

Book report on the scarlet letter essay (book review)

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Authored by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1850, *The Scarlet Letter* is a fascinating masterpiece featuring Hester Prynne as the protagonist. Hester bears a child, Pearl, who is a byproduct of an adulterous affair. Amid facing imprisonment, the main character strives to leave a life of repentance struggling to restore her dignity.

The author sets the novel in the seventeenth century in a Puritan community within Boston, Massachusetts. In this city, Hester gets out of the prison. She is carrying “ her daughter in her arms with her body covered with a gown referred to as a rag of scarlet cloth that takes the shape of letter A” (Hawthorne 10). It signifies adultery. In the end, Dimmesdale reveals letter “ A” marked in his breasts where Pearl kisses him only to mark the death of Chillingworth.

To deliver his targeted lessons, Hawthorne revolves around the main character to present the theme of remorse, transgression and conformity. Though the development of these themes is also a subject of other characters such as Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, Hester is outstandingly the central character since she makes the latter two behave in the manner they do in the novel to the extent of contributing towards their demise.

Hester is aware of the identity of one of the elderly onlookers as being her past lover. However, she goes down with a crowd of fathers and never puts it in white her identity. Her capacity to maintain secrecy is astounding since, as the author informs in chapter two, “ One token of her shame would but poorly serve to hide another” (Hawthorne 31). It also evident that the elderly man is not aware of the reason as to why Hester encounters the punishment.

However, one of the elderly onlookers informs Chillingworth the reason behind the punishment: her involvement in an adulterous affair. Despite the fact that the novel is all about Hester, the author explores nothing much about her personality. Rather, he focuses on the forces that shape her real being.

In the early chapters of the book, the reader becomes aware that Hester was a strong and a morally upright woman. She recalls her parents as being passionate and vital role models who more often attempted to curb the likelihood of the emergence of incautious behaviors in her. Since she involved herself in an affair that resulted to public shaming, it is also evident that she was passionate in nature. Though shamed publicly, she does not allow these acts to change her personality or feel sorry about her past.

This fact is somewhat evident when she proclaims that “ But this had been a sin of passion, not of principle, nor even purpose” (Hawthorne 45).

Furthermore, the reader meets her in the novel as a woman who worked to gain hefty communal acceptance through her charitable work: something that she does as the main chore of her life when her daughter marries a European upon the demise of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth a year later.

By refusing to accept the societal tagging of acts referred to as ‘ sinful’ to afflict her, Hester emerges as an ample character that questions and speculates the organizations of the society, enormously placing the moral aspect of the society into interrogation. The strong belief on her autonomy to

reason and take charge of her actions arguably is as an immense source of her motivation.

As previously mentioned, some of the universal ideas introspected in *The Scarlet Letter* include offense, culpability and legalism. Conceptualization of sin infers bringing forth knowledge about the existence of sin and the repercussions of involvements in sinful behaviors. As it is evident in the Judeo-Christian tradition, sin fosters the separation of evil from the good. The result is the ample laying forth of true human nature, which is a subject of exposure to challenges and the urge to sin.

The tale of Hester and Dimmesdale is perhaps reminiscent of the Judeo-Christian tradition tales of Adam and Eve. The similarity in these tales lies on foundations of the repercussions of sin, suffering and pain. In the two accounts, knowledge results from sinning. "The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread" (Hawthorne 67).

For Hester, the letter is a discriminating passport depictive of her landing into places that other women in the New England had not endeavored. This way, she can contemplate about herself and the surrounding society in a more bold way. The realization of the fact that "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true" (Hawthorne 105) makes the theme of sin and knowledge even more conspicuous in the novel.

Though Hester does not plainly admit that she was involved in sinful acts, the repercussions of sin are imminent since “ She had not known the weight until she felt the freedom” (Hawthorne 147). Even though Hester and Dimmesdale are empathetic, attempting to reconcile themselves on daily life experiences, sin has certain moral consequences, which need to be conspicuous before the eyes of the society.

This is perhaps true since the society elders put more emphasis on seeing Hester go through the experiences of her involvement in sin right here on earth. The Puritan elders view sin as something worthy punishing. Unfortunately, this experience is prejudiced since Dimmesdale does not go through such experience. Later, women come to realize this fact.

They strongly believe that Hester’s source of sin relates to sexism of the men in their town. They seek help from her when faced with similar sexism forces emanating from the men. Even though the Puritan village may remain stagnant about the perception of the true nature of one’s involvement in sin, Dimmesdale and Hester are perhaps real witnesses that sin may create better platforms of understanding others and making one become sympathetic.

More importantly, it leads to personal growth. “ Shame, Despair, Solitude: These had been her teachers - stern and wild ones - and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss” (Hawthorne 165). In fact, it is perhaps after going through extraordinary circumstances that makes her an imperative figure in the society.

There is always a reason behind the publishing of every literary work. One could interpret a scholarly work from the contexts of the implied or textual perspectives amongst other perspectives. From the textual perspective, *The Scarlet Letter* is entertaining. More often, the reader feels sympathetic to Hester. However, he/she still advocates for harsh punishment for deceit, infidelity and hypocrisy as some of the detriments of the basic unit of society. This is also perhaps more consistent to what the Puritan elders thought.

The author seems bothered by the manner in which the society takes issues of equality. Is adultery a question of only a single gender: women alone? Was there no man figure in the picture during the act? Were the two genders not supposed to get an equal punishment? Even though Hester never revealed the real father to Pearl, arguably, the author, Hawthorne intended to raise the question of male dominance during the seventieth century.

The author perhaps also intended to put the societal leaders, who should act as moral guiders, into perspectives based on their ability to involve themselves in conspiracies that are detrimental of the moral institutions they proclaim to defend. Dimmesdale, a minister, would be the last person Chillingworth would have anticipated being involved in a secret affair with Hester.

However, amid such leaders, the author provides some hope of the emergence of better males' generation when he presents Chillingworth as a scholar who allowed Pearl to inherit his property despite her being not his

real daughter. Here, education stands out as an essential catalyst for transformation of society.

As portrayed in the end of the novel, every vice has its end, whether maintained in secret or not. The reader finally realizes the identity of Pearl's father. Her mother's grave is next to Dimmesdale. They both share the letter "A" in their common tombstone just as the letter was evident on Dimmesdale's breasts.

It was also the shape taken by the scarlet cloth won by Hester. This way, the author offers an indication of the likelihood of eradication of a generation characterized by sin, and ushering in of a new one free from sin. In fact, *The Scarlet Letter* stands out as an informative literary masterpiece.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. London: Ticknor, Reed and Fields, 1850. Print.