

Chapters 1-3

- 1. As the story opens, a throng is gathered. Who are they and why have they gathered in the market place?**
- 2. According to Hawthorne, what are the first two places allotted for in any new community?**
- 3. Judging from the conversations of the Puritan women, what are their conceptions about sin, morality, and punishment?**
- 4. What suggestion does Hawthorne make with the rosebush?**
- 5. What hints do you get in Chapter 2 about the nature of Hester's crime?**
- 6. Describe Hester Prynne.**
- 7. What is the usual punishment for Hester's crime?**
- 8. Briefly relate the first description of the "stranger in the crowd."**
- 9. What important question related to Hester's crime is still unanswered?**
- 10. What attitude do you have toward Puritan society after reading the first three chapters?**

11. How did Puritan ideas about crime and punishment differ from our ideas today?

Chapters 4-6

12. Why does the jailer bring Roger Chillingworth to see Hester?

13. What is Chillingworth's real purpose for the visit?

14. We know that Chillingworth is an assumed name. What connotations does the name itself have? How is his behavior during the visit to Hester consistent with these connotations?

15. How does Hester see her position in the town after the discovery of her crime?

16. Hester's needlework was done for many in the community, but not for a certain group. Who was she not asked to work for, and why?

17. How does Pearl's life differ from those of the other children in town?

18. What is symbolic about the name "Pearl"?

19. Hawthorne repeatedly uses the words "imp" and "elf" to describe Pearl. In what ways are these words appropriate regarding her character and behavior?

Chapters 7-9

- 20. What two purposes does Hester have for visiting the Governor's mansion?**
- 21. At the end of Chapter 7, why is Pearl crying?**
- 22. Who intercedes for Hester in the matter of Pearl's custody?**
- 23. What does Mistress Hibbins ask Hester to do?**
- 24. A close association develops between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale. Why does Chillingworth seek this association?**
- 25. How had Chillingworth gained some of his knowledge of herbs?**
- 26. What conclusion regarding Dimmesdale does Chillingworth reach?**

Chapters 10-12

- 27. What do you think Chillingworth sees when he secretly enters the minister's room? What effect does this incident have on the physician?**
- 28. What secret practices did the minister engage in as a result of the "immoral troubles" that beset him? Why do you think he was doing this?**

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29. As Hester had once done, Dimmesdale ascends the scaffold. At what time of day does he do this? What compels his action?

30. Pearl, now seven, begins to display the quality of intuition. Give a few examples.

31. What guess would you make about the sight that made Chillingworth throw up his hands and stamp with joy? (refer to question 27)

32. How is Chapter 11 significant to the theme of the novel?

Chapters 13-15

33. How has the attitude of the townspeople toward Hester changed during the seven years since her "crime" was committed? Why has this change occurred?

34. How does Chillingworth respond to Hester's plea that he change his course of action?

35. What questions does Pearl keep asking? Why does Hester reply as she does?

36. What inner changes in Chillingworth's character are made evident to Hester from his outward appearance? In what sense has he undertaken the 'devil's office'?

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37. Hawthorne's use of color imagery often has symbolic importance. Three color references are worth observing in these chapters.

(a) In Chapter 14, find references to red.

(b) At the end of Chapter 14, what is the "black flower"? What contrast with another flower is suggested?

(c) Pearl constructs and wears a letter of her own. What is suggested by the color and material of her "A"?

38. What is your opinion of Hester as a parent?

Chapters 16-18

39. Why does Hester plan to meet with Dimmesdale?

40. How does Pearl occupy herself while Hester speaks with Dimmesdale?

41. Explain the significance of sunshine in this chapter.

42. What effect does Hester's information about Chillingworth have on Dimmesdale? How does his reaction change?

43. What is Chillingworth's worst sin according to Dimmesdale?

44. What decision do Hester and Dimmesdale make?

Chapters 19-21

45. What does Pearl refuse to do? What must Hester do to persuade her?

46. At what event will Dimmesdale be making a speech?

47. Who displayed more strength of character during the forest meeting, Hester or Dimmesdale? Give evidence.

48. Do you approve or disapprove of the decision made by Hester and Dimmesdale?

49. After Dimmesdale leaves the forest, what are some of the *physical* effects (on him) of his meeting with Hester?

50. Describe the town on the day of the celebration.

51. What unwelcome news does Hester receive from the ship's captain? What is her reaction?

Chapters 22-24

52. What is unusual about the way Dimmesdale walks as he goes toward the meeting house?

53. What is significant about Mistress Hibbins' remarks to Hester and Pearl?

54. What is significant about Pearl's treatment of Dimmesdale at the end of the story?

55. What *three* theories are offered to explain the scarlet letter on the minister's chest?

56. What happened to each of these characters after the minister's death?

(a) Chillingworth

(b) Hester

(c) Pearl

57. Why does Hester return to New England?

58. How has Pearl's relationship with her mother apparently changed since Dimmesdale's death?

59. What significance do you see in Hester's burial place and in the inscription on the tombstone?

60. What are the major themes (messages about life) of the novel?