

## English III Honors – Summer Reading Assignment

Dear Student,

Welcome to the challenge of English III Honors! The choice to enroll in an honors level class means accepting the challenge of a more rigorous curriculum. Honors students will have consistent homework assignments, including extensive reading and annotating. Much of the reading which is assigned will be for out-of-class completion. Students should also expect to have reading and related assignments over Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring breaks. The summer assignment for the English III – Honors course will count as 10% of your **1<sup>st</sup> marking period grade. All work is due on the first day of school (with reasonable extensions for new enrollments to be determined on an individual basis).**

- Assigned reading: *The Scarlett Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Accompanying activities:

**Graphic Organizers/Worksheets – These are worth 50 points**

**Discussion/Comprehension Questions – These are worth 50 points**

**Project – Select and complete one from the attached project list – This is worth 100 points**

**Total possible points: 200**

Please feel free to stop by my classroom in Building 9, Room 6 before the end of the school year; I look forward to meeting with you.

Contact me with any questions via my school email: [truelsonl@pcsb.org](mailto:truelsonl@pcsb.org)

Sincerely,

Dr. Truelson

## Study Guide

***The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne**

LEXILE 1420

**The Novel at a Glance****MORE ABOUT THE WRITER**

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1804, into a prominent Puritan family. The earliest of his American ancestors, William Hathorne (as the name was spelled before Nathaniel changed it), arrived in the Colonies in 1630—the year the Boston Colony was founded. This soldier and magistrate is now mainly remembered for having condemned a Quaker woman to be led around by a cart and whipped through the streets of Boston and other towns. His early forebears had a prominent place in Hawthorne’s thinking, representing both solid accomplishment and great guilt—conflicting attributes Hawthorne was to associate with Puritanism generally.

After graduation, Hawthorne returned to Salem, where he spent the next twelve years in relative seclusion, reading and writing instead of entering a business or profession as his relatives had expected. During this period, he soaked up the history and lore of this seaport town, which was to become the setting for many of his stories and for his novel *The House of the Seven Gables*. His first novel, *Fanshawe: A Tale*, was published anonymously at his own expense. Although it was not a success and Hawthorne later recalled and destroyed all the copies he could, *Fanshawe* did attract the attention of a publisher, who published some of his stories, later reprinted as *Twice-Told Tales*. Many of these stories deal with guilt and the Puritan moral code—elements later to figure prominently in his major novels.

Unable to support himself through writing alone, Hawthorne worked for a while in the Boston customhouse and then joined Brook Farm, an experimental community of philosophers and writers, where he hoped to be able to live and write. However, he did not share the optimistic idealism of the other members of the community and, in any case, was ill-suited to communal life. In 1842, Hawthorne married Sophia Peabody, one of three daughters of a distinguished family. The marriage was happy. Sophia provided understanding and encouragement. The strength and nobility of Hester Prynne, the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter*, reflect qualities Hawthorne found in his wife.

The newlyweds settled in Concord, Massachusetts, where they had as neighbors and associates Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Amos Bronson Alcott. These liberal thinkers rejected the spirit of Puritanism; although influenced by them, Hawthorne could not find in their idealistic philosophy a satisfactory moral guide. In time, lack of money forced Hawthorne to serve as surveyor in the Salem customhouse—an institution he satirizes in “The Custom House,” the long introduction he appended to *The Scarlet Letter*. A change in political administrations cost Hawthorne his job in 1849, but by this time he was completing *The Scarlet Letter*, which brought him considerable success.

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**The Scarlet Letter** *continued*

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Only a year after the appearance of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne published *The House of the Seven Gables*. Unlike *The Scarlet Letter*, which was set in the Puritan past, this novel of guilt and unexpiated crime is set in Hawthorne's own time. The curse that plays such an important role in the lives of the Pyncheon family was traditionally supposed to have been uttered to his judge ancestor John Hathorne at the Salem witchcraft trials. The hereditary guilt that carries down to the narrator's own time reflects Hawthorne's awareness and sensitivity to his own Puritan background.

