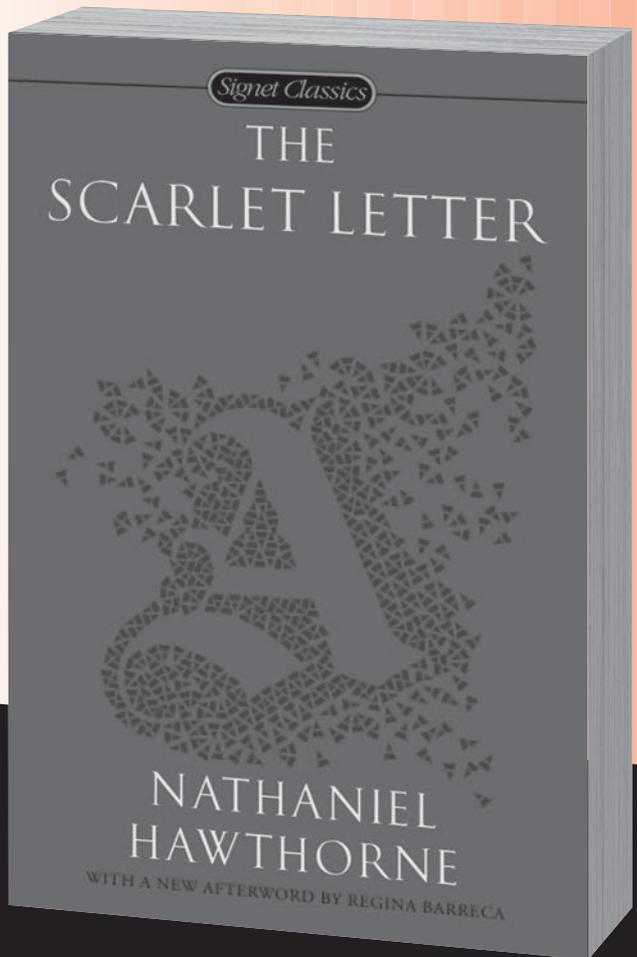


A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

THE SCARLET LETTER

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE



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INTRODUCTION

A beautiful young woman, branded as a sinner, taunted by her neighbors, admonished by their leaders, stands on a platform. This is the reader's first introduction to Hester Prynne, perhaps the most famous female protagonist in American literature. Since its publication in 1850, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* has served not only as a literary masterpiece, but also as a complex examination of Puritan culture. Hawthorne's novel was written to serve as a "moral blossom," illuminating and thereby relieving the sins of his Puritan forefathers. And yet, more than 175 years later, how much has changed?

The 21st century court of public opinion can be just as harsh, demanding, and unforgiving. Its platform is social media, its leaders are network news outlets, and its neighbors are too often Internet trolls. Sin is condemned and contrition demanded; it must be public and immediate to be sincere. Young women are shamed for their sexuality or simply their wardrobes. Like the title of a recent *New York Times* article asserts, we are "still Puritan after all these years" (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/opinion/sunday/are-americans-still-puritan.html?_r=0).

Today's students will engage in *The Scarlet Letter's* timely themes and participate in rigorous analysis of complex text. This guide is designed to assist teachers in planning a unit that is accessible and appealing to students of various reading levels. The guide divides the novel into two sections as Hawthorne's scaffold scenes (Chapters 2, 12, and 23) provide a natural division for the novel's action. A "text set" and list of accompanying activities is provided for each section enabling students to access the complexities of Hawthorne's work. Discussion questions and key quotations are provided to elicit student reflection and response. Activities integrate college and career-ready skills such as evaluating claims, citing textual evidence, summarizing ideas, comparing different media, engaging in discussion, and analyzing rhetoric, purpose and point of view. These skills promote critical analysis of Hawthorne's novel while facilitating the active engagement characteristic of today's classrooms.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

MAIN CHARACTERS

Hester Prynne	Single mother in Puritan Boston
Arthur Dimmesdale	Young Puritan minister
Roger Chillingworth	Hester's husband, presumed dead
Pearl	Hester's child

MINOR CHARACTERS

Governor Bellingham	Current governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony
Governor Winthrop	Past governor
John Wilson	Elder clergyman of Boston
Mistress Hibbins	Bellingham's sister and a self-proclaimed witch
Master Brackett	Prison jailer
Indian Attendant	Chillingworth's traveling companion
Bond-Servant	Governor Bellingham's slave
Captain	Shipmaster of the <i>Spanish Main</i>

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

The following activities can be used to build or connect to background knowledge in history, literature, and culture.

TEXT SET:

- *A City Upon a Hill*. <http://tinyurl.com/hbeowpo>. (Video).
 - “The Clinton’s Scarlet Letters.” <http://tinyurl.com/hyx35j6>. (Political Cartoon).
 - *The Dark Romantics in American Literature*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVpWmB630qc>. (Video).
 - “Easy A.” <http://tinyurl.com/h63hk5f>. (Movie Poster).
 - *The Oxbow*. <https://cdn.kastatic.org/ka-perseus-images/8264f283c65ea9b1dc25a846758436e18fcf9698.jpg>. (Painting).
 - “People and Ideas: The Puritans.” <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/people/puritans.html>. (Website).
 - John Winthrop, “City Upon a Hill.” <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/winthrop.htm>. (Sermon).
 - “We Will Overcome Evil with Good.” <http://time.com/4398685/dallas-shooting-gov-greg-abbott-open-letter/>. (Letter).
 - “Young Goodman Brown.” (Short story).
1. Poll the class to see if any students are familiar with the meaning of the letter “A” in *The Scarlet Letter*. Chances are several will know. Explain that the symbol is one of the most memorable in American literature and is in fact often alluded to in today’s society. Project one or more contemporary images or political cartoons that allude to the scarlet letter and ask students to analyze. One image students might discuss is a political cartoon of Bill and Hillary Clinton that depicts both politicians wearing scarlet letter As. Another image students may be familiar with is a poster from the Emma Stone movie *Easy A*. Several good templates for image analysis can be found at <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/index.html>. After students complete the analysis, discuss with the class:
 - Why is the scarlet letter a popular contemporary image?
 - What tone, purpose, and message are intended for the viewer?
 2. In “The Custom House,” the author’s introduction to the novel, Hawthorne describes the scarlet letter in great detail with gothic overtones (pp. 31-32). To encourage close reading and comprehension of this complex text and to introduce students to the letter’s associations today, ask students to recreate the letter to the author’s specifications. Students might choose to draw, sew, or create the letter on their computers. Afterwards, invite volunteers to wear their letter for a day, noting reactions from classmates and other teachers. Debrief the experience as a class:
 - What did you hear from onlookers?
 - How did you feel when people had a reaction and why?
 - Why do you think so many people know about this novel?
 - What questions and thoughts do you have before beginning to read the novel?

