

# [Scarlet letter: dimmesdale’s suffering 1680](https://assignbuster.com/scarlet-letter-dimmesdales-suffering-1680/)

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In Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet

Letter, Dimmesdale, experiences the most emotional suffering from the

weight of guilt placed upon him as the father of an illegitimate

child. His lover, Hester Prynne bears their child and is chastised

and exiled from her peers. The identity of the father is kept

secret, so the community respects Dimmesdale as a member of the

Doctrine of the Elect. Dimmesdale is considered a role model for

other Puritans of Boston. Dimmesdale suffers the most because of the

pressure of being a role model for the community, so he cannot tell

anyone, and he puts himself in physical and emotional turmoil because

of this.

Being a role model makes it harder for Dimmesdale to live his

life. As a parishioner, Dimmesdale's every word is considered

important. " They deemed the young clergyman a miracle of holiness.

They fancied him the mouthpiece of Heaven's message of wisdom, and

rebuke, and love" (131). This shows that he was widely respected

which made it harder to confess. At times he wanted to bear the

black secret of his soul, but he could not because of the respect he

had over people. Hester did not have to suffer this way. Her secret

was out in the open. It is proven when Dimmesdale dies on the

scaffold how he was respected. Some of his fellow parishioners do

not believe that there was an " A" on his chest.

Dimmesdale cannot tell anyone about his secret, because of

Chilingworth's vengeance, talking to Hester makes him fearful of

being suspected. Once again the suffering Chilingworth experiences

is nothing compared to Dimmesdale. Chilingworth is also concealing a

deep secret, but he does not face any consequences if he confesses.

Hester does not have any more secrets. Chilingworth, whom Dimmesdale

is living with, is very vengeful. There is even reference to

Chilingworth being like the devil. In the prison when Chilingworth

treats the infant Pearl, Hester asks if he will prey upon her soul

now that he is in Boston. Chilingworth replies "'Not thy soul'"

(72). This means that he is going to take vengeance on the father.

Chilingworth explains that he is ruthless, "(F)ew things hidden from

the man who devotes himself earnestly and unreservedly to the

solution of a mystery" (70). This shows that Chilingworth is

determined to make Dimmesdale suffer, and magnifies Dimmesdale's

suffering.

Dimmesdale suffers emotionally and physically, because he is

alone and a role model. He physically damages himself by etching the

A into his flesh. As well, it is shown that he is emotionally

deteriorating. The night he went to the scaffold Dimmesdale thought

he had a whole conversation that did not really happen. After

thinking Dimmesdale spoke he thought to himself, " Good heavens had

Mr. Dimmesdale actually spoken? For one instant he believed that

these words had passed his lips... they were uttered in his

imagination" (138). This shows that Dimmesdale is not in the right

mind, and he is having trouble establishing reality from his

imagination. Physically it has been noted that Dimmesdale might have

been whipping himself. " In Mr. Dimmesdale's secret closet... there

was a bloody scourge.... this (man) had piled it on his own

shoulders" (133). Later it also alludes to how he starved himself,

out of guilt. Although Hester suffers from loneliness, she still is

allowed to know her daughter, while Dimmesdale fears his own child.

Chilingworth deteriorates, because he thrives on Dimmesdale falling

health.

Dimmesdale suffers the most in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The

Scarlet Letter. He is ashamed to admit his sins to a parish that

respects him greatly, and because of this he is alone. It has

deteriorated his mind and his thoughts. Suffering is a universal

trait. All of us feel pain, emotional and physical, at some point in

our lives. The barrier between human and animal or woman or man is

unseen by the lurking shadow of suffering. Like the does whose lives

are mercilessly taken during a weekend pastime, or by a speeding car

they suffer just as much as one who is mourning a death or their own

inner exile.