

## **Eleventh English**

### ***The Scarlet Letter***

#### **Chapters One through Four**

1. What is the setting (i.e., place and time) of the story?
2. What legend explains the existence of the rose bush by the prison door?
3. What is the mood of the crowd, and why is their attention focused on the door?
4. Why was Hester Prynne not executed for her crime? What would the Puritan women have done to her if given the power?
5. What are Hester's specific actions as she walks from the prison to the scaffold?
6. What memories does Hester review during her three-hour ordeal?
7. Tell where the following are while Hester is on the scaffold.
  - a. her daughter Pearl
  - b. the Reverend Dimmesdale
  - c. her former husband, Roger Chillingworth
8. What is Dimmesdale's plea to Hester?
9. During their interview, what is Chillingworth's attitude toward Hester and her act of infidelity?
10. What promise does Chillingworth exact from Hester?

#### **Chapters Five through Eight**

11. After her ordeal, where did Hester choose to live? Why?
12. What is Hester's occupation?
13. Describe Hester's appearance and mental state during this time.
14. How does the community treat Hester?
15. Describe Pearl's personality and appearance.
16. What is Pearl's reaction to the scarlet letter?

17. Why does Hester go to the Governor's house?
18. Describe the luxury of the Governor's home, especially in contrast to an ordinary Puritan's lifestyle.
19. How does Pearl behave when questioned by the men?
20. How does Hester succeed in her mission, and how does this relate to her conversation with Mistress Hibbins?

### **Chapters Nine through Twelve**

21. What are the townspeople's reactions to Chillingworth's lodging in the same house as Dimmesdale?
22. How has Chillingworth changed over the years?
23. How does Dimmesdale punish himself?
24. Why is Chillingworth called a "leech"?
25. Why does the narrator compare Chillingworth with a miner?
26. Why does Chillingworth examine Dimmesdale's chest?
27. How does Dimmesdale's congregation react to his sermons?
28. For what reasons are the major characters at the scaffold during the night?
29. Why does Dimmesdale cry out while on the scaffold?
30. Where is each major character when they see the meteor?
31. What are the various interpretations the characters attribute to the shape of the meteor?

### **Chapters Thirteen through Fifteen**

32. How does the letter affect Hester Prynne over this seven-year interval?
33. What crime has Hester committed which, if known to the Puritans, would have resulted in her death?
34. What value does Hester place upon her life?
35. What does Hester see as necessary before women would be treated equally in society?

36. What is the meaning of the line, “the scarlet letter had not done its office”?
37. Why does Hester feel responsible for Dimmesdale’s physical condition?
38. What favors does Chillingworth feel he has done for Dimmesdale?
39. Why is Chillingworth even more vengeful toward Dimmesdale?
40. When is Hester untrue to the scarlet letter?
41. What is the current relationship between Hester and Pearl?

### **Chapters Sixteen through Nineteen**

42. Why does Hester prefer to meet with Dimmesdale in the forest rather than in the settlement?
43. What significance can one attribute to the play of sunlight on Pearl and Hester?
44. What story does Pearl hear of her mother’s involvement with the Black Man of the Forest?
45. What are Dimmesdale’s reactions when Hester tells him Chillingworth’s identity?
46. What effect does Hester have on Dimmesdale?
47. How does Pearl fit into the forest setting?
48. Why does Pearl refuse to retrieve the scarlet letter herself?
49. Why does Pearl insist that the scarlet letter be replaced?
50. How is Hester affected when she replaces the letter on her bosom?
51. What is the significance of Pearl’s reaction to the minister?

### **Chapters Twenty through Twenty-two**

52. What is Hester’s plan for Dimmesdale, Pearl, and herself?
53. What is Dimmesdale tempted to do as he returns to his room? Why?
54. What decision does he make as he reaches his lodging?
55. What does the Puritan celebration tell about their values?
56. How has Chillingworth interfered with Hester’s plan?

57. What does the procession show about Puritan values?
58. What is the minister's mental state as he walks to the meeting-house? How does he affect Hester?
59. Where does Hester stand during Dimmesdale's sermon?
60. Why does Hester become the center of the crowd's attention? What irony does the narrator see in the scene?
61. What does Pearl do during the sermon?

### **Chapters Twenty-three through Twenty-four**

62. What are the topic and the mood of Dimmesdale's sermon?
63. Describe the minister's condition after the speech. Who offers him assistance?
64. Where are the four major characters during the final scaffold scene?
65. What changes occur in Pearl? What does she accept from Dimmesdale?
66. What moral does the narrator say is central to the story?
67. What are the various versions of what was seen on Dimmesdale's chest?
68. How does Dimmesdale's confession affect Chillingworth?
69. How does Chillingworth's legacy affect Pearl?
70. Describe the circumstances of Hester's return to Boston.
71. Are Hester and Dimmesdale ever united? How does the reader know?

### **Author Information**

72. How does the author's ancestral history explain his preoccupation with the Puritan era?