

The Scarlet Letter

by Nathaniel
Hawthorne



THE
SCARLET
LETTER

Notes

Nathaniel Hawthorne

- **Born July 4, 1804, in Salem, Mass.**
- **Reclusive at times**
- **Wrote *Twice-Told Tales*, *The House of Seven Gables*, *The Scarlet Letter*, etc.**
- **Married Sophia Peabody and fathered Una**
- **Died in 1864**
- **Buried in Concord, Massachusetts**
- **Great-great-great-great grandfather, John Hathorne, was judge at Salem witch trials**

Nathaniel Hawthorne



Background Information

- **The novel is set in the mid 1600s in Boston, Massachusetts.**
- **The plot encompasses a seven year period.**
- **The plot involves the love triangle of wife-lover-husband.**
- **The major theme of the novel is developed in the context of good vs. evil.**

What is Puritanism?

■ Puritan beliefs:

- An emphasis on private study of the Bible
- A desire to see education and enlightenment for the masses (especially so they could read the Bible for themselves)
- Simplicity in worship, the exclusion of vestments, images, candles, etc.
- Did not celebrate traditional holidays which they believed to be in violation of the regulative principle of worship.
- Believed the Sabbath was still obligatory for Christians, although they believed the Sabbath had been changed to Sunday
- Some approved of the church's involvement with the courts

