

The scarlet letter: do  
you dread guilt?



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## The Scarlet Letter: Do You Dread Guilt?

What is guilt? We all have guilt about something. Maybe forgetting

something, lied about something, or even did something that shouldn't of been

done. In The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne we saw guilt fester in the

minds and outward appearance of the main characters, Hester Prynne,

Arthur

Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth.

When you hear the word guilt what do you think it means? Guilt means

remorseful awareness of having done something wrong or of having failed to do

something required or expected. Does that sound about right? Guilt is

something everyone has. Its this mental manifestation that lets us know when we

did something wrong but no one knows it yet. Guilt is very powerful. Some

people after awhile give in to this guilt and confess what they did.

In The Scarlet Letter, Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale commit a

great sin. Because of this great sin, it causes them immense guilt and

sadness

though out the rest of the book. One of the main character's that is affected the most is Arthur Dimmesdale. Dimmesdale handles it in a different way though,

to him its more of a "concealed sin." A example of this is, "It may be that they are kept silent by the very constitution of their nature. Or – can we not suppose it – guilty as they may be, retaining, nevertheless, a zeal for God's glory and man's welfare, they shrink from displaying themselves black and filthy

in the view of men; because, thenceforward, no good can be achieved by them; no

evil or the past be redeemed by better service." Dimmesdale also has another

reason for his concealing, he wants to remain silent so that he can continue to

do God's work as a minister.

Hester Prynne handles her guilt in another way. Instead of worrying

about it day after day and letting to fester, she makes it outward. At the

beginning of the book she wears the most awesome clothes and shows the world

she's not guilty for what she has done. An example of this is, " And never had

Hester Prynne appeared more lady-like, in the antique interpretation of the term,

than as she issued from the prison." Also she shows it with the scarlet A on her chest. Instead of just putting some dumb A on her chest she spends the time

and embroiders it with red and gold thread and even wears the scarlet A long

after she could have removed it.

Roger Chillingworth appears at first to be the one that was sinned on

but though out the book that changes with every page of the nasties that

Chillingworth has caused. Even with the major sin of Hester Prynne and Arthur

Dimmesdale, Roger's sins are much greater. First Roger knows that he never really did love Hester and says he did wrong by marrying such a young wife that

also didn't love him. But Roger doesn't notice is second sin, taking revenge on

Arthur Dimmesdale. An example of this is, " We are not, Hester, the worst

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sinner in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood,

the sanctity of a human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!" Because Chillingworth's sin was the blackest his fate was the most horrible of the three.

To overcome this great guilt the character's handle it in their own way.

Hester Prynne handles it by trying to hide nothing, trying to show the world, see what I did and I'm proud of it! Arthur Dimmesdale handles his terrible guilt by concealing it to himself. To overcome it he would whip himself, take long walks into the forest, and even get in a secret interview with Hester. His final output to the world was to tell them all on the scaffold of his great sin on election day. Roger Chillingworth handles his guilt by not showing he had any. Ignorance played a big part for Roger and in the end he also tells and notices what a great sin he has caused.

What comes to the mind when guilt is said? Good, bad or are you just plain confused? Everyone has these problems about guilt, it's not just yourself.

Right? In The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne guilt affected many people.

Guilt is very powerful and festers in our minds and hearts of everyone when wrong doing occurs.

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