

Name: _____

Period: _____

The Scarlet Letter: Summer Assignment

Directions: Your summer assignment for AP Language and Composition is to read and respond to Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*. Because of its complicated themes, ornate style, and multiple allusions, *The Scarlet Letter* can be a difficult novel to read, so give yourself plenty of time to finish this assignment!

Read through this entire packet before you begin reading the novel so that you will be ready to respond to questions as you read. Then, carefully and thoroughly answer all questions. Pay attention to detail, use complete sentences, and thoroughly explain your reasoning.

The Scarlet Letter might be a difficult reading experience, but it is also very rewarding! So, don't get discouraged, and along the way enjoy your time with Hester Prynne, Pearl, Roger Chillingworth, and the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale.

DUE DATE: First day of class! August 19th/20th

Before You Read:

Directions: Read the following information about Hawthorne and The Scarlet Letter. Then answer the questions and THOROUGHLY explain your reasoning.

Context (Provided by Spark Notes):

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1804. His family descended from the earliest settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; among his forebears was John Hathorne (Hawthorne added the “w” to his name when he began to write), one of the judges at the 1692 Salem witch trials. Throughout his life, Hawthorne was both fascinated and disturbed by his kinship with John Hathorne. Raised by a widowed mother, Hawthorne attended Bowdoin College in Maine, where he met two people who were to have great impact upon his life: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who would later become a famous poet, and Franklin Pierce, who would later become president of the United States.

After college Hawthorne tried his hand at writing, producing historical sketches and an anonymous novel, *Fanshawe*, that detailed his college days rather embarrassingly. Hawthorne also held positions as an editor and as a customs surveyor during this period. His growing relationship with the intellectual circle that included Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller led him to abandon his customs post for the utopian experiment at Brook Farm, a commune designed to promote economic self-sufficiency and transcendentalist principles.

Transcendentalism was a religious and philosophical movement of the early nineteenth century that was dedicated to the belief that divinity manifests itself everywhere, particularly in the natural world. It also advocated a personalized, direct relationship with the divine in place of formalized, structured religion. This second transcendental idea is privileged in *The Scarlet Letter*.

After marrying fellow transcendentalist Sophia Peabody in 1842, Hawthorne left Brook Farm and moved into the Old Manse, a home in Concord where Emerson had once lived. In 1846 he published *Mosses from an Old Manse*, a collection of essays and stories, many of which are about early America. *Mosses from an Old Manse* earned Hawthorne the attention of the literary establishment because America was trying to establish a cultural independence to complement its political independence, and Hawthorne’s collection of stories displayed both a stylistic freshness and an interest in American subject matter. Herman Melville, among others, hailed Hawthorne as the “American Shakespeare.”

In 1845 Hawthorne again went to work as a customs surveyor, this time, like the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter*, at a post in Salem. In 1850, after having lost the job, he published *The Scarlet Letter* to enthusiastic, if not widespread, acclaim. His other major novels include *The House of*

the Seven Gables (1851), *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), and *The Marble Faun* (1860). In 1853 Hawthorne's college friend Franklin Pierce, for whom he had written a campaign biography and who had since become president, appointed Hawthorne a United States consul. The writer spent the next six years in Europe. He died in 1864, a few years after returning to America.

The majority of Hawthorne's work takes America's Puritan past as its subject, but *The Scarlet Letter* uses the material to greatest effect. The Puritans were a group of religious reformers who arrived in Massachusetts in the 1630s under the leadership of John Winthrop (whose death is recounted in the novel). The religious sect was known for its intolerance of dissenting ideas and lifestyles. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne uses the repressive, authoritarian Puritan society as an analogue for humankind in general. The Puritan setting also enables him to portray the human soul under extreme pressures. Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth, while unquestionably part of the Puritan society in which they live, also reflect universal experiences. Hawthorne speaks specifically to American issues, but he circumvents the aesthetic and thematic limitations that might accompany such a focus. His universality and his dramatic flair have ensured his place in the literary canon.

1. From what you know about Puritan society and what you learned from this introduction to the novel, what are some similarities between our contemporary society and Puritan society?
2. What are some major differences between our society and Puritan society?
3. Is it ever ethically acceptable to allow someone to take the blame for something for which you are responsible? Why or why not?

