

## English 10 Honors Summer Reading

### PART 1:

There is an attached list of literary terms that you will define and it will need to come with you to class. We will utilize this list often; therefore, it is important to have list completed before the school year begins.

### PART TWO: READING

The book you will need to read this summer is *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. You may obtain a copy of the book through the library or by going to the following site: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25344/25344-h/25344-h.htm>

Be sure to read the introductory as well. This book will not only be used as the summer reading but also serve as the main focus of the first unit in class as well as utilized on Warrior Exams and the final essay in the class.

### Rationale

*The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne serves not only as a prime example of the Romantic movement of the later 19th century but also as a doorway into the Puritan lifestyle of colonial America. Set in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the novel addresses the various social and spiritual hardships of the early Puritans. As Hawthorne focuses on the effects of hidden sin, he also examines such issues as the inequities that exist between the genders and the fickleness of a judgmental society that seeks salvation by accusing others of wrongdoing. Hawthorne's use of complex symbolism and his development of an intriguing plot have contributed to the notoriety that has made *The Scarlet Letter* a staple of American literature.

### Historical Background

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, and he spent most of his life there. Hawthorne's family had been members of the original Puritan settlement in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Judge John Hawthorne was one of the judges who condemned numerous people to death during the infamous Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. Embarrassed by the severity and intolerance of his ancestors, Hawthorne stated, "I . . . hereby take the shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them. . . maybe now and henceforth removed" (Leone et al, eds. 14-15).

After graduating from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, Hawthorne returned to Salem and sought to establish himself as a writer. In various short stories, Hawthorne examined the religious fervor that helped to form New England society, and he would gain public success with the publication of *Twice-Told Tales* (1837). This collection of stories prefigured the completion of his most successful work, a novel about a young woman who is indicted by the Puritans for adultery and punished with public shame and ostracism. Although initially it was met with mixed reviews, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) did catch the eye of the vibrant New England literary community (Leone et al, eds. 20-23).

Hawthorne knew and, in some cases, had close personal relationships with numerous notable figures of the time period. He attended college with the famous poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and future American President Franklin Pierce. He knew the transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau and even stayed at the experimental transcendental community Brook Farm in 1841, an experience that would inspire the novel *The*

Blithedale Romance (1852) (Leone et al, eds. 16-19). His closest friend from the literary world was Herman Melville. Hawthorne served as a mentor for the young writer and helped Melville as he completed what would become one of the greatest achievements in 19th century American literature. Hawthorne's encouragement and influence in Melville's literary aspirations are quite evident. Melville dedicated *Moby Dick* (1851) to his friend (Leone et al, eds. 23).

### **While Reading:**

While reading, you will need to make notes for one the following literary elements listed below. Think of this as an active investigation of how the device of your choice is present and represented throughout the book. There are several ways that this can be accomplished: 1. using post-it notes and marking these areas and commenting on meaning or posting a question; 2. using the online book to screenshot the pages and then highlight and write on the actual pages; 3. keep detailed notes and interactions on notebook paper making sure to include page numbers and well-thought-out explanations and interactions. You want to make sure that you can fully discuss these interactions when prompted in class discussion.

### **Literary Elements for Annotations:**

**Select one to follow throughout the book.**

- **Setting:** The novel is set in the Massachusetts Bay Colony after the Puritans have been settled for over a century. Consider: How does this setting impact the book?
- **Characterization:** Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl are the main characters. Note not only how the characters transform over time but also how the town's perception of the characters change.
- **Symbolism:** The characters serve as symbols. The author also incorporates the scarlet letter itself, aspects of nature, and specific locations in the town as symbols. If one ignores the symbolism in the novel, then one does not understand the novel at all. Trace these elements and consider their meanings.
- **Allegory:** The novel has been interpreted as a religious and social allegory. Follow one or the other.
- **Theme Topic:** Hawthorne examines the effects of sin, most notably hidden sin. Follow this throughout the book and determine what the theme message is at the end. What does Hawthorne hope that the readers learn from the novel?

### **Part III.**

Write an informative essay (no more than 3 pages and no less than 2 pages) in which you analyze the use of the literary element you followed throughout the book. This should be conducted in MLA format meeting the requirements of MLA. If you struggle with MLA format google OWL Purdue MLA and use the site for assistance. Remember that this is not a book report but rather an analysis of the literary merit that exists within a piece of work. Use this an opportunity to show off your writing skills and consider it my introduction to your abilities as a writer. Your paper will be graded on format, content, and development.

**Final Thoughts:**

As with any long-term project, please pace yourself to complete the reading and assignments prior to the beginning of school in August. All summer assignments are due the first day of school; assignments will not be accepted after the due date. Keep in mind, the summer project is worth a high number of points. While it may be tempting to only utilize Sparknotes or another review site, I caution you about relying on the interpretation presented as it is just that—someone's interpretation of the literature, themes, etc. You are better served by reading the novel and completing the tasks on your own with the integrity of your ideas and thoughts. We will refer to this work throughout the school year.

If you have any questions regarding the summer assignment, please feel free to email me at [kmorgan@mail.kana.k12.wv.us](mailto:kmorgan@mail.kana.k12.wv.us) which I will be checking throughout the summer. Have a fabulous summer!