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## CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER QUESTIONS FOR *THE SCARLET LETTER*

This is to function as a “reading guide” to help you better understand the novel.

1. Please closely read the first five (5) chapters in the novel – utilize an annotating strategy that works for you (e.g. sticky notes; dialectical journal, etc.).
2. Then, answer the corresponding chapter questions to check for comprehension and explore deeper meanings in the novel.
3. Various literary terms are typed in bold throughout the guide. Pay particular attention to these terms as we will use them throughout the year.

*A 1636 Plymouth Colony law required anyone convicted of adultery to "wear two Capital letters viz AD cut out in cloth and sowed on their uppermost Garments on their arme or backe; and if att any time they shallbee taken without the said letters whiles they are in the Govrment soewarn to bee forthwith taken and publickly whipt." Other Massachusetts colonies had their own versions of this law. In fact, "The Capitall Lawes of New-England, as they stand now in force in the Common-wealth, by the Court, in the years 1641, 1642, established within the jurisdiction of Massachusetts," proclaim that "if any person committeth adultery with a married or espoused wife, the Adulterer, and the Adulteresse, shall surely be put to death."*

### Part I.

Custom House Introduction (*refer to this section in your copy of the novel*):

1. Hawthorne included the Custom House introduction in the novel to give the reader insight into what event in his life that helped him to craft this novel. Describe this event in detail.

### Chapter 1—The Prison Door

#### Vocabulary:

**Virtue** – good quality or trait

**Dark Romanticism** (literary time period) – writing that took a pessimistic view of humans and saw the potential for evil in all people

1. Paragraph two explains the typical allotment of land in a Puritan town. What three establishments are early accounted for on Isaac Johnson's lot? What does this information tell us about Puritan values?
2. How does Hawthorne describe the prison? Identify a significant **metaphor** in the second paragraph.
3. A **pathetic fallacy** is a literary device in which Nature appears to understand human feeling and respond accordingly. An example is believing that the sun is shining because you are happy, or that a day is dark and rainy because you are feeling depressed. Hawthorne employs a significant pathetic fallacy in this opening description. Can you locate it?
4. What grows near the prison? What does Hawthorne say it symbolizes?

## Chapter 2—The Market Place

### Vocab:

**Ignominy** – a disgraceful act

**Iniquity** – evil; sin

**Scaffold** – a platform

**Pillory** – humiliate

**Countenance** – facial expression

1. When does the story take place?
2. For what purposes did people sometimes gather in front of the prison door?
3. Who seems especially interested in the punishment that is about to take place?
4. Pay attention to conversation among the women. What is their attitude toward Hester? Are they unanimous?
5. Note the description of Hester, the novel's heroine. What seem to be her outstanding characteristics? What is unusual about her? What do people notice first when seeing her ("*the point which drew all eyes*")?
6. Note again the women's conversation. What appears to be their opinion of Hester now?
7. The beadle's words, "*A blessing on the righteous colony of the Massachusetts, where iniquity is dragged out into the sunshine,*" might engender some thinking about values. Does it seem to you that exposing iniquity is worthy of a blessing? Do we seem to feel it proper today to expose personal behavior, especially wrongdoing, to public view?
8. What is Hester's punishment that day? What does Hawthorne say about this kind of punishment, the kind that does not allow the culprit to hide his or her shame?
9. What is purpose of contrasting Hester and her baby to "*the image of Divine Maternity*"?
10. Pay particular attention to the description of "*the man well stricken in years.*" Who do you think he is?

## Chapter 3—The Recognition

### Vocab:

**Infamy** – disgrace

**Sagacity** – wisdom; prudence

**Fervor** – passion; commitment

1. Read carefully the second paragraph. Who is the man at the Indian's side?
2. Imagine that you are this man. What information do you, a stranger to Boston, learn from the townsman with whom you talk?
3. The townsman says that the magistrates of Boston have, "in their mercy and tenderness of heart," softened Hester's punishment. What do you think of this mercy?