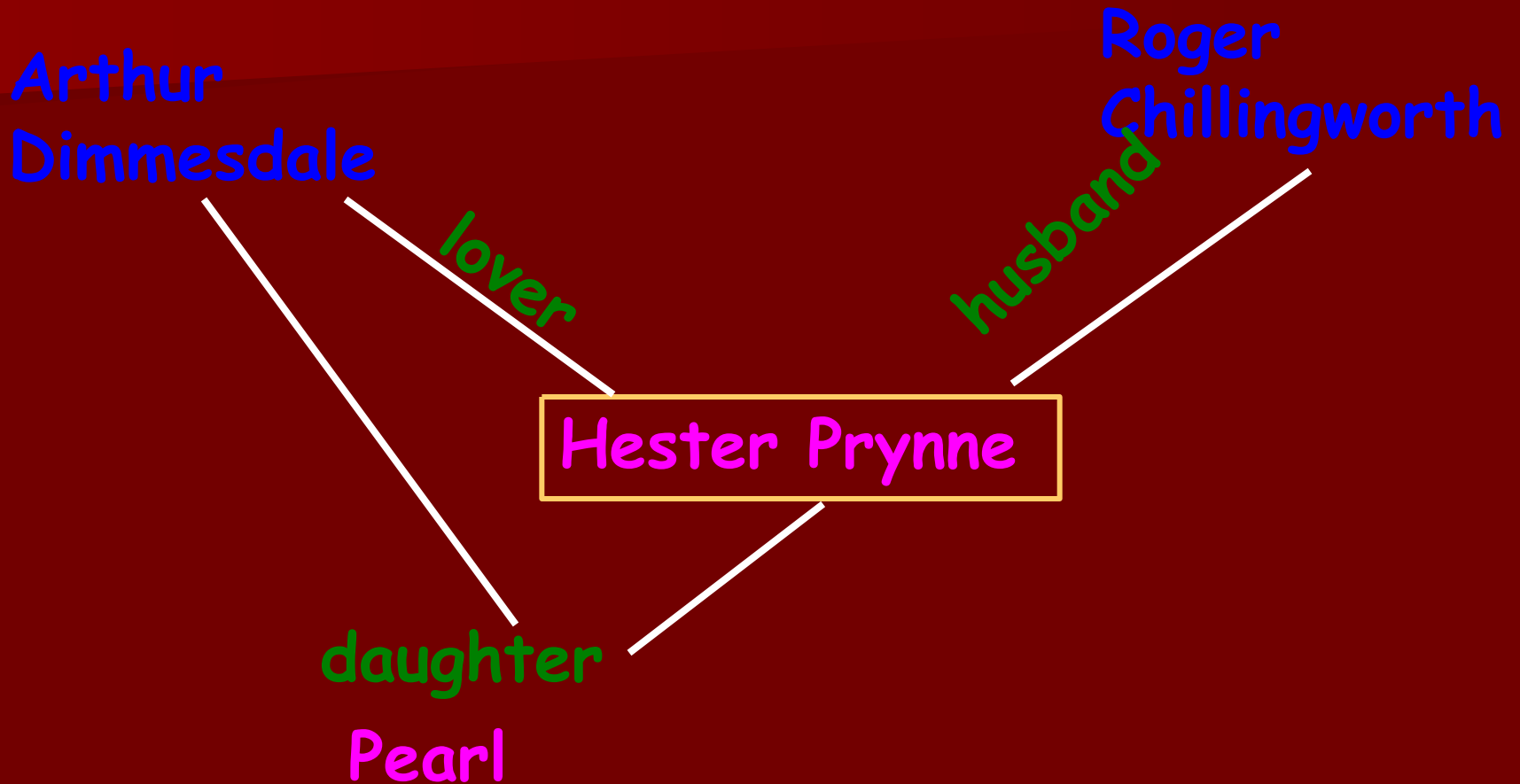
Point of View

- Third Person – Omniscient:
 - There is no limit to what the reader knows.
 - We hear the inner the thoughts of all the characters.

Characters

- **Hester Prynne-** wearer of the scarlet letter
- **Pearl-** child of Hester; living symbol of Hester's sin
- **Roger Chillingworth-** learned scholar; doctor
- **Arthur Dimmesdale-** admired young minister
- **Governor Bellingham-** governor and magistrate of Massachusetts Bay Colony
- **Rev. John Wilson-** senior minister of colony
- **Mistress Hibbins-** Gov. Bellingham's sister

Major characters in *The Scarlet Letter*



Symbolism

- **The Scarlet Letter** - The letter's meaning shifts as time passes. Originally intended to mark Hester as an adulterer, the "A" eventually comes to stand for "Able."
- **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.

Symbolism

- **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.
- **Rose Bush** - The rosebush symbolizes the ability of nature to endure and outlast man's activities.

Introduction Information

The Custom House

- **Narrator is nameless – resembles Hawthorne**
- **Narrator is “chief executive officer” of custom house in Salem**
- **“customs” – taxes paid on foreign imports into Salem**
- **“custom house” – building where people came to pay taxes**

Introduction Information

The Custom House

- Narrator is bored because few people come to Salem now
- Finds a bundle with a scarlet and gold "A" embroidered on it
- Holds it to his chest and it appears to burn him

Introduction Information

The Custom House

- Manuscript is written by John Pue about an incident 100 years before his time as surveyor of the custom house
- Narrator re-writes the tale which becomes what the reader is reading

Chapter 1

Notes

Chapter 1 - Summary

- This chapter sets the scene (17th c Boston)
- Drably dressed Puritans gathered in front of the prison
- In front of the prison is a growth of weeds, and beside it grows a wild rose bush.





Chapter 1 – Analysis

- The rust, decay, and ugliness foreshadow the gloom of the novel.
- Two landmarks ---the prison & cemetery--- point to themes of punishment & death.
- Although the rose is beautiful, it is a striking contrast to everything else.

Chapter 2

Notes

Chapter 2 - Summary

- Puritans are gathered in front of the prison to witness a public punishment.
- Most of the women appear self-righteous in discussing Hester Prynne's sin.
- Proud & beautiful, Hester emerges from the prison wearing an elaborately embroidered scarlet letter A on her dress.
- The A stands for adultery.



Chapter 2 - Summary

- Hester is carrying a three-month old infant in her arms.
- The crowd is unsympathetic as Hester walks toward the scaffold of the pillory.



