

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne (Published by McDougal Littell)

Approved for use in Advanced Placement Communication Arts III

Summary

In a small Puritan society, Hester Prynne has committed the ultimate sin of adultery. She is labeled with an “A” on her chest and shunned by the community, as is her daughter, Pearl. Through their trials, Hester and Pearl manage to survive and even mature. Arthur Dimmesdale, the minister, and Roger Chillingworth, Hester’s husband, however, are consumed by their personal secrets which ultimately lead to their personal ruin.

Connection to the Curriculum

The Scarlet Letter is an excellent example of an author’s use of dramatic irony to demonstrate the ambiguous nature of character motivations. Additionally, the elevated diction and style facilitates developing close reading skills, which are essential for interpreting complex themes and characters. Hawthorne’s portrayal a community grappling with public transgression is a springboard for discussion of how to handle difficult conflicts within a community.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

Writing: 3.1- The students use writing as a tool for learning throughout the curriculum. 3.2- The students use a writing process that includes preparing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing to produce a written text.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.4.7- The student identifies characteristics of narrative texts.

1.4.10- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading the text.

1.4.11- The student use information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

1.4.17- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author’s style and use of literary devices work together to achieve his or her purpose for writing text.

Literature:

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of character and analyzes the development of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and its influence on characters and events in the story.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices in a text.

Writing:

3.1.1- The students use the writing process in various formats.

3.2.5- The student publishes a legible final copy in the following modes: narrative, expository, persuasive, and technical.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Hawthorne reveals his concern of society’s judgment on sinners as the main character is forced to live in shame by wearing a symbol of the adultery she has committed. There is no explicit description of the adultery, as Hawthorne maintains a Puritan feel in the telling of the story.

AP Connections

The AP Language Exam draws from a wide range of literature, from the 1600s to the present day. As such, this novel provides the opportunity for students to explore archaic language that still has universal and enduring themes. This text requires close reading; grappling with elevated language is an essential skill for students in an AP class.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities