

The scarlet letter essay: how nature plays a role in the novel essay sample



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Overlooked in many books, nature plays a huge part in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*. It plays its own character that seems to show emotions as well as its own likes and dislikes. It is where Hester and Dimmesdale first committed their sin and it also seems to be the first place where they are most forgiven from it. Metaphors were also created with the use of nature to keep things more connected throughout the book, and to keep the reader on track. Also, Pearl seems to have a connection with nature as if she is it in a human-like form. Talks of her being a sprite and an elf show this point clearly because both of those creatures take care of nature.

The forest specifically is where many of the important events occurred in the book and could in some ways be viewed as a separate world from that of the Puritan community. In contrast to the hostile and unforgiving society Hester and Dimmesdale lived, the forest was understanding and accepting to the two. It is to be understood that the sin the two committed happened in the forest. This split the two apart for at least seven years before they met back in the woods to find comfort in one another, in the place where their lives were changed forever. During the scene where Hester and Dimmesdale meet in the forest after seven years of being distant from each other, nature has a big role in letting the reader know how it feels about the sinners. When Hester wants to move forward with her life and with Dimmesdale, she talks about leaving the past in the past and getting on with her life. After this, she threw the scarlet letter towards the brook. “ With a hand’s breadth further flight it would have fallen into the water, and have given the little brook another woe to carry onwards, besides the unintelligible tale which it still kept murmuring about.

But there lay the embroidered letter, glittering like a lost jewel..." In this scenario, the river was telling Hester that her sin could not yet just be washed away. This leads one to believe that the forest has yet to forgive Hester but in the next moment, Hester takes off her bonnet and lets down her hair and " 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, transmitting the yellow fallen ones to gold, and gleaming adown the gray trunks of the solemn trees." God seems to be allowing nature to open up itself for Hester whereas before it was unwilling to let Hester bask in its sun.

We see this change of heart from nature because earlier in the book, Pearl is the one to recognize the relationship of the sun and her mother when she says; " the sunshine does not love you, It runs away and hides itself; because it is afraid of something on your bosom. Now, see! There it is playing, a good way off. Stand you here, and let me run and catch it. I am but a child. It will not flee from me; for I wear nothing on my bosom yet." Pearl connects the letter to nature shunning her mother and this as shown in the earlier quote changes completely later on.

Nature also plays a metaphorical role in the book by becoming different types of flowers to show the difference between evil and good. In the beginning of the book, the prison threshold " was a wild rose-bush covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went as he went in..." The rose is the goodness the part of nature that reaches out to

everyone good and bad and is there to help them to add beauty into the
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lives of the ugly. A black flower is mentioned as a metaphor for the evil results of Chillingworth's hate and Hester's sin when Chillingworth says, " Let the black flower blossom as it may."

Red and black are further indulged upon as metaphors in other parts of the novel. Another use of the natural world was in a description of the things Pearl played with. " The pine trees, aged, black and solemn, and flinging groans and other melancholy utterances on the breeze needed little transformation to figure as Puritan elders; the ugliest weeds of the garden were their children, whom Pearl smote down and uprooted, most unmercifully." The environment was used to show both the good and the bad in the novel.