4. For what reason do Governor Bellingham and the ministers speak to Hester? Why does Mr. Wilson think Mr. Dimmesdale should speak to Hester? What is Dimmesdale's feeling about this job? Note with care the first description of Dimmesdale.
5. What effect do Dimmesdale's words have on Hester? On the baby?
6. What kind of father does Hester say her baby will have?
7. Contrast the two ministers' different reactions to Hester's refusal to name her fellow sinner.

#### Chapter 4—The Interview

**Vocab:**

**Amenable** – agreeable; willing

1. Why did the jailer send for a doctor for Hester?
2. You ought to know for certain, by the seventh or eighth paragraph of this chapter, just who this man is. What clues (in previous chapters) has Hawthorne given you as to his identity? Why, do you suppose, does Chillingworth want to keep his identity a secret?
3. It would be so easy for Chillingworth to kill Hester. Why does he want her to live?
4. Upon whom does Chillingworth put the blame for Hester's sin? How much is her fault? How much is his own?
5. How much revenge does Chillingworth plan to get on Hester? (A particular line in their conversation tells us exactly.) Who is the real object of Chillingworth's revenge?
6. The paragraph beginning "*Never, sayest thou?*" if read well, can reveal exactly what kind of person Chillingworth is. Read it with a touch of villainy in thy voice and thou must needs quake with fearfulness at the plan this misshapen scholar. (Do you see how easy it is to get carried away?)
7. Hester says something interesting about how a person's words may lead to one interpretation of his character and his actions may lead to another. How do Chillingworth's words present him? His actions?
8. What request does Chillingworth make of Hester? What is his reason?

#### Chapter 5—Hester at Her Needle

**Vocab:**

**Martyrdom** – the act of somebody making sacrifices or suffers greatly (or even, possibly, dying) in order to advance a cause or principle

**Intentional Ambiguity** – something undetermined/vague in order to open up multiple possible meanings

1. How does Hester feel upon leaving prison? What does the future have in store for her?
2. You might wonder why Hester doesn't leave Boston, since it is only in Boston that she must wear the scarlet letter. What are her reasons? Be sure not to overlook the most important of them.

3. What features of Hester's home seem most appropriate?
4. How does Hester make a living? In what ironic way does she advertise her skills?
5. Who were the only ones who made no use of Hester's services? Why?
6. What does Hester do with the extra money she earns ("her superfluous means")? What does this tell us about her character?
7. Hawthorne compares Hester's scarlet letter with the mark on Cain's forehead. If you don't know about Cain's mark, you can read about it in the Bible in Genesis 4:1-16. **Biblical allusions** are not uncommon in literature, so a well-read person is familiar with the major stories of the Bible. This familiarity has nothing to do with a person's religious beliefs.
8. What specific "tortures" ("*the innumerable throbs of anguish*") does Hester endure?
9. In the penultimate (that is, the next to the last) paragraph of the chapter, Hawthorne begins to suggest that there might be some positive feature of Hester's wearing the scarlet letter. What is it?
10. Describe how Hawthorne uses one of his favorite devices, **intentional ambiguity**, in the last paragraph.

**Part II.** Now that you've read the first five chapters, you likely have some questions or need clarification on a few details. Please write down three (3) of your questions/requests for clarification so that we can address them when class begins.

