

## Review of *The Scarlet Letter*

By Amy Rosenfeldt

### *The Atlantic*

My first inclination that this novel existed was back in Year 10 of high school in which our class watched the acclaimed teen comedy *Easy A*. It was an enjoyable movie, and when I found this piece of classic literature again on my Nintendo DS game I suddenly became interested in the material this film was inspired off of.

In the Puritan New England, Hester Prynne has been marked with the letter “A” for adultery after giving birth to a daughter of unknown parentage, facing public humiliation in her town for what she has done. She can only be freed from this humiliation if she reveals the child’s father, but her husband refuses to let her speak of it for he will also be punished. What follows is a life of ostracization for Hester and her daughter Pearl, as they both embrace and resent the reputation the Scarlet Letter brings to them. However, they may not be the only ones facing such burden...

I liked this novel for how it told of the roles played by man, women and child – just to name a handful – in such a society. Each was subject to alienation – by self, by society and by birth respectively. Just to see how each of these characters reacted to such things was intriguing. Father Dimmesdale going mad, Hester taking her’s in stride, and young Pearl oblivious to it.

The narrative was viewed through one valuable and terrifying lens – manipulation. Blackmail. Something so universally terrifying from even so long ago. The balance between righteousness and security. Though I experience it from a very modern perspective, I related to this theme a fair amount. I feel guilty for doing things that offer me security but ultimately feel wrong. And the symbolism of the novel really showcased this, powerful imagery that left me spooked.

However, there were times where I was unsure what was happening. This may have largely been to the writing style and how Hawthorne would add detail to certain routines, occasional backstory and heavy internal monologue. This can be a big turn off for me at times, often what makes me finish a book or rate it under average. Luckily I was able to work out the plot of the novel towards its end and connect the various dots. The fact that I could still understand the story as a result proved to be a very valuable part of finishing this novel in the end, especially during a year where there were novels that didn’t make sense at any time. I very much merit the Scarlet Letter for that.

I look forward to connecting the dots and seeing the greater value of the story when I reread it. Maybe then I may rate the novel higher, but we shall see.

The Scarlet Letter gets a score of 3/5. I'm willing to give this book a second try in a couple of years time, but for now I am satisfied.