

FREE PRINTABLE QUIZ

The Scarlet Letter

Chapter 10

Nathaniel Hawthorne · 11 questions with a full answer key and explanations

What's inside

- **11 multiple-choice questions**, including passage analysis with the original text printed above it — the way your English class asks it.
- **Answer key** on its own page so you can take the quiz first.
- **Explanations** for every question, so a wrong answer teaches you something.
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The quiz

The Scarlet Letter — Chapter 10. Answers begin on the answer key page.

PLOT & EVENT

1. What does little Pearl do with the prickly burrs she gathers beside the tombstone?

- A. She arranges them along the scarlet letter on Hester's dress and throws one at Dimmesdale.
- B. She crushes them in her palms and scatters them across Isaac Johnson's flat armorial tombstone.
- C. She weaves them into a wreath to place upon the open windowsill where Dimmesdale is resting.
- D. She drops them into Roger Chillingworth's collection basket among his unsightly dark herbs.

PLOT & EVENT

2. What does Chillingworth do when he discovers Dimmesdale asleep in his chair over a large book?

- A. He pulls open the minister's personal diary to search for written confessions.
- B. He thrusts aside the minister's vestment to look directly at his bare bosom.
- C. He takes a sample of the minister's blood to analyze in his dark laboratory.
- D. He quietly removes the herbal medicine he had left on the table beside him.

CHARACTER

3. According to Dimmesdale, why do some guilty men refuse to confess their sins during their lifetime?

- A. They believe that earthly confession removes the possibility of divine mercy at the Last Judgment.
- B. They fear that revealing their corruption will destroy their ability to do future good and redeem their past evil.
- C. They harbor deep hatred for the community elders and intentionally withhold the truth to spite them.
- D. They distrust earthly clergymen and prefer to undergo self-inflicted bodily punishments in private.

CHARACTER

4. Why does Dimmesdale offer ample apologies to Chillingworth shortly after storming out of the room?

- A.** He fears Chillingworth will publicly expose his spiritual secrets to the town magistracy.
- B.** He realizes Hester Prynne has warned the physician about their secret relationship.
- C.** He believes his own nervous affliction caused an unjustified, unseemly outburst against a helpful friend.
- D.** He discovers that Chillingworth's herbal drug has successfully cured his physical ailment.

MICRO-DETAIL

5. Where does Chillingworth claim to have gathered the dark, flabby-leafed weeds he is examining?

- A.** From an unmarked grave in the adjacent cemetery, where they supposedly grew out of a dead man's heart.
- B.** From the shadowed forest path leading toward the Native American settlement outside of town.
- C.** From the damp soil beneath the town pillory where Hester Prynne stood in public ignominy.
- D.** From the overgrown garden patch behind Governor Bellingham's estate along Spring Lane.

MICRO-DETAIL

6. Why is Dimmesdale unable to recognize that Chillingworth is his dangerous enemy?

- A.** Dimmesdale is completely blinded by the physician's cheerful, boisterous manner.
- B.** Dimmesdale's general suspicion of all mankind prevents him from discerning a specific adversary.
- C.** Dimmesdale is constantly under the influence of powerful somniferous drugs mixed into his drink.
- D.** Dimmesdale assumes Chillingworth has taken a holy vow of silence regarding pastoral secrets.

MICRO-DETAIL

7. What specific trait distinguishes Chillingworth's ecstasy from that of Satan after uncovering Dimmesdale's bosom?

- A. A sudden pang of remorse.
- B. A profound sense of sorrow.
- C. The distinct trait of wonder.
- D. A surge of spiritual triumph.

ANALYTICAL

8. Hawthorne compares Chillingworth's search into Dimmesdale's heart to a miner digging for gold and a sexton delving into a grave primarily to convey:

- A. The physician's genuine scientific detachment and lack of personal emotional investment.
- B. The transition of Chillingworth's investigation from an earnest pursuit of truth into a morbid, invasive obsession.
- C. The mutual financial profit that both men hope to gain from their theological studies.
- D. The town's reliance on physical labor rather than intellectual reflection to solve moral crises.

ANALYTICAL

9. How does Dimmesdale reinterpret the theological purpose of the Last Judgment during his debate with Chillingworth?

- A. He argues it serves primarily to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of intelligent beings rather than to inflict retribution.
- B. He asserts that hidden sins will remain entirely concealed forever through God's infinite mercy.
- C. He claims that only clergymen will be permitted to reveal the secrets of the dead to the heavenly host.
- D. He suggests that physical disease on earth fully replaces the need for divine judgment in the afterlife.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

"This man," said he, at one such moment, to himself, "pure as they deem him,—all spiritual as he seems,—hath inherited a strong animal nature from his father or his mother. Let us dig a little further in the direction of this vein!"

