

Summer Assignment 2025

Honors English 10

Ms. Toole

The Scarlet Letter

by Nathaniel Hawthorne



Name _____

Your summer assignment is due **Friday, September 12th.**

214 POINTS TOTAL

Part One: Symbolism (24 POINTS)

In addition to Hester's scarlet A, Hawthorne uses myriad symbols throughout the story. Identify the literal meaning and then the symbolic meaning of each reference.

In the story...	Literal Meaning	Symbolic Meaning
Scarlet Letter		
Light		
Darkness		
The Town		
The Forest		
The brook		
The rosebush		
The scaffold		
The sea		
Clothing		
Pearl		
The prison door		

Part Two: Short Answer (40 POINTS)

Directions: Choose TWO of the following questions. Answer each in a well-developed TYPED response of at least 200 words using examples from the novel.

1. Some critics say that Hester Prynne was the first American heroine. Others, however, say that her somewhat silent suffering isn't truly heroic. What qualities and actions make a character heroic? Are there any heroes or heroic actions in *The Scarlet Letter*? Defend your answer.
2. If Hester Prynne is the protagonist of *The Scarlet Letter*, who is the antagonist? Arguments can be made not only for Roger Chillingworth and Governor Bellingham, but also perhaps for Arthur Dimmesdale - and even for the Puritan society as a whole. Which of these characters, if any, do you believe serves as the villain in the novel? Why? What qualities and actions make a character villainous? If you believe there are no villains in the story, why do you feel that is the case?
3. Does the character of Pearl seem realistic? Some readers of *The Scarlet Letter* think she seems much older than her age - far too mature for a young girl. Can you think of any reasons why Pearl should seem so unlike a child at times? Are children her age today ever "forced to grow up early" like that? Why? Pearl is also a very angry child-angry with her mother in particular. Does this seem like a realistic trait as well? Why or why not?
4. What are some ways in which Hawthorne uses irony in the novel?
5. Which is Hester Prynne's most admirable quality? Which is her least admirable? Explain your answer.
6. Describe Chillingworth's "revenge". Why does he choose to torture Dimmesdale and Hester when he could simply reveal that he is Hester's husband? What does this imply about justice? About evil?

Part Three: Your Creative Side (50 POINTS)

Directions: use your creativity as you complete ONE of the below assignments.

(1) The Artistic A

Obviously, the scarlet letter is the most important symbol in the novel. Not only did it stand for Hester's sin, but her artistic ability was also represented in her elaborate embroidery. Using any medium, create an A that Hester would appreciate. You'll be evaluated on creativity!

(2) The ABC's of the Scarlet Letter

After reading the entire novel, create a chronological summary of the story. Write the alphabet down a sheet of paper. For each letter, an element, event, character should be described in the order that the story is told. For example:

"A is for the letter Hester wears to show her sin."

Present your ABCs in a creative way - typed embellished with drawings, photos, etc. - however you want - but keep it to one sheet of paper.



Part FOUR:

The Scarlet Letter Summer Reading Assignment: Essay and Analysis (50 POINTS EACH)

Part One Directions: Choose **ONE** of the three essay prompts listed below. Type an essay in response to the question. *Be sure to have a complete introduction, a minimum of two body paragraphs, and a conclusion.* Be sure to use a minimum of two directly quoted MLA citations. Also make sure that you place the author's last name and page number in parentheses after the quotes you take from the novel that support your essay response. Be prepared to turn your essay in to Google Classroom and to have a hard copy in case it is needed. *Be prepared to also be tested over the novel.*

Question 1: The structure of many novels and plays is shaped by the recurrence of certain key events. Write a well-organized essay in which you describe the major similarities and differences in a sequence of recurring events in *The Scarlet Letter* and analyze how this recurrence determines the structure of the story. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Question 2: The themes of many novels depend upon a single image, metaphor, or symbol whose meaning and significance evolve as the story progresses. In a well-written essay, trace the evolution of Hester Prynne's scarlet letter as it is viewed throughout the book by Hester, the villagers, Pearl, and by the author himself.

Question 3: Rather than establish a single, definitive theme, many authors end their novels on a note of ambiguity, inviting readers to examine the various sides of a complex issue. Write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the ambiguous ending of *The Scarlet Letter* and explain the possible reasons for Hawthorne's ending the book in this way. Do not merely show that the ending is ambiguous or assert a theme for the book.

Part Two Directions: Read the short story "The Minister's Black Veil." After reading the story, write a complete paragraph (minimum 10 sentences and 1 directly quoted MLA citation) responding to the following question:

Compare and contrast "The Minister's Black Veil" and *The Scarlet Letter*. What are the differences? What characters are found in both stories? What might this say about Hawthorne's overall perspective of men, women, and the church? Interact with both works and provide specific examples.