Chapter 2 - Summary

- While standing on the pillory, Hester dreams of her past life in England (with her father) and on the Continent (with her “misshapen scholar” husband).
- Stern faces watch Hester.
- Hester is painfully aware of her present position of shame and punishment.

Chapter 2 – Analysis

- Pearl is the symbol of Hester's sin.
- Roger Chillingworth (the misshapen scholar) is Hester's legal husband.
- Hawthorne reveals his critical attitude toward Puritan society (probably due to his family background).

Chapter 2 – Analysis

- The goodwives condemn Hester and suggest more violent torture. Hawthorne objected to this type of attitude in early American Puritanism.
- Hawthorne avoids over-generalizing Puritans by including one character who is somewhat sympathetic toward Hester.
- This chapter is heavy in historical narrative.

Chapter 3

Notes

Chapter 3 - Summary

- In this chapter, Hawthorne reveals that Hester was sent ahead from Europe by her husband.
- Hester has been in Boston for two years without any word from her husband.
- Because Hester was with child, she was not executed for the sin of adultery.
- Hester's punishment is standing on the scaffold for three hours & wear the symbolic letter for the rest of her life.

Chapter 3 - Summary

- Hester's husband encountered problems in crossing the Atlantic Ocean. At some point, he was held captive. These problems delayed him from reaching Hester.
- Hester's husband is upset that the baby's father is not sharing in the public punishment.

Chapter 3 - Summary

- Hester dreads talking to her husband.
- The Reverend Mr. John Wilson is Boston's oldest and most famous minister.
- The young Reverend Mr. Arthur Dimmesdale's voice tone reveals a kindness toward Hester.
- Hester refuses to name the father of her child.
- Pearl cries and screams.

Chapter 3 – Analysis

- Reverend Dimmesdale is the father of Pearl. This fact makes his passionate appeal one of the richest passages of irony in the book (there is a strong undercurrent of personal meaning in Dimmesdale's public remarks).

Chapter 4

Notes

Chapter 4 - Summary

- Back in the prison cell, Pearl convulses in pain.
- Hester's husband poses as a physician by the name of Roger Chillingworth, and does not reveal that he is married to Hester.
- Although fearful he will harm the baby, Hester allows Chillingworth to give the baby medicine.
- Still in fear, Hester accepts some sedative.

Chapter 4 - Summary

- The sedative calms Hester.
- Hester and her husband talk intimately and sympathetically---both accept a measure of blame for the current situation.
- Chillingworth does not want revenge against Hester; however, he wants to know who violated his marriage.

Chapter 4 - Summary

- Since Hester is concealing the identity of her lover, Chillingworth requests that Hester also keep her husband's identity secret.
- Chillingworth promises not to take the life or damage the reputation of her unknown lover (if Hester doesn't give the name of her husband).

Chapter 4 - Summary

- Chillingworth warns Hester if she fails to keep his identity secret, then he will hurt Pearl's father.



Chapter 4 – Analysis

- This is one of the more dramatic chapters of the book.
- Regarding the development of Chillingworth, we see both what he has been and what he is to become.
- Chillingworth is a lonely, gentle scholar who has been robbed of his wife; however, he has an element of self-destruction in his grim determination to discover the man who has caused him offense.

Chapter 4 – Analysis

- Hester never pretended to love her husband.
- Hester does deeply love Pearl's father.
- It is Hester's concern for Dimmesdale (more than her sense of obligation to Chillingworth) that persuades her to swear to keep her husband's secret. *This promise will make Hester and her lover suffer later in the book.



Chapter 5

Notes

Chapter 5 - Summary



- After her imprisonment, Hester is free to leave Boston; however, she moves into a small thatched cottage on the outskirts of town.
- Hester supports herself as a seamstress. Her work is in demand for everything but wedding dresses.
- Hester remains a social outcast. She patiently takes abuse from the townspeople.

