

The Scarlet Letter

By:Nathaniel Hawthorne

Plot Summary

- The Scarlet Letter opens with a long preamble about how the book came to be written. The nameless narrator was the surveyor of the customhouse in Salem, Massachusetts. In the customhouse's attic, he discovered a number of documents, among them a manuscript that was bundled with a scarlet, gold-embroidered patch of cloth in the shape of an "A." The manuscript, the work of a past surveyor, detailed events that occurred some two hundred years before the narrator's time. When the narrator lost his customs post, he decided to write a fictional account of the events recorded in the manuscript. The Scarlet Letter is the final product. The story begins in seventeenth-century Boston, then a Puritan settlement. A young woman, Hester Prynne, is led from the town prison with her infant daughter, Pearl, in her arms and the scarlet letter "A" on her breast.

- A man in the crowd tells an elderly onlooker that Hester is being punished for adultery. Hester's husband, a scholar much older than she is, sent her ahead to America, but he never arrived in Boston. The consensus is that he has been lost at sea. While waiting for her husband, Hester has apparently had an affair, as she has given birth to a child. She will not reveal her lover's identity, however, and the scarlet letter, along with her public shaming, is her punishment for her sin and her secrecy. On this day Hester is led to the town scaffold and harangued by the town fathers, but she again refuses to identify her child's father. The elderly onlooker is Hester's missing husband, who is now practicing medicine and calling himself Roger Chillingworth. He settles in Boston, intent on revenge. He reveals his true identity to no one but Hester, whom he has sworn to secrecy. Several years pass. Hester supports herself by working as a seamstress, and Pearl grows into a willful, impish child.

- Shunned by the community, they live in a small cottage on the outskirts of Boston. Community officials attempt to take Pearl away from Hester, but, with the help of Arthur Dimmesdale, a young and eloquent minister, the mother and daughter manage to stay together. Dimmesdale, however, appears to be wasting away and suffers from mysterious heart trouble, seemingly caused by psychological distress. Chillingworth attaches himself to the ailing minister and eventually moves in with him so that he can provide his patient with round-the-clock care. Chillingworth also suspects that there may be a connection between the minister's torments and Hester's secret, and he begins to test Dimmesdale to see what he can learn. One afternoon, while the minister sleeps, Chillingworth discovers a mark on the man's breast (the details of which are kept from the reader), which convinces him that his suspicions are correct.

- Dimmesdale's psychological anguish deepens, and he invents new tortures for himself. In the meantime, Hester's charitable deeds and quiet humility have earned her a reprieve from the scorn of the community. One night, when Pearl is about seven years old, she and her mother are returning home from a visit to a deathbed when they encounter Dimmesdale atop the town scaffold, trying to punish himself for his sins. Hester and Pearl join him, and the three link hands. Dimmesdale refuses Pearl's request that he acknowledge her publicly the next day, and a meteor marks a dull red "A" in the night sky. Hester can see that the minister's condition is worsening, and she resolves to intervene. She goes to Chillingworth and asks him to stop adding to Dimmesdale's self-torment. Chillingworth refuses. Hester arranges an encounter with Dimmesdale in the forest because she is aware that Chillingworth has probably guessed that she plans to reveal his identity to Dimmesdale. The former lovers decide to flee to Europe, where they can live with Pearl as a family. They will take a ship sailing from Boston in four days. Both feel a sense of release, and Hester removes her scarlet letter and lets down her hair.

- Pearl, playing nearby, does not recognize her mother without the letter. The day before the ship is to sail, the townspeople gather for a holiday and Dimmesdale preaches his most eloquent sermon ever. Meanwhile, Hester has learned that Chillingworth knows of their plan and has booked passage on the same ship. Dimmesdale, leaving the church after his sermon, sees Hester and Pearl standing before the town scaffold. He impulsively mounts the scaffold with his lover and his daughter, and confesses publicly, exposing a scarlet letter seared into the flesh of his chest. He falls dead, as Pearl kisses him. Frustrated in his revenge, Chillingworth dies a year later. Hester and Pearl leave Boston, and no one knows what has happened to them. Many years later, Hester returns alone, still wearing the scarlet letter, to live in her old cottage and resume her charitable work. She receives occasional letters from Pearl, who has married a European aristocrat and established a family of her own. When Hester dies, she is buried next to Dimmesdale. The two share a single tombstone, which bears a scarlet "A."

