

The scarlet letter symbolism

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The Rosebush The rose bush is a discreet yet important symbol in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*. The rosebush is first mentioned in the chapter, "The Prison Door." The narrator is setting the first major scene by describing the scenery. He is comparing the Puritan society to an "ugly edifice" and contrasting the rose bush to "the deep heart of Nature." Later, in "The Governor's Hall," Hester and Governor Bellingham are talking about taking Pearl away from her. Pearl starts throwing a tantrum until she can have a rose from a rosebush. These events show major symbolism in a delicate flower.

As the narrator describes the rosebush, he offers a rose to the reader "to symbolize some sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow," (Hawthorne 42). This foreshadows the story will be forlorn. The rose is an offer to comfort the reader at the end of a disheartening novel. The rosebush also symbolizes life and beauty surrounded by a dreary world of sorrow. Outside of the prison door, the lively rosebush grows next to many weeds. This shows a truly beautiful flower can arise from a complete barren region.

The rosebush is mentioned again later in the novel. At the governor's house, "Pearl, seeing the rosebushes, began to cry for a red rose, and would not be pacified," (Hawthorne 95). This carries over from the symbolism in chapter one. Although Pearl acts like a child of the devil, filled with darkness and mystery, she can be sweet and delicate by holding a single rose. The rosebush is an important symbol to understand the sorrow in *The Scarlet Letter*. After the symbolism is understood, readers can see the speck of

amiability here and there. Throughout the novel the rose pacifies sorrowful and depressing emotions this story can bring.