3. Show the class the PBS video *A City Upon a Hill*. This five minute video introduces several of the novel's key themes and historical references. Ask students to jot down what they think may be important references as they watch. One idea is to watch the short video twice, once for comprehension and once for noting references. Afterwards, create a class brainstorming list. References should include utopian societies, Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, witchcraft, religious liberty, Anne Hutchinson, and the role of women in the Puritan faith. Explain to students that this is the setting of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and that students should note references to these ideas as they read.

To extend this activity, ask students to read an excerpt from John Winthrop's sermon, "A City Upon a Hill." Because this is a primary document with archaic language, consider pre-teaching difficult vocabulary or allowing students to read in pairs. Discuss:

- What does Winthrop identify as the purpose of the Puritan's utopian society?
 - Why does Winthrop choose the phrase "a city upon a hill"?
 - What is the Puritan code of conduct as outlined from this text?
 - Do codes of conduct have a place in contemporary American society?
4. To provide further background on Puritan beliefs and values, create a circle map organizer on the whiteboard or Smartboard. In the middle, title the circle map "Puritan Beliefs." Then, ask students to read the PBS website, "People and Ideas: The Puritans," marking specific lines about Puritan beliefs or values. After reading, ask students to share their findings and record them in colored marker inside the circle. Answers might include "original sin," "faith as key to salvation," and "community covenant." Challenge students to look for evidence of these values in the characters and plot of Hawthorne's novel. To provide comparative analysis of a primary and an academic text, students might add the additional Puritan values illustrated in the Winthrop "City Upon a Hill" sermon to the circle in a different color.
 5. Introduce students to the Romantic period of American literature, specifically the subgenre of Romanticism known as "Dark Romanticism" (sometimes called "Gothic Romance"). Explain that Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne are all famous writers from this period. The Dark Romantics frequently used symbolism, explored the psychological effects of guilt and sin, and depicted nature as shadowy and suspicious. These writers portrayed the deterioration of the mind into madness and often death. For a further review of the elements of Romanticism, students can watch the instructional video, *The Dark Romantics in American Literature*. Explain to students that this is the approach taken by Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter* and that an understanding of style is important to comprehending the author's purpose.

Read together the author's depiction of Romanticism in "The Custom House," beginning on the last paragraph of page 35. In this section, the author describes moonlight as "a medium the most suitable for a romance writer" due to its ability to make objects and persons "so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noontide visibility." Ask students to turn and talk to a partner about the following:

- How can filtered light transform the ordinary?
- Why does Hawthorne say that details are "spiritualized" by the light, "losing their actual substance and becoming "things of intellect?"
- What does Hawthorne suggest about his purpose as a writer?
- How might the reader approach Hawthorne's novel?

As a writing extension to demonstrate the impact of Romantic style, ask students to read a paragraph excerpt from Hawthorne's short story, "Young Goodman Brown," identifying as

a class the elements that make it “Romantic” or “gothic.” As a class, use the whiteboard to “re-write” the paragraph, taking out all symbolism, imagery, and gothic overtones. Read the new paragraph aloud. Discuss with students: How did removing the elements of romantic style change the story?

6. In “The Custom House,” Hawthorne introduces readers to his distinct point of view. To introduce students to his narrative voice and uncover his reasons for adopting this style, read the first two paragraphs of “The Custom House” (pp. 5-6) with students. Ask the class: Who is the speaker here? Who is his audience? Students might notice that Hawthorne speaks directly to the reader, which is not common in canonical literature they typically see. Ask: What style or format does the author claim right from his first sentence? Students should be able to identify that Hawthorne presents this section as autobiography, citing the reference to his “autobiographical impulse” (p. 5). Next ask students: How does Hawthorne wish to be seen by his reader? Students should be able to cite paragraph two of “The Custom House,” where Hawthorne states, “This, in fact—a desire to put myself in my true position as editor, or very little more, of the most prolix among the tales that make up my volume—this, and no other, is my true reason for assuming a personal relation with the public” (p. 6). Discuss with students: How does Hawthorne’s desire to be not only author but also editor of his narrative impact the novel’s themes, tone, and meaning? Explain that throughout the novel, students will see the narrative interspersed with direct comments to the reader, and they should continue to analyze the impact of such choices.

INTRODUCING THEMES

1. The meaning of sin and the nature of evil are central to *The Scarlet Letter*. To generate thinking about these complex ideas, ask students to read and respond to “We Will Overcome Evil with Good,” a recent open letter written by Texas Governor Greg Abbott after the July 2016 Dallas Police shooting. After reading, ask students to share their thinking via padlet.com, an online bulletin board where students can write, post, and view each other’s short responses. Prompts might include:
 - How is the governor defining evil?
 - What claims is he making?
 - Do you agree with, disagree with, or qualify the author’s point of view?
 - What is the intent and the impact of a governor talking to his constituents about evil, justice, and God?

Tell students that similar themes, including sin, justice, and the merging of church and state, will be uncovered in the novel and to keep these ideas in mind while reading.

2. Explore the novel’s motif of nature versus civilization through another Romantic Era text, Thomas Cole’s 1836 oil painting, *The Oxbow*. The painting is divided into two clear sections: a dark and stormy wilderness and a sunny depiction of calm civilization. Project the painting on the whiteboard. In order to see all details prior to analysis of the painting as a whole, ask students to create a simplified sketch of the painting in their own notebooks. Then ask them to jot down what they see on paper first, then what they think it represents. Students might use the image analysis template found at the Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Photos_and_Prints.pdf.

Ask students to share their analysis with a small group before discussing as a class. Discussion topics might include:

- Why does the painter create the diagonal line from lower right to upper left?
- What words might we use to describe the nature scene on the left?
- How does the village scene on the right compare to the nature scene?
- What might be the artist's message about nature versus civilization?

Explain to students that the Puritans of Hawthorne's novel saw the forest as dark and evil, a fearful place untouched by God or man. Civilization, on the other hand, was a haven of safety, a place where shared values could be celebrated. Ask students to look for this contrast between nature and civilization as they read *The Scarlet Letter*.

3. Encourage preliminary thinking about the novel's broader themes with graffiti posters. Post several large sheets of paper around the classroom, leaving space in between for students to gather and walk. At the top of each poster, provide a title indicating a broad theme, such as "appearance versus reality," "the individual versus community," "public versus private guilt." So students are able to discover main ideas for themselves as they progress through the novel, avoid posting too specific or numerous themes. Provide students with colored markers and ask them to move from poster to poster, jotting down their contemporary connections to the themes. Encourage students to respond to one another's posts as well as to the initial theme. Students can refer to or add to the posters as they read the novel.