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### Chapter 6—Pearl

**Vocab:**

**Sprite** – fairy; elf

**Imp** – mischievous child; gremlin

**Enmity** – hostility; hatred

1. Why does Hester name her baby Pearl?
2. Pearl is a significant character in this novel, so pay attention to the detailed description of her.
3. Isn't it a **paradox** that Pearl, the product of sin, is "worthy to have been brought forth in Eden"?
4. In the fourth paragraph, the "Scriptural authority" is Proverbs 13:24, which reads, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (In modern English, parents who withhold punishment actually hate their children, but those that love them correct their behavior early.) What is Hawthorne saying about the way parents raised their children in Puritan times? How does Hester raise Pearl?
5. Why does Pearl seem not to be a human child?
6. Why is Pearl an "outcast of the infantile world"?
7. What kind of games did "the Puritan nurture... permit" children to play? Do they seem like fun to you?
8. What is the attitude of the Puritan children toward Pearl?
9. What does Pearl use for playthings? (Hawthorne calls them "the puppets of Pearl's witchcraft," a good phrase.)
10. The reference to "dragon's teeth" (in the same paragraph) is an allusion to a Greek myth in which Cadmus kills a dragon and plants his teeth. The teeth grow into warriors who fight each other until only few are left alive. This myth, incidentally, is the beginning of the story that eventually comes to concern Oedipus Rex, but there is no association to be made between that story and this one.
11. What was the first thing Pearl noticed in her mother?
12. What happens when Hester sees her reflection in Pearl's eyes? This is still another example of **intentional ambiguity**.
13. Who do the gossiping neighbors claim is Pearl's father?

### Chapter 7—The Governor's Hall

**Vocab:**

Pestilence – deadly disease

1. What two reasons does Hester have for visiting the governor?
2. In what way does Pearl remind Hester of the scarlet letter?

3. Contemplate the tremendous significance of Hester's looking into the armour, which reflects the scarlet letter disproportionately and hides Hester behind it.

4. The description of the garden recalls the Garden of Eden, an appropriate suggestion since we have already seen references to the Garden of Eden earlier in the novel. Pearl's crying for a red rose may suggest the desire for forbidden fruit, and the refusal by Hester ("I hear voices in the garden") may correspond to Genesis 2:16-17 and 3:6-8 ("the voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden).

### **Chapter 8—The Elf-Child and the Minister**

1. Who are Bellingham's guests? Which is not in good health? Why? Which is the medical advisor to the sick one?

2. All of the descriptions of Pearl by Bellingham and his guests remind the reader of what important *visual* fact? (think of a color and how that ties in with a recurring symbol)

3. What matter were Bellingham and his guests discussing before Hester's arrival?

4. What are both sides of the argument between Hester and Bellingham?

5. How does Wilson "test" Pearl? How does she do on this test?

6. Specifically, what is Pearl's answer? How did she get such a strange idea? What else do you know about the prison rosebush? Think back to chapter 1, where Hawthorne said it was a symbol, and see if you can't work out the symbolic significance of this incident.

7. How has Chillingworth changed over the years?

8. To whom does Hester turn for assistance in her attempt to keep Pearl? Why does she feel he can help?

9. Dimmesdale says that Pearl is both a blessing and a torture for Hester. How is this true?

10. Pay special attention to Dimmesdale's words beginning, "... this boon was meant."

11. As Hester and Pearl leave, "it is averred" that something happened. Hawthorne likes to include hearsay, gossip, rumor, legend, and so on in his story. Where have we seen it already in this novel? Keep an eye open for other instances as we read on.

12. Who stops Hester as she departs? For what purpose?

### **Chapter 9—The Leech**

1. Look up leech in the dictionary; you will find several definitions. Which of the many possibilities seems most appropriate here?

2. The first three paragraphs explain how Chillingworth does what in Boston?

3. Who becomes Chillingworth's prime patient? What is his illness?

4. What is Dimmesdale's most characteristic gesture? Why do you suppose he makes this gesture?

5. Observe how typically the people of Boston, when they are unable to explain Chillingworth's arrival out of the blue, create a rumor about him.
6. "So Roger Chillingworth" begins a really important section, describing the relationship that develops between which two characters?
7. What happens "after a time, at a hint from Roger Chillingworth"?
8. The penultimate paragraph (you had that word in chapter 5, question 9) compares or associates Chillingworth with whom?

