

"the scarlet letter":
chapter 8-12 (study
questions)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

1.) Describe the luxury of the Governor's home, especially in contrast to an ordinary Puritan's lifestyle. The Governor's house was luxurious. It was full of armor and paintings and lots of metal. It has ponderous chairs with elaborately carved chairs. A Puritan's home was just simple, it only had the necessities. 2.) How does Pearl behave when questioned by the men? She becomes different, her attitude changes she becomes dark. 3.) How does Hester succeed in her mission, and how does this relate to her conversation with Mistress Hibbins? She's able to keep Pearl. If she were to fail her mission, she says that she probably would have joined Mistress Hibbins. 4.) What are the townspeople's reactions to Chillingworth's lodging in the same house as Dimmesdale? Many are happy that a doctor will be close at hand to tend to their beloved minister. It is seen as the answer to their prayers. Others begin to notice changes in Chillingworth's appearance and personality, and rumors circulate that he might be in league with the devil. If there is any conflict between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, they are sure the goodness in Dimmesdale will win out. 5.) What changes have taken place in Chillingworth over the years? There was something ugly and evil in his face. It was widely held that he was the devil or the devil's agent come to persecute Dimmesdale. 6.) What actions does Dimmesdale take to punish himself? Over the years Dimmesdale has taken to whipping his shoulders with a scourge, fasting until weak with hunger, and staying awake in night-long vigils. 7.) Why is Chillingworth called a "leech," and why, at another point, does the narrator compare him to a miner? Doctors used leeches to draw out bad blood, and the ironic use here is appropriate. Chillingworth is also presented as someone who was entering into the interior of a heart and digging, like a miner, to take out something precious. 8.) What is the

significance of Chillingworth's examining Dimmesdale's chest? Dimmesdale often clutches his chest and to this point has not allowed Chillingworth, his doctor, to examine him. Since Chillingworth suspects the minister has committed the same sin as Hester, it follows that he might be pained symbolically and literally in the same spot as she. 9.) What is the reaction of Dimmesdale's parishioners to his sermons? Ironically, the more earnestly Dimmesdale tells them that he is a sinner, the more powerful his sermons are to those who see him as the model of virtue. If this saintly man has sinned, they must be very unworthy of God's blessing. 10.) For what reasons are the major characters at the scaffold during the night? Dimmesdale feels he might have more peace within himself if he stands at the place of atonement even though it is under the cover of night. The others are passing by after leaving the deathbed of Governor Winthrop: Hester as a nurse and shroud maker, Pearl as her companion, and Chillingworth as his doctor. 11.) Why does Dimmesdale cry out while on the scaffold? Dimmesdale shrieks out of horror at the thought that his guilt is exposed to the view of the universe. He calls to Wilson out of a fatalistic impulse that tells him he will soon be exposed because he feels he cannot move. 12.) Where is each major character located when the meteor is seen? Dimmesdale, Hester, and Pearl are on the scaffold while Chillingworth is approaching it. 13.) What are the various interpretations the characters attribute to the shape of the meteor? Dimmesdale interprets the shape to indicate that Heaven has taken notice of his guilt. The townspeople interpret the "A" to stand for "Angel" for the taking into heaven of Governor Winthrop. ON" THE SCARLET LETTER":

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