Character Analysis

- **Hester Prynne** - Hester is the book's protagonist and the wearer of the scarlet letter that gives the book its title. The letter, a patch of fabric in the shape of an “A,” signifies that Hester is an “adulterer.” As a young woman, Hester married an elderly scholar, Chillingworth, who sent her ahead to America to live but never followed her. While waiting for him, she had an affair with a Puritan minister named Dimmesdale, after which she gave birth to Pearl. Hester is passionate but also strong—she endures years of shame and scorn. She equals both her husband and her lover in her intelligence and thoughtfulness. Her alienation puts her in the position to make acute observations about her community, particularly about its treatment of women.
- **Pearl** - Hester's illegitimate daughter Pearl is a young girl with a moody, mischievous spirit and an ability to perceive things that others do not. For example, she quickly discerns the truth about her mother and Dimmesdale. The townspeople say that she barely seems human and spread rumors that her unknown father is actually the Devil. She is wise far beyond her years, frequently engaging in ironic play having to do with her mother's scarlet letter.

- **Roger Chillingworth** - “Roger Chillingworth” is actually Hester's husband in disguise. He is much older than she is and had sent her to America while he settled his affairs in Europe. Because he is captured by Native Americans, he arrives in Boston belatedly and finds Hester and her illegitimate child being displayed on the scaffold. He lusts for revenge, and thus decides to stay in Boston despite his wife's betrayal and disgrace. He is a scholar and uses his knowledge to disguise himself as a doctor, intent on discovering and tormenting Hester's anonymous lover. Chillingworth is self-absorbed and both physically and psychologically monstrous. His single-minded pursuit of retribution reveals him to be the most malevolent character in the novel.
- **Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale** - Dimmesdale is a young man who achieved fame in England as a theologian and then emigrated to America. In a moment of weakness, he and Hester became lovers. Although he will not confess it publicly, he is the father of her child. He deals with his guilt by tormenting himself physically and psychologically, developing a heart condition as a result. Dimmesdale is an intelligent and emotional man, and his sermons are thus masterpieces of eloquence and persuasiveness. His commitments to his congregation are in constant conflict with his feelings of sinfulness and need to confess.

- **Governor Bellingham** - Governor Bellingham is a wealthy, elderly gentleman who spends much of his time consulting with the other town fathers. Despite his role as governor of a fledgling American society, he very much resembles a traditional English aristocrat. Bellingham tends to strictly adhere to the rules, but he is easily swayed by Dimmesdale's eloquence. He remains blind to the misbehaviors taking place in his own house: his sister, Mistress Hibbins, is a witch.
- **Mistress Hibbins** - Mistress Hibbins is a widow who lives with her brother, Governor Bellingham, in a luxurious mansion. She is commonly known to be a witch who ventures into the forest at night to ride with the “Black Man.” Her appearances at public occasions remind the reader of the hypocrisy and hidden evil in Puritan society.

- **Reverend Mr. John Wilson** - Boston's elder clergyman, Reverend Wilson is scholarly yet grandfatherly. He is a stereotypical Puritan father, a literary version of the stiff, starkly painted portraits of American patriarchs. Like Governor Bellingham, Wilson follows the community's rules strictly but can be swayed by Dimmesdale's eloquence. Unlike Dimmesdale, his junior colleague, Wilson preaches hellfire and damnation and advocates harsh punishment.
- **Narrator** - The unnamed narrator works as the surveyor of the Salem Custom House some two hundred years after the novel's events take place. He discovers an old manuscript in the building's attic that tells the story of Hester Prynne; when he loses his job, he decides to write a fictional treatment of the narrative. The narrator is a rather high-strung man, whose Puritan ancestry makes him feel guilty about his writing career. He writes because he is interested in American history and because he believes that America needs to better understand its religious and moral heritage.

Main Character Analysis

- **Hester Prynne**-Although *The Scarlet Letter* is about Hester Prynne, the book is not so much a consideration of her innate character as it is an examination of the forces that shape her and the transformations those forces effect. We know very little about Hester prior to her affair with Dimmesdale and her resultant public shaming. We read that she married Chillingworth although she did not love him, but we never fully understand why. The early chapters of the book suggest that, prior to her marriage, Hester was a strong-willed and impetuous young woman—she remembers her parents as loving guides who frequently had to restrain her incautious behavior. The fact that she has an affair also suggests that she once had a passionate nature. But it is what happens after Hester's affair that makes her into the woman with whom the reader is familiar. Shamed and alienated from the rest of the community, Hester becomes contemplative. She speculates on human nature, social organization, and larger moral questions.

