

3. For what sin is Hester Prynne condemned?
4. What is the Old Testament punishment for adultery?
5. What is the public view of Hester's sin as expressed by the women outside the prison? What do their comments suggest about this society?
6. What is Hester's punishment?
7. What is surprising about the "A" Hester has sewn for herself? What might this indicate?
8. What is accomplished by Hawthorne's allusion to the Madonna and Child?
9. Considering the common use of physiognomy, what might Hawthorne be suggesting by portraying Hester as extremely beautiful?

Chapter 3:

1. What purpose does the conversation between the townsman and the stranger at the beginning of the chapter serve?

2. Why wasn't Hester sentenced to death for her adultery?

3. Where has the stranger been? What motion does he make to Hester?

4. Who is Dimmesdale? What appeal does he use to convince Hester to reveal the baby's father?

5. What is Hawthorne foreshadowing with the stranger's prediction that the name of the father will eventually be disclosed?

6. What is ironic about Dimmesdale's reaction to Hester's refusal to name the father of the child?

7. Explain the allusion in the townsman's telling Chillingworth, "that matter remaineth a riddle; and the Daniel who shall expound it is yet a-wanting."

Chapter 4:

1. Who does the stranger Hester recognized in the crowd that afternoon turn out to be?

2. What traditional dichotomy does Hawthorne begin to establish with the location of Hester's cottage?

3. Give two reasons why Hester decides to remain instead of moving to a less-restrictive colony.

4. How do the townspeople treat Hester, and how does she react?

5. How does Hester's character evolve?

6. Describe the difference between Hester's clothing and her child's.

7. What point is Hawthorne making about an individual's ability to separate oneself from one's wrongdoings?

8. Where do Hawthorne's sympathies lie? How do you know?

Chapter 6:

1. What, according to the narrator, is ironic about Pearl's existence?

2. What is the significance of Pearl's name?

3. What is significant about Pearl's temperament?

4. Explain the ambiguity concerning Pearl's background.

5. Hester believes that, while society punishes her for sinning, God has a different reaction. How does Hester explain Pearl's existence?

Chapter 7:

1. How sincerely concerned are the townspeople of Salem for the souls of Hester and Pearl?

2. Compare the Governor's garden with gardens in Old England. What is significant about the difference?

3. How is Pearl dressed, and what is her dress compared to?

4. Where else have we seen a rose bush in this novel? What was its significance then?

5. Does it maintain the same significance here?

Chapter 8:

1. Explain the Puritan attitude toward luxury and how Governor Bellingham and the Reverend John Wilson responded to it.

2. How do the magistrates react to Pearl and why?

3. How does Hester behave towards the magistrates and why?

4. Why does Hester feel that Arthur Dimmesdale should speak on her behalf?

5. Why would Hawthorne have Pearl perform such an uncharacteristically tender action?

6. What does Chillingworth note about Dimmesdale's defense of Hester?

7. Describe how Dimmesdale has changes since Hester's public punishment?

8. Describe how Chillingworth has changed over the last few years.

9. What would physiognomy suggest about Dimmesdale and Chillingworth?

10. Why would Hawthorne want to include Mistress Hibbins as a minor character in this book?

Chapter 9:

1. Why doesn't Chillingworth assert his rights as Hester's husband?

2. A difference of opinion arises over the cause of Dimmesdale's failing health. Compare the townspeople's opinion to Dimmesdale's.

3. Why does Dimmesdale reject Chillingworth's offer of help? What finally persuades him to accept the offer?

4. Explain the ambiguity of the chapter's title, "The Leech."
5. The passage sets up an interesting contrast between two types of men. What is this contrast, and how is it likely to shape the future of the novel?
6. Describe Chillingworth's method for treating illness.
7. Describe the relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth.
8. Some people in the community feel that God has sent Chillingworth to heal their minister, but other people have a different view. Explain the second view about Chillingworth.
9. How do the people explain "the gloom and terror in the depths of the poor minister's eyes"?
10. What is suggested by the names Chillingworth and Dimmesdale?

Chapter 10:

1. What is suspicious about Dimmesdale's position in his debate with Chillingworth about sin?
2. How do the black flowers initiate a discussion on hidden sins?
3. How does Dimmesdale's rationale for not confessing a hidden sin support the doctrine of salvation by works rather than salvation by faith?
4. What metaphors does Hawthorne establish for Chillingworth's probe? How do they further define Chillingworth's character?
5. What does Chillingworth mean when he mutters, "A strange sympathy betwixt soul and body! Were it only for the art's sake, I must search this matter to the bottom!"?
6. What does Chillingworth do while Dimmesdale sleeps, and what does his action symbolize? Describe Chillingworth's reaction and what his response reveals about his character.
7. What do you suppose is the specific secret that Chillingworth discovers?

Chapter 11:

1. Explain the statement, “He [Chillingworth] became, thenceforth, not a spectator only, but a chief actor, in the poor minister’s interior world.”
2. What is ironic about Dimmesdale’s incredible success as a minister?
3. Why are Dimmesdale’s public assertions of guilt ironic?
4. Explain the ways that Dimmesdale tortures himself.
5. Comparing Dimmesdale’s current struggle with his sin with Hawthorne’s’ earlier treatment of Hester and her sin, what is Hawthorne suggesting about the effects of sin?
6. What is ironic about Hawthorne’s portrayal of the Puritan society, in terms of this developing theme?

Chapter 12:

1. How is the episode of Dimmesdale’s midnight vigil on the scaffold structurally significant?

2. What is the significance of Pearl's challenge to Dimmesdale?

3. Considering the role of Nature in Anti-Transcendental literature, what is the significance of the meteor event?

4. Although Governor Winthrop is merely mentioned in the book, why would Hawthorne choose this night as the night Dimmesdale stands on the scaffold with Hester and Pearl?

5. How does Dimmesdale feel as he holds Pearl's hand and why?

6. Why does Pearl pull away from Dimmesdale?