



ENGLISH III  
*The Scarlet Letter*  
 Reading Guide

Try very hard to do this work *as you read* and to use as many of Hawthorne's own words (from the book!) as possible when answering the questions. Page numbers are for the Penguin version.

Chapter 2

	Hawthorne says . . .
What is the judgment that the women of the town think should be visited upon "such a malefactress as this Hester Prynne" (48)? Why?	
How do the women of the town feel about the SCARLET LETTER (51) Hester has sewn? What does their reaction tell you about them?	
Notice the next to the last paragraph of Chapter 2. List some words and phrases to describe Roger Chillingworth.	

Chapter 3

	Hawthorne says . . .
List as many words and phrases as you can (from the second paragraph) used to describe the man in the crowd (56).	
What impassioned vow does this stranger make with regard to Hester's unknown fellow-sinner (58)?	



<p>Use as many words and phrases as you can (page 61) to describe the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale.</p>	
<p>The Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale charges Hester to “speak out the name of thy fellow-sinner and fellow-sufferer” (62). What reasons does he use to try to convince her?</p>	
<p>What is Dimmesdale’s reaction to Hester’s refusal? Copy the paragraph that begins, “She will not speak!” (63).</p>	
<p>What do you think is going on here?</p>	

Chapter 4

	<p>Hawthorne says . . .</p>
<p>Describe Hester’s and Chillingworth’s marriage (68-69).</p>	
<p>What is Chillingworth’s response to Hester’s declaration, “Thou shalt never know” (69)? Pay close attention to the end of the following paragraph.</p>	
<p>What does Hester agree to do for Chillingworth?</p>	



## Chapter 5

	Hawthorne says . . .
What job does Hester do for the community?	

## Chapter 6

	Hawthorne says . . .
Students are always so upset because they think little Pearl is of the devil. She's not. Read carefully what Hawthorne says to describe her. She's really a child of nature (passionate and wild) as you will see in a later chapter.	It was " <i>the talk</i> of the neighboring townspeople; who, <i>seeking vainly elsewhere</i> for the child's paternity, and observing some of her odd attributes, <i>had given out</i> that poor little Pearl was of a demon offspring" (88).

## Chapter 8

	Hawthorne says . . .
What does Hester say the Scarlet Letter teaches her (98)?	
What physical changes have come over Roger Chillingworth since we last saw him (99)? Describe him.	
What is Hester's appeal to Dimmesdale? Quote what she says starting with, "Speak thou for me!" (100).	
How has Dimmesdale's appearance changed since the day on the scaffold (100)?	



<p>Dimmesdale argues that Hester should be allowed to keep little Pearl. What are his reasons?</p>	
<p>What interesting exchange do Pearl and Dimmesdale have?</p>	

Chapter 9

	<p>Hawthorne says . . .</p>
<p>What is Roger Chillingworth's relation to Hester Prynne?</p>	
<p>List some words and phrases which Hawthorne uses to describe Chillingworth.</p>	
<p>What does Chillingworth try to do for Dimmesdale?</p>	
<p>"A man burdened with a secret should especially avoid the intimacy of his physician" (109). Why?</p>	
<p>Pay close attention to page 112. What change has come over Chillingworth since he has begun to lodge with Dimmesdale?</p>	



<p>The “widely diffused opinion” (112) of the townspeople is that . . .</p>	
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Chapter 10

	<p>Hawthorne says . . .</p>
<p>Chillingworth’s vocation . . .</p>	
<p>What request does Chillingworth make of Dimmesdale (119)?</p>	
<p>What is Dimmesdale’s impassioned response?</p>	
<p>What is Chillingworth’s response the day that he finally gets to look at Dimmesdale’s bosom? Copy the next to the last paragraph of the chapter.</p>	



Chapter 11

<p>Start with the third sentence of the first paragraph and copy the rest of the paragraph.</p>	<p>Hawthorne says . . .</p>
<p>Notice paragraph 2:                  “A revelation . . . had been granted to him. . . . By its aid, in all the subsequent relations betwixt him and Mr. Dimmesdale, not merely by the external presence, but the very inmost soul of the latter seemed to be brought out before his eyes, so that he could see and comprehend its every movement” (122).</p> <p>Compare that with:                  “Yet those same bleared optics had a strange, penetrating power, when it was their owner’s purpose to read the human soul” (55).</p>	<p>Comment on the two quotations. What is Hawthorne trying to tell the reader?</p>
<p>Meanwhile . . . how is Mr. Dimmesdale’s professional life progressing? Why?</p>	



<p>How does his success make Mr. Dimmesdale feel?</p>	
<p>What does Dimmesdale do to himself as a result of these feelings?</p>	

Chapter 12

<p>Where does the minister go on “an obscure night in early May” (129)?</p>	
<p>Who joins the minister during his lonely vigil?</p>	
<p>What request does Pearl make of Dimmesdale? and what is his response?</p>	
<p>What does Dimmesdale say to Hester about Chillingworth (137)?</p>	
<p>Pearl whispers “gibberish” (137) into his ear, and Dimmesdale asks if she mocks him. What is her response? Write it down.</p>	
<p>At the end of the chapter, how is the “great red letter in the sky” (138) interpreted?</p>	



Chapter 13

	Hawthorne says . . .
List the words and phrases which describe Dimmesdale.	
How is Hester perceived by the townspeople these days? Look for words and phrases from 139-145.	
The narrator says “the scarlet letter had not done its office” (145). What does this mean? Why hadn’t the letter “done its office”?	