- Hester's tribulations also lead her to be stoic and a freethinker. Although the narrator pretends to disapprove of Hester's independent philosophizing, his tone indicates that he secretly admires her independence and her ideas. Hester also becomes a kind of compassionate maternal figure as a result of her experiences. Hester moderates her tendency to be rash, for she knows that such behavior could cause her to lose her daughter, Pearl. Hester is also maternal with respect to society: she cares for the poor and brings them food and clothing. By the novel's end, Hester has become a protofeminist mother figure to the women of the community. The shame attached to her scarlet letter is long gone. Women recognize that her punishment stemmed in part from the town fathers' sexism, and they come to Hester seeking shelter from the sexist forces under which they themselves suffer. Throughout *The Scarlet Letter* Hester is portrayed as an intelligent, capable, but not necessarily extraordinary woman. It is the extraordinary circumstances shaping her that make her such an important figure.

- **Roger Chillingworth**-As his name suggests, Roger Chillingworth is a man deficient in human warmth. His twisted, stooped, deformed shoulders mirror his distorted soul. From what the reader is told of his early years with Hester, he was a difficult husband. He ignored his wife for much of the time, yet expected her to nourish his soul with affection when he did condescend to spend time with her. Chillingworth's decision to assume the identity of a “leech,” or doctor, is fitting. Unable to engage in equitable relationships with those around him, he feeds on the vitality of others as a way of energizing his own projects. Chillingworth's death is a result of the nature of his character. After Dimmesdale dies, Chillingworth no longer has a victim. Similarly, Dimmesdale's revelation that he is Pearl's father removes Hester from the old man's clutches. Having lost the objects of his revenge, the leech has no choice but to die.

- Ultimately, Chillingworth represents true evil. He is associated with secular and sometimes illicit forms of knowledge, as his chemical experiments and medical practices occasionally verge on witchcraft and murder. He is interested in revenge, not justice, and he seeks the deliberate destruction of others rather than a redress of wrongs. His desire to hurt others stands in contrast to Hester and Dimmesdale's sin, which had love, not hate, as its intent. Any harm that may have come from the young lovers' deed was unanticipated and inadvertent, whereas Chillingworth reaps deliberate harm.

- **Arthur Dimmesdale** -Arthur Dimmesdale, like Hester Prynne, is an individual whose identity owes more to external circumstances than to his innate nature. The reader is told that Dimmesdale was a scholar of some renown at Oxford University. His past suggests that he is probably somewhat aloof, the kind of man who would not have much natural sympathy for ordinary men and women. However, Dimmesdale has an unusually active conscience. The fact that Hester takes all of the blame for their shared sin goads his conscience, and his resultant mental anguish and physical weakness open up his mind and allow him to empathize with others. Consequently, he becomes an eloquent and emotionally powerful speaker and a compassionate leader, and his congregation is able to receive meaningful spiritual guidance from him.

- Ironically, the townspeople do not believe Dimmesdale's protestations of sinfulness. Given his background and his penchant for rhetorical speech, Dimmesdale's congregation generally interprets his sermons allegorically rather than as expressions of any personal guilt. This drives Dimmesdale to further internalize his guilt and self-punishment and leads to still more deterioration in his physical and spiritual condition. The town's idolization of him reaches new heights after his Election Day sermon, which is his last. In his death, Dimmesdale becomes even more of an icon than he was in life. Many believe his confession was a symbolic act, while others believe Dimmesdale's fate was an example of divine judgment.

- **Pearl**-Hester's daughter, Pearl, functions primarily as a symbol. She is quite young during most of the events of this novel—when Dimmesdale dies she is only seven years old—and her real importance lies in her ability to provoke the adult characters in the book. She asks them pointed questions and draws their attention, and the reader's, to the denied or overlooked truths of the adult world. In general, children in *The Scarlet Letter* are portrayed as more perceptive and more honest than adults, and Pearl is the most perceptive of them all.