4. Which action do you believe would be more psychologically harmful: holding onto a painful secret or being forced to unwillingly reveal a painful secret to others? Why?

The Introduction:

Directions: Though it may seem long and fairly tedious, the introduction to The Scarlet Letter (Entitled, “The Custom-House”) is an essential part of the novel’s structure and helps introduce the tone, themes, and narrative voice. That being said...if you feel good about it, you can skip the introduction.

The Novel:

Directions: As you are reading the novel, pause when you encounter one of the following quotations. Think about the purpose of each quotation. Rather than tell me what a quotation means (I know what it means), tell me why Hawthorne chose to phrase this idea in this particular way? What is he trying to achieve? How does it affect the tone, characterization, or theme? Pay attention to detail!

Fill in the following chart for each quotation from the novel. Be thorough and thoughtful. The first couple have been done for you to give you an idea of how to respond. Read and learn from the examples if you want to get a good grade on this assignment!

Quotation	Language/Style Choices to Notice	Explanation/Purpose
Chapter One: “A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and other bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak and studded with iron spikes.”	Tone	The words “sad-color,” “gray,” and “heavily” create a kind of somber, leaden tone. Though the description is only at the beginning of the scene, we immediately understand that this event is serious. The narrator(s) have already established their attitude about what will soon take place.
Chapter One: “This rosebush, Had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson, as she entered the prison door—we shall not take upon us to determine.”	Allusion Symbolism	Hutchinson was a historical figure who organized Puritan religious gatherings against the wishes of Puritan leaders. She was banished to Rhode Island for her behaviors (more on her later); today, she is most often characterized as an independent, strong woman and somewhat revered for her actions. In this quotation we learn that the narrators agree with a more contemporary vision of Hutchinson because the symbol of the rosebush has such a positive, natural, and

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		beautiful connotation.
Chapter Two: “Goodwives,” said a hard-featured dame of y, “I’ll tell ye a piece of my mind. It would be greatly for the public behoof, if we women, being of mature age and church-members in good repute, should have the handling of such malefactresses as this Hester Prynne. What think ye, gossips? If the hussy stood up for judgment before us five, that are now here in a knot together, would she come o with such a sentence as the worshipful magistrates have awarded? Marry, I trow not!”	Dialogue Characterization	The judgmental nature of the older women is evident in this quote. Her use of the word “malefactresses” (root word: “mal”) shows her Puritanical and unforgiving attitude towards sin. She feels Hester’s punishment is light and should be more severe.
Chapter Two: “The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance, on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes. She was lady-like, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterized by a certain state and dignity ...”	Characterization Tone Imagery	
Chapter 3: A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one lie pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight. His face darkened with some powerful emotion, which, nevertheless, he so instantaneously controlled by an effort of his will, that, save at a single moment, its expression might have passed for calmness.	Simile Foreshadowing	
Chapter 3: It irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side. But he will be known!—he will be known!—he will be known	Repetition (anaphora)	
Chapter 5: “But now, with this unattended walk from her prison-door, began the daily custom, and she must either sustain and carry it forward by the ordinary resources of her	Metaphor Theme	

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<p>nature, or sink beneath it. She could no longer borrow from the future, to help her through the present grief.”</p>		
<p>Chapter 5: Her needle-work was seen on the ruff of the Governor; military men wore it on their scarfs, and the minister on his band; it decked the baby’s little cap; it was shut up, to be mildewed and moulder away, in the coffins of the dead. But it is not recorded that, in a single instance, her skill was called in aid to embroider the white veil which was to cover the pure blushes of a bride.</p>	<p>Juxtaposition/Contrast</p>	
<p>Chapter 6: “She seemed rather an airy sprite, which, after playing its fantastic sports for a little while upon the cottage=floor, would flit away with a mocking smile. Whenever that look appeared in her wild, bright, deeply black eyes, it invested her with a strange remoteness and intangibility; it was as if she were hover in the air and might vanish, like a glimmering light that comes we know not whence, and goes we know not whither.”</p>	<p>Characterization Simile</p>	
<p>Chapter 7: “But it was a remarkable attribute of this garb, and, indeed of the child’s whole appearance, that it irresistible and inevitably reminded the beholder of the token which Hester Prynne was doomed to wear upon her bosom. It was the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life!”</p>	<p>Personification Metaphor Symbolism</p>	
<p>Chapter 8: “Pearl keeps me in life! Pearl punishes me too! See ye not, she is the</p>	<p>Pathos</p>	

