

# Kevin staley

Literature, Russian Literature



Kevin Staley Mrs. Westerside 3/20/13 AP/IB English The Ultimate Salvation

Take a moment to consider enduring the embarrassment of a whole village's condemnation. In *The Scarlet Letter*, author Nathaniel Hawthorne creates a narrative of a woman who faces this very same condemnation because she committed the heinous act of adultery, and refused to declare the father of her child, Pearl. In accordance to Hester committing this terrible deed, the magistrates of the town rule for her to wear a big letter A on her chest to symbolize the vile sin she has committed. After seven long years, Hester decides to remove the letter A freeing herself from the emotional prison society has put her in. By creating this passage of Hester removing the A, Hawthorne demonstrates the importance of honesty, forgiveness for one's sins and that acceptance is the only true form of freedom and repentance. Hawthorne uses Imagery and diction throughout the passage to emphasize the importance of honesty. For example with Hester having removed the A and the "The stigma gone, Hester heaved a long deep sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departed from her spirit"(199). This shows how she felt free and unburdened by society's definition of her by finally coming to terms and being honest with herself about what she has done. The use of imagery in this quote really illustrates the importance of honesty by perfectly capturing the emotional intensity of how relieved and free Hester felt by removing the A, which symbolized the sin she had committed. A second example is the "O exquisite relief"(199) Hester felt after removing the letter and how "She had not known the weight until she had felt the freedom"(199). By saying "She had not known the weight until she had felt the freedom" it implies that Hester didn't know the huge burden and

emotional baggage that the letter had created. It was not until she had taken the letter off that she had freed herself from the bondage of the letter and thus the sin and evil attached to it. By structuring the quote “ O exquisite relief” next to the quote “ She had not known the weight until she had felt the freedom” it emphasizes the meaning of the “ weight” that is mentioned in the quote and the sheer intensity of the relief Hester felt when she took off the letter. Hawthorne uses impeccable diction in this quote by using the word “ exquisite” instead of a normal word like excellent, or great to imply that the feeling of relief Hester felt was not just good or average, but extreme, and greater than just normal relief. Another example is after Hester acts on an impulse to remove the A, “ by another impulse, she took off the formal cap that confined her hair, and down it fell upon her shoulders”(199). This quote explains how after Hester removed the A she felt so free from society’s definition and rules for her, that she was honest with herself and let her hair down to be the person she wants to be and not what society wants her to be. The use of imagery in this quote promotes the importance of honesty, by painting a picture of her taking off the cap that confined her hair, similar to Hester taking off the A that confined her to society’s definition of her. The author also uses rhetorical devices such as simile, imagery to demonstrate the importance of forgiveness for one’s sins in the passage. For example after Hester throws the scarlet letter off her chest, it was “ as if the gloom of the earth and sky had been but the effluence of these two mortal hearts, it vanished with their sorrow” (199). This shows how the earth and sky were cursed and plagued by the symbol and sin of the A, and how she was forgiven after she had removed the A, and the earth and sky once again

became nice and beautiful. The use of simile in this quote depicts the importance of forgiveness for one's sin by comparing the gloom of the earth and sky to Hester and Dimmsdale's hearts, effectively supporting the author's purpose. Another example is when Hester is finally forgiven for her sin, when she removes the A, and then " All at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest, gladdening each green leaf, transmuting the yellow fallen ones to gold, and gleaming adown the gray trunks of the solemn trees"(199). This quote exhibits how by the simple act of removing the A, Hester's sin was forgiven and Nature once again became great, luscious and beautiful.

Hawthorne uses imagery in this quote to paint a picture for the reader of how great and beautiful the forest became after Hester was forgiven and how the sun finally showed through the dark evil residing in the forest.

Hawthorne uses rhetorical devices such as imagery and diction to support his purpose that acceptance of your sin is the only true form of freedom and repentance. One example of this is how Hester feels after she removes the A, and " Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past, and clustered themselves with her maiden hope, and a happiness before unknown, within the magic circle of this hour"(199). This shows how now that she has accepted her sin and made it her own she is the master of her fate, and her normal youth vigor and beauty has come back. The imagery displayed in this quote, expresses how Hester felt and reveals her now reclaimed sex drive and youthful vigor in more detail to the reader. Another example is how if " the forest still kept its gloom, it would have been bright in Hester's eyes, and bright in Arthur

Dimmesdale's! "(199). This shows how a dark evil infested the forest but by Hester accepting her sin and removing the A, the dark evil was removed where if she hadn't the dark evil would've still remained apart of her and Dimmesdale as well. The diction shown in this quote by the use of the word gloom, shows how there was not just darkness covering the forest it was a much more powerful dark evil that was consuming Hester and Dimmesdale. So hence, Hawthorne creates the passage of Hester removing the A to show and demonstrate the importance of honesty, forgiveness for one's sins and that acceptance is the only true form of freedom and repentance. Hawthorne showed the importance of honesty by showing how after being honest with herself Hester made her own image didn't let herself be defined by society rules. He also showed the importance for one's sins by showing how by doing the act of removing the A she was forgiven for her sin and the dark evil that resided in the forest and in the A was lifted. Then finally the author showed how acceptance is the only true form of freedom and repentance by showing how Hester accepted her sin and embraced it as her own, thusly removing the Sin and evil that had taken a hold on her and Dimmesdale. Proving how Hawthorne's purpose for the creating this passage, was brought to light by the importance of honesty and forgiveness for one's sins and that acceptance is the only true form of freedom and repentance. Works Cited Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, 1984. Print.