### Chapter 10—The Leech and His Patient

1. Dimmesdale develops a characteristic similar to Hester's in that he was "suspicious of all mankind."
2. The conversation between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale concerning confession of sin is worth special attention. Apparently Dimmesdale is concealing some sin. What might that sin be? Really?
3. What occurrence interrupts this conversation?
4. What is unusual about Pearl's behavior?
5. Do you see any symbolic meaning in Pearl's placing the prickly burdock on Hester's scarlet letter? If not, think some more until you do.
6. When Dimmesdale refuses to "open ... the wound or trouble" in his heart to Chillingworth, to whom does he say he will bare his soul?
7. Hawthorne makes a joke! It doesn't happen often, so let's not let this one get by. Dimmesdale falls asleep over a book which "must have been a work of vast ability in the somniferous school of literature." (The humor depends on your knowing what "somniferous" means.)
8. The final two paragraphs are exceptionally important. Hawthorne does not say what Chillingworth saw, but maybe you can imagine. Anyhow, you might wonder what could have made Chillingworth so happy.

### Chapter 11—The Interior of a Heart

1. What has become of Dimmesdale's attitude toward Chillingworth?
2. Even though his health is failing, what are Dimmesdale's fortunes as a minister?
3. Interestingly, Dimmesdale is annoyed by the high regard his parishioners have for him ("the agony with which this public veneration tortured him"). Here is another example of **intentional ambiguity**, a form of irony. Dimmesdale is not what the people think he is.
4. It's almost humorous how the congregation mistakes Dimmesdale's statements of his sinfulness. Do you agree or disagree?

5. Compare the visions Dimmesdale has in his "lengthened vigils" with Hester's reminiscence in ch. 2. Why does Hester appear in Dimmesdale's vision? What is important about her gesture?

### Chapter 12—The Minister's Vigil

#### Vocab:

Expiation – exposing or paying for one's crime

1. Where does Dimmesdale go?
2. Probably it's not just accidental that it's been seven years since Hester stood on the platform. Seven has been a magical number since ancient times.
3. Why does Hawthorne say that "many culprits ... have ascended" the platform? With what is he asking us to associate it? In other words, what is he making the platform a symbol of? Do you know by now why Dimmesdale is climbing it?
4. No one comes when Dimmesdale screams. Why? What does Dimmesdale see from the scaffold?
5. Where has Wilson been that night?
6. Where have Hester and Pearl been? Do you think it is a fitting place for a seven-year-old girl to be? Remember: Pearl is solely Hester's responsibility.
7. What does Dimmesdale invite Hester and Pearl to do?
8. How does Dimmesdale feel as he touches Pearl's hand? Why do you suppose he feels this way?
9. The paragraph beginning "But before Mr. Dimmesdale had done speaking" is very important. Read it carefully. Most of the novel's important symbols are brought together at this moment. What is the light in the sky? What does this unnatural light reveal? How is Pearl a connecting link between Hester and Dimmesdale? (You might have two answers, one literal, one figurative.) Why does Dimmesdale have his hand over his heart?
10. Who is standing across the way watching the scene? How does Dimmesdale feel about him? Are you surprised to hear him say so?
11. What does the sexton give to Dimmesdale? How does the sexton account for Dimmesdale's loss of this item?
12. How does the sexton (speaking for the townspeople) interpret the light in the sky?
13. This chapter is the halfway point in the novel. Because of the novel's rigorous construction, the midpoint is the climax. From this point on, we are heading toward the resolution.

### Chapter 13—Another View of Hester

1. Can you explain why Hester feels an obligation toward Dimmesdale?

- Hawthorne writes in the middle of the second paragraph that "It is to the credit of human nature, that... it loves more readily than it hates." Do you think he's right? Has he illustrated this theme anywhere in the novel?
- This chapter, which discusses Hester's life, explains why the townspeople change their views of Hester. Although it is mostly descriptive, be sure you understand why they do.
- The sentence "Had she fallen among thieves, [the scarlet letter] would have kept her safe" is an **allusion** to the parable of the Good Samaritan, told in Luke 10:30-37. It's worth reading.
- What is the "sad transformation" that has come over Hester?
- Notice that Hawthorne says of Pearl that her "nature had something wrong in it, which continually betokened that she had been born amiss." What other characters' outward appearances suggest their inner natures? This is a significant feature of Romantic literature (1820-1860), one that continues through our own time, especially in the movies.
- This chapter is typical of Hawthorne's circular style. He begins by discussing Hester's attitude toward Dimmesdale, and then wanders into related matters until he eventually returns ("Now, however, her interview with the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale") to the first thought. He did this before when Hester stood on the scaffold in chapter 2. Hawthorne builds entire chapters, as this one, around this device; or, more often, he constructs his longer paragraphs this way. This observation might help you to read the longer paragraphs with more comprehension.
- How do you explain, in the first sentence of the final paragraph, the phrase "her former husband"? How did he get to be her former husband? Did I miss a divorce somewhere? Or is there another explanation?

