

Scarlet letter – guilt essay

Literature, Russian Literature



Guilt We would love to live In a world where all of us are perfect but the reality Is that we are not perfect. All of us make mistakes or do something wrong but some of us are never caught, then that few have a choice to make; either to turn themselves in or live their life as if it never happened. The emotion one has when one either commits an act not accepted by the society or when he fails to do something required or expected Is called Guilt. This emotion can be seen quite a lot in the book The ScarletLetter by Nathaniel Hawthorne where all 3 of the main characters, Arthur Timescale. Hester Prying and Roger Chlorinating are guilty of doing something that was not accepted by their Puritan society. We can see the guilt fester in the mind and outward appearance of these characters.

If one hides his guilt within himself than that can lead to drastic circumstances; the more one tries to hide his guilt, the more it tends to grow and slowly it reaches a point where it overpowers the person which often leads to confession or death of the person. The guilt of abandoning Hester, the harboring of the secret that he Is the father of Pearl, and the thought of him having committed adultery wore down on Timescale almost Like an everlasting punishment that soon after led to his death. Arthur Timescale is a minister, a father, a sinner and a man who feels incredible guilt. He commits adultery with Hester before the book begins. As the book begins it is revealed he is the true father of Hester child Pearl. Timescale, afraid of losing his status and being humiliated, does not confess his crime.

For this this he Is rewarded and greatly punished. He Is rewarded by keeping his status In the community. However, he also has something he doesn't want, his conscience. Most people would leave town because they would be

sorry for what they did but happy because they got a chance to start a new life. Not Timescale, not Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. He instead beats himself up over it with a whip. The rest of his life is a descent into madness brought on by constant self-induced suffering, which is later more than self-induced when Chloroform usuries it out. He also cuts the letter “ A” into his skin like how Hester has to wear it on her dress.

To top it all off, his inner conflict manifests itself into the outside world. “ His form grew emaciated; his voice, though still rich and sweet has a certain melancholy prophecy of decay in it” (82). His guilt was slowly overpowering him and also caused him a heart condition in which he had to clutch his chest very often. Dimmesdale tries many times to tell others of his sin but always falls just short.

He rises to tell the people at his overpowered him and in the end lead to his death, a punishment much greater than his rewards. Church that he is a sinner like them. The people there assume he is just trying to be modest now that he is receiving great acclaim for his sermons.

Another time he goes up to the scaffold where Hester and Pearl stood. “ Walking in the shadow of a dream Mr..

Dimmesdale reached the spot where Hester Prynne had loved through her first hours of public ignominy. The minister went up the step” (Hawthorne 113). Dimmesdale tries to account for his guilt by going on the scaffold and “ publicly” (at night when no one is around) atoning both as a positive and negative inevitable human emotion. As guilt grows in a person’s life it

eventually begins to have a deteriorating effect on the individual. If one can't escape the guilt, his life will become a living hell. He will be tormented by Nat he has done and wont be able to live his life. He could run away but his guilty conscience would catch up quickly and torture him till he eventually dies.