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

TRACKING THE NARRATIVE

1. College and career ready standards ask students, rather than teachers, to determine the themes and central ideas in a text and analyze their development. With this in mind, ask students to keep a "Themes Tracker" for themes and motifs they will uncover in *The Scarlet Letter*. As students read and begin noticing a pattern developing, direct them to create a new entry in their tracker. Possible themes for Hawthorne's novel might include public versus private shame, the nature of evil, and the role of women in Puritan society. Recurring motifs can be tracked the same way. Students can track examples of light and dark imagery, civilization versus the forest, and the evolving significance of the scarlet letter. Students can track these ideas digitally or by hand. Students might share their themes and motifs with each other and add new entries from their discussion. If students need help getting started, choose one theme and model how to track its development from chapter to chapter, as in the example below. Alternatively, ask students to use different color highlighters to identify themes as they read. Margin notes can be used to analyze how themes or motifs are developed throughout the text.

Theme/Motif	Text Citation	Analysis
Women in Puritan Society	"What do we talk of marks and brands . . . cried another female, the ugliest as well as the most pitiless of these self-constituted judges. 'This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die.'" (p. 49)	Early in the novel, Hawthorne directly characterizes women in the crowd as ugly, judgmental, and unforgiving. He does not characterize male characters in the same way. Why?
	"Indeed, the same dark question often rose into her mind with reference to the whole race of womanhood. Was existence worth accepting, even to the happiest among them?" (p. 156)	Midway through the novel, the author returns to the role of women, specifically naming their plight as central to Hester's thoughts and therefore perhaps, to his own. He is saying that Puritan women were fated to a dark existence due to their religious and cultural beliefs and laws.
	"The stigma gone, Hester heaved a long, deep sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departed from her spirit. . . . Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back . . ." (p. 193)	Once again Hawthorne makes a connection between the plight of women and their physical beauty. This is a tool he uses with other characters whose outer appearance signifies something deeper. Hester's beauty, in fact the essence of her womanhood, has been repressed by the stigma of her sin.

- In *The Scarlet Letter*, each of the main characters changes drastically throughout the novel (except Pearl, whose transformation occurs at the end). The changes are not only in disposition but in physical appearance as well. Flow charts can help students visualize how characterization develops, impacts the novel's overall structure and meaning, and contributes to Hawthorne's aesthetic appeal. Ask students to create a box and arrow flow-chart for one or more main characters, including Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, or Pearl. The first box is created when the character is introduced, and new boxes are added whenever physical, spiritual, or mental change is evident in the text. Because Hawthorne's characterization is both direct and indirect, text evidence can come from dialogue, narration, or plot. Students can create free digital flowcharts using www.lucidchart.com. Students can share their maps online or on the whiteboard, discussing their thinking with classmates who mapped a different character.
- Invite students to "backchannel" their ideas and wonderings while reading *The Scarlet Letter*. The backchannel facilitates total-class participation and provides quiet students with a platform to establish voice. As they read each of the novel's chapters, ask students to generate questions about the text. Questions might ask for background information, clarification, or interpretation. They could also be about diction, imagery, structure, or point of view. Questions can be submitted on sticky notes to a "Parking Lot" poster or via social media platforms such as Twitter, GotoMeeting.com, or Backchannel Chat. Teachers might choose to address the questions during a "hotseat" break or allow peers to answer them during class. Online, the teacher can also use the backchannel to pose questions, assign quick-writes, and post digital media that deepens understanding of the text at hand. For information about back channeling, see the following article: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/13/education/13social.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.
- To model the use of textual evidence as support for what the text says explicitly as well as what is implied, ask students to create a double column chart. Charts can be created by

hand or digitally, such as by using Google Docs. Ask students to label the two columns “What Hawthorne Says” and “What Hawthorne Means.” Explain that this is a method for keeping track of significant quotations and excerpts as students read and for making inferences about them. In addition to selecting excerpts that seem important, students might also choose quotes because they are well written, interesting, incendiary, or confusing. The “What Hawthorne Means” column is for students to record their thinking. They can summarize in their own words or paraphrase Hawthorne’s intent.

5. Providing an objective summary of the text is key to comprehension and analysis. Challenge students to write a “six-word story” for each chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*. Students can record these in their interactive notebooks, share them via the whiteboard, or post them on a class Twitter chat by using a shared hashtag. A six-word story for chapter 10 might read “Devil doctor won’t leave minister alone.” Samples of six-word stories from literary giants and everyday folks may be found at <https://www.reddit.com/r/sixwordstories/>. Caution: teachers will want to choose appropriate examples prior to class.
6. *The Scarlet Letter*’s diction will challenge some students. Prior to reading each chapter or section, consider words that may need attention. When selecting “high-value” words from the novel, consider the following:
 - Are students likely to see the word in other texts and disciplines?
 - Does the word relate to other words the student knows or has been learning?
 - Will the word be useful in student writing?
 - Does the word have significance in the text?
 - Does the context fail to provide enough information for inferring meaning?

Depending on the answers to these questions, decide whether to tell students the meaning, whether the word is worthy of more instruction, or whether the word does not need to be addressed. A helpful tool for selecting words to teach is “The Academic Word Finder,” found at <http://achievethecore.org/page/1027/academic-word-finder>. For example, the Word Finder identified the following words from the first paragraph of *The Scarlet Letter*, Chapter 5 as high-value: *forth, morbid, threshold, occur, vital, sufficed, condemned, and stem*.

A rubric that helps teachers select and analyze high value words from complex text is at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-Jm2dtB1gxPc3ByQ0w5dVZLSW8/view?usp=sharing>.

ANALYZING THE NOVEL

PART 1: CHAPTERS 1-12: PUNISHMENT AND PENITENCE

SYNOPSIS

The novel opens with a description of the old Boston prison, a gloomy edifice overgrown with weeds and relieved only by the appearance of one rosebush, a sign of hope in what Hawthorne otherwise terms “a tale of human frailty and sorrow” (p. 46). The reader is introduced to the heroine as she, Hester Prynne, is led from the prison to a scaffold where she is to stand for three hours with her newborn daughter in her arms. Elaborately embroidered upon the mother’s chest is a scarlet letter “A.” Hester’s husband has yet to arrive from England after two years away, and she has borne another man’s child in the meantime. Though elder clergyman John Wilson and young Minister Arthur Dimmesdale encourage her to name the father, Hester

refuses and is sentenced to wear the scarlet letter for the rest of her life. In an ironic turn of events, her husband arrives in town the same day, accompanied by one of the Indians who have been holding him hostage. Now a skilled healer named Roger Chillingworth, Hester's husband visits the prison to attend to mother's and baby's health. Both husband and wife admit they have wronged the other. However, when Hester refuses to reveal the baby's father, Chillingworth vows to ruin the man's soul. Freed from prison, Hester and her daughter settle into a small cottage where she makes a modest living with her needlework. Giving any extra income or food to the poor, Hester's only extravagance is the clothing she creates for baby Pearl. To the townsfolk, Hester serves as a living symbol of sin. Her scarlet letter has taken on a supernatural quality, both in appearance and in its ability to give Hester knowledge of the hidden sin in others' hearts. Like the scarlet letter, Hester's daughter seems otherworldly. Pearl is capricious in nature, causing her mother to wonder if the baby is an airy sprite rather than a human child. Mother and child are ostracized from society, and Pearl becomes fixated on the scarlet letter.

