*Scarlet Letter* study guide name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Main characters**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hester Prynne |  |
| Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale |  |
| Roger Chillingworth |  |
| Pearl |  |

**Chapter 1 (pages 7-9)**

1. How are the men gathering in front of the prison door characterized?

2. What is a "Utopia"?

3. Who was Ann Hutchinson?

4. Why does Hawthorne talk about Hutchinson (who is not a character in the novel) in this chapter? What does she symbolize?

5. What was growing in front of the jail?

**Chapter 2 (pages 11-16)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **retribution (noun)** |  |
| **mete (verb)** |  |
| **lenient (adj.)** |  |
| **pang (noun)** |  |
| **gallows (noun)** |  |
| **brazen (adj.)** |  |
| **hussy (noun)** |  |

1. What is the setting (time and place) of the novel?

2. What sort of government do the people of Salem have?

3. How does Hawthorne describe the women of Salem?

4. Why, according to one of the women gathered outside the jail, is Rev. Dimmesdale "deeply hurt and embarrassed" (12)?

5. Some of the women considered Prynne's punishment to be too lenient. What are some of the things they would have preferred as punishment for Prynne's sin?

6. What "crime" did Prynne commit? What is Prynne's punishment?

7. What does the "A" stand for?

8. Why do the women think that Prynne is "showing off" (13)?

9. How long does Prynne have stand on the gallows?

10. Where did Prynne grow up? What was her childhood like?

11. Why did she agree to marry the man studying medicine?

12. Why did Prynee's husband agree to take the job in Salem? Where and how did they live before coming to Salem?

13. Why did Prynne arrive in Salem before her husband?

14. What is believed to have happened to Prynne's husband?

15. What does Prynne do to earn a living in Salem?

**Chapter 3 (pages 19-22)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **adultery (noun)** |  |
| **eloquence (noun)** |  |
| **fornication (noun)** |  |
| **transgress (verb)** |  |

1. Who is the man Prynne recognizes in the crowd?

2. What happened to Prynne's husband?

3. Who is the father of Prynne's child?

4. What is the usual punishment for adultery? Why was Prynne saved from this fate?

5. How is Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale described?

6. What does Dimmesdale urge Prynne to do?

**Chapter 4 (pages 25-28)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **turmoil (noun)** |  |

1. Where is Prynne in this chapter?

2. Who, in reality, is Roger Chillingworth?

3. What does Chillingworth give Prynne's child? Why does Prynne suspect it might be poison?

4. What two "wrongs" does Chillingworth admit to doing to Prynne?

5. What does Chillingworth vow to do?

6. Explain the importance of this quote: "For he who bears the secret creates his own Hell here on earth, and the longer he lives, the longer will he suffer" (28).

**Chapter 5 (31-34)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **purge (verb)** |  |
| **espouse (verb)** |  |
| **endow (verb)** |  |

1. Why does Prynne choose to stay in Salem?

2. Where does Prynne take up residence?

3. Describe Pearl's clothing.

4. What does Prynne do with her money?

5. How was Prynne "like a ghost" (33)?

6. What power does the scarlet letter "endow" Prynne with?

**Chapter 6 (37-40)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **cavort (verb)** |  |
| **idealistic (adj.)** |  |

1. How does Hawthorne contrast Pearl with Prynne?

2. How does Pearl show maturity beyond her years?

3. How does Pearl show a disregard for authority?

4. How does Pearl demonstrate an "independent behavior" (38)?

5. How does Pearl demonstrate "anger and hostility" (39)?

6. How does Pearl respond to the scarlet letter?

**Chapter 7 (43-45)**

SUMMARY: Hester Prynne and Pearl arrive at Governor Bellingham's mansion. The mansion is described as being very fancy and ornate. They are let into the mansion by a servant who assumes that they are rich because of Pearl's fancy dress. Hester and Pearl have been called to see Bellingham because it needs to be determined if Hester should maintain custody of Pearl. It is rumored that Pearl, based on her behavior, is the "child of a Demon."

**Chapter 8 (47-52)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **plumage (noun)** |  |
| **perverse (adj.)** |  |
| **prudent (adj.)** |  |

1. Prynne says the scarlet letter is "teaching me" (48), but she does not explain what lesson it is teaching her. What lessons do you suppose the letter is teaching her?

