

A view of how nathaniel hawthorne portrays the use of falseness as illustrated in...

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The author of the *Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne, is a fervent anti-transcendentalist who opposes the naïve ideology of the transcendentalists in which they believe that people are always pure and good. Hypocrisy is a dominant theme throughout the novel, *Scarlet Letter*, as almost all of the main characters commit actions that go against their beliefs and virtues. The outcome of these hypocritical actions soon proves to be fatal as many of the characters got negatively impacted. Through the juxtaposition of Hester's and Dimmesdale's hypocritical nature with Pearl's pureness, Hawthorne reveals the true harming effects of the Puritan society on its individuals and the benefits of unorthodoxy in the prevailing community.

Hester has caused only further problem to herself and her neighbors through her hypocritical actions which eventually led to the damnation of Dimmesdale. The purpose of the scarlet letter was to show the society that Hester has caused a great sin and should be openly humiliated in front of everyone. Hester, however undaunted by the society's intimidation, wore the scarlet letter without a feeling of guilt because she believed that wearing it will relieve her of her guilt as she is openly confessing all her sins to the community and is a chance to start anew. While Hester is proudly wearing the sign of guilt, she tells her fellow townsmen and even Chillingworth that they "shalt never know" (52) the true identity of her lover and is unwilling to confess his name. This is an act of hypocrisy as she is omitting in disclosing the main part of her sin. Fearing that Chillingworth would seek revenge, Hester refuses to tell him even though he has been so amiable and nice to her. Chillingworth, suddenly enraged from Hester's unwillingness to disclose her suitor's name, claimed that he'll "seek this man...see him tremble...feel

myself shudder... [and] he must needs be mine!" (52). The fear of the unknown and the unpredictability of Chillingworth's innate savage behavior cause Hester to use hypocrisy as means to ward off the conflict she is facing. Hester's insistence in not disclosing the name of her lover has caused Chillingworth to find even more reasons to seek revenge on Dimmesdale. This soon resulted in the downfall of Dimmesdale as Chillingworth stalks him and mentally torments him to near death. Hester's hypocritical actions have only caused harms to the people around her.

Dimmesdale's moral conflict between his role of a minister and a sinner forces him to seek hypocrisy as a way to tell partial truths to his people. Dimmesdale is a god-fearing man who is caught up between an affair with a woman who he dearly loves and his saintly reputation in the society. As Dimmesdale agree to start his life anew after his encounter with Hester and Pearl at the woods, he immediately contradicted his ideology after he rejects Pearl's invitation to "stand ...with mother and her, to-morrow noontide" (105) on the scaffold. This shows that although he really wants to free himself from all the sinful burdens, his care for his reputation prevents him from doing such things as the society regards Dimmesdale as "'[a] godly youth!' [and a] 'Saint on earth!'"(99). Dimmesdale's hypocritical views are not caused by Dimmesdale's characters, but rather by the Puritan society. The Puritans have a strict spiritual policy in which people are forced to abide by oppressive extremist beliefs. They believe that individuals should abandon their individual wants and follow the rules of God. Hawthorne shows that Dimmesdale, who is considered the most pure person in society, is sinful

through his hypocritical views. Dimmesdale suffered from many occasions as he is caught up between moral virtues and the responsibility of a minister. Dimmesdale wanted to live a life with Hester but he had a reputation to live up to. Dimmesdale wanted to confess his sins, but the strict rules and punishment held for adultery made Dimmesdale to back down. It is the way the society function, not cowardness, that made Dimmesdale be a hypocrite.

Pearl's pureness and holy nature exempts herself from the rest of the society by not being affected by the stains of the Puritan community. Hawthorne demonstrates the goodness of being oblivious to hypocrisy through Pearl's character and good nature. Her innocence and her ability to not get tainted by society help relieve her to the exposure of hypocrisy. As seen through her innocence and amateur behavior, she "lacked reference and adaptation to the world...and [is] not amenable to rules" (62). The purity of Pearl's character is one that many people want. She lives a carefree world where freedom and liberties are abundant. In contrast to the oppressive Puritan society, Hawthorne purposely utilizes this antithesis to compare the two worlds and their effects. The Puritan society is filled with sorrow and hypocrisy while Pearl's life is filled with happiness and purity and impervious to "the diseases of sadness...inherit from [the society]" (126). Hawthorne explicitly shows us that people are not born evil demonstrated through Pearl's ignorant behavior and actions but rather through the influence of the society. As people grow older, the effects of the Puritan society can be seen in almost everyone's hypocritical actions such as Hester, Dimmesdale and other members of the community. The Puritan society in the story molds the

characters into who they are now. Pearl, free from restraints of the society, lives an absolute, real life. Hawthorne uses the contrast of Pearl with other characters as a way to challenge the audience to choose the life they want to live.

The juxtaposition of Hester's and Dimmesdale's hypocritical actions with Pearl's saintly character brings about the effects of a Puritan society can have upon the individuals in that community. Oppressive spiritual restraints turn nation into hypocrites as they are forced to abide to strong spiritual customs while living a fraudulent, sinful life. Nathaniel Hawthorne uses hypocrisy to point out the harms of the prevailing Puritan society can have on every individual and the effects that can be brought upon to loved ones.