Chapter 14

	Hawthorne says . . .
Chillingworth reveals the magistrates’ discussion regarding allowing Hester to remove the scarlet letter (147). Copy her response to the suggestion.	





<p>Seven years have changed Chillingworth's appearance. Use Hawthorne's words and phrases to describe how he looks now.</p>	
<p>Hester reminds Chillingworth of her promise to hide his true identity. She refers to Dimmesdale and accuses Chillingworth: "You tread behind his every footstep. You are beside him, both sleeping and waking. You burrow and rankle in his heart! Your clutch is on his life . . ." (149). What is Chillingworth's response (149-152)? Use the good doctor's own words.</p>	

Chapter 15

	<p>Hawthorne says . . .</p>
<p>Hester says, "Be it sin or no . . . I hate the man" (153). What does she consider to be her worst crime (154)?</p>	



<p>Pearl and Hester banter back and forth about the meaning of the scarlet letter. What interesting question does Pearl ask at the end of the chapter?</p>	
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Chapter 17 (Read this one *very* carefully.)

	<p>Hawthorne says . . .</p>
<p>Dimmesdale claims his life is “more misery” (166). What reasons does he give?</p>	
<p>Hester tries to encourage the minister, telling him his “sin is left behind . . . in the days long past” (167). Arthur disagrees. List his reasons.</p>	
<p>Hester asks Dimmesdale’s forgiveness (169). Why?</p>	
<p>Copy Dimmesdale’s response to her request (paragraph 3, page 169).</p>	



<p>Copy paragraph 2, page 170.</p>	
<p>Copy paragraph 3, page 170.</p>	
<p>Copy the three paragraphs on page 171 which begin with “the judgment of God is upon me . . .”</p>	
<p>What plan does Hester suggest?</p>	



## Chapter 18

	Hawthorne says . . .
How is Hester described in paragraph 2?	
And how is the minister described in paragraph 3 “on the other hand”?	
What amazing thing does Hester do? What is the result? Be sure to use the narrator’s description here.	

## Chapter 19

	Hawthorne says . . .
What causes Pearl to be disturbed?	
“Wilt thou not love him? Come! he longs to greet thee” (185), says Hester. Copy Pearl’s response.	



## Chapter 20

	Hawthorne says . . .
<p>“Before Mr. Dimmesdale reached home, his inner man gave him other evidence of a revolution in the sphere of thought and feeling” (189-190). What three things is he tempted to do on the way home?</p>	
<p>Eventually, Dimmesdale is by himself in his room. What things does he do?</p>	

## Chapter 21

	Hawthorne says . . .
<p>Pearl asks if the minister will be part of the day’s festivities, and Hester replies that he will, but that he will not greet her nor must Pearl greet him. What is Pearl’s reaction? for what reasons?</p>	
<p>Uh-oh! What startling information does the mariner give Hester?</p>	



Chapter 22

	Hawthorne says . . .
List words and phrases that describe Dimmesdale as he “kept his place in the procession” (207).	
What is Hester’s reaction to the sight?	
What claim does Mistress Hibbins make about Dimmesdale (210)?	
Where is Hester during Dimmesdale’s Election Sermon?	
Copy the last paragraph of the chapter.	



Chapter 23 (Read this one *very* carefully, too.)

	Hawthorne says . . .
As Dimmesdale marches out of the church and stops by the scaffold, what amazing request does he make of Hester and Pearl?	
What is Chillingworth’s response? Copy the paragraph that begins “Madman . . .” (219) and the following paragraph.	
Copy the paragraph that begins “Hadst thou sought the whole world over . . .” (219-220).	
Pearl kisses the minister. What happens?	
Copy the next to the last paragraph of Chapter 23.	



## Chapter 24

	Hawthorne says . . .
What theories were put forth to explain the alleged appearance of a SCARLET LETTER on Dimmesdale's chest?	
“Nothing was more remarkable than the change that took place, almost immediately, after Mr. Dimmesdale's death, in the appearance and demeanor of the old man known as Roger Chillingworth” (224). List words and phrases which describe the changes.	
What happens to Pearl?	
What happens to Hester?	





**THINK!**

Consider the fate of each character at the end of the book. What is Hawthorne trying to tell you? (and how can you use this information to help your client and hinder the other two?)