- Pearl makes us constantly aware of her mother's scarlet letter and of the society that produced it. From an early age, she fixates on the emblem. Pearl's innocent, or perhaps intuitive, comments about the letter raise crucial questions about its meaning. Similarly, she inquires about the relationships between those around her—most important, the relationship between Hester and Dimmesdale—and offers perceptive critiques of them. Pearl provides the text's harshest, and most penetrating, judgment of Dimmesdale's failure to admit to his adultery. Once her father's identity is revealed, Pearl is no longer needed in this symbolic capacity; at Dimmesdale's death she becomes fully “human,” leaving behind her otherworldliness and her preternatural vision.

Themes

- **Sin, Knowledge, and the Human Condition**
- Sin and knowledge are linked in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Bible begins with the story of Adam and Eve, who were expelled from the Garden of Eden for eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As a result of their knowledge, Adam and Eve are made aware of their humanness, that which separates them from the divine and from other creatures. Once expelled from the Garden of Eden, they are forced to toil and to procreate—two “labors” that seem to define the human condition. The experience of Hester and Dimmesdale recalls the story of Adam and Eve because, in both cases, sin results in expulsion and suffering. But it also results in knowledge—specifically, in knowledge of what it means to be human. For Hester, the scarlet letter functions as “her passport into regions where other women dared not tread,” leading her to “speculate” about her society and herself more “boldly” than anyone else in New England.

- As for Dimmesdale, the “burden” of his sin gives him “sympathies so intimate with the sinful brotherhood of mankind, so that his heart vibrate[s] in unison with theirs.” His eloquent and powerful sermons derive from this sense of empathy. Hester and Dimmesdale contemplate their own sinfulness on a daily basis and try to reconcile it with their lived experiences. The Puritan elders, on the other hand, insist on seeing earthly experience as merely an obstacle on the path to heaven. Thus, they view sin as a threat to the community that should be punished and suppressed. Their answer to Hester's sin is to ostracize her. Yet, Puritan society is stagnant, while Hester and Dimmesdale's experience shows that a state of sinfulness can lead to personal growth, sympathy, and understanding of others. Paradoxically, these qualities are shown to be incompatible with a state of purity.

- **The Nature of Evil**
- The characters in the novel frequently debate the identity of the “Black Man,” the embodiment of evil. Over the course of the novel, the “Black Man” is associated with Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, and Mistress Hibbins, and little Pearl is thought by some to be the Devil's child. The characters also try to root out the causes of evil: did Chillingworth's selfishness in marrying Hester force her to the “evil” she committed in Dimmesdale's arms? Is Hester and Dimmesdale's deed responsible for Chillingworth's transformation into a malevolent being? This confusion over the nature and causes of evil reveals the problems with the Puritan conception of sin. The book argues that true evil arises from the close relationship between hate and love. As the narrator points out in the novel's concluding chapter, both emotions depend upon “a high degree of intimacy and heart-knowledge; each renders one individual dependent . . . upon another.” Evil is not found in Hester and Dimmesdale's lovemaking, nor even in the cruel ignorance of the Puritan fathers. Evil, in its most poisonous form, is found in the carefully plotted and precisely aimed revenge of Chillingworth, whose love has been perverted. Perhaps Pearl is not entirely wrong when she thinks Dimmesdale is the “Black Man,” because her father, too, has perverted his love. Dimmesdale, who should love Pearl, will not even publicly acknowledge her. His cruel denial of love to his own child may be seen as further perpetrating evil.

- **Identity and Society**

- After Hester is publicly shamed and forced by the people of Boston to wear a badge of humiliation, her unwillingness to leave the town may seem puzzling. She is not physically imprisoned, and leaving the Massachusetts Bay Colony would allow her to remove the scarlet letter and resume a normal life. Surprisingly, Hester reacts with dismay when Chillingworth tells her that the town fathers are considering letting her remove the letter. Hester's behavior is premised on her desire to determine her own identity rather than to allow others to determine it for her. To her, running away or removing the letter would be an acknowledgment of society's power over her: she would be admitting that the letter is a mark of shame and something from which she desires to escape. Instead, Hester stays, refiguring the scarlet letter as a symbol of her own experiences and character. Her past sin is a part of who she is; to pretend that it never happened would mean denying a part of herself. Thus, Hester very determinedly integrates her sin into her life.
- Dimmesdale also struggles against a socially determined identity. As the community's minister, he is more symbol than human being. Except for Chillingworth, those around the minister willfully ignore his obvious anguish, misinterpreting it as holiness. Unfortunately, Dimmesdale never fully recognizes the truth of what Hester has learned: that individuality and strength are gained by quiet self-assertion and by a reconfiguration, not a rejection, of one's assigned identity.