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<p>scarlet letter, only capable of being loved, and so endowed with a million-fold the power of retribution for my sin? Ye shall not take her! I will die first!"</p>	<p>Rhetorical Question</p>	
<p>Chapter 8: "God gave her the child, and gave her, too, an instinctive knowledge of its nature and requirements, - both seemingly so peculiar, - which no other mortal being can possess."</p>	<p>Logos Ethos</p>	
<p>Chapter 10: "But still, methinks, it must needs be better for the sufferer to be free to show his pain, as this poor woman Hester is, than to cover it all up in his heart."</p>	<p>Foreshadowing False dichotomy Theme</p>	
<p>Chapter 11: "To the untrue man, the whole universe is false, - it is impalpable, - it shrinks to nothing within his grasp. And he himself, in so far as he shows himself in a false light, becomes a shadow, or, indeed, ceases to exist."</p>	<p>Contrast/Juxtaposition Parallelism</p>	
<p>Chapter 12: "He had been driven hither by the impulse of that Remorse which dogged him everywhere, and whose own sister and closely linked companion was that Cowardice which invariably drew him back, with her tremulous gripe..."</p>	<p>Personification</p>	

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Chapter 12: “A great red letter in the sky, - the letter A, - which we interpret to stand for Angel.”	Ambivalence	
Chapter 13: “Individuals in private life, meanwhile, had quite forgiven Hester Prynne for her frailty; nay, more, they had begun to look upon the scarlet letter as the token, not of that one sin, for which she had borne so long and dreary a penance, but of her many good deeds since.”	Symbolism Shift	
Chapter 16: “He looked haggard and feeble, and betrayed a nerveless despondency in his air, which had never so remarkably characterized him in his walks about the settlement, nor in any other situation where he deemed himself liable to notice . . . There was a listlessness in his gait; as if he saw no reason for taking one step farther . . .”	Tone Theme	
Chapter 17: “The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers, - stern and wild ones, - and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss.”	Personification Metaphors	

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<p>Chapter 18: “By another impulse, she took off the formal cap that confined her hair; and down it fell upon her shoulders, dark and rich, with at once a shadow and a light in its abundance, and imparting the charm of softness to her features.”</p>	<p>Symbolism</p> <p>Tone</p>	
<p>Chapter 20: “And the infectious poison of that sin had been thus rapidly diffused throughout his moral system. It had stupefied all blessed impulses, and awakened into vivid life the whole brotherhood of bad ones.”</p>	<p>Theme</p>	
<p>Chapter 21: “The persons now in the market-place of Boston had not been born to an inheritance of Puritanic gloom. They were native Englishmen, whose fathers had lived in the sunny richness of the Elizabethan epoch; a time when the life of England, viewed as one great mass, would appear to have been as stately, magnificent, and joyous, as the world has ever witnessed.”</p>	<p>Historical reference</p>	
<p>Chapter 22: “We must not always talk in the market-place of what happens to us in the forest.”</p>	<p>Parallelism</p> <p>Juxtaposition</p>	

<p>Chapter 23: “Pearl kissed his lips. 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 for ever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it. Towards her mother, too, Pearl’s errand as a messenger of anguish was all fulfilled.”</p>	<p>Theme</p> <p>Irony</p>	
<p>Chapter 24: “Among many morals which press upon us from the poor minister’s miserable experience, we put only this into a sentence: - “Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!”</p>	<p>Repetition</p> <p>Thesis</p>	

After Reading:

On a separate piece of paper, write three hand-written thorough paragraphs answering the following questions:

1. What would you say is the *most dominant theme* in this story?

2. How can this story be considered and **allegory**?

3. What do you think the **climax** of the story is? Explain why.

Staple your finished paragraphs to this summer assignment packet.