Chapter 5 – Analysis

- The primary function of this chapter is to show Hester undergoing penance.
- Hester goes beyond the letter of the law—staying in Boston (atmosphere of torture) when she could leave.
- Hester dresses in the coarsest and most somber attire when her natural taste is for the rich and beautiful.
- Despite Hester's apparent humility and her refusal to strike back, she resents and inwardly rebels against the viciousness of her Puritan persecutors.

Chapter 6

Notes

Chapter 6 – Notes

- At age three, Pearl is a physically beautiful, vigorous, and graceful little girl.
- Pearl has unusual depth of mind but an uncontrollable, fiery passion (neither threats or kindness of Hester can control this side of Pearl).
- Hester makes rich, elaborate dresses for Pearl.



Chapter 6 – Notes

- Pearl's mischief and disrespect for authority remind Hester of her own sin of the passions.
- Hester names her daughter "Pearl" because she came at a "great price."

Chapter 6 – Notes

- Hester and Pearl rely on one another because they are excluded from “respectable” society.
- Pearl does not try to make friends; rather, she throws rocks and screams at the other children.
- Pearl’s only companion in play is her imagination—but even in her games of make-believe she never creates friends. Pearl does create make-believe enemies (Puritans) she plans to destroy.

Chapter 6 – Notes

- The object that most captures Pearl's attention is the scarlet letter on her mother's dress.
- As an infant, Pearl grasped at the letter. As a child, Pearl threw wild flowers at the letter.
- Pearl denies having a Heavenly Father and demands that Hester explain where Pearl came from.

Chapter 6 -- Analysis

- Hester's interpretation of Pearl's behavior as almost supernatural or fiendish takes place primarily in Hester's mind.
- Hester deeply loves Pearl but cannot understand her and somewhat fears Pearl.

Chapter 7

Notes

Chapter 7 -- Summary

- Hearing that influential citizens are going to take Pearl away from her, Hester goes to Governor Bellingham's mansion.
- Under the pretext of taking him gloves, Hester plans to plead for the right to keep her daughter.
- When she is taunted by a group of Puritan children, Pearl screams and threatens the children.

Chapter 7 – Summary

- Leech is an archaic term for a physician.
- Hester attempts to quiet Pearl who is crying and screaming for one of the red roses from the garden.

Chapter 7 -- Analysis

- The scarlet A is strengthened by two striking variations: the magnified A in the breastplate, and Pearl as a living version of the scarlet symbol.

Chapter 8

Notes

Chapter 8 -- Summary

- The Governor is shocked by Pearl's vain and immodest costume. He doubts Hester's fitness to raise Pearl in a Christian way.
- The Governor instructs Reverend Wilson to test Pearl's knowledge of religious items.
- Although Hester has taught Pearl much more about religion than most three year olds, Pearl deliberately pretends ignorance.



Chapter 8 -- Summary

- After a plea from Hester, Dimmesdale persuades the Governor and Wilson to let Pearl remain with her mother (as a blessing from God & as a reminder of sin).
- Leaving the mansion, Mistress Hibbins (the governor's sister) invites Hester to a midnight meeting of witches in the forest. Hester declines.

Chapter 8 Analysis

- For the first time in three years (since the scaffold) the four main characters are together.
- This chapter contains the first hints as to Dimmesdale being the father.
- Dimmesdale has been suffering with his concealed guilt.
- Chillingworth physically appears more ugly, dark, and misshapen.

Chapter 9

Notes

Chapter 9 Summary

- Some Puritans believe that it is as special act of Providence that Chillingworth has arrived and can take care of Dimmesdale.
- Dimmesdale and Chillingworth have separate apartments in the same house.
- Gradually, the townspeople become suspicious of Chillingworth; however, they have faith that Dimmesdale is strong enough to overcome his tormentor.