Motifs

- **Civilization versus the Wilderness**
- In *The Scarlet Letter*, the town and the surrounding forest represent opposing behavioral systems. The town represents civilization, a rule-bound space where everything one does is on display and where transgressions are quickly punished. The forest, on the other hand, is a space of nature rather than human authority. In the forest, society's rules do not apply, and alternate identities can be assumed. While this allows for misbehavior— Mistress Hibbins's midnight rides, for example—it also permits greater honesty and an escape from the repression of Boston. When Hester and Dimmesdale meet in the woods, for a few moments, they become happy young lovers once again. Hester's cottage, which, significantly, is located on the outskirts of town and at the edge of the forest, embodies both orders. It is her place of exile, which ties it to the authoritarian town, but because it lies apart from the settlement, it is a place where she can create for herself a life of relative peace.

- **Night versus Day**
- By emphasizing the alternation between sunlight and darkness, the novel organizes the plot's events into two categories: those which are socially acceptable, and those which must take place covertly. Daylight exposes an individual's activities and makes him or her vulnerable to punishment. Night, on the other hand, conceals and enables activities that would not be possible or tolerated during the day—for instance, Dimmesdale's encounter with Hester and Pearl on the scaffold. These notions of visibility versus concealment are linked to two of the book's larger themes—the themes of inner versus socially assigned identity and of outer appearances versus internal states. Night is the time when inner natures can manifest themselves. During the day, interiority is once again hidden from public view, and secrets remain secrets.

- **Evocative Names**
- The names in this novel often seem to beg to be interpreted allegorically. Chillingworth is cold and inhuman and thus brings a “chill” to Hester's and Dimmesdale's lives. “Prynne” rhymes with “sin,” while “Dimmesdale” suggests “dimness”—weakness, indeterminacy, lack of insight, and lack of will, all of which characterize the young minister. The name “Pearl” evokes a biblical allegorical device—the “pearl of great price” that is salvation. This system of naming lends a profundity to the story, linking it to other allegorical works of literature such as *Pilgrim's Progress* and to portions of the Bible. It also aligns the novel with popular forms of narrative such as fairy tales.

Symbols

- **The Scarlet Letter**

- The scarlet letter is meant to be a symbol of shame, but instead it becomes a powerful symbol of identity to Hester. The letter's meaning shifts as time passes. Originally intended to mark Hester as an adulterer, the “A” eventually comes to stand for “Able.” Finally, it becomes indeterminate: the Native Americans who come to watch the Election Day pageant think it marks her as a person of importance and status. Like Pearl, the letter functions as a physical reminder of Hester's affair with Dimmesdale. But, compared with a human child, the letter seems insignificant, and thus helps to point out the ultimate meaninglessness of the community's system of judgment and punishment. The child has been sent from God, or at least from nature, but the letter is merely a human contrivance. Additionally, the instability of the letter's apparent meaning calls into question society's ability to use symbols for ideological reinforcement. More often than not, a symbol becomes a focal point for critical analysis and debate.

- **The Meteor**
- As Dimmesdale stands on the scaffold with Hester and Pearl in Chapter XII, a meteor traces out an “A” in the night sky. To Dimmesdale, the meteor implies that he should wear a mark of shame just as Hester does. The meteor is interpreted differently by the rest of the community, which thinks that it stands for “Angel” and marks Governor Winthrop's entry into heaven. But “Angel” is an awkward reading of the symbol. The Puritans commonly looked to symbols to confirm divine sentiments. In this narrative, however, symbols are taken to mean what the beholder wants them to mean. The incident with the meteor obviously highlights and exemplifies two different uses of symbols: Puritan and literary.