When civic and church leaders plan to remove Pearl from her mother's care, Hester travels to Governor Bellingham's house to present an eloquent argument. She asks Reverend Dimmesdale to speak on her behalf. He supports Hester's argument that Pearl, whose appearance and dress remind the beholder of the scarlet letter, is both God's blessing and retribution to her mother. Meanwhile, Roger Chillingworth has moved in with Arthur Dimmesdale in order to treat the young minister's declining health. Both men's physical appearance has changed. The minister is emaciated and often is seen with his hand over his heart. Chillingworth now sports a dark and evil expression, and his eyes often glow. He urges Dimmesdale to cure his bodily illness by admitting the spiritual disease that appears to ail him. Pearl recognizes evil in Chillingworth, calling him the "Black Man." One night when Dimmesdale is asleep, Chillingworth uncovers the minister's chest and becomes ecstatic at what appears there, now even more intent on revenge. Though Dimmesdale admits to his parishioners he is far from perfect, he is revered more than ever before. Wracked with remorse and unable to reveal his sin in public like Hester with her scarlet letter, the minister scourges himself in secret. On the night of elderly Governor Winthrop's death, Dimmesdale feels compelled to mount the scaffold where Hester stood with her baby. Hester and Pearl pass by, and the minister asks them to join him. When Pearl asks Dimmesdale to join them here in the light of day, the minister promises to one future day. At this same moment, a meteor is seen in the sky, lit in red and forming the letter "A." Dimmesdale learns the next day that many have seen the fiery letter and believe it stands for "angel" in memory of the old governor.

TEXT SET:

- "Bloody Suckers: Leech Therapy." <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/bloody-suckers-leech-therapy/11360/>. (Transcript).
 - "The Problem with Slut-Shaming in Schools." <http://www.latimes.com/local/education/laud-la-me-edu-slut-shaming-20160218-story.html>. (Newspaper article).
 - *The Scarlet Letter*. PBS: 1979. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0078683/>. (Film).
1. Chapter 1 of *The Scarlet Letter* provides students with an excellent opportunity to unpack the structure and meaning of a complex text. The close-reading process focuses on excerpts, or "chunks" of text, promoting interpretation that is deep rather than wide and fostering critical thinking skills through writing and speaking. Ask students to conduct a close reading of Chapter 1 (the chapter is less than two pages). After each reading, the following questions can be discussed with a partner or group and answered in writing.

- After the first reading, ask students: What is happening in the text? Students should be able to say that the chapter describes the prison and its surroundings.
- The second reading goes deeper. Ask students: What is this text beginning to be about? What central ideas are beginning to emerge? What seems to be the author's purpose? Students might say that the Puritan society appears oppressive or that the rosebush is a symbol of hope.
- The third reading asks students to focus on the language in the text. Ask students: Which words and phrases contribute to the text's meaning and tone? Students may cite words such as "dark," "gloomy," "overgrown," and "unsightly" and might discuss the author's sympathy for the prisoner or the contrast between hope and despair.

For all three questions, students must cite evidence from the text. For more information on close reading, view the following Douglas Fisher video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5w9v6-zUg3Y>

2. Students can draw a parallel between Hester's public shaming and its 21st century equivalent. A 2016 article in the *Los Angeles Times* defines the term "slut shaming" as "the practice of punishing or making character judgments about people, usually girls and women, based on their sexual activity or on assumptions about their sexual activity." The article explains that "those assumptions can be based on what they wear, what they look like or rumors about them." The article also touches on school dress codes and how they can be biased against females. Distribute a copy of this article, "The Problem with Slut-Shaming in Schools," to the class. Direct students to highlight text illustrating the author's claims, as well as evidence she provides to support her claims. After reading, discuss the class's responses to the article as well as its connection to Chapter 2 of *The Scarlet Letter*. Questions to ask might include:
 - Why does Hawthorne portray the female townspeople as more unforgiving and judgmental than the males?
 - Are today's females judgmental of one another as well? Why?
 - Are school dress codes necessary? What evidence from the article supports your view?
3. In Chapter 9, Chillingworth is labeled "The Leech" and indeed is a leech in more ways than one. Because today's students may be unaware of either meaning, hold a "Say Something" paired reading of the PBS transcript "Blood Suckers: Leech Therapy." Students take turns reading paragraphs out loud, stopping to "say something" to their partner about the text. The comment might be a summary, question, inference, or connection to *The Scarlet Letter*. The process is repeated until the reading is complete. Afterwards, ask partners to discuss:
 - How have leeches been used throughout time to heal patients?
 - In what multiple ways can Chillingworth be considered a "leech" to Dimmesdale?
 - Whose best interest is the physician serving?

To extend this activity, hold a Four Corners poll, asking students to choose a corner of the classroom depending on their opinion on the following statement: "Chillingworth has the right to extract Dimmesdale's deepest secrets." Corners can be assigned for "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "somewhat disagree," and "strongly disagree." Students in each corner can discuss and devise an argument to support their point of view, which they share with the class. Students who are won over by another group's argument can choose to switch corners.

4. Ask students to compare the scaffold scene from Chapter 12 in Hawthorne's 1850 novel to the same scene in the 1979 PBS film version. Dimmesdale is compelled to mount the scaffold at night with Hester and Pearl, but he is unable to stand with them in the light of day as Pearl asks. Reread pages 139-146 with students and then watch the film version of the same

scene. Ask students to compare and contrast the treatment of the text in the film using the chart below. Afterwards, ask students to write a comparison/contrast thesis reflecting their analysis. To prompt writing, students may be provided with sentence starters such as these:

- Both the original and screen version of *The Scarlet Letter* _____; however; the 1850 novel _____ whereas the 1979 screenplay _____.
- While both the original and screen texts of *The Scarlet Letter* _____, the film takes advantage of _____ in order to _____.

Text	Characterization	Dialogue	Setting	Other
1850 Novel				
1979 Screen Version				

5. Ask students to reflect collaboratively on Hawthorne's multiple themes through a "fishbowl" discussion. Arrange the class in a circle. In the center of the circle, arrange a group of four desks. In the middle of the desks, place a container full of questions that focus on the current chapter and will elicit reflective thinking and engaged discussion. Set a timer and provide 3-5 minutes for the group to select a question and hold a discussion. Remind students to use textual evidence for support. The group can then repeat the process with a new question or exchange seats with a new group. While the small groups discuss, students in the outer circle observe, take notes, and might later pose questions and comments to classmates in the middle. Before beginning the discussion, discuss the norms for fishbowl discussions, such as participating fully, building upon previous comments, and asking extension questions. As students discuss, the teacher stays outside the fishbowl, looking in but only participating if norms need to be restated or if the discussion has come to a halt. In a fishbowl discussion of Chapter 9, for instance, questions might include:

- Why does Dimmesdale continuously hold his hand over his heart? What pain might he be suffering?
- What has changed in the appearance of both men? Why?
- Who appears to be suffering the most?