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

10. What does Chillingworth's monologue reveal about his strategy in probing Dimmesdale?

- A.** He intends to abandon his physiological inquiries and focus purely on spiritual instruction.
- B.** He perceives an underlying physical passion beneath Dimmesdale's spiritual facade and resolves to exploit it.
- C.** He suspects Dimmesdale is feigning illness to avoid his pastoral duties in the parish.
- D.** He believes the minister's illness is entirely hereditary and cannot be influenced by guilt.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

"Come away, mother! Come away, or yonder old Black Man will catch you! He hath got hold of the minister already. Come away, mother, or he will catch you! But he cannot catch little Pearl!"

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

11. In the context of the cemetery scene, Pearl's exclamation to her mother functions to:

- A.** Warn Hester that Chillingworth represents the devil and has already ensnared Dimmesdale.
- B.** Reveal to the town magistrates that Dimmesdale is secretly meeting Hester in the graveyard.
- C.** Beg Hester to cast away the scarlet letter before entering the churchyard.
- D.** Demonstrate that Pearl is terrified of the physical deformities of the old physician.

Answer key

Check your answers here, then read the explanations on the next page.

1. A	2. B	3. B	4. C	5. A
6. B	7. C	8. B	9. A	10. B
11. A				

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Answers explained

Why the right answer is right — and what the question is really testing.

1. A. She arranges them along the scarlet letter on Hester's dress and throws one at Dimmesdale.

Pearl takes a handful of burdock burrs, places them along the outline of Hester's scarlet letter (where they stick), and then tosses one through the open window at Mr. Dimmesdale.

2. B. He thrusts aside the minister's vestment to look directly at his bare bosom.

Finding Dimmesdale in an unusually heavy slumber, Chillingworth steps directly in front of him, places his hand on his chest, and pushes aside his clothing to inspect his breast.

3. B. They fear that revealing their corruption will destroy their ability to do future good and redeem their past evil.

Dimmesdale explains that guilty men who still retain a zeal for God's glory shrink from showing themselves 'black and filthy' because it would end their usefulness and prevent them from achieving good in the world.

4. C. He believes his own nervous affliction caused an unjustified, unseemly outburst against a helpful friend.

After calming down in private, Dimmesdale feels remorseful, believing his frayed nerves caused him to violently reject an old friend who was merely offering duty-bound medical advice.

5. A. From an unmarked grave in the adjacent cemetery, where they supposedly grew out of a dead man's heart.

Chillingworth tells the minister that he found the unfamiliar weeds growing directly on an unmarked grave, speculating that they sprang from the buried heart of someone who died with an unconfessed secret.

6. B. Dimmesdale's general suspicion of all mankind prevents him from discerning a specific adversary.

Because Dimmesdale's sickly, morbid state of mind causes him to distrust all people equally, he cannot identify a true enemy when one enters his life.

7. C. The distinct trait of wonder.

The text explicitly notes that while Chillingworth's wild physical reaction resembles Satan claiming a lost soul, it is differentiated by the presence of wonder.

8. B. The transition of Chillingworth's investigation from an earnest pursuit of truth into a morbid, invasive obsession.

The dual figurative comparison highlights Chillingworth's transformation: he shifts from seeking valuable truth to delving obsessively into moral corruption and decay within the clergyman's soul.

9. A. He argues it serves primarily to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of intelligent beings rather than to inflict retribution.

Dimmesdale rejects the idea that public exposure at the Last Day is meant for retribution, claiming instead that it is intended merely for the intellectual satisfaction of intelligent beings seeing life's dark problem solved.

10. B. He perceives an underlying physical passion beneath Dimmesdale's spiritual facade and resolves to exploit it.

Chillingworth recognizes that despite Dimmesdale's spiritual reputation, he possesses an inherited 'animal nature,' identifying this earthly passion as the exact vulnerability ('vein') he must probe deeper into.

11. A. Warn Hester that Chillingworth represents the devil and has already ensnared Dimmesdale.

Pearl's intuitive outburst identifies Chillingworth as the 'Black Man' (the devil) and insightfully notes that he has already gained control over the minister, while boasting that he cannot capture her.

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