2. Describe Prynne's religious beliefs and what she is teaching Pearl about religion.

3. According to Pearl, who made her?

4. How does Dimmesdale convince Bellingham to allow Prynne to keep Pearl?

5. What does Chillingworth call Pearl?

6. At the end of the chapter, what does Hibbins offer to Prynne? What is Prynne's response?

**Chapter 9 (55-60) *The Scarlet Letter* study guide part two name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

SUMMARY: Chillingworth begins spending time with Dimmesdale in effort to treat the minister's failing health. Chillingworth is a skilled physician having not only trained in Europe but also learning about healing plants and herbs from the Native Americans with whom he spent time.

Dimmesdale has grown pale, lost weight and seems pre-occupied. The town fears he might die. But in Chillingworth's care, Dimmesdale's condition begins to improve. Suspiciously, as Rev. Dimmesdale's condition improves, Dr. Chillingworth begins to take on an "ugly and evil" look in his face.

**Chapter 10 (63-67)**

SUMMARY: Chillingworth continues to treat Dimmesdale. He says to himself that "any man who can become passionate about one thing can become passionate about another." Chillingworth can plainly see Dimmesdale's passion for religion, so he wonders what else the reverend might be passionate about.

Dimmesdale, while improving somewhat, is still suffering. He frequently clutches his hand over his heart. The townspeople continue to worry about their beloved reverend. Chillingworth comments that Dimmesdale might be suffering more from a psychological ailment rather than a physical condition. At this suggestion, Dimmesdale becomes very angry, claiming he would only talk to God about any emotional or mental anguish.

Later that day, Chillingworth returns to Dimmesdale's house. Here's the final two paragraphs from Chapter 10. I'll let you decide what's going on.

"He reached down, unbuttoned Dimmesdale's shirt and drew it open, baring the chest. Chillingworth sucked in his breath, and his eyes widened. Then a broad smile spread across his face, and he clenched one fist in the air, dancing triumphantly around the minister's study.

"If someone were to see Chillingworth at that moment, he'd never again need to wonder how Satan himself rejoices when a precious human soul is lost to Heaven and condemned forever."

1. Ok. So ignoring the fact that it's sort of creepy that Chillingworth wanders into peoples' houses and takes off their clothes while they're sleeping, what do you think Chillingworth saw?

2. What else is being implied at the end of this chapter? What has been bothering Dimmesdale so much???

**Chapter 11 (69-71)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **latent (adj.)** |  |
| **malice (noun)** |  |
| **abhorrent (adj.)** |  |
| **loathe (verb)** |  |

1. It's pretty obvious what is making Dimmesdale feel guilty, right?

2. How has Dimmesdale's sermons improved?

3. What does it mean that Dimmesdale "scourged" himself? What was he doing?

4. What other two ways does Dimmesdale punish himself?

**Chapter 12 (73-77)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **revel (verb)** |  |
| **repentance (noun)** |  |

1. Where does Dimmesdale go?

2. Who hears Dimmesdale's terrifying scream?

3. Who joins Dimmesdale on the scaffold?

4. Why was Prynne out in the middle of the night?

5. What does Pearl ask Dimmesdale to do? What is Dimmesdale's response?

6. What do the streaking meteors in the sky symbolically form?

7. Who sees the family standing on the scaffold?

8. What does Chillingworth say to Dimmesdale?

9. What possession of Dimmesdale's is found on the scaffold and returned to him?

**Chapter 13 (79-81)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **appall (verb)** |  |

1. Describe Dimmesdale's condition?

2. What does Prynne suspect Chillingworth of?

3. Compare Prynne's current condition with her situation seven years ago.

4. What are some of the rumors about what the "A" stands for?

**Chapter 14 (83-87)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **luxuriant (adj.)** |  |
| **resilient (adj.)** |  |

1. Chillingworth reveals that the Governor has considered doing what? What is Prynne's response?

2. Prynne studies Chillingworth. How has Chillingworth changed?

3. Find a quote that reveals what Chillingworth has been doing to Dimmesdale.

4. What does Prynne mean when she says that they "are lost in a moral maze" (86)?

5. What does Prynne want to reveal to Dimmesdale?

**Chapter 15 (89-93)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **rebuke (verb)** |  |
| **inkling (noun)** |  |

1. What does Prynne admit regarding Chillingworth?

2. What does Pearl do while she is playing?

3. What two questions does Pearl keep asking her mother?

4. Why does Prynne lie to Pearl about the scarlet letter? How does she feel about lying?

**Chapter 16 summary**

Prynne decides that she is going to meet Dimmesdale and reveal to him Chillingworth's true identity. She knows that he will be returning through the woods from his weekly visit with a nearby Indian tribe whom Dimmesdale is determined to convert to Christianity. Prynne takes Pearl with her. Pearl asks about the "Black Man," the name the Puritans give the Devil and wonders if Prynne has ever met him. " 'Yes,' Prynne said at last, 'Once in my life I met the Black Man! And this scarlet letter is his mark!' " (97).