Chapter 9 – Analysis

- For Dimmesdale, the relationship with Chillingworth is dangerous.
- There is a Satanic turn in Chillingworth's character

Chapter 10

Notes

Chapter 10 -- Summary

- Chillingworth is obsessed with discovering the truth.
- Chillingworth asks Dimmesdale why a man should be willing to carry secret sins to the grave rather than confessing them during his lifetime.
- Dimmesdale replies that most men *do* confess but that some men *do not* because they would no longer be able to do God's work on earth.

Chapter 10 -- Summary

- Chillingworth finds Dimmesdale asleep in a chair. He pulls aside the minister's vestment (ceremonial robe) and finds a letter A carved into the skin.
- Chillingworth experiences feelings of wonder, joy, and horror.

Chapter 10 Analysis

- Chillingworth has become diabolical in his determination. As seen in chapter ten, this is the most vicious side of Chillingworth; however, Hawthorne reminds the reader that C had once been kindly, pure, and upright. C did not choose a path of evil.
- C is a victim of his need to seek the truth.
- D is a victim of his own weakness.
- Dimmesdale is consumed with painful inner suffering. He is wasting away from the struggle with his soul.

Chapter 11

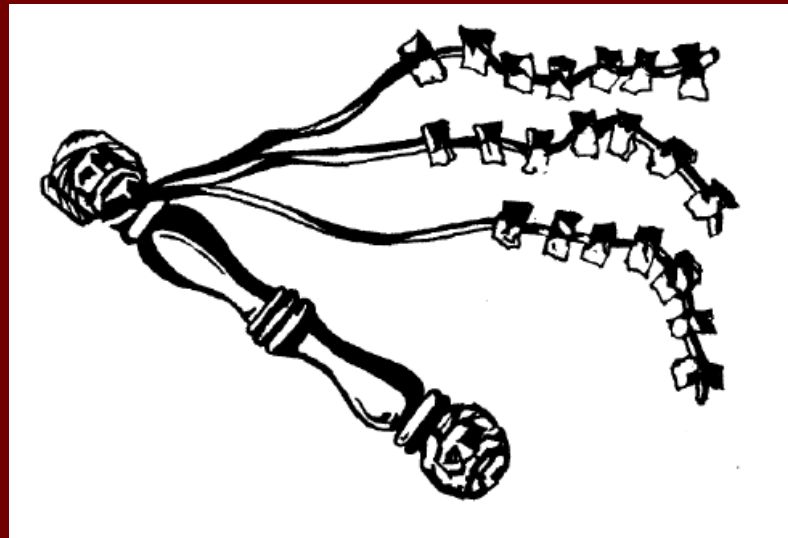
Notes

Chapter 11 -- Summary

- Knowing the secret, Chillingworth begins his unrelenting torture of Dimmesdale.
- Dimmesdale begins to abhor Chillingworth
Dimmesdale tolerates Chillingworth because he feels the dislike stems from an impurity in his own heart.
- Dimmesdale becomes more popular among the congregation. D's suffering allows him to sympathize with the sin and suffering of others.

Chapter 11 -- Summary

- The misplaced adoration (from the congregation) tortures Dimmesdale and he wants to confess.
- Incapable of the one act necessary for his salvation, Dimmesdale substitutes self-punishment (often by beating himself with a bloody scourge) & walks the house at night.



Chapter 11 -- Analysis

- Hawthorne's irony shows up again in the clever paradox of Dimmesdale's futile attempts at public confession.
- The more D asserts his own sinfulness, the holier the congregation believe him to be.

Chapter 12

Notes

Chapter 12 -- Summary

- Realizing the mockery of his standing safe and unseen where he should have stood seven years earlier before the townspeople, Dimmesdale is overcome by a self-aborrence which leads him to shriek aloud.
- Dimmesdale tells Pearl he cannot stand with them on the scaffold the next day but that he will stand with them on judgement day.
- Hester refuses to reveal Chillingworth's identity to Dimmesdale.

