supporters did not believe him and his confession, and so they pretty much dismissed it.