

# [The scarlet letter 10](https://assignbuster.com/the-scarlet-letter-10/)

'Among many morals which press upon us from the poor minister's miserable experience, we put only this into a sentence: Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!';(Ch. 24: 236) Hawthorne expresses the purpose of writing this novel in that short sentence. He creates characters who have sin and disguise these sins for their own salvation. Slowly these sins evolve the characters, it strengthens Hester, humanizes Dimmesdale, and turns Chillingworth into a demon. The story is Hawthorne's depiction of the effects of sin on the hearts and minds of humanity during the Puritan society through the characters Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth.

Hester's sin is that her passion and love were of more importance to her than the Puritan moral code, but she learns the error of her ways and slowly regains the adoration of the community. For instance, 'What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other! Hast thou forgotten it?';(Ch. 17: 179). Hester fully acknowledges her guilt and displays it with pride to the world. This was obvious by the way she displays the scarlet letter with elaborate designs showing that she is proud. Furthermore, she does not want to live a life of lies anymore when she states 'forgive me! In all things else, I have striven to be true! Truth was the one virtue which I might have held fast, and did hold fast, through all extremity save when thy good--the life--they fame--were put in question! Then I consented a deception. But a lie is never good, even though death threaten the other side!';(Ch. 17: 177). Hester learns from her sin, and grows strong, a direct result from her punishment. The scarlet letter 'A' was as if a blessing to Hester changing her into an honest person with good virtues. Fittingly, she chooses to stay in Boston with Pearl although Hawthorne admits, ';… that this woman should still call that place her home, where, and where only, she must needs be the type of shame';(Ch. 5: 73). She is trying to stay and face her consequences instead of running in the other direction. Most people would leave a town where they are looked upon as trash the scum of society. Finally, the colonists come to think of the scarlet letter as '… the cross on a nun's bosom';(Ch. 13: 149). She proves her worth with her uncommon sewing skills and providing community service. They view Hester as less of an outcast and more of her being part of the community now. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread: Shame, Despair, and Solitude! these had been her teachers, --stern and wild ones, --and they had made her strong.
Arthur Dimmesdale's was Hester's silent partner in crime that confesses nothing in order to save himself. First, Dimmesdale pleads with Hester, while she receives her sentence on the scaffold, to confess the father of the her child,';#8230; I charge thee to speak out the name of thy fellow-sinner and fellow-sufferer! Be not silent from any mistaken pity and tenderness for him for, believe me, Hester, though he were to step down from a high place, and stand there beside thee on thy pedestal of shame, yet better were it so, than to hide a guilty heart through life. What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him--yea compel him, as it were--to add hypocrisy to sin?';(Ch. 3: 63). Though he never actually says that he is not the parent he implies it by talking of the father in third person. Dimmesdale is a coward, a man who is too weak to confess his guilt, even though he desires it greatly. When Dimmesdale is speaking to Chilling worth, you could see guilt in underlying meanings, or even directly, from what he says, '… it may be that they are kept silent by the very constitution of their nature. Or--can we not suppose it?--guilty as they may be, retaining, nevertheless, a zeal for God's glory and man's welfare, they shrink from displaying themselves black and filthy in the view of men because, thencefoward, no good can be achieved by them no evil of the past be redeemed by better service. So, to their own unutterable torment, they go about among their fellow-creatures looking pure as new-fallen snow while their hearts are all looking speckled and spotted with iniquity of which they cannot rid themselves';(Ch. 10: 121). Dimmesdale becomes weaker by letting guilt and grief eat away at his conscience. Dimmesdale is trying to excuse his behavior, when his soaring career may be a justification for concealing a sin. As a result, he confesses his sin on Election Day,';… I should have stood; here, with this woman, whose arm,…';(Ch. 23: 231). After giving the greatest sermon of his life, he climbs the very scaffold where he first pleaded with Hester to reveal his identity, now he releases his secret. Dimmesdale surrenders the identity, which brings him the love and admiration of his parishioners saving his soul. Hawthorne wanted to see what would happen if he creates a character that struggles to hide a terrible sin deep in his heart, but also believes in a God that sees and loves the truth.

For seven years, Chillingworth's purpose is to search out and torment the man who has betrayed him, which inevitably he must assume the responsibility for destroying himself. Thus, the townspeople find '... that Roger Chillingworth's aspect had undergone a remarkable change while he had dwelt in town, ad especially since his abode with Mr. Dimmesdale. At first his expression had been calm, meditative, scholar-like. Now, there was something ugly and evil in his face, which they had not previously noticed, and which grew still the more obvious to sight the oftener they looked upon him';(Ch. 9: 117). Vengeance is what he obsesses with in the process of carrying out his own vengeance he destroys himself. It is he who surrenderes his human sympathies in his quest for revenge. Second, Hawthorne states '; This unhappy man had made the very principle of his life to consist of the pursuit and systematic exercise of revenge and when, by its completest triumph and consummation, that evil principle was left no further material to support it, when, in short, there was no more Devil's work on earth for him to do so...';(Ch. 24: 236). Chillingworth's worst sin is violating the sanctity of the human heart. His sole purpose for living was vengeance, which was all that was driving him forward. He attempts to play God, and instead turns into a devil. Also, 'In a word, old Roger Chilling worth was a striking evidence of man's faculty of transforming himself into a devil…';(Ch. 14: 155). He obsesses with this new mission in his life, and when he targets Reverend Dimmesdale as the possible suspect. His expression becomes those of the Devil celebrating when a precious soul is lost to heaven as he finds that Dimmesdale is the father. Chillingworth's deception allows him to become consumed with hatred and the desire to inflict his revenge on the one whom stole his wife's heart.

A believable plot, convincing characterization help Hawthorne's view of Puritan society and its conviction of sin to develop within his characters. The message of this novel is beneficial because it is applicable to today's society. Sins have the power to change a person into an opposing figure of what they originally were. Hawthorne's message teaches the audience a lesson in coping with life's blows. Each individual character displays both senses of truth and evil and a lesson of purity is developed throughout the book.