Chapter 12 -- Analysis

- One of the most powerful chapters (due to the symbolism)
- Hawthorne was a master at psychological realism (D's sudden mood changes, self-condemnation, near insanity, subconscious expression of suppressed desires).
- D's first two refusals to acknowledge publicly Hester and Pearl may suggest Peter's first two denials of Christ. (But perhaps Dimmesdale, like Peter, will have a third opportunity.)

Chapter 13

Notes

Chapter 13—Summary

- Hester's untiring services to the sick, the poor, and the troubled have won her much respect among the townspeople who once condemned her.
- Some people attribute to the embroidered letter a supernatural power to protect its wearer.
- Hester's warmth, charm, and passion have been replaced with coldness, severity, and drabness.

Chapter 13—Summary

- Only in the care and education of Pearl does Hester demonstrate warmth and enthusiasm (but Pearl's abnormal nature baffles and saddens Hester).
- Hester wonders whether it would be better if she and Pearl were dead. The fact that she can contemplate suicide indicates that the letter has not done its job.

Chapter 13—Analysis

- This chapter helps the reader understand Hester.

Chapter 14

Notes

Chapter 14--Summary

- Chillingworth tells Hester that there is talk that she may be allowed to remove the letter.
- Hester denies the right of the magistrates to remove the letter saying if she were worthy to not have the letter that it would naturally fall away.
- Hester believes Chillingworth has been transformed into a devil. Chillingworth blames Dimmesdale for his transformation and says that D has made his purpose in life evil.

Chapter 14--Summary

- Chillingworth tells Hester that she can reveal his identity to Dimmesdale.
- Hester is not really sinful or fiend-like. Fate has created the tragic situation.

Chapter 14--Analysis

- Hester's misery (as she senses her responsibility for Dimmesdale's suffering & for Chillingworth's moral deterioration) evokes the physician's sympathy.
- The suggestion that Chillingworth is powerless to resist the dictates of fate does not in Hawthorne's view, excuse the physician from responsibility for his actions --- but it does make it possible for the reader to sympathize, while condemning him.

Chapter 15

Notes

Chapter 15 -- Summary

- After Pearl arranges eel-grass (in the form of a letter A) on her dress, Hester tells Pearl that the green letter has no meaning.
- Pearl says Hester's letter means the same thing as when the minister puts his hand over his heart.
- Hester says she knows nothing of the minister's heart.

Chapter 15 -- Analysis

- Despite their moment of mutual pity in the preceding chapter, Hester hates Chillingworth. By involving her in the unnatural marriage, Chillingworth set off the chain of events leading to her present suffering, and Dimmesdale's.
- Despite Hester going beyond the letter of the law in accepting punishment, she is not at heart truly repentant.

Chapter 15 -- Analysis

- The pathetic loneliness of Hester's position becomes vivid as Hawthorne shows her wondering whether she might not make of Pearl a real friend and confide to her at least part of the truth about the letter A.
- Only two adults besides Hester know the full story and neither is convenient or pleasant to talk with about the issue.
- Hester has no one to talk to.

Chapter 15 -- Analysis

- It is natural that Hester is tempted to take Pearl into her confidence, and it is sad that, instead, she slams the door on her daughter's curiosity. In so doing, Hester finds it necessary to lie about the reason for her scarlet letter. As Hawthorne points out, this is the first time in seven years that she has been false to the symbol she wears.

Chapter 16

Notes

Chapter 16 -- Summary

- While in the forest, Pearl suggests that the sunshine is running from Hester because of the letter she wears.
- Hester tells Pearl that the Black Man of the forest put the mark on Hester.

Chapter 16 -- Analysis

- The chilly gloom of the forest almost perfectly reflects Hester's state of mind.
- The narrow footpath through the dense forest is suggestive of the path which Hester has been forced to follow for the past seven years.
- Hester sees the forest itself as the "moral wilderness in which she had so long been wandering."