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS QUESTIONS FOR PART 1

These questions can be used for independent quick-writes or group discussion.

1. How does the choice of a prison setting in Chapter 1 contribute to the text's tone?
2. How does Hawthorne characterize the Puritan townswomen in Chapter 2 (pp. 48-49)? Contrast their appearance and demeanor with that of Hester (p. 51). Why might Hawthorne make this distinction?

3. Why does the author use the word “methinks” when describing the scaffold (p. 53)? How does this choice suggest his point of view?
4. Discuss the irony in Hawthorne’s comparison between Hester Prynne and Mother Mary (pp. 53-54).
5. Why does the author choose to depict Chillingworth with a deformity?
6. Asking about the unnamed father of Hester’s baby, Chillingworth repeats three times the phrase “he will be known!” (p. 60). Why does Hawthorne choose to have Chillingworth repeat this phrase?
7. How does the placement of the scaffold impact the meaning and significance of the punishment scene (p. 61)?
8. Reread the description of Reverend Dimmesdale (p. 63). What do you learn about the character of the young minister?
9. How can the description of the scarlet letter at the end of Chapter 3 be considered romantic or gothic in nature?
10. Why does Chillingworth use words such as “decay,” “misshapen,” and “deformity” (pp. 70-71) to refer to himself in his discussion with Hester? What does this tell us about Chillingworth? What does this characterization suggest about Hawthorne’s point of view? What is the author saying about physical versus spiritual character?
11. What are the various reasons that compel Hester to stay in the New England colony and face her punishment? Why doesn’t she run away to the forest or to England (pp. 75-76)?
12. Hester comes to have “a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts” (p. 82). What is Hawthorne saying about the nature of sin?
13. How does Pearl’s outward appearance reflect her inner nature (p. 85)?
14. In Chapter 6, how does Pearl’s isolation from society affect her character?
15. On her visit to the governor’s mansion, why does Hester outfit Pearl in a crimson velvet tunic (p. 95)?
16. Is Hester in reality the best person to care for Pearl? Why does Dimmesdale think she is?
17. Describe Chillingworth’s and Dimmesdale’s appearance in Chapter 8. How have they changed and what does it suggest about their character?
18. Dimmesdale is often seen covering his heart with his hand (p. 113). What connection is the author making between Dimmesdale and other characters? What is Hawthorne leaving unsaid?
19. Why is Pearl obsessed with the scarlet letter?
20. Explain the irony when Chillingworth advises Dimmesdale that “a bodily disease...may, after all, be but a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part” (p. 128).
21. What might Chillingworth have seen on Dimmesdale’s chest (p. 130)? What support can be offered for this inference?
22. Describe the contrast between the townspeople’s view of Reverend Dimmesdale and his own view of himself (pp. 133-135).
23. What is the significance of the scaffold scene in Chapter 12? Consider the time of day, the characters on the platform, those below, and those not present.

READER RESPONSE AND JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR PART 1

These quotes can be used for journal entries or online discussion forums.

1. “Thus she will be a living sermon against sin, until the ignominious letter be engraved upon her tombstone” (p. 60).
2. “...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” (p. 64).
3. “Here ... had been the scene of her guilt, and here should be the scene of her earthly punishment; and so, perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saintlike, because the result of martyrdom” (p. 76).
4. “In giving her [Pearl] existence, a great law had been broken, and the result was a being whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder; or with an order peculiar to themselves...” (p. 86).
5. “This child of its father’s guilt and its mother’s shame hath come from the hand of God, to work in many ways upon her heart...” (p. 108).
6. “...I, your pastor, whom you so reverence and trust, am utterly a pollution and a lie!” (p. 135).

PART 2: CHAPTERS 13-24: REVELATION AND REDEMPTION

SYNOPSIS

Pearl is now seven years old. Hester selflessly attends to the sick and the poor. While her scarlet letter still gleams with a supernatural glow, it has become a beacon of hope for the afflicted and now means “Able” to many townspeople. Hester’s appearance has paid the price for her isolation, though Hawthorne hints that her beauty could return with the right provocation. “The scarlet letter had not done its office,” says the author (p. 157). While outwardly Hester is submissive, her inner thoughts challenge Puritanism and its inferior relegation of women. Feeling stronger and more independent-minded, Hester confronts her former husband, asserting it is time to tell Dimmesdale the truth. Chillingworth answers that all three of them are subject to fate, and they should “let the black flower blossom as it may” (p. 165). Meanwhile, Pearl continues to question Hester about Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, and the meaning of the scarlet letter. She fashions a letter “A” for herself out of grass and asks her mother if she’s ever met the “Black Man.” Hester answers that she has met him once and the scarlet letter is his mark.

Seeking Dimmesdale in the forest, Hester reveals that she and Chillingworth were married and begs his forgiveness. Removing the scarlet letter and her cap, Hester is transformed into the beauty she once was. Likewise, the minister feels joy and relief from his pain. Hester and Dimmesdale agree to leave Boston and sail with Pearl to Europe. Pearl, however, will not join the couple until her mother re-pins the scarlet letter to her breast, the child insisting again that the minister acknowledge them in the light of day.

Dimmesdale returns to town in an excited state, eager to write the election sermon that he will deliver prior to leaving for England. On his way, he is compelled yet resists the temptation to say inappropriate things to all he meets. When Chillingworth asks of his health, Dimmesdale announces he will no longer need the physician’s care. The holiday in honor of the new governor arrives, and all attend the celebration in town. Reverend Dimmesdale’s election sermon is the most inspirational speech his followers have ever heard. All is not well, however. Mistress

Hibbins, an acknowledged witch, approaches Hester and insinuates that the minister has been visiting the Black Man in the forest. The ship's captain tells Hester that Chillingworth knows about her plan to leave with Dimmesdale, and that the physician has purchased a ticket on the same voyage. Dimmesdale breaks away from the procession and asks Hester and Pearl to join him on the scaffold. Chillingworth follows them, lamenting that the scaffold is the one place Dimmesdale can escape him. The minister proclaims himself "the one sinner of the world" and triumphantly uncovers his bare chest. When he asks Pearl for a kiss, the child willingly complies, and as Hawthorne says, "a spell was broken" (p. 242). After saying farewell to Hester, the minister dies on the scaffold. Many claim to have seen a scarlet letter on Dimmesdale's breast, which prompts multiple conjectures, including that the mark is a manifestation of Dimmesdale's purposeful penance, his uncontrollable remorse, or even Chillingworth's revenge. The obsessed physician dies within the year, leaving a substantial fortune to Pearl. Both mother and daughter move away, but after a time, Hester returns to a quiet life of servitude, where she is seen sewing baby clothes for her grandchildren. After many years, Hester is buried alongside Dimmesdale. Hawthorne leaves the reader with this moral: "Be true! Be true! Be true!"