#### **Chapter 14—Hester and the Physician**

- Hawthorne says again that a great transformation has come over Chillingworth. He has changed "himself into a devil." We have seen before how Chillingworth has been compared to Satan.
- The conversation between Hester and Chillingworth should be self-explanatory. Notice Hester's request: "Forgive, and leave his further retribution to the Power that claims it." Perhaps this is a theme of the novel.
- Chillingworth says, "Let the black flower blossom as it may." Do you remember what the black flower is? What does he mean here?

#### **Chapter 15—Hester and Pearl**

- Hester declares that she hates Chillingworth. Do you think she has good reason?
- How has Pearl been amusing herself?
- Pearl makes a letter to wear herself. You might consider what significance the two colors of the two letters have: scarlet for Hester and green for Pearl. What might green symbolize in connection with Pearl?
- Why is Pearl's response to her mother's questions concerning why she wears the scarlet letter ironic?

5. For what reasons does Hester consider telling Pearl why she wears the letter?
6. You can see how Pearl is getting on her mother's nerves. How would you have answered Pearl? Do you believe, as Hester does, that "There are many things in this world that a child must not ask about"? Notice that Hester, at the end of the chapter, answers Pearl "with an asperity that she had never permitted to herself before."

### Chapter 16—A Forest Walk

This chapter begins what is for many readers the most memorable part of the novel. Remember that Hawthorne has called his novel "a tale of human frailty and sorrow." In chapters 16-19 you will be expected to respond to this sorrow. Watch especially how every possibility for happiness is eliminated. Watch also how Hawthorne uses images of light and dark in the forest. If you are a romantic, you will find this scene especially moving.

1. Why won't Hester visit Dimmesdale in his study?
2. Notice how the sunlight withdraws as Hester approaches it. What does the sunlight symbolize here? Why is there none for Hester? If you have forgotten about the **pathetic fallacy**, return to chapter 1, question 3 for a reminder.
3. What stories has Pearl heard? What does Pearl think Hester's letter has to do with the Black Man?
4. Notice how Hawthorne compares Pearl to the brook. Showing people and Nature as one was a favorite technique of Romantic writers (1820-1860).
5. Observe, too, how sorrowfully Dimmesdale approaches.

### Chapter 17—The Pastor and His Parishioner

1. How do Hester and Dimmesdale approach each other? Notice the things they speak of—the weather, their health. Why is it so hard for them really to communicate with each other?
2. Just before Hester tells Dimmesdale that Chillingworth was her husband (again she uses the past tense), she stresses the value of truth. Of what significance should this speech be to Dimmesdale?
3. Hester asks Dimmesdale to forgive her and let God take care of her punishment—the same request she made of Chillingworth.
4. Why does Dimmesdale consider Chillingworth to be the worst sinner of the three?
5. Hester speaks here one of the most important lines of the novel: "What we did had a consecration of its own." Be sure you understand all the implications of this sentence. She (and Dimmesdale) considered their "sin" to be morally acceptable (it was consecrated) in a system of laws higher than those of the church. Hester is trying to justify herself by saying that in some cases state laws are imperfect and do not, or should not, apply in all cases to all people. But she cannot think that she was following God's laws, because adultery is forbidden by the Ten Commandments. Then is she placing her individual law above even God's law? Can she do this? Does Hester consider her love for Dimmesdale to be more important or holier than the Ten Commandments?

This is a topic—the conflict between personal law and public law— that appears in a great number of important literary works, such as *Antigone*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Crucible*, to name just a few.

