

The scarlet letter: hester's secrets cause harm

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The Scarlet Letter, written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, follows the story of Hester Prynne and her dealings with a nasty love triangle and life with the sin of adultery. Hawthorne also outlines the consequences of keeping secrets and the effects it may have on the lives of oneself and others. In this novel, Hester keeps many destructive secrets that harm more than herself and some that she should have shared before it got too late. Hester most likely believed that her secrets harmed herself and spared others pain as long as they were hers and hers alone.

However, Hester's secrets harmed many more people, including her lover Dimmesdale and her husband Chillingworth. Her secrets hurt Dimmesdale the most. When she shared that her husband was Chillingworth, he seemed almost heartbroken at the fact that she would hide such an important piece of information from him. Dimmesdale was also hurt in many ways when she withheld the identity of the father of Pearl from the community, such as harming himself to deal with the fact he did not come forth at court.

In fact, this very act also resulted in the harm of Chillingworth. He vowed revenge because he did not know who the baby's father was, which sent him and his health in a downward spiral. Her acts in holding these secrets were destructive in the community as well, not just harmful to a few people. The community as a whole had to deal with the shame of having an adulteress within its jurisdiction and many people were disgusted with the idea of it in the first place.

To make matters worse, her secrets caused the downfall of the local minister and doctor, both of which were very esteemed. Her secrets caused Dimmesdale's aforementioned self harm and Chillingworth's spite towards <https://assignbuster.com/the-scarlet-letter-hesters-secrets-cause-harm/>

him, which when combined sent his health downwards very quickly. He, also sharing the secret, eventually collapsed under the pressure and, in his last sermon, died. Chillingworth died as well because he had spent so much of his time and energy being evil that it impacted his health negatively, which did not mix well with his age.

Now the town's beloved doctor and minister were dead and much of the community was, understandably, distraught. These problems were caused by Hester's secrets and could have been completely prevented if she shared them with the right people at the right times. She was right to not reveal the identity of her lover in court, as it saved Dimmesdale's life, but she should have shared with him the identity of her husband.

If she had done this right away, Dimmesdale could have avoided Chillingworth completely and not been unaware to the harm that was being done by the doctor. This may have also increased the chances that Chillingworth would remain oblivious to who Dimmesdale really was since their time together would have been severely reduced. Hester should have also shared with Pearl who Dimmesdale really was earlier on to help her understand more about her life and their strange relationship.

Perhaps Pearl could have grown up with Dimmesdale as her father after they retreated to another city, had a more normal childhood. Ultimately, Hester's secrets harmed many. They were destructive and reckless and perhaps she should have shared some of them in a better fashion at better times. It was these secrets that caused much pain, as they do in many circumstances in life. This may have been one thing Hawthorne was trying to portray in his novel, that secrets hurt more than those who keep them.