Pearl asks Prynne if Dimmesdale has ever met the Black Man. Prynne ignore the question. The chapter ends as Dimmesdale approaches through the forest.

**Chapter 17 (101-107)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **atheist (noun)** |  |
| **delusion (noun)** |  |
| **repent (verb)** |  |
| **succumb (verb)** |  |
| **malicious (adj.)** |  |
| **infamy (noun)** |  |
| **divulge (verb)** |  |

1. How does Dimmesdale believe he could've found peace?

2. " 'I am neither man nor minister, but some grotesque shadow whose soul had died long ago but whose body has not yet fallen into the grave' " (102). What does Dimmesdale mean when he says this?

3. Why does Dimmesdale believe his faith is not very strong?

4. What is on Dimmesdale's chest?

5. How does Dimmesdale react to Prynne's revelation?

6. What is a Hippocratic Oath? Has Chillingworth kept it?

7. What are some of the options Prynne presents to Dimmesdale at the end of the chapter?

**Chapter 18 summary**

Dimmesdale agrees to run off with Hester. Hester removes the scarlet letter. Dimmesdale is worried about meeting Pearl. Hester calls Pearl over. She was off in the woods doing stuff with, like, birds and junk.

**Chapter 19 (115-118)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **surmise (verb)** |  |
| **estranged (adj.)** |  |
| **gambols (noun)** |  |

1. What were Dimmesdale's concerns regarding Pearl's appearance?

2. How does Pearl react when she sees her mother without the scarlet letter?

3. What does Pearl do after Dimmesdale kisses her?

**Chapter 20 (121-125)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **deteriorate (verb)** |  |
| **suppress (verb)** |  |
| **blaspheme (verb)** |  |
| **pious (adj.)** |  |
| **ribald (adj.)** |  |

1. What are Prynne and Dimmesdale's plans?

2. What "holiday" is it in Salem, and what are Dimmesdale's responsibilities during this holiday?

3. What urge does Dimmesdale have while walking through the town?

4. Summarize the conversation Dimmesdale and Hibbins have.

5. What does Dimmesdale inform Chillingworth of?

**Chapter 21 summary**

Prynne and Pearl make their way through the crowds gathered for the holiday. Pearl asks her mother if they will meet Dimmesdale there. Prynne tells Pearl that Dimmesdale will not acknowledge them like he did in the forest. Pearl probably says something. Then Prynne runs into the captain of the Spanish ship on which they'll be sailing. The captain informs Prynne that Chillingworth has also booked passage and will be sailing with them to Europe. What a bummer!

**Chapter 22 summary**

Hester and Pearl watch Dimmesdale walk through the crowds. Pearl asks if that is the same man that they saw in the woods. " 'He just looked so different that I wasn't certain' " (135). Dimmesdale's appearance is much better now. He shows more energy and is standing up straight. He looks healthier, as if a weight has been lifted from his shoulders. The chapter endds just as Dimmesdale is ready to begin his speech.

**Chapter 23 (141-145)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **thrall (noun)** |  |
| **bestow (verb)** |  |
| **undertone (noun)** |  |
| **surmise (verb)** |  |
| **pinnacle (noun)** |  |

1. How does the crowd react to Dimmesdale's speech?

2. Where was Prynne during Dimmesdale's speech?

3. How had Dimmesdale become the people's "saint and . . . hero" (142)?

4. How does Dimmesdale's appearance change after he finishes his speech?

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5. How does Pearl greet Dimmesdale?

6. What does Chillingworth try to prevent Dimmesdale from doing?

7. What does Dimmesdale reveal to the crowd?

8. What happens to Dimmesdale?

**Chapter 24 (147-150)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **penance (noun)** |  |
| **divert (verb)** |  |
| **infer (noun)** |  |

1. What are the explanations for the "A" upon Dimmesdale's chest?

2. How do some people explain why Dimmesdale embraced Prynne?

3. What happens to Chillingworth? What does he do for Pearl?

4. Where does Pearl go?

5. What does Prynne return to Salem and do?

6. What marks Prynne's grave

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