TEXT SET:

- Aristotle. *Poetics*. <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.2.2.html> (Essay).
- Puritan Era Woodcut. <http://tinyurl.com/j649amd>. (Image).
- *Catching Fire* Chapter 25. (Young Adult Novel Excerpt). http://www.bookspopular.com/Suzanne_Collins/Catching_Fire/25.html.
- Henry David Thoreau. *Walden*. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/walden/hdt02.html> (Essay).

1. Hold a Paideia Seminar on Chapter 13, "Another View of Hester." Prior to the seminar, discuss with students what an ideal seminar looks and sounds like, including participation, active listening, and respect of multiple viewpoints. Ask students to set a class goal, such as "I will contribute to the discussion at least one time," as well as a personal goal, such as, "I will mention a classmate's name and extend on or disagree with his or her thinking." Students should record their goals on paper or sticky-notes that are visible during the seminar. During the discussion, take a facilitator's role. Ask a low-risk opening question to encourage total-class participation in a round robin response, such as: What is the single most important word or phrase in this chapter? This question might be provided the night before. Its purpose is to identify main ideas in Hawthorne's text. Then move to a core question for the purpose of analyzing text details, such as: In the "Introduction" to the novel by Brenda Wineapple, Hester is called a "radical visionary" (p. ix). In what ways is that true in this chapter? End the discussion with a closing question that promotes personalization and application, such as: How might this chapter's ideas and themes apply to a current social issue? Ask students to evaluate their own and their classmates' speaking, thinking, and listening. Did they meet their class and personal goals? How did the Paideia deepen their understanding of *The Scarlet Letter*? For examples of Socratic seminars in secondary English classes, see <https://www.paideia.org/teachers/seminar-lesson-plans/>.
2. A close reading of Hawthorne's forest scenes (Chapters 16-19) will focus on the forest as evil and the imagery of light and darkness. As students read these chapters, ask them to highlight key words and phrases that contribute to setting and then write margin notes that draw inferences about its impact on meaning and tone. Annotations could include "gray expanse of cloud," "flickering sunshine," and "primeval forest" (p. 174). In the mar-

gins, students might write “the continuing contrast between dark and light indicates a foreboding atmosphere associated with the woods.” Or, students might note how Pearl seems at home in the forest and infer that she is either evil, natural, or both. Encourage students to look for patterns of words or images that contribute to an analysis of setting, imagery, and tone. These findings can be shared on the whiteboard or on a class poster.

3. Ask students to analyze how two different texts from the Romantic period treat the theme of nature. After reading Hawthorne’s forest scenes, project a well-known excerpt from chapter two of Thoreau’s *Walden* on the whiteboard, beginning with “Every morning was a cheerful invitation” and ending with “It is the chief end of man here to ‘glorify God and enjoy him forever.’” Ask students to respond to the excerpt in their interactive journals or notebooks. Provide them with the following prompts:
 - Summarize Thoreau’s view of nature versus civilization and compare it to the Puritan view Hawthorne depicts in *The Scarlet Letter*.
 - How might these conflicting views of nature have affected Hawthorne’s choices in writing *The Scarlet Letter*?
4. Delve into the character of Mistress Hibbins and the Puritan idea of the “Black Man” or devil. Project on the whiteboard and ask students to reread the dialogue between Mistress Hibbins and other characters on pages 210-211 and 229-230. Ask students to consider: How does Hawthorne bring to light the Puritan idea of Satan in the speeches of Mistress Hibbins? Then invite students to come forward and annotate the text with colored dry-erase markers, sharing their thinking by circling or underlining significant words and phrases and by writing margin notes. Ask students to take a moment and read their peers’ thinking. Invite them to come up again and use arrows and lines to connect annotations and inferences that fit into patterns. Allow plenty of wait time to facilitate critical thinking. Topics that might arise or can be posed by the teacher include the following:
 - What role does Mistress Hibbins serve for Hawthorne? What role does she serve for Hester, Dimmesdale, and Pearl?
 - Why do the Puritans refer to the devil as the “Black Man”?
 - Why is he most often set in the forest?
 - What is the significance of the signed book Mistress Hibbins repeatedly mentions?

Next, project the Puritan era woodcut of Satan at <http://tinyurl.com/j649amd>. The image, like Hawthorne’s text, depicts Satan in the wilderness, approaching Puritan townsfolk and asking them to sign his book. Ask students: How does this Puritan art piece echo or depart from Hawthorne’s text? As an extension, ask students to analyze excerpts in the novel (pp. 120-121, 126, 130) that depict Roger Chillingworth as a red-eyed, satanic “Black Man” from the “lower regions.”

5. Provide a mini-lesson or review on the characteristics of an Aristotelian tragic hero. Ask groups to jigsaw-read sections of Aristotle’s *Poetics* and summarize the main ideas. Then provide students with a graphic organizer and ask them to cite evidence in the novel supporting Dimmesdale’s character as a tragic hero. Afterwards, invite students to share their thinking. Discuss: How might Dimmesdale differ from the archetypal tragic hero?

Tragic Hero Characteristics	Evidence from <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> (Arthur Dimmesdale as Tragic Hero)
Moment of Recognition/Catharsis	
Reversal of Fortune	
Identifiable Character	
Tragic Flaw (Hamartia)	
Punishment that Exceeds Crime	
Free Choice/Fate	

6. Towards the end of the novel, discuss the complete development of Pearl's character by comparing an idea from Hawthorne's text with one from a contemporary young adult novel. Prepare a handout with two quotes on the front side, leaving room for response below each. On the top, record the excerpt from Chapter 23, after Dimmesdale kisses and acknowledges Pearl in public: "A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies; and as her tears fell upon her father's cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor forever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it" (pp. 242-243). On the second half of the page, post this quote from Suzanne Collins's *Catching Fire*. At the end of chapter 25, Katniss ponders what Peeta has said: "As coal pressured into pearls by our weighty existence. Beauty that arose out of pain." Ask students to write an individual analysis of each excerpt. Next ask them to turn over the page and respond to this question: How does Collins's quotation about pain and beauty inform Hawthorne's description of Pearl's transformation? After students have had an opportunity to write individually, discuss in partners or as a class: How does Pearl's name provide both aesthetic and symbolic insight into the purpose and meaning of the text?

