

## **THE SCARLET LETTER, CHAPTER 20... THE DIMMESDALE DEBATE!**

In recent days, we have discussed the fact that Hester seems to have been liberated, in some ways, by the punishment she receives, while Dimmesdale seems to suffer in silence in a kind of internal prison. While she becomes a free thinker, even a “radical,” he becomes more careful and cautious than ever before, as he monitors, with obsessive vigilance, “not [just] his acts [...] but each breath of emotion, and his every thought” (183).

In Chapter 20, however, Dimmesdale claims that he is a changed man, that he has experienced a “revolution in the sphere of thought and feeling,” “a total change of [...] moral code in [his] interior kingdom...” (198).

**Your task is to argue about whether or not this is true: *has Dimmesdale really changed?*** It’s a debate! Tomorrow you will be arguing one side of this case or the other, yes or no (teams will be set in class, depending on what you believe). **All your evidence should come primarily from Chapter 20, “The Minister in a Maze”:** review carefully and find QUOTES to support your views!

To prepare for the debate, after reading chapters 19 & 20, please answer the following questions:

- 1) First, what has Dimmesdale been like prior to this point in the novel? How has he thought, felt, acted?
- 2) Now, at this point in the novel (Chapter 20), answer the following. **QUOTE EVIDENCE FOR EACH ANSWER**, and don’t forget the page numbers! ☺
  - A. Does Dimmesdale ***think*** differently? Explain.
  - B. Does Dimmesdale ***act*** differently? Explain.
  - C. Does Dimmesdale ***feel*** free? Does he ***act*** free? Explain.
  - D. Does Dimmesdale seem to experience what Hester experienced? Explain.

- 3) And now your conclusion, based on all the above:

**HAS DIMMESDALE REALLY CHANGED—OR NOT?!?**

**EXPLAIN AND JUSTIFY YOUR OPINION ON THE BACK OF THIS SHEET! >>>**