

As many women
during this era of



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As citizens of the United States and members of the most open society in the world it is difficult for us to picture a world where the phrases woman's rights, equal opportunity, and religious freedom have little meaning. When the surface of American history is scratched, not necessarily deeply a past of limited rights for women is soon revealed. The challenge to any author comes in painting a picture of this colonial past to both current readers and readers to come. Nathaniel Hawthorne In his book "The Scarlet Letter" successfully meets this task through the character of Hester Prynne. Hawthorne describes a woman with independence ahead of her time and a social order Hester's independence was promptly demonstrated at the novel's beginning. The court has ruled as punishment for her adultery she must wear an "A" upon her chest, that to the colonist served as a reminder of the punishment they would suffer if their sins were to be discovered, and to Hester a reminder of sin.

Hester stands alone outside the court house as the close minded colonial eyes stare at her and the baby in her arms. Many women during this era of American history would look for a way to run. Hester shows little sign of uneasiness, with exception to her firm hold on the infant. At the conclusion of this scene the reader knows that this is a strong woman trying to maintain dignity in a land where a woman's independence ranked right above blasphemy on the hierarchy of values. Throughout the novel Hester demonstrates her independence of living.

Her husband never comes forward, and her lover does the same. With everyone denying relations Hester is forced to live alone. She raises the child by herself and is successful in her enterprise of sewing and hemming.

Hawthorne informs us that this lifestyle of isolationism is unique to her, and convinces us that an average colonial woman could not survive under these conditions. At this point in the book Hester has shown her independence in dealing with life's crisis, and in her style of living. The best way to understand a parents personality is to examine how they raise their children. This idea holds true when one examines closely the techniques Hester uses to raise Pearl.

In this era of religious totality, independence of thought, and the teachings of those ideals commanded little respect. Doing something taboo for the times, Hester refuses to adopt puritan customs into Pearls upbringing. Most families of our colonial past raised children with a strict biblical stick. Refusing to adapt these brutish policies Hester allows Pearl to maintain a spirit of revolutionary independence.

Hawthorne leads us to believe that these traits stem from both Hester's nature, At the conclusion of the novel Hawthorne leaves much to be pondered. Although, one thing is clearly shown, Hesters has reforming independence. Although the novel used little imagery a reader is still left to contemplate the true magnitude of this Woman's independence.

The specific effects of her personality can always be argued, but a modern reader will never question Hesters ability to achieve success in today's social structure. Bibliography: