

## Summer Project for English III AP Language and Composition

**The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a book all AP English Language and Composition as well as AP English Literature and Composition students should be familiar with.**

*The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a story of sin, guilt, and mystery as Hester Prynne makes her way through turmoil when she wears a red letter 'A' for adultery. This novel was famous for its use of symbolism, making *The Scarlet Letter* a fantastic tool for looking beyond the surface of a text. This will serve the student well as he or she analyzes various texts during the multiple choice and the free response section of the AP English Language exam.

The multiple choice exam dictates that the student must be able to look deeply into a passage and see beyond the words. The questions are made to utilize critical thinking skills that one needs to pick apart *The Scarlet Letter*.

Therefore, you are required to purchase the novel, and read it over the summer.

**\*\*\*Your summer assignment is to read and annotate the novel. You may want to write 2 or 3 annotations per page. This is just a suggestion; you do need to remember where important details are for our class discussion that will take place after the test. To help you remember what you have read, you may also want to write a short summary at the beginning or end of each chapter.\*\*\***

**You will be pulled when Focus begins in the Fall of 2018 to take a test on the novel. You will also be required to write an essay on one of the following topics:**

**The teacher will decide which essay will be assigned the day of the test, so you may want to take notes in the book itself in preparation for this assignment. You will need quotes to support each essay.**

**Sin** is a theme which is heavily discussed throughout the book. Because of its setting in Puritan Boston, the sin of adultery is an especially grievous one, usually punishable by death. However, the townspeople agree to spare Hester Prynne's life and make her a living testament to the evil of sin.

**Hypocrisy** is another prevalent theme in The Scarlet Letter. The hypocrisy of Reverend Dimmesdale is discussed at length throughout the book. His self-hatred stems not from his original sin, but from his hypocritical inability to admit to wrongdoing.

**Guilt and Blame** are two intertwined themes you will notice within the story. Both Prynne and Dimmesdale are changed by the guilt they feel for their actions. Meanwhile, Chillingworth seems free of guilt for his own reprehensible actions until he dies, leaving Pearl his fortune. The townspeople blame Prynne for her sin and look upon her with disdain and pity. This fate is one Dimmesdale escapes through his own cowardice. And, Chillingworth is decided to be the real villain by both Prynne and Dimmesdale when they realize his misdeeds.

**Individuality and Conformity** are another two related themes found in this work. Hester Prynne is humiliated, shunned, and outcast due to her non-conformity to the strict rules of the Puritanic society. The people of Boston mark her as the example to all other would-be-individuals of what ill fate will befall them if they refuse to conform.

**Nature** is also an important theme explored throughout the story. The contrast of natural beauty with the stark and lifeless existence of Puritan society is introduced immediately into the story. Hawthorne paints a mesmerizing description of natural scenes through the book which presents a remarkable contrast to the society his characters live in.

**The Occult** is a theme which is discussed sympathetically throughout the book. The author suggests that the witch hunt was simply a by-product of Puritan fear of individuality. The strict rules set by society cause anyone who is different to be looked at suspiciously and aligned with the occult.