

Ap lit- function on foil character in the scarlet letter



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, the story's protagonist, Hester Prynne commits adultery and is forced to live her life with the scarlet letter "A" embroidered upon her chest. The outcome of Hester's "unforgivable sin" is her daughter, Pearl who is seen as a demon and symbol of evil by all in the Puritan village. Throughout the novel the author portrays Pearl as a foil character to her mother, Hester by showing major contrast and comparisons of the two. Hawthorne also uses the forest as a foil to the perfection of the Puritan society.

In the beginning of the story Hester emerges from the Puritan prison with the scarlet letter "A" on her chest, and a child in her arms. However, she shows no motherly love or affection toward Pearl, as she walks or stands on the scaffold with her. As the story continues Hester and Pearl's relationship is illustrated as a relationship of two companions who are both outcast from the village rather than a love filled mother-daughter relationship.

As time goes by and Pearl grows up, she begins to become her own person, similar and different from her mother. She begins to be as beautiful and unordinary as her mother, they are both portrayed as opposite of those in the Puritan society who are gray and dull. As Hester is portrayed as a strong, religious, and very human, Pearl however, is illustrated as a mythical creature who is a symbol of nature. Hester longs to be able to be free and glowing the way her daughter is; the way she once was as a child. This highlights Hester's weakness of guilt and shame for her sins.

When the Governor Bellingham threatens to take Hester's only friend and companion away from her Hester protests and fights for the daughter she

shows no motherly love towards. She says “ God gave me the child! She is my happiness! She is my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punishes me too! See ye not, she is the scarlet letter. Ye shall not take her! I will die first”. Hester sees her daughter the same way the Puritan’s see Hester’s scarlet letter; a symbol of sin. Even several year later, and she still feels the same shame and guilt. This is just another example of how Pearl helps show her mother’s weaknesses.

As Pearl grows up little by little each day she matures beyond what a child her age would be. One day Pearl asks her mother why she wears the scarlet letter “ A”, and what it means. This troubles Hester and catches her off guard. Later on Pearl asks Dimmesdale to hold her and her mother’s hand publically. Pearl does not hide the way she feels, and this is the complete opposite of her mother. Hester longs once again to be able to openly show her feelings the way her child can.