6. What courses of action does Hester suggest to Dimmesdale so that he can rid himself of Chillingworth's menace? Why are none of them satisfactory to him?

### Chapter 18—A Flood of Sunshine

1. Again Hawthorne gives a positive result of the scarlet letter—it was Hester's "passport into regions where other women dared not tread."

2. Was Dimmesdale's sin a sin of passion or of principle?

3. In paragraph 4, Hawthorne gives a very succinct statement concerning Dimmesdale's predicament: "between fleeing as an avowed criminal, and remaining as a hypocrite, conscience might find it hard to strike the balance ...." This is an example of a **dilemma**, a choice between two equally unpleasant alternatives. To be in such a situation we say is to be "on the horns of a dilemma." If you interpret the metaphor to suggest being tossed by a bull, you see immediately how painful that can be.

4. What does Dimmesdale, after a struggle, resolve to do? What are his reasons?

5. What does Hester do to make it as though the past had never been? (Don't let this question go unanswered. We've been waiting seven years ...)

6. How does she feel after she has done this significant thing? Note the line, "She had not known the weight until she felt the freedom."

7. The paragraph beginning, "The stigma gone ..." is important. Hester removes her cap and her letter, and lets her hair fall down. Look back to chapter 13, where the letter, cap, and hair had been mentioned as symbols of Hester's "sad transformation" from beauty to plainness. These same symbols are used here to reveal Hester's natural beauty. Notice that this chapter is called "A Flood of Sunshine," a title involving a metaphor, Hester's hair is another such flood. What happens, concerning the sunshine, when Hester's hair falls down? This is one the great **pathetic fallacies** in all of literature.

8. Notice how Nature reacts to the love between Hester and Dimmesdale. "Such was the sympathy of Nature ..." Hawthorne uses the word "sympathy" in its more general sense of feeling the same ("sym" meaning the same and "pathos" meaning feeling) rather than feeling sorry for someone.

9. Pearl is standing in a beam of sunshine, of course. The flickering light makes her look "now like a real child, now like a child's spirit." How Hawthorne loves **visual ambiguity**!

10. How do the animals of the forest treat Pearl? Note the hearsay: "A wolf, it is said— but here the tale has surely lapsed into the improbable."

11. Why does Pearl approach slowly when she is called?

### Chapter 19—The Child at the Brook side

1. Hester and Dimmesdale talk very lovingly of their child.

2. What is the effect of the reflection of Pearl in the pool?
3. What does Dimmesdale do when Pearl looks at him? Then, how does Pearl respond to this gesture?
4. Why won't Pearl come to Hester?
5. Does Pearl's command "Come thou and take it up" seem to you as though she were reminding her mother of her guilt?
6. What happens as Hester puts up her hair? Why?
7. Remember that in the second scaffold scene Pearl asks if Dimmesdale will stand with Hester and her in broad daylight. What similar request does Pearl make of Dimmesdale now?
8. What does Pearl do when Dimmesdale kisses her?

### **Chapter 20—The Minister in a Maze**

1. What arrangement has Hester made for Dimmesdale, Pearl, and herself?
2. Why does Hawthorne consider Dimmesdale "so pitiably weak"? Note the final sentence of this paragraph (the third), which makes use of **ambiguity**.
3. What strange feeling does Dimmesdale have as he returns to the town? ("mutability" = flexibility)
4. What three people does Dimmesdale meet? What does he want to do to each of these people? Why?
5. In the paragraph about the old woman, Hawthorne writes that she might have dropped dead when she heard Dimmesdale's words, "as by the effect of an intensely poisonous infusion." You might be interested to know that in the 1600s it was common belief that a person could be killed if poison were poured, or infused, into his ear. Shakespeare, writing in the early 1600s, used this belief as a method of death in *Hamlet*.
6. What is the importance of the episode between Dimmesdale and Mistress Hibbins?

