

Subject: English/History --Review of "The Scarlet Letter"

"Hawthorn Swings,  
and  
Misses"

### The Scarlet Letter

Adultery, betrayal, promiscuity, subterfuge, and intrigue, all of which would make an excellent coming attraction on the Hollywood scene and probably a pretty good book. Add Puritan ideals and writing styles, making it long, drawn out, tedious, wearisome, sleep inducing, insipidly asinine, and the end result is The Scarlet Letter. Despite all these things it is considered a classic and was a statement of the era.

The Scarlet Letter is a wonderful and not so traditional example of the good

versus evil theme. What makes this a unique instance of good versus evil is that either side could be considered either one. Hester could very easily have been deduced as evil, or the "bad guy," as she was by the townspeople.

That is, she was convicted of adultery, a horrible sin of the time, but maybe not even seen as criminal today. As for punishment, a sentence to wear a scarlet "A" upon her chest, it would hardly be considered a burden or extreme sentence in present day. Or Hester can be seen as rebelling against a society where she was forced into a loveless marriage and hence she would be the "good guy," or girl, as the case may be. Also the townspeople, the magistrates, and Chillingworth, Hester's true husband, can be seen in both lights. Either they can be perceived as just upholding the law -she committed a crime, they enforce the law. On the other hand are they going to extreme measures such as wanting to take Pearl, Hester's daughter, away just because Hester has deviated from the norm, all to enforce an unjust law that does not even apply to this situation?

Although the subjects of the novel do apply to important issues in history and could have had influences on the time period, they were not great.

During the times and in the Puritan community this did not have a large affect on anything. Sure, they did not want anyone committing adultery, most were killed if convicted, but it was not something that upset their way of living in any permanent manner. To an individual or group who was battling something backward in the Puritan society, as were many things, this would have been an inspirational book and possibly a revelation.

In short, this book could have been exceptional; it had all the elements of a superb book. Unfortunately, Hawthorne found himself a rather large thesaurus and added a bunch of mindless prattle that mellowed out the high points of the book and expanded on the low points. In many chapters all he manages to accomplish is to update the lives of characters, mostly with irrelevant drivel. Also by expanding on the symbolism of the scarlet letter umpteenth times he wears it out so that the reader wants nothing more to do with a dumb "A" on some woman's chest hundreds of years ago. Other than that, great book.