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS QUESTIONS FOR PART 2

- How has the meaning of the scarlet letter changed for the townspeople over the years?
- Analyze the impact of Hawthorne's foreshadowing when he tells the reader, "We shall see whether Hester Prynne were ever afterwards so touched, and transfigured" (p. 154). Why might he choose to relate the story in this way?
- What seems to be the author's point of view when he relates Hester's questions about womanhood (p. 156)? Can Hawthorne be considered a feminist? In what ways? Use textual evidence to support your view.

4. In Chapter 15, the author interrupts his narrative to speak directly to the reader, offering a warning and asking rhetorical questions such as “What did it betoken?” (p. 167). Discuss the impact on tone, meaning, and/or style when Hawthorne shifts his narrative in such a way.
5. Describe the role of the sun and the brook in Chapters 16-19. How does this symbolism serve to support the author's purpose?
6. Upon their forest meeting, Hester asks, “And thou, Arthur Dimmesdale, dost thou yet live?” (p. 180). Discuss the layers of meaning within her question.
7. Hawthorne says of Dimmesdale, “Here, seen only by her eyes, Arthur Dimmesdale, false to God and man, might be, for one moment, true!” (p. 186). Keeping in mind how the Puritans regard the woods, discuss the irony of the forest setting. What is the author saying about the nature of sin once removed from human law?
8. The author states, “The truth seems to be...that the mother forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wildness in the human child” (p. 195). Why does Hawthorne choose to characterize Pearl as wild throughout the novel?
9. Dimmesdale observes, “I have a strange fancy...that this brook is the boundary between two worlds...” (p. 199). To what two worlds does Dimmesdale refer?
10. Why does Pearl wash off Dimmesdale's kiss in the brook (p. 203)?
11. Why does Hawthorne say of Dimmesdale, “That self was gone. Another man had returned out of the forest; a wiser one...” (p. 212)?
12. Why does Hawthorne choose to describe Pearl specifically as “the gem on her mother's unquiet bosom” (p. 217)? What is the significance of his diction?
13. Analyze the setting of the final scaffold scene. Who stands on the platform now? Why? What does this scene reveal about the changes in the characters?
14. What is the final image of the novel? What does it suggest?

READER RESPONSE AND JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR PART 2

1. “Thus, Hester Prynne, whose heart had lost its regular and healthy throb, wandered without a clue in the dark labyrinth of mind; now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice; now starting back from a deep chasm...The Scarlet Letter had not done its office” (pp. 156-57).
2. “Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a type of typical illusion; neither am I fiendlike, who have snatched a fiend's office from his hands. It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may” (p. 165).
3. “Happy are you, Hester, that wear the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom! Mine burns in secret!” (p. 183)
4. “We are not, Hester, the worst sinners in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart” (p. 185).
5. “No man for any considerable period can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true” (pp. 205-206).
6. “Hadst thou sought the whole world over...there was no one place so secret—no high place nor lowly place where thou could have escaped me—save on this very scaffold!” (p. 240).

AFTER READING**DEEPENING ANALYSIS: GROUP AND INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES****TEXT SET:**

- John Green. “A Double Standard.” <http://fishingboatproceeds.tumblr.com/post/55126275089/a-double-standard>. (Author Tumblr Entry which quotes the poem, “A Double Standard,” by Frances E.W. Harper).
 - *Madonna and Child*. <https://www.britannica.com/media/full/355933/107467>. (Painting).
 - *The Scarlet Letter*. <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/25737/the-scarlet-letter/>. (Painting).
1. Prepare the class to read a complex literary criticism and to collaborate in an exchange of ideas. Ask students to quick-write an answer to one or more of the following questions:
 - Which character shows the strongest moral fortitude?
 - Who inflicts the most harm?
 - Is there a hero in *The Scarlet Letter*?

Then challenge students to consider a critic's perspective and how it might impact their thinking. In her “Afterword” to the novel, Regina Barreca writes of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, “Clearly they are both inadequate matches for Hester, who emerges as the genuine hero of this book; the male characters are literally pale in comparison...” (p. 264). Ask students to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of Barreca's argument through text rendering, marking the paragraph, the sentence, and the phrase or word that seems most significant. Selections do not have to come from the same paragraph, nor do they have to be ideas with which students agree. Ask students to meet in small groups and take turns identifying one or more of their text selections. Group members should build on each other's ideas in a well-reasoned and thoughtful collaborative discussion about the moral strength of Hawthorne's main characters.

2. Establish a line of inquiry for a short research project: How do different accounts and texts impact your understanding of Hester, the Puritans, and their culture of sin and redemption? Explain that the class will examine three different texts to formulate an answer. Using the “zoom in” strategy where one quadrant of an image is uncovered at a time, project on the whiteboard the 1859 Merle painting, *The Scarlet Letter*. As each quadrant is uncovered, provide students time to jot down a quick description of what they see as well as a quick analysis of what it means. Explain that as more and more of the painting is unveiled, interpretations should expand and perhaps change altogether, because additional text evidence is being provided. Focusing on one chunk of text at a time (in this case a painting) allows students to closely consider evidence. Items of focus from the painting may include the child's fascination with the letter, the woman's beauty and color, and the townsfolk far in the background.

Now show students the circa 1500 Bellini painting, *Madonna and Child*. Ask students to turn and talk with a classmate: What do you notice when you compare this painting to the previous one? Knowing that Merle painted his piece 350 years after Bellini's, how does his painting of Hester mimic or depart from the painting of The Madonna? Finally, reread with students Hawthorne's description of Hester from Chapter 2: “Had there been a Papist among the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the

image of Divine Maternity..." (p. 53). After exploring all three texts, the class is ready to answer the initial question. Students can discuss or record their thinking in writing.

- As a class, read John Green's Tumblr entry on *The Scarlet Letter*. In it, the popular young adult author asserts that since *The Scarlet Letter* is misogynistic in nature, it must also be tied to themes of entrenched power in America and is therefore connected to contemporary issues of class and race. Ask students to find specific parallels between Hawthorne's novel and the poem "A Double Standard," written by an African American author in 1855 and included in Green's Tumblr. Students can use the following chart to record their observations and then write a statement summing up their comparison.

	<i>"A Double Standard"</i>	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
Topic		
Narrative Voice		
Other Points of Comparison		

Following their analysis, students might discuss Green's statement: "What the narrator of Harper's poem wants is to be treated *equally*—not to go unpunished if she committed a crime but to be treated the same as any other citizen. This is one of the fundamental ideas of America, but of course our rhetoric has always run up against entrenched power structures that do not actually wish for a world of equal opportunity for all people. *Our hatred of vice has always been a sham*, born not of a desire to protect the innocent but to allow the powerful to retain their power. When America has moved forward as a nation, it has been when the oppressed have demanded the U.S. live up to its rhetoric." Discuss with students:

- Has America lived up to its rhetoric?
 - How do recent events involving race and power contribute to your answer?
 - How does the idea of equality today (gender, race, class) compare to the Puritan period described in *The Scarlet Letter*?
- Challenge students to conduct a short research project involving multiple print and digital resources answering the following compelling question: How is Hawthorne's theme of public versus secret guilt and redemption relevant in contemporary society? The culminating project might be an essay, blog entry, podcast, digital poster or slide presentation. Digital tools could include **Google Slides**, **Voicethread**, **Smore**, or **Thinglink**. With Google Slides, students can use **TechSmith Snagit**, which is a Chrome extension that allows students to narrate and screencast their slides and then save them as a movie. Voicethread is a slides-based presentation with video, voice, and text commenting. Smore and Thinglink are digital posters that allow makers to add videos, links, and pictures.