- **Pearl**
- Although Pearl is a complex character, her primary function within the novel is as a symbol. Pearl is a sort of living version of her mother's scarlet letter. She is the physical consequence of sexual sin and the indicator of a transgression. Yet, even as a reminder of Hester's "sin," Pearl is more than a mere punishment to her mother: she is also a blessing. She represents not only "sin" but also the vital spirit and passion that engendered that sin. Thus, Pearl's existence gives her mother reason to live, bolstering her spirits when she is tempted to give up. It is only after Dimmesdale is revealed to be Pearl's father that Pearl can become fully "human." Until then, she functions in a symbolic capacity as the reminder of an unsolved mystery.

- **The Rosebush Next to the Prison Door**
- The narrator chooses to begin his story with the image of the rosebush beside the prison door. The rosebush symbolizes the ability of nature to endure and outlast man's activities. Yet, paradoxically, it also symbolizes the futility of symbolic interpretation: the narrator mentions various significances that the rosebush might have, never affirming or denying them, never privileging one over the others.

Key Facts

- **full title** · The Scarlet Letter
- **author** · Nathaniel Hawthorne
- **type of work** · Novel
- **genre** · Symbolic; semi-allegorical; historical fiction; romance (in the sense that it rejects realism in favor of symbols and ideas)
- **language** · English
- **time and place written** · Salem and Concord, Massachusetts; late 1840s
- **date of first publication** · 1850
- **publisher** · Ticknor, Reed, and Fields

- **narrator** · The narrator is an unnamed customhouse surveyor who writes some two hundred years after the events he describes took place. He has much in common with Hawthorne but should not be taken as a direct mouthpiece for the author's opinions.
- **point of view** · The narrator is omniscient, because he analyzes the characters and tells the story in a way that shows that he knows more about the characters than they know about themselves. Yet, he is also a subjective narrator, because he voices his own interpretations and opinions of things. He is clearly sympathetic to Hester and Dimmesdale.
- **tone** · Varies—contemplative and somewhat bitter in the introduction; thoughtful, fairly straightforward, yet occasionally tinged with irony in the body of the narrative
- **tense** · The narrator employs the past tense to recount events that happened some two hundred years before his time, but he occasionally uses the present tense when he addresses his audience.
- **setting (time)** · Middle of the seventeenth century
- **setting (place)** · Boston, Massachusetts
- **protagonist** · Hester Prynne

- **major conflict** · Her husband having inexplicably failed to join her in Boston following their emigration from Europe, Hester Prynne engages in an extramarital affair with Arthur Dimmesdale. When she gives birth to a child, Hester invokes the condemnation of her community—a condemnation they manifest by forcing her to wear a letter “A” for “adulteror”—as well as the vengeful wrath of her husband, who has appeared just in time to witness her public shaming.
- **rising action** · Dimmesdale stands by in silence as Hester suffers for the “sin” he helped to commit, though his conscience plagues him and affects his health. Hester's husband, Chillingworth, hides his true identity and, posing as a doctor to the ailing minister, tests his suspicions that Dimmesdale is the father of his wife's child, effectively exacerbating Dimmesdale's feelings of shame and thus reaping revenge.
- **climax** · There are at least two points in *The Scarlet Letter* that could be identified as the book's “climax.” The first is in Chapter XII, at the exact center of the book. As Dimmesdale watches a meteor trace a letter “A” in the sky, he confronts his role in Hester's sin and realizes that he can no longer deny his deed and its consequences. The key characters confront one another when Hester and Pearl join Dimmesdale in an “electric chain” as he holds his vigil on the marketplace scaffold, the location of Hester's original public shaming. Chillingworth appears in this scene as well. The other climactic scene occurs in Chapter XXIII, at the end of the book. Here, the characters' secrets are publicly exposed and their fates sealed. Dimmesdale, Hester, and Chillingworth not only acknowledge their secrets to themselves and to each other; they push these revelations to such extremes that they all must leave the community in one way or another.

- **falling action** · Depending on one's interpretation of which scene constitutes the book's “climax,” the falling action is either the course of events that follow Chapter XII or the final reports on Hester's and Pearl's lives after the deaths of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth.
- **themes** · Sin, experience, and the human condition; the nature of evil; identity and society
- **motifs** · Civilization versus the wilderness; night versus day; evocative names
- **symbols** · The scarlet letter; the town scaffold; the meteor; Pearl; the rosebush next to the prison door
- **foreshadowing** · Foreshadowing is minimal, because the symbols tend to coincide temporally with events, enriching their meaning rather than anticipating their occurrence.