Three years after the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, as a reward for writing a campaign biography of his friend Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne was appointed United States Consul to Liverpool, a position he held for four years. He lived for several years in Rome, where he was shocked and fascinated by the sophisticated life of the continent, an experience he drew upon in his novel *The Marble Faun*. This proved to be Hawthorne's last complete work of fiction.

Hawthorne has long been considered one of America's greatest writers. In *The Scarlet Letter*, he was one of the earliest to write a truly psychological novel; his celebrated short stories helped to establish the genre as an American art form. His powerful accounts of human loneliness, sin, unmerited suffering, and expiation have made and continue to make a profound impression on readers.

### **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

**Hester Prynne**, a young Englishwoman, has been living alone in Boston; her husband has been missing for several years. Hester has given birth to a child and refuses to name its father (Dimmesdale). Over the course of the novel, she pays for her sin in many ways, although she never renounces her love for Dimmesdale.

**Arthur Dimmesdale** is a popular and admired young clergyman. Refusing to acknowledge that he is the father of Hester's child, he undergoes intense internal suffering and becomes prey to Chillingworth's slow revenge.

**Roger Chillingworth**, Hester's husband, a scholar much older than she, arrives in Boston after years of captivity to find that his wife has just given birth to a daughter. Chillingworth is the major antagonist. The novel chronicles his spiritual deterioration as he takes revenge on Dimmesdale, whom he suspects, correctly, of being the child's father.

**Pearl**, the daughter, is a blithe, highly intuitive, intelligent, and imaginative child.

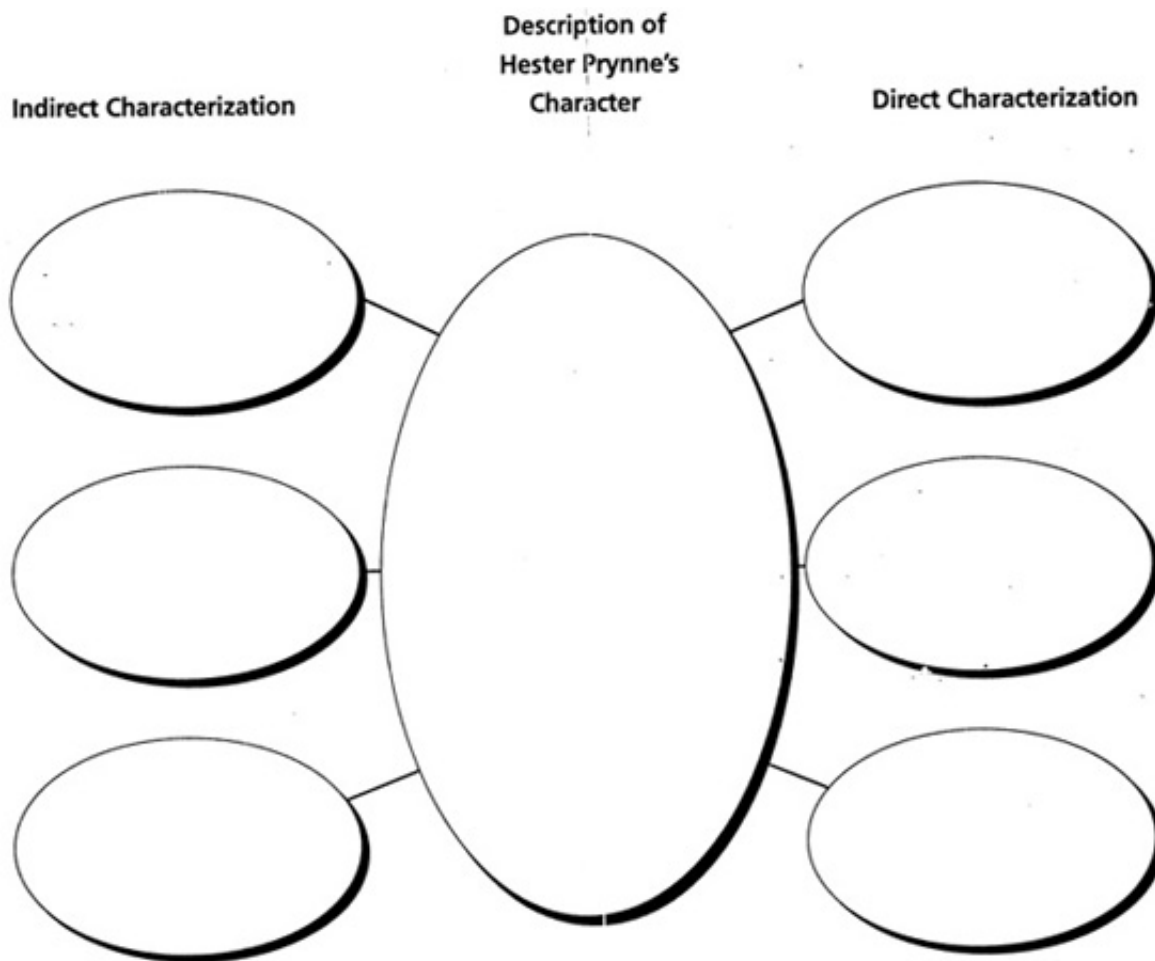
Reading Skills and Strategies Worksheet  
**The Scarlet Letter**

