

FREE PRINTABLE QUIZ

The Scarlet Letter

Chapter 12

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 12. Answers begin on the answer key page.

PLOT & EVENT

1. Where had Hester Prynne been immediately prior to encountering Mr. Dimmesdale on the scaffold in the middle of the night?

- A. Watching at the deathbed of Governor Winthrop and taking his measurement for a robe
- B. Gathering medicinal herbs with Mistress Hibbins in the surrounding forest
- C. Embroidering liturgical vestments inside the meeting-house beneath the balcony
- D. Assisting Roger Chillingworth in preparing remedies at his laboratory

PLOT & EVENT

2. What article belonging to Arthur Dimmesdale is discovered on the scaffold the next morning and returned to him after his sermon?

- A. A black glove
- B. A leather-bound Bible
- C. A communion band
- D. A velvet skullcap

CHARACTER

3. Why does Mr. Dimmesdale refuse Pearl's request to stand with her and Hester at noon the following day?

- A. He is overwhelmed by the dread of public exposure and humiliation before the community.
- B. He is under strict instructions from Roger Chillingworth to avoid public association with them.
- C. He fears that missing his study time will compromise the delivery of his Sabbath discourse.
- D. He believes that Hester has not shown genuine repentance for her past sins.

CHARACTER

4. Why does Pearl mock Dimmesdale with gibberish instead of revealing Roger Chillingworth's identity when the minister pleads with her?

- A. She is rebuking the minister because he refused to stand boldly and openly with them in the daylight.
- B. She is disoriented and terrified by the blinding glare of the meteor overhead.
- C. She has sworn a solemn promise to Hester never to speak the physician's true name.
- D. She believes Chillingworth is a supernatural spirit whose name is forbidden to human tongue.

MICRO-DETAIL

5. What prompts Mistress Hibbins to extinguish her lamp and withdraw from her window after hearing Dimmesdale's midnight shriek?

- A. Noticing the illuminated lamp of Governor Bellingham at an adjacent window
- B. Hearing the slow footsteps of Father Wilson making his way through the street
- C. Seeing the bright meteor light up the midnight sky from zenith to horizon
- D. Recognizing Arthur Dimmesdale standing exposed upon the public scaffold

MICRO-DETAIL

6. What physical sensation does Dimmesdale experience the instant he takes Pearl's hand on the scaffold?

- A. A rush of new vital warmth and energy coursing through his veins
- B. A sudden burning agony radiating across the flesh of his chest
- C. A deep, paralyzing numbness that freezes his limbs and voice
- D. A wave of faintness and nausea that causes him to stumble

MICRO-DETAIL

7. According to the sexton, how did the Puritan community interpret the great red letter 'A' seen in the midnight sky?

- A. As representing 'Angel,' commemorating the late Governor Winthrop's ascent to heaven
- B. As signifying 'Adultery,' warning the town of an unconfessed sinner in their midst
- C. As denoting 'Affliction,' prefiguring an oncoming epidemic of pestilence
- D. As standing for 'Armor,' forecasting military conflict and Indian warfare

ANALYTICAL

8. How does the narrator analyze Dimmesdale's perception of the meteor shaping itself into an immense scarlet letter in the sky?

- A.** As an egotistical delusion produced by a diseased mind projecting its private guilt onto nature
- B.** As an actual, objective divine miracle engineered to force an unrepentant sinner to confess
- C.** As a hypnotic hallucination cast upon the town by Roger Chillingworth's necromancy
- D.** As a collective optical illusion caused by the dense atmospheric fog over the settlement

ANALYTICAL

9. What psychological reaction does the narrator describe when Dimmesdale imagines greeting Father Wilson and envisions the town discovering him on the scaffold?

- A.** An involuntary recourse to a lurid and grisly sense of humor to cope with intense anxiety
- B.** A sudden onset of religious mania that leads him to embrace his impending martyrdom
- C.** A complete detachment from reality that blinds him to the actual passage of time
- D.** A surge of bitter resentment toward the hypocrisy of the town's elder magistrates

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

He had been driven hither by the impulse of that Remorse which dogged him everywhere, and whose own sister and closely linked companion was that Cowardice which invariably drew him back, with her tremulous gripe, just when the other impulse had hurried him to the verge of a disclosure. Poor, miserable man! what right had infirmity like his to burden itself with crime? Crime is for the iron-nerved, who have their choice either to endure it, or, if it press too hard, to exert their fierce and savage strength for a good purpose, and fling it off at once!

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

10. According to this passage, what psychological forces dictate Dimmesdale's inability to resolve his inner turmoil?

- A. The constant battle between an urge toward remorseful confession and a paralyzing cowardice
- B. The conflict between his intellectual pride and his obligation to Puritan dogma
- C. The tension between his secret love for Hester and his hatred for Roger Chillingworth
- D. His physical frailty competing against his aspiration to attain ministerial martyrdom

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

"It was found," said the sexton, "this morning, on the scaffold where evil-doers are set up to public shame. Satan dropped it there, I take it, intending a scurrilous jest against your reverence. But, indeed, he was blind and foolish, as he ever and always is. A pure hand needs no glove to cover it!"

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

11. What central dramatic irony is expressed in the sexton's remarks regarding the minister's glove?

- A. The sexton assumes Satan dropped the glove to mock Dimmesdale's spotless purity, unaware the minister himself stood there in guilt.
- B. The sexton believes the scaffold is reserved for common thieves, ignorant of Hester Prynne's previous public punishment.
- C. The sexton suspects Roger Chillingworth of witchcraft while openly venerating Governor Bellingham.
- D. The sexton assumes Dimmesdale lost the glove while visiting the sick, unaware that Dimmesdale had spent the night in his closet.

Answer key

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

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

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Answers explained

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

1. A. Watching at the deathbed of Governor Winthrop and taking his measurement for a robe

Hester explains to Dimmesdale that she has just come from Governor Winthrop's deathbed, where she was taking his measurement for a shroud/robe.

2. A. A black glove

Following his Sabbath sermon, the church sexton hands Dimmesdale his black glove, which was found on the scaffold earlier that morning.

3. A. He is overwhelmed by the dread of public exposure and humiliation before the community.

When Pearl asks him to stand openly at noontide, the minister's long-standing fear and anguish over public exposure immediately return, compelling him to postpone their joint appearance until Judgment Day.

4. A. She is rebuking the minister because he refused to stand boldly and openly with them in the daylight.

Pearl rebuffs Dimmesdale's urgent question by calling him out for his cowardice, stating he was neither bold nor true because he refused to hold their hands at noon.

5. A. Noticing the illuminated lamp of Governor Bellingham at an adjacent window

After thrusting her head out to investigate the sound, Mistress Hibbins spots the gleam of Governor Bellingham's lamp and promptly puts out her own lamp before disappearing.

6. A. A rush of new vital warmth and energy coursing through his veins

Holding hands with Hester and Pearl completes an 'electric chain,' causing a sudden surge of life and warmth to flood Dimmesdale's half-torpid body.

7. A. As representing 'Angel,' commemorating the late Governor Winthrop's ascent to heaven

The sexton tells Dimmesdale that the town interpreted the meteor's red 'A' as 'Angel,' believing it heralded Governor Winthrop's entrance into heaven.

8. A. As an egotistical delusion produced by a diseased mind projecting its private guilt onto nature

The narrator explains that the meteor itself had no such clear shape; rather, Dimmesdale's morbid, guilt-ridden self-contemplation extended his personal torment over the entire firmament.

9. A. An involuntary recourse to a lurid and grisly sense of humