

The Scarlet Letter Study Guide

Directions: While reading *The Scarlet Letter*, answer the following questions. You do NOT have to write your responses in complete sentences, but make sure that your answers are accurate and thorough. Every class you should be prepared to hand in your study guide for a surprise completion or accuracy check. Since I may ask you to hand in your study guide answers on any given day, write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Not all chapters will be graded, but the study guide will help you prepare for reading quizzes and aid you in class discussion, as we analyze the text.

Chapter 1 - The Prison Door

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?
2. How does Hawthorne describe the prison?
3. A pathetic fallacy is a literary device in which Nature appears to understand human feeling and respond accordingly. An example of a pathetic fallacy is when the sun is shining while you are happy, or that a day is dark and rainy when you are feeling depressed. What is Hawthorne's pathetic fallacy in the opening description?
4. What grows near the prison?

Chapter 2 - The Market Place

5. When does the story take place?
6. Why did people sometimes gather in front of the prison door?
7. Who seems especially interested in the punishment that is about to take place?
8. How is Hester described?
9. What is Hester's punishment that day?

Chapter 3 - The Recognition

10. Carefully read the second paragraph. Who is the man at the Indian's side?
11. What did the magistrate of Boston do to Hester's punishment?
12. Why do Governor Bellingham and the ministers speak to Hester?
13. What kind of father does Hester say her baby will have?

Chapter 4 - The Interview

14. Why did the jailer send for a doctor for Hester?
15. Whom does Chillingworth blame for Hester's sin?
16. Who is the real object of Chillingworth's revenge?
17. What request does Chillingworth make of Hester?

Chapter 5 - Hester at Her Needle

18. How does Hester feel when leaving prison?
19. How does Hester make a living?
20. What specific "tortures" ("the innumerable throbs of anguish") does Hester endure?

Chapter 6 - Pearl

21. Describe Pearl.
22. How do the Puritan children treat Pearl?
23. What was the first thing Pearl noticed in her mother?
24. Who do the gossiping neighbors claim is Pearl's father?

Chapter 7 - The Governor's Hall

25. In what way does Pearl remind Hester of the scarlet letter?

26. How is the garden described?

Chapter 8 - The Elf-Child and the Minister

27. How do Bellingham and his guests describe Pearl?

28. Describe the argument between Hester and Bellingham.

29. How has Chillingworth changed over the years?

30. To whom does Hester turn for assistance in her attempt to keep Pearl?

Chapter 9 - The Leech

31. After Chillingworth sets up his medical practice in Boston, who becomes Chillingworth's prime patient?

32. Describe the relationship that develops between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale.

33. The penultimate paragraph compares or associates Chillingworth with whom?

Chapter 10 - The Leech and His Patient

34. What interrupts Chillingworth and Dimmesdale's conversation about confessing sins?

35. What does Pearl place on Hester's scarlet letter?

36. When Dimmesdale refuses to "open ... the wound or trouble" in his heart to Chillingworth, to whom does he say he will bare his soul?

Chapter 11 - The Interior of a Heart

37. What has become of Dimmesdale's attitude toward Chillingworth?

38. Why does Hester appear in Dimmesdale's vision?

Chapter 12 - The Minister's Vigil

39. How many years has it been since Hester stood on the platform?

40. What does Dimmesdale invite Hester and Pearl to do?

41. How does Dimmesdale feel as he touches Pearl's hand?

Chapter 13 - Another View of Hester

42. Why do the townspeople change their view of Hester?

43. What is the "sad transformation" that has come over Hester?

44. Whom does Hester resolve to meet?

Chapter 14 - Hester and the Physician

45. Hawthorne says that Chillingworth has changed into what?

46. Chillingworth says, "Let the black flower blossom as it may." What is the black flower?

Chapter 15 - Hester and Pearl

47. How does Hester feel toward Chillingworth?

48. Pearl makes a letter to wear herself – what color is her letter?

Chapter 16 - A Forest Walk

49. Why won't Hester visit Dimmesdale in his study?

50. What happens to the sunlight as Hester approaches it?

Chapter 17 - The Pastor and His Parishioner

51. How do Hester and Dimmesdale approach each other?

52. Why does Dimmesdale consider Chillingworth to be the worst sinner of the three?

53. What courses of action does Hester suggest to Dimmesdale so that he can rid himself of Chillingworth's menace?

Chapter 18 - A Flood of Sunshine

54. What does Hester do to make it as though the past had never been?
55. What happens to the sunshine when Hester's hair falls down?
56. How do the animals of the forest treat Pearl?

Chapter 19 - The Child at the Brook-Side

57. What does Dimmesdale do when Pearl looks at him?
58. What does Pearl ask Dimmesdale?

Chapter 20 - The Minister in a Maze

59. What arrangement has Hester made for Dimmesdale, Pearl, and herself?
60. What three people does Dimmesdale meet?
61. What happens between Dimmesdale and Mistress Hibbins?

Chapter 21 - The New England Holiday

62. Why is Pearl confused as she and Hester reach town?
63. What news does the captain bring Hester?

Chapter 22 - The Procession

64. How is Dimmesdale described as he marches?
65. What does Mistress Hibbins know that Hester wishes she didn't?

Chapter 23 - The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter

66. What change comes over Dimmesdale after he gives his sermon?
67. Where is the only place that Dimmesdale could have escaped Chillingworth?
68. What happens as Dimmesdale dies?

Chapter 24 - Conclusion

69. What happened to Chillingworth?
70. What role does Hester play in the community?
71. What is Hester's "firm belief of which she assures unhappy women?"