

Feminism and sexism

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



The Scarlet Letter“ In Heaven’s own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutualhappiness” (ch. 24). The Scarlet Letter; where there is a woman, a husband, and a lover. A story where women are downgraded, humiliated, punished, and judged for their actions. It is an obvious that eras have changed as well as customs, women now have a say in our government.

Therefore, we mainly focus on two political issues that have affected our society, feminism and sexism. We go in depth of researching how their definitions have changed throughout time and how they have affected our society solely in the United States. The Scarlet Letter, is a good representation of how feminism and sexism was affected in the era of the Puritans. Within the story, women were thought of as lesser than men. Women’s purposes were to raise children and give them good morals and values.

Women did not have jobs; they wore the plainest clothes, and sat quietly by their husbands’ sides. Passion and happiness were considered to be a sin in the Puritan faith. Hester Prynne, (the main character in the story), has to overcome many obstacles in the novel, emotionally, socially, and psychologically. Living in a Puritan Society, where they had strict rules that everyone had to abide by, the society showed that men overruled women, and women were subjects to men. Hester’s place within Puritan society changes within the novel, where she defies male authority.

Feminism in its definition according to Barbara Smith in This Bridge Called My Back (1981) means; " Feminism is the political theory and practice to free

all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement. (Web. Vanderbilt. edu)" Hester Prynne was forced to wear an embroidered " A" on her bodice of every garment as a signification of adultery. Women then, were punished more for such sexual transgressions.

Unlike men, according to the Puritans women were considered to be ruled by their emotions, while men were considered to be governed by reason (Web. Public. gettysburg. edu). Therefore, we could conclude that women were humiliated and had no contribution to their society; feminism was at its minimal. Women then in the United States started fighting back, which lead to The Women's Movement. This organized feminism first initiated in 1848 (Web. Feminisim. eserver. org). From this movement several branches formed such as the Abolition of Slavery, the Social Purity and Temperance movement.

Furthermore, after 70 years (1928) women were granted to vote and finally have a word in society. Therefore, in comparison with The Scarlet Letter and feminism, women have significantly evolved to become great idols in society. They have freedom and are at the level of a " male's authority". There is no such humiliation or judgment for committing any sin, women are allowed to be happy, independent and be with whomever makes them happy. Commonly, in today's society it is most popular that women are single mothers with a stablecareerto support their child.

Consequently, women today are not forced to wear such embellishments like Hester Prynne, binding the before-and-today comparison on feminism and the impact it has on women today. Sexism, as previously mentioned has also been a political issue in women. Sexism means the prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex. The main overview of *The Scarlet Letter* is that Hester gets punished for committing adultery and conceiving a child out of marriage. In reality the only reason why Hester gets punished and forced to wear an “A” is because she is a female.

Dimsdale, Hester’s lover, being a pastor is suffering internally as the community is rising against Hester. Although the community doesn’t know of his crime, he is remotely thinking of his rejection as a pastor in the case they ever do find out. Even then, the community will not severely punish him, judge him or make him wear an embroidered “A” solely because he is male. Just like feminism, sexism also presents itself as a discrimination and it is still being seen in today’s society even with feminism reformations. It may be less than the puritan era, but questions such as: “Why don’t we have a female president?” arise. Overall in reality, unlike feminism, sexism will always be present. The discrimination of “because she is a woman” will still influence many points of view in people. Why do women commit adultery? What cause them to take such step? Questions that we wonder but at times have no answer. Although in *Infidelity Facts.com* we find a confounding answer as to why: “Statistically, women don't cheat for the sake of sex. It's of secondary concern for them. The #1 reason why they cheat is for an emotional connection.

And this is particularly true of women over the age of 30. In more than a few instances, women won't even cheat physically. They will carry on emotional affairs... where they'll fall in love and experience emotional intimacy with a man, while never taking it to the physical level. It's these type of affairs that can continue on for years, without ever being detected, and often leaving a wake of destruction in their path. Studies have found that in long-term relationships, women, whether they work outside of the house or not, often find themselves "shut out" emotionally.

Over 70% of women are still the primary caregivers for their children while also being the cook and the maid... whether or not they have a full or part-time job. This leaves them precious little time for themselves to foster a woman's natural urge to grow emotionally. An urge typical ignored by men whose primary interest is physical contact. Thus the longing for a man who can "see who they really are" begins. And in the weeks, months or even years that follow, they will usually find such a man - or think they've found one.

An interesting point to take away of this female need for an "emotional bond": affairs initiated by women generally last 3 times longer than those initiated by men". We then refer back to the novel and as readers we discover a connection with what is presented and with Hester. Hester did not commit the affair because of "sex". She was looking for love, love that Dimsdale had for her. Technically she did have a child out of marriage, but she did not have her because she was prostituting herself; Hester had Pearl from deep intimate love and passion. All she wanted was someone to be by her side and love her for the person she was.

Obviously in the Puritan community, adultery was a great sin but in today's society it is an open common issue. Some statistics on adultery include:

- That over a third of married men will cheat on their wives;
- That nearly a quarter of all married women will cheat on their husbands;
- And that more than 50% of all marriages will be impacted by one of the spouses being unfaithful.
- Back in the 1960's it was usually the husband who was unfaithful. Today, researchers are finding that women are just as likely as men to have an affair (Web. Kellybonewell. com).