

# Example of the birth- mark essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Renaissance](#)



Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Birth-Mark* is a short story examining obsessions with human perfection. The romantic short story was first published in 1843. It tells of the life of Aylmer, an intelligent scientist and philosopher who abandons his experiments and career to marry Georgina. Georgina is physically perfect save for a red birthmark on her neck in the shape of a human hand. Aylmer becomes excessively obsessed with the birthmark on Georgina's cheek as the story progresses. One night, the philosopher and scientist dreams of cutting the birthmark on his wife's cheek and progresses all the way to the heart with his incision. However, he does not remember the dream until the wife asks the following day what his sleep-talking meant. As Aylmer recollects the dream, Georgina announces that she would rather have the birthmark on the cheek removed than incessantly endure her husband's horror. The end of the story is tragic, with Georgina dying after she drinks a potion prepared by her husband to remove the birthmark. The story is a depiction of the period of renaissance. Renaissance in Europe was about the new exposure to the old and classical art, architectural forms and text. Some works of Romans and Greeks were known in the Islamic World and Europe, but the fall of Constantinople made them accessible to most western scholars for the first time. The feature of the Renaissance was that it enlightened the rest of Europe on the vast knowledge the Romans and Greeks had. The world learnt about the expertise the Romans and Greek had in caring and representation of the human body, astronomy, geography, architecture and efficient government of states and armies (Tignor and Hague, 2007). The story of Aylmer is akin to other philosophers and scientists of the time.

As the world learnt about the brilliance of the Romans and Greeks, notion of perfection cropped up. It was during this period that the world came to know of the Christian views of creation than ever before. This was through the crusades of the Romans as they spread Catholicism around the globe. From the bible stories that spread across Europe like wild fire, there was an aspect of perfection of God and His creation. This notion entered and resided in Westerners like the fictional Aylmer that any hint of defiance to nature meant “ unholy”. For this reason, several philosophers of the time became obsessed with little flaws. The birthmark on Georgia’s cheek meant a lot to Aylmer that he spent his entire marriage studying it. These were the effects of Roman and Greek civilization that were taking root in the whole of Europe.

Aylmer’s story reiterates another facet of the renaissance that nullified the need to believe in one source of knowledge. The second feature of Renaissance is that it replaced the prior existence of the sole need to trust the mediaeval authorities and understand the Christian teachings to be considered knowledgeable. It added a new twist to the discernment of knowledge in which people had to interpret original sources, learn new languages and understand history. The dive back into the historic times of the Greek and the Romans was known as humanism. Its significant objective was to aspire to be aware of the human experiences beyond Christian and Islamic teachings. Aylmer had his source of knowledge to create the concoction that shaded off the birthmark from Georgina’s cheek from sources that were not medieval, Christian or Islamic.

Like other popular figures of the renaissance period, Aylmer had sponsorship

of the state to conduct his experiments before abandoning them. The same feature applies to artists, scientists and philosophers of renaissance age. An example is Leonardo de'Vinci who was housed by de Medici family. The third feature of Renaissance is that it was sponsored and made possible by the sponsorship and support of rich and powerful families and the ruling class. For instance, the de Medici family patronized ancient models for three generations from 1480s. The family made Florence a major showplace for Renaissance, ancient arts and architecture. Likewise, Aylmer was an asset of the state before he left all his works of science to concentrate on his marriage. However, he did not abandon the scientific works fully as the end of the story reveals that he had secretly studied the shape on Georgina's cheek and devised a concoction to remove it.

The romantic period was characterized by people doing acts that would be contemporarily referred to as “insanity” for love. This was the same notion the author, Nathaniel Hawthorne had in mind as he wrote about the sacrificial escapades of Aylmer for love. He describes a character with romanticism since he had the mindset of romantic period. Like Aylmer did, men abandoned successful careers to be beside the women they vowed to love. Likewise, they did everything they would to protect the people they loved. Stories are told of men who were ready to lose their lives in bizarre scenarios for the women they loved. All that mattered was living with the people they loved. Unlike contemporary time when more than love matters, the romantic period was moved and powered by love. The Birth-Mark is indeed a portrayal of the renaissance and romantic periods.

## References

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