

Judgement

Literature, Russian Literature



Judgement The main theme of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, is judgement. Because of Hawthorne's broken past many of his writings focus on sin and judgement in Puritan societies. Throughout *The Scarlet Letter* we journey with Hester as she returns to her village after being held in jail because of her grievous sin of adultery. Hawthorne uses Chillingworth and the townspeople in order to show that, " When we judge others we are not defining them we are defining ourselves. " When Hester's husband arrives in the village to find that she has committed adultery he tries to be as understanding as possible. He tends for her baby while she is in the prison before talking to her. After the baby is asleep he admits that they both have fault in her sin, but then he vows that he will find the man she slept with. From that point forward he becomes Chillingworth. He starts to judge everyone in order to try and figure out the father of Pearl. All the characters notice that Chillingworth changes from a good man to a man with, " Something ugly and evil in his face, which they had not previously noticed, and which grew still the more obvious to sight, the oftener they looked upon him. " Judging others completely changes Chillingworth's character rather than Dimmesdale or anyone else in the village. Before Hester even leaves the jail she is bombarded with judgements from all of the townspeople surrounding the prison, but she never lets the judgements define herself. As soon as she leaves the prison she begins to help others. Her kind deeds help her to redefine her own sin, and to help her feel as though she has repented fully. Even though Hester is genuinely trying to repent the villagers still hold on to their cruel judgements about her. These judgements help to make themselves feel as though their sins are not as bad, and that they have been

chosen as righteous people through predestination and will be saved. Hester truly has nothing to do with this accusations they are making, but each judge is defining themselves. Throughout the book there is no more common theme than judgement. From before Hester leaves the prison till the conclusion of the novel there is judging with the townspeople and chillingworth as the main judges. Each perfectly exemplifies the quote, "When we judge others we are not defining them we are defining ourselves. "