

The birthmark by nathaniel hawthorne essay sample

[Science](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ One-half of knowing what you want is knowing what you must give up before you get it.”

Howard, Sidney American dramatist (1891-1939)

When Alymer gave up science, he set in motion a course that ultimately led to an even greater sacrifice. Hawthorne's short story, *The Birthmark*, is a classic story of sacrifice and acceptance. It is evident that Alymer's passions of the heart superceded the logic of the mind. He was incapable of bridling any extreme feelings of love or hate without the end results being the loss of dreams and the life of his beloved wife. I believe Hawthorne is telling us that we as humans must not sacrifice anything that we are not willing to fully surrender, and if we do, we must be prepared to accept the consequences of our choices.

In the opening paragraph of *The Birthmark*, Hawthorne describes the life that Alymer forfeits and how he had to join his two passions, the love of science and the love of his wife, in order to create a semblance of balance.

He had left his laboratory to the care of an assistant, cleared his fine countenance from the furnace smoke, washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife . . . but it could only be by intertwining itself with his love of science, and uniting the strength of the latter to his own.

It is unknown to us why he felt he could not continue to practice science, we only know that he chose this course to pursue his wife. This action was one which led to a form of 'madness.' Alymer's desire to practice science and

continue his studies was one that should not have been pushed aside. By suppressing this, Alymer felt his sacrifice was too great. He became bitter and angry. He then turned the anger into a true dislike of his near-perfect wife and the one aspect that represented imperfection in his eyes.

Furthermore, his wife's near perfection also taunted him due to his failures as a scientist.

Throughout the experiments that Alymer takes on to remove the birthmark, it is mentioned how there were numerous failures. Furthermore, in the fifty-fourth paragraph Georgiana is reading the books which belonged to Alymer and described his many science experiments. While reading the scientific history of her husband, she loses faith in his ability to be able to create a solution that would remove the birthmark. This faith is lost due to the many failures that Alymer had experienced.

Georgiana, as she read, revered Alymer and loved him more profoundly than ever, but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid success were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed. His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach.

It is evident that Hawthorne was expressing to the reader that Alymer had failed as a scientist yet still loved the work. He was not truly willing to sacrifice the life of science not even for the love of this beautiful woman.

Because of the bitterness of loss dreams, Alymer converted this to an anger

<https://assignbuster.com/the-birthmark-by-nathaniel-hawthorne-essay-sample/>

toward Georgiana and focused the anger on the most imperfect aspect which happened to be the birthmark.

The hatred led to the eventual death of Georgiana. Alymer thrived on creating a scientific product that would remove the mark from his wife and make her the 'perfection' he had always lacked in his chosen field and at the same time he would be deemed successful in the scientific world. If his experiment were successful, he would then create a balance of science and love that he longed for; however, this was not to be.

We learn the final experiment did indeed take the life of Georgiana. His dreams of being a successful scientist faded away along with the mark on her face, and at the same time he also loses the only perfect part of his world, Georgiana. Perhaps the last sentence of the entire story sums it up best, "The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present." Ironically, Alymer sacrificed science for his wife, and his wife ultimately sacrificed her life for science.