

Consequences of human desire in the scarlet letter

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



Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1994 novel *Scarlet Letter* shows the cause and effect of actions from human desire. In the beginning of the novel we meet two main characters who had the town believe an identity the two had created of Hester Prynne from committing adultery. Yet throughout the novel we see the sins both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale have committed, causing one to seek revenge.

Identity plays a major role throughout *Scarlet Letter*. Hester Prynne has her identity made by the town from committing adultery, not allowing the town to accept her as who she really was. Throughout *Scarlet Letter* we see Hester Prynne being a great mother showing good deeds, creating her own identity to overshadow her past. "Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped." (46). Hester staying in a hate filled town showed how strong she was to not let the town's opinion question her own identity. "But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfigured the wearer, so that both men and women, who had familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time, - was that Scarlet Letter, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself." (46).

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne explores the theme of sin in Hester Prynne, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth. Although it seems at first that Hester has committed a serious sin adultery it is Dimmesdale and

Chillingworth who are the true sinners as they are consumed by the sins they commit.

“ And that, moreover, as is most likely, her husband may be at the bottom of the sea; -they have not been bold to put in force the extremity of our righteous law against her. The penalty thereof is death.” (54)

“ Thou hast escaped me!” he repeated more than once. “ Thou hast escaped me!” “ May God forgive thee!” said the minister. “ Thou, too, hast deeply sinned!” (209)

The theme of revenge in *The Scarlet Letter* is embodied by Chillingworth, who represents pure evil. Chillingworth is so consumed by his plans for vengeance that he makes it his ultimate life goal and quickly perishes once his goal is fulfilled.

“ What evil have I done the man?” asked Roger Chillingworth again. “ I tell thee, Hester Prynne, the richest fee that ever physician earned from monarch could not have bought such care as I have wasted on this miserable priest!” (141)

Roger Chillingworth, letting the lurid fire of his heart blaze out before her eyes. “ Better had he died at once! Never did mortal suffer what this man has suffered.” (141)