Chapters I–IV

**Chapters I–IV: Direct and Indirect Characterization**

The character of Hester Prynne is developed through both direct and indirect characterization. We learn about Hester through her actions and dialogue, through others' thoughts and comments about her, and through their reactions to her and their actions toward her. These are examples of **indirect characterization**. We also learn about Hester from the author's straightforward commentary, **direct characterization**.

**In the small ovals below, list examples of both types of characterization. In the large oval, describe Hester Prynne's character.**



**FOLLOW-UP:** Compose a paragraph about Hester Prynne's character. Create your topic sentence from the content of the large oval, and support that position with examples from the small ovals.

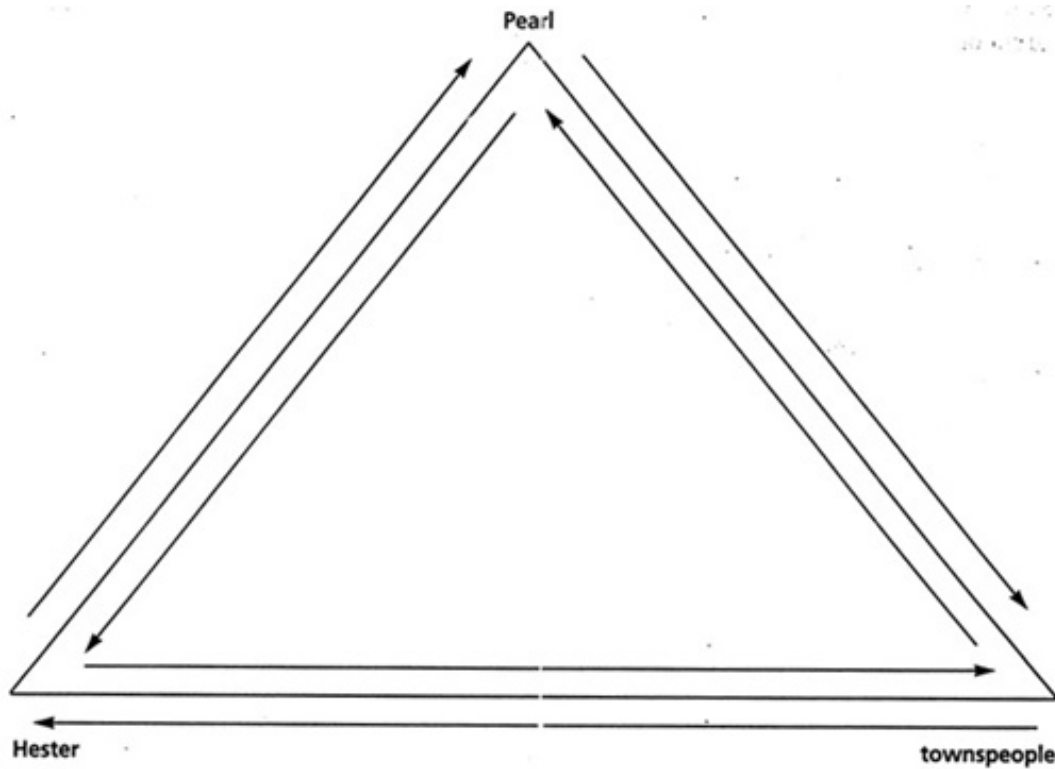
Reading Skills and Strategies Worksheet  
**The Scarlet Letter**