Chapter 16 -- Analysis

- The obvious significance of the sunshine fleeing from Hester is complicated by the irony of the ever-vivacious Pearl's appearing to absorb the sunshine.
- The story of the Black Man and his mark is described as common superstition; yet for Hester, it has a special and personal meaning.
- The brook is suggestive of Pearl "inasmuch as the current of her life gushed from a well-spring as mysterious, and had flowed through scenes shadowed as heavily with gloom."

Chapter 16 -- Analysis

- The difference between the song of the brook and the song of the girl is also symbolic. Unlike the brook and Hester, Pearl has not known sorrow which leads to melancholy.

Chapter 17

Notes

Chapter 17 -- Summary

- Neither Dimmesdale nor Hester have found peace.
- Dimmesdale and Hester have both worked to atone for their sins; however, D suffers more because his sin is concealed.
- Hester tells Dimmesdale that Chillingworth is her husband and that he is an enemy to D. D forgives Hester for not telling him earlier.
- D says Chillingworth's sin is greater than their sin.
- Hester and D vow to leave Boston together.

Chapter 17 -- Analysis

- This chapter is key to the development of the love story. After seven years, Hester and Dimmesdale are able to be alone to talk.
- Hester realizes that she must be a source of strength for D.
- Dimmesdale is seen as a man (rather than just a minister) whose passions are not always under perfect control.
- D's cry of despair and appeal for help from Hester tend to humanize him and make him a more believable character.

Chapter 18

Notes

Chapter 18 -- Summary

- Hester is a woman of independent mind and strong passions, who has never been a Puritan and who for seven years has not even been a member of society. Hester's strength and assurance convince Dimmesdale that they can start a new life together.
- Feeling a surge of joy, Hester removes her letter and cap. As her rich, dark hair falls about her shoulders, Hester youth, passion and beauty seem to return. The sunshine breaks through the forest.

Chapter 18 -- Summary

- Dimmesdale is afraid that Pearl may not like him. Hester is sure that having a father will help to straighten out Pearl.
- Pearl seems so wild in the village; however, in the forest she is in her proper element. The forest, as though recognizing her nature, takes her in as one of its own. The animals do not run from Pearl and the wild flowers seem pleased when she gathers them to decorate her hair and dress.

Chapter 18 -- Analysis

- In the forest, nature's principles operate rather than the laws of man. Hester and Dimmesdale have given in to natural impulses, and Nature symbolically indicates its approval in a sudden burst of sunshine.
- Mistakenly thinking that he can change his entire nature and turn his back on the past, the minister becomes exuberant at the thought of escaping with Hester.

Chapter 18 -- Analysis

- The obvious symbolism of the forest's accepting Pearl is that she was born of a natural, rather than a socially-sanctioned, union.
- With all three of the family group now molding their conduct to the laws of nature (rather than the laws of man) it almost appears they can find happiness. The discouraging omens are that D fears that Pearl may not accept him and the slowness in which Pearl approaches him.

Chapter 19

Notes

Chapter 19 – Summary & Analysis

- Dimmesdale admitted fear that someone might have noticed the resemblance Pearl had to her father.
- Upon seeing her mother without the letter, Pearl goes into a fit of rage.
- In Chapter 2, Hester was tempted to hold Pearl up so as to cover the letter – but realized that “one token of shame would poorly serve to hide another.”
- Here the living symbol (although she did so unknowingly) of Hester’s sin actually forces her to accept again the cloth token (letter.)
- Pearl kisses her mother but washes away Dimmesdale’s kiss because he has not publically acknowledged his part.

Chapter 20

Notes

Chapter 20 – Summary

- Hester is to secretly book passage for two adults and one child on a Bristol-bound ship. They are leaving for Europe in four days – one day after Dimmesdale is to preach the Election Sermon. D is so happy that he seems physically stronger.
- Back in town, D encounters irrational temptations. He wonders whether he has really sold his soul to the devil.
- D burns his old sermon and writes a new one.

