

# Sin, that's the message!

Business



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the novel *The Scarlet Letter*, many words or suggestive themes can be noted or stated to be the true moral of the story. Sin is by far the most common theme stated, which is the basis of *The Scarlet Letter*. Many articles and essays have been written that sin is the moral of the story. In a sense, they are correct, but, let us dig a little deeper into the true moral.

Yes, sin is a huge part of the story, do not get me wrong, but with that, a state or act of sinfulness can lead to one's personal growth. *The Scarlet Letter* is a story about a young woman named Hester Prynne. Hester, believing that her husband died at sea, had begun a new relationship with a man named Arthur Dimmesdale. After the alleged affair, Hester bore a daughter, Pearl. When the town found out about her adulterous act, they forced her to wear a scarlet "A."

" Later, a man named Roger Chillingworth, who poses as a physician and is Hester's very much alive husband. Over the course of a few years, Dimmesdale continues to hide the secret that he is the father of Pearl; Chillingworth finds out the truth and tortures Dimmesdale. In the end, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth die, and Hester still remains to wear the scarlet "A." As you can tell from the short summary above, this novel is most definitely based on sin and also the acts behind them. First, let us start with Arthur Dimmesdale.

Dimmesdale started out as a smart, sounding character; after all, he was a scholar. He was also just as equal of committing adultery as Hester, but he did indeed commit the sin. What most people do not notice about Dimmesdale is his rather active conscience. First of all, he allows Hester to

take all of the blame for the sinful act they both committed. Straightforward, he is a coward, and this crushes his active conscience. He takes on mental anguish and physical weakness, but by doing this it leads him to become eloquent.

By committing the sinful act with Hester, Dimmesdale punishes himself for being a coward, but in return he grows into becoming an eloquent man. In his critical essay “Hester versus Dimmesdale,” Henry F. Chorley states: It was the former which fixed the scarlet letter to the breast of Hester Prynne, and which drove Arthur Dimmesdale into a life of cowardly and selfish meanness, that added tenfold disgrace and ignominy to his original crime. (Chorley, 1978) After failing to take half of the blame of his sinful act, Dimmesdale grew into a simply noted eloquent coward. Though it was not a great type of personal growth, Dimmesdale did indeed grow. Now onto the villain of the story: Roger Chillingworth.

It is honestly safe to say that Chillingworth was a malevolent man. From that single act of sin, it led Chillingworth to become obsessed with vengeance. With that single act, Chillingworth plotted his revenge, and grew into a spiteful human being. In his essay “Great Feeling and Discrimination,” Evert A. Duyckinck states: This slow, cool, devilish purpose, like the concoction of some sublimated hell broth, is perfected gradually and inevitably.

The wayward, elfish child, a concentration of guilt and passion, binds the interests of the parties together, but throws little sunshine over the scene. (Duyckinck, 1978) This act of sin is what Chillingworth thrived on. He grew from being a husband to a malicious, knowledgeable mastermind. After

Dimmesdale's death, Chillingworth had no one left to punish, torture, or afflict on. In his critical essay "From Allegory to Symbolism," W. C.

Brownell states: Above all, Chillingworth is a mistake, or at most a wasted opportunity. For he is specialized into a mere function of malignity, and withdrawn from the reader's sympathies, whereas what completes, if it does not constitute the tragedy of adultery, is the sharing by the innocent of the punishment of the guilty. (Brownell, 1978) Chillingworth was so hell-bent on seeking revenge that it became who he was. As I stated before, after Dimmesdale's death, Chillingworth had no one to punish and had no choice but to die. He grew into a revenge seeking monster the act of just one sin. All Chillingworth lived for was revenge.

Hester and Dimmesdale's sin was not intent on hurting anyone, but to Chillingworth, it was deliberate. Now on to our protagonist of the story: Hester Prynne. Hester exemplifies a freethinker as soon as she begins to wear the scarlet "A." She also started to speculate on the social organization and the act of human nature after she committed her sin: But Hester Prynne, with a mind of native courage and activity, and for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed, from society, had habituated herself to such a latitude of speculation as was altogether foreign to the clergyman. (Hawthorne, 1978) In a sense, Hester took in her act of sin and used it to open her mind to different aspects of life.

Most importantly, Hester also grew to become a maternal figure. She cared for her daughter Pearl and cared for the poor by bringing them food and clothes. It was her sinful circumstance that shaped her into such an

important figure in the story. In conclusion, the sinful act that Hester and Arthur committed greatly shaped their own and others' personal growth. "The sunshine does not love you.

It runs away and hides itself, because it is afraid of something on your bosom." This line, said by Pearl, is an overall concept of what the sin Hester and Arthur committed. It exemplifies that there is a relative connection between and humanness. The old saying "I'm only human" really goes a long way in *The Scarlet Letter*. All Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth were, were human beings; and by being a human, it is almost unethical by not committing an act of sin. By committing variant acts of sins, it defines who we are as humans.

(Just like the sinful act Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale). It reflected upon who they really were. BIBLIOGRAPHY Brownell, W. C. "From Allegory to Symbolism.

" *The Scarlet Letter*. Ed. Sculley Bradle. NY: W. W.

Norton and Co., Inc., 1978. 292. Chorley, Henry.

" Hester versus Dimmesdale." *The Scarlet Letter*. Ed. Sculley Bradle. NY: W. W.

Norton and Co., Inc., 1978. 253-254 Duyckinck, Evert. " Great Feeling and Discrimination.

" *The Scarlet Letter*. Ed. Sculley Bradle. NY: W. W. Norton and Co.

, Inc., 1978. 249 Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. Ed. Sculley Bradle.

NY: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1978.