Chapters V–VIII

**Chapters V–VIII: Drawing Conclusions**

Use the triangle below to show the relationships among Hester, Pearl, and the townspeople.

On the outer sides of the triangle, describe the feelings that the character at the beginning of the arrow has for the character at the end of arrow. Then, do the same for the arrows on the inside of the triangle.



**FOLLOW-UP**

- Each side of the triangle is composed of two descriptions. Which of these three sides is the most interesting to you? Why?

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.....  
.....  
.....

- Choose one side of the triangle. On your own paper, cite instances of how the feelings you described on that side are developed in the story.

Reading Skills and Strategies Worksheet  
**The Scarlet Letter**

*Chapters IX–XII*

**Chapters IX–XII: Summarizing and Interpreting**

The physical and spiritual decline of Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth follow a similar path of descent.

- **In the box on the left, describe the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale’s “crime,” punishment, and people’s conception of him.**
- **In the box on the right, describe Chillingworth’s transformation, hidden agenda, and people’s conception of him.**
- **In the area where the boxes intersect, explain how the decline of these characters is connected.**

**FOLLOW-UP: In your opinion, which of these characters is more tragic? Explain.**

# The Scarlet Letter

## LITERARY ELEMENTS WORKSHEET

### Irony

Irony involves a contrast between what would normally be expected and what actually happens.

**Verbal Irony**—when someone says one thing but really means something else.

**Example:** “Pious Master Dimmesdale!”—Chillingworth to Dimmesdale the evening of the minister’s vigil.

**Explain the real feelings of Chillingworth toward Dimmesdale that make this passage ironic.**

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.....

**Dramatic Irony**—when a character thinks one thing is true and the audience or readers know better.

**Example:** Dimmesdale’s plea to Hester in Chapter III to name her fellow sinner.

**Explain, with information you now have as a reader, the irony of this passage.**

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.....  
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**Situational Irony**—when there is a discrepancy between what is expected to happen, or what is appropriate to happen, and what really does happen.

**Example:** The relationship of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale when Hester encounters them at the Governor’s Hall (Chapter VII).

**Explain the discrepancy between the expected relationship of these two and what has actually occurred.**

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.....

**FOLLOW-UP: Find another example in the novel of one of the three types of irony. Explain what makes it ironic.**

**Example:** .....

**Explanation:** .....

# The Scarlet Letter

## LITERARY ELEMENTS WORKSHEET

### Symbols

Hester's sentence of a lifetime of wearing the scarlet letter is testimony to the power of symbolism. Hawthorne is liberal with his use of symbols.

The left side of the chart contains symbols used in the novel. In the right side of the chart, state the possible meaning of each symbol and an example of its use in the text.