Chapter 20 – Analysis

- In the change in Dimmesdale, and in his series of temptations toward some wild and wicked action, Hawthorne shows the deep subconscious effects of Dimmesdale's conscious commitment to sin.
- Until his agreement with Hester, D's strong Puritan conscious had struggled constantly with his weak will. But now, he has made the deliberate choice for the first time to do what he wants (although it be a sin).
- D's subconscious tries to make his guilt known. Hawthorne had tremendous psychological insight.

Chapter 21

Notes

Chapter 21 – Summary & Analysis

- Hester tells Pearl that the minister will be at the market place but that they must not greet each other.
- Hester learns that Chillingworth has planned to take Dimmesdale on the ship to Europe. Escaping Chillingworth will not be an easy task for Hester, Pearl, and D.
- Puritans were forbidden to act as freely as the sailors

Chapter 22

Notes

Chapter 22 -- Summary & Analysis

- As he passes, Dimmesdale fails to look at Hester. It upsets and depresses Hester that D ignored her in passing.
- Dimmesdale's strength is only temporary.
- The strings of tension are drawn tighter as Hawthorne brings in each of the major characters. The point of crisis has arrived, and the problem is entirely Dimmesdale's.

Chapter 23

Notes

Chapter 23 -- Summary & Analysis

- Dimmesdale inspires the crowd with his speech.
- Standing with Hester and Pearl, Dimmesdale tells Hester that he is dying and must acknowledge his shame – he turns to the crowd and discloses his guilt.
- As D dies, Chillingworth cries out (because D is escaping his grasp).
- D asks God to forgive Chillingworth, asks for a kiss from Pearl (which he receives), and tells Hester farewell.

Chapter 23 -- Summary & Analysis

- Dimmesdale symbolically rejects the help of Reverend Wilson (representing the church) and Governor Bellingham (representing the state). He turns only to Hester for support in a moment of crisis – even she cannot help him at this point. He must expose the letter on his chest.
- When the climactic action drains D of his strength and he collapses, it is again Hester on whom he leans. But she cannot assure him that his public act of repentance was better than their plan to escape from Boston.

Chapter 23 -- Summary & Analysis

- D's recognition of Pearl takes place in the form of a highly symbolic kiss. It symbolizes Pearl's acceptance and forgiveness of him. Also, it converts her from a cold, unreal, imp-like creature into a human being, one who weeps human tears for the first time in the book. Pearl becomes a person --- "A spell was broken."
- D has made his place with God, but unlike Hester, he is too much the Puritan to be optimistic about the future.

Chapter 24

Notes

Chapter 24 -- Summary & Analysis

- Some people in the market place say the mark on Dimmesdale was the result of Chillingworth's magic drugs --- while others say it was the result of a suffering spirit, the result of D's own hand, or that there was no mark at all.
- Though he finds Chillingworth's sin the most grievous in the book, Hawthorne is not Puritan enough to view the man coldly and vindictively.

Chapter 24 -- Summary & Analysis

- Hawthorne gives strong hints that Pearl lived on in happiness and wealth, married well, had a child, and remained an affectionate and dutiful daughter to Hester.
- While Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth were all involved in the tragedy through their own sins, Pearl was a helpless victim.
- The end of the novel focuses on Hester. After inheriting property (incredible wealth) from Chillingworth, Hester went to Europe with Pearl. After a number of years Hester returned to her cottage in Boston.

Chapter 24 -- Summary & Analysis

- Although Hester had done her penitence (and not the sternest Puritan would have forced Hester to wear the letter again), she put it on voluntarily and wore it the rest of her life.
- Hester gained a kind of wisdom through her suffering. After many years, Hester died and was buried in the cemetery near Dimmesdale. One tombstone served both graves and read – “On a black background, the scarlet letter A.”

References

http://www.shakespeare.org/photolibrary/2002_images_media/scarlet_media/index.htm