

# How hester changes: the strength of her character



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the *Scarlet Letter*, it is remarkable how Hawthorne shows Hester Prynne's strength of character. Although Hawthorne does not give us much information about Hester's life prior to the novel, he does show her great character which is revealed through the number of trials and obstacles she faced, her public humiliation and isolated Puritan life. Hester seems to have changed the greatest in character and attitude, from a haughty and proud demeanor to having a warm and tender heart. Throughout the novel, Hester changes three different times, from being a shamed woman to a capable and able woman and then to a healer.

Her honesty, strong-willed spirit and compassion may have been in her character all along, but the scarlet letter really brought it to the attention of others.

In the beginning of the novel, Hester is described as being a tall, slim beautiful girl with "long, dark abundant hair" (51). She has a rich complexion, her eyes are dark and beautiful, and altogether is a gorgeous girl. Despite her outward appearance, she has a great personality as well. With her strong-willed spirit and "wild and passionate heart" (Herzog 17), who can help but love her.

Nevertheless, when Hester comes imprisoned with a child, she is forced to become the mature mother that Pearl needs.

When Hester is finally able to come home from prison, she emerges from the prison door, proud and beautiful wearing an embroidered scarlet letter "A" on her chest as she carries a three-month-old baby "but Ah", interposed more softly, a young wife holding the child "let her cover the mark as she

will, the pang of It will always be In her heart" (49). Her expression as she exited the prison did not seem to show any kind of regret.

She seemed to be proud and unashamed of what she had done " with a burning blush and yet a haughty smile, and a glance that would not be abashed" (50). Hester is faced with several different punishments. While she is standing on the scaffold she becomes aware of the stern faces looking up at her.

Hester painfully realizes her position of guilt and shame. She was made to stand on the scaffold for three hours " here, she said to herself, had been the scene of her guilt and here should be the scene of her earthly punishment.

The torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost; one saint like because of the martyrdom" (74). The task was both physically and emotionally exhausting for Hester and Pearl. The Puritan society will not forgive her for the adultery that she has committed, so they put her through all the shame and embarrassment, the feelings of torments and ridicule, and the public display of her sin as she stands on the scaffold in the middle of the day.

The child that she carries is also the greatest punishment that Hester could have.

Pearl is a constant reminder of her sin that happened long ago. Pearl is the only one who is a devilish child that is indifferent to the puritan society.

Pearl is a pain to please; she always gets her way because she seems to play

on Hester guilt. Pearl is constantly mocking authority in the novel. She is constantly asking stupid questions that she already knows the answer to.

Hester and Pearl are both very secluded throughout the novel because of Hester sin. Hester and Pearl lived in a small cottage on the outside of town.

There, Hester hides her beautiful hair under a cap and her beauty and warmth is gone. Pearl is the only one who can see the real Hester. When she takes the letter A off as she does in chapter 13, Pearl will not have anything to do with her. Pearl angrily demands that she put the letter back on and the keep her cap on.

With the scarlet letter and her hair back in place under the cap, her beauty, the warmth and richness of her womanhood had faded like sunshine.

Symbolically, when Hester removes her cap and the scarlet letter, she is removing the harsh and unbending Puritan social and moral structures.

She is also punished by the Puritans by having to wear the scarlet letter "A", which tanks of adultery, on her bosom. This was another form of public display of her sin and another form of her punishment, she suffered public humiliation by having to wear it everywhere she went.

Again, she shows herself as being a very proud woman as she embroiders her bright red "A" with gold thread to display to the community. (The scarlet letter) I think that forgiveness is a very important part of life, as well part of the novel. Without it, people can not move on with their lives.

The three main characters either needed forgiveness or needed to forgive. Some got it, some didn't. Whether or not they received or gave forgiveness had a great impact on their lives.

Timescale had sinned by sleeping with a married woman and she ended up giving birth to their daughter. He needed forgiveness from everyone else before he could forgive himself. Hester had turned her back on her husband, Roger Chlorinating, and slept with Timescale. She needed forgiveness from her husband, from the town's people and from her daughter, Pearl. She would tell no one who the father was, she just wore the scarlet letter.

After Pearl and the town's people forgave her, the scarlet letter became known as "able" instead of adulterer (146). Chlorinating could not forgive Timescale for what he had done with Hester. The lack of forgiveness drove both Timescale and Chlorinating to their death. Now you can see why I think it is very important that we as humans give and receive forgiveness.

Two of these people had their lives ruined because they had no forgiveness. When Hester got the forgiveness she needed, she started to be accepted back into the community, but things were not so good for Chlorinating and Timescale.

Time will heal their wounds, only forgiveness. In the end, Hester's strength, honesty and compassion carry her through a life she could not have ever imagined. After Timescale and Chlorinating die, Pearl is married and Hester is left alone.

Hester moves back to their little cottage in Boston and becomes something of a legend in the town. Throughout the scarlet letter, Hester is portrayed as an intelligent and capable woman. It is extraordinary circumstances shaping her that makes her such an important fugue. (Spark notes) more at peace through her suffering.