Symbol	Explanation and Example
rose	
weeds	
sunshine	
shadow	
scaffold	
red zenith in the sky	
brook	

### FOLLOW-UP

- Which of the symbols do you think is the most effective? Why?

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- How does the shadow symbolism communicate the theme of sin and its effects?

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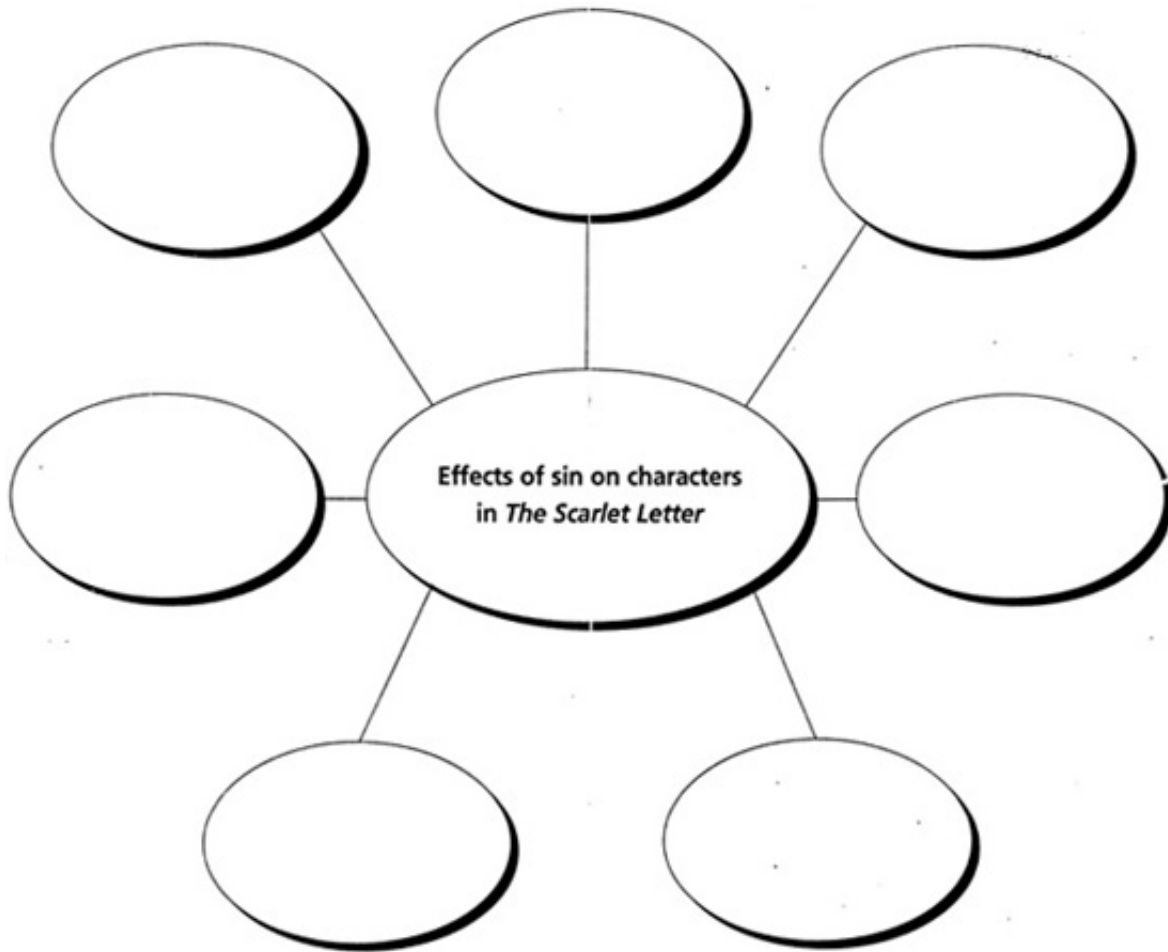
# The Scarlet Letter

## LITERARY ELEMENTS WORKSHEET

### Theme

**Theme** is the insight about human life that is revealed in a literary work.

**In the center oval of the web is one theme of the novel. In the attached ovals, write events or behaviors that reveal that theme.**



### FOLLOW-UP

- Create two similar webs on your own paper: one for the theme of hypocrisy and one for another theme that you see present in the book.
- Formulate the information in one of your webs into two- to four-paragraphs analyzing theme in *The Scarlet Letter* and discussing the insight that the theme provides into human behavior.