### **Chapter 21—The New England Holiday**

1. "The day" in the first sentence is three days after the forest scene. The rest of the novel's action takes place on this day.
2. How does Hester feel on this particular day? To what does she look forward?
3. Notice that Pearl's "garb is all of one idea with her nature," suggesting again the relationship between her outer appearance and her inner nature.
4. Why is Pearl confused as she and Hester reach town?
5. Notice the forms of entertainment popular in England that are not to be found in Massachusetts.

6. Hawthorne writes, "the generation [which came after the first Puritans] wore the blackest shade of Puritanism, and so darkened the national visage with it, that all the subsequent years have not sufficed to clear it up. We have yet to learn again the forgotten art of gayety." Do you agree?
7. Notice that Chillingworth is talking with the captain of the ship. Why do you suppose that he is doing that?
8. What news does the captain bring Hester? How does she respond to it?

### Chapter 22—The Procession

1. The first part of this chapter is a lavish description of the groups performing in the parade.
2. Note the description of Dimmesdale as he marches.
3. What does Mistress Hibbins know that Hester wishes she didn't?
4. The paragraph beginning "This vocal organ" is a description of Dimmesdale's sermon.
5. What message does the ship's captain give to Pearl?
6. It is sad to read in the penultimate paragraph the sentence beginning, "Hester saw and recognized."

### Chapter 23—The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter

1. What is the townspeople's reaction to Dimmesdale's sermon?
2. How does Dimmesdale feel about his career as a minister at this time? (Look in the third paragraph.)
3. After he gives his sermon, what change comes over Dimmesdale?
4. Why does Chillingworth try to stop Dimmesdale? After all, hadn't he wanted Dimmesdale's guilt to be known?
5. Where is the only place that Dimmesdale could have escaped Chillingworth? What does this mean?
6. What does the crowd see as Dimmesdale tears away his "ministerial band"? Are you sure?
7. Does Dimmesdale think he and Hester will meet again in Heaven? Why?
8. "By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast"—is this line meant to be taken literally or figuratively? Note how the **alliteration**, which makes the line quite poetic, provides emphasis.
9. What happens as Dimmesdale dies?

### Chapter 24—Conclusion

1. As might be expected, "there was more than one account of what had been witnessed on the scaffold."

2. What explanations are offered for what had happened?
3. How does Hawthorne feel about those who say that Dimmesdale never said that he was Pearl's father?
4. Does the moral beginning "Be true! Be true! Be true!" seem like a theme to you? Compare it to what Pearl said to Dimmesdale on the scaffold in chapter 12.
5. What happened to Chillingworth?
6. Why might love and hate be really "the same thing at bottom"?
7. Who is Chillingworth's beneficiary?
8. Be sure you know what happens to Hester and Pearl.
9. Who discovers that Hester has returned?
10. What, according to rumor, has become of Pearl?
11. What role does Hester play in the community?
12. What is Hester's "firm belief of which she assures unhappy women? For a novel written in 1850 this is a remarkably contemporary idea,
13. Beside whom is Hester buried?
14. "'Gules" is the color red. "Sable" is black. The final sentence, which summarizes the whole novel in a remarkably concise and symbolic way, is the description of Hester's tombstone. Before the days of colored printing, people had to find a way to instruct engravers who were going to produce coats of arms, banners, flags, and the like. This sentence says that Hester's tombstone, which has a black background (a field sable), will be engraved with the letter A in red (gules). Think of all the other things in the novel that can be described with that sentence—the midnight sky in the second scaffold scene; Hester's blouse; Hester's life, which seems to have been very bleak with only one moment of happiness; even the Puritan period of American history, which was a dark period, as Hawthorne tells it, "relieved only by one ever-glowing point of light." Let us remember that the name Hester—an archaic form of Esther—means "star."

You might remember that Chillingworth said that Hester "will be a living sermon against sin, until the ignominious letter be engraved upon her tombstone." Yet the letter can represent something other than Adultery. We have already come to see it represent Able, Art, and Angel. What else might the A have meant to Hester? Remember that in some Massachusetts communities, Plymouth among them, the punishment for adultery was to wear the letters AD. What could AD have represented to Hester?

*The End*