To provide background and topic ideas, give students a list of more recent scandals where cover-ups and lies may have been involved and contrition was demanded in a public forum. Public figures with a history of scandal might include: Lance Armstrong, Bill Clinton, Josh Duggar, David Petraeus, Ray Rice, Clarence Thomas, Brock Turner, Anthony Weiner, and Tiger Woods.

WHOLE BOOK TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITTEN RESPONSE

These topics and questions can be used for writing assignments, discussions, or individual analysis.

1. Trace the use and development of the letter “A” throughout the novel. How does its initial meaning change? Why?
2. How is each of the three main characters affected by isolation? How does the isolation differ for each of them? Explore physical as well as emotional and spiritual isolation.
3. Among Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth, which character is guilty of the greatest wrong? Which is the most wronged by another?
4. Which of the main characters is the strongest? Consider moral and spiritual strength. In what ways is the novel a testament to the strength of the human spirit?
5. Analyze the role of Pearl throughout the novel. What purpose does Hawthorne have her play for Hester? For Dimmesdale? For Chillingworth? For the village?
6. Discuss the relationship Hawthorne explores between outer appearance and inner character. Use specific text evidence for support.
7. Review the definition and samples of Romanticism we discussed prior to reading. Citing specific passages from *The Scarlet Letter*, how does Hawthorne’s Romantic style support his purpose, tone, and meaning?
8. At the novel’s end, the author admonishes the reader to “Be True! Be True! Be True!” (p. 246). Consider the multiple instances Hawthorne chooses to speak directly to his reader. How does this use of second person impact the novel’s major themes?
9. In the “Introduction,” Brenda Wineapple calls *The Scarlet Letter* “a story of place” (p. xiii). In what way is Hawthorne’s text the story of America? Might her label apply for contemporary times as well as the Puritan period about which the author writes?
10. In her “Afterword,” Regina Barreca argues that Dimmesdale is feminized and Hester, a female, is the hero of the novel. What evidence from the novel adds to the argument that *The Scarlet Letter* is a feminist novel?

ANALYZING FILM ADAPTATIONS OF THE NOVEL

Various film versions of *The Scarlet Letter* can be used to analyze multiple interpretations of Hawthorne’s story. Ask students to evaluate how each film interprets the source text, using the following line of inquiry: How can various writers, directors, and artists affirm, extend, alter, or recreate a source text?

- *The Scarlet Letter*. Dir. Robert G Vignola. Majestic, 1934.
 - *The Scarlet Letter*. Dir. Rick Hauser. PBS, 1979. (TV miniseries).
 - *The Scarlet Letter*. Dir. Roland Joffe. Hollywood Pictures, 1995. (R-rated with Demi Moore).
 - *The Scarlet Letter*. Dir. Elizabeth Berry. Risen Light Films, 2015.
1. Share the first scene of the 1934 film version of *The Scarlet Letter*, starring Colleen Moore and Alan Hale with the class. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf9I89ooaDE>. The film begins with a playful musical score and two characters not seen in the original text. Two townspeople have been added, one a woman accused of gossip and the other a man who laughed on the Sabbath. Both must stand in the town center and hold signs depicting

their crime. The man tells a couple of jokes. The scene becomes more familiar and much more serious when Hester Prynne and her child appear on the scaffold. Stop the scene after Hester is asked to name the father and ask students to turn and talk about why the director may have chosen to start out such a serious story on this light note. Discuss the tendency of film directors to make choices that can highlight, add to, or even depart from their original source material. Students may make connections to other books they have read that are altered in movie form.

2. Show students the trailer from the 1995 version of *The Scarlet Letter* starring Demi Moore, Gary Oldman, and Robert Duvall. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtZetd_jOo8. After an initial viewing, ask students to select a one-word descriptor for the tone of the trailer. Students might select from a Quizlet tone list such as the one linked below. Answers might include “prurient,” “fervent,” “decadent,” or “zealous.” Next, ask students to watch the trailer a second time and select words and phrases from the film clip that support their choice of tone. Students may select “building our New Jerusalem,” “a passion so fierce,” “a love so forbidden,” and images such as bathing, skinny dipping, and fire dancing. Ask students to compare their tone words and evidence from the film trailer to Hawthorne’s original text and evaluate where and why the written text and film differ in tone. Discuss with students: How might viewing this film impact a reader’s understanding of Hawthorne’s novel? <https://quizlet.com/5545160/ap-english-language-and-composition-tone-words-by-definition-flash-cards/>.
3. As a comparison in cinematography, show students the trailer from the most recent film version of *The Scarlet Letter*, released in 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Io0R6FFf9I>. Ask the class to create a double column chart and take notes as they watch on music, scenery, makeup, and script. Students should note the suspenseful music that builds throughout, the simple forest and scaffold scenes, the hollow-eyed minister and the exact lines from the novel. Discuss: In what ways might this film impact a reader’s understanding of Hawthorne’s novel?

Next ask students to compare this montage to the 1995 trailer, asking the following questions:

- How does the earlier clip differ in music, scenery, makeup, and script?
- Which is most like the source text?
- Why did these two directors make such different choices?

Additional discussion might focus on characterization. Chillingworth is depicted as physically violent in both trailers. Dimmesdale and Hester are portrayed as charismatic and defiant in the 1995 film, tortured and sympathetic in the 2015 clip.

TEXTS RELATED TO THE THEMES OF THE NOVEL

The following titles are appropriate for both independent reading or literature circles.

- Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. NY: Scholastic, 2010. (Individual vs. society, female hero).
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. “The Minister’s Black Veil.” <http://www.eldritchpress.org/nh/mbv.html>. (Short story about secret sin).
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. “Young Goodman Brown.” <http://www.eldritchpress.org/nh/ygb.html>. (Short story about Puritanism, the nature of sin).
- Mathieu, Jennifer. *The Truth about Alice*. NY: Roaring Brook Press, 2014. (YA novel, feminism and public shaming).

- Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible*. NY: Penguin, 2003. (Puritanism, public vs. private guilt, the nature of evil).
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. NY: NY: Knopf Doubleday, 1987. (Guilt and redemption).
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. NY: Penguin, 2000. (Dark Romanticism, nature vs. civilization).

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