## The Scarlet Letter

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### Whole-Novel Discussion and Activities

#### BURNING ISSUES

1. A modern reader who judges harshly the inclination of Governor Bellingham and Mr. Wilson to remove Pearl from her mother's care may be overlooking the fact that court systems also remove children from their parents' custody. In what situations do you think that removal is acceptable? Would Hester be at risk of losing Pearl today?
2. American author and critic Henry James wrote, "In *The Scarlet Letter* there is a great deal of symbolism. . . . It is overdone at times, and . . . mechanical; it ceases to be impressive, and grazes triviality." Do you agree with James? Explain your point of view, using examples from the text.
3. Hawthorne paints a pessimistic picture of the role of women in Puritan society. Does he strike you as an advocate of women's rights? In your opinion, have enough changes occurred so that today women are "allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position"?
4. The townspeople present at the minister's revelation do not agree on exactly what they saw on the scaffold nor on its significance. When have you interpreted an event differently from other people? How can you account for differing views in your personal experience? How can you account for them in the novel?
5. Make a list of woman protagonists from movies or other works of literature. What are the traits they most commonly possess? Does Hester Prynne possess these traits? What comment does that make upon the expectations society has of women?

#### CHOICES ACTIVITIES

1. **Autobiographical Sketch Pearls of Wisdom.** Write an autobiographical sketch by Pearl on her twentieth birthday, thirteen years after the events of *The Scarlet Letter*. Show how she feels about Hester, her own childhood, Dimmesdale, and events of the story. (*Creative Writing*)
2. **Literary Analysis Is a Rose Just a Rose?** In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne makes extensive use of symbols—people, places, or objects that are made to take on a larger meaning. Compose an essay explaining the central symbols of the novel and how they are used to illustrate a particular theme. (*Critical Writing*)
3. **Alternative Ending Hollywood Style.** Rewrite the conclusion of Chapter XXIII, beginning with, "He turned towards the scaffold, and stretched forth his arms." In a style similar to Hawthorne's, write a new and happy ending. Include a one-paragraph explanation to your audience on how your new ending stays true to Hawthorne's themes or how it alters the message of the novel. (*Creative/Critical Writing*)
4. **History Who They Really Were.** Real historical characters appear in the novel. Research three to four of these characters. Report back to the class on the roles and accomplishments of these characters, how the characters are used in *The Scarlet Letter*, and whether their portrayal in the novel fits their real lives.

**Characters:** Anne Hutchinson, Governor John Winthrop, Governor Richard Bellingham, John Wilson, Isaac Johnson, John Eliot, John Endicott, Increase Mather, Mistress Hibbins.

**The Scarlet Letter** *continued*

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5. **Art Sample Sampler.** The earliest example of embroidery in the United States is a sampler. Embroider a sampler of your own. Research patterns. If you are experienced at needlework, try to create an elaborate section of embroidery like some of those Hester made for her customers. When you present your work, make sure you connect it with the novel.
6. **Video: Miniseries Lights! Camera! Action!** If this novel were a miniseries, what might one episode look like? You and your production crew of classmates are to bring some major scenes from this novel to the small screen. Create dialogue where necessary, along with sets and costumes. Hawthorne included a great deal of commentary; you need to keep it in mind, but mainly concern yourself with the action of *The Scarlet Letter*. Include opening and closing credits to give yourself recognition. Perhaps your class can have an opening gala to premiere your film.