

Anti-  
transcendentalism in  
the scarlet letter  
essay sample



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Anti-transcendentalism is focused on the limitation and the potential destructiveness of the human spirit rather than the possibilities of the human spirit. It acknowledges the presence of evil in humanity. The anti-transcendentalist writings are known for being full of symbols. Anti-transcendental writings are based off of the transcendental writings which believe that the human senses can know only physical reality.

Transcendentalism focuses on the human spirit and on the natural world.

The *Scarlet Letter* is considered an anti-transcendental novel. It could also be categorized as dark romanticism. It not only focuses on potential destruction but incorporates evil and change into the world. The characters suffer due to moral problems. They suppress and deny aggressive and sexual impulses which lead to psychotic behavior. One of the evils portrayed in this novel was sin. Hester Prynne committed adultery with the minister, Dimmesdale. As a result of their temptation Hester has a child whom she named Pearl. Hester is sentenced to wear an "A" on all her clothing to show the wrong she had done. She refuses to divulge who the father was which slowly ate away at Dimmesdale.

Roger Chillingworth is another example of the evil that is incorporated in this novel. He becomes obsessed with seeking revenge on Hester. Chillingworth uses his position as a doctor to get acquainted with Dimmesdale so that he is capable of poisoning Dimmesdale for sleeping with his wife, Hester. Evil was not only portrayed. Change was also another anti-transcendental characteristic portrayed in the novel. Dimmesdale in the beginning of the novel comes off as strong, confident, and not vulnerable. As the secret

between him and Hester begins to eat away at him, he becomes weaker and realizes what should be done.

He finally comes forward and acts as the father he should have been all along. Also, another example of change is how Hester begins to live her sin and incorporates her sin into her life. She begins to help the poor in her spare time at the cottage on the outskirts of the town by making beautiful embroidered clothing. Overall, *The Scarlet Letter* is filled with layers of symbols. Nathaniel Hawthorne developed his novel by using layers of symbols to create a diverse set of characters. It is clearly anti-transcendental novel that shows the evils of humanity and the change between characters. It shows the world like it truly is and is also considered dark romanticism.. This proves that *The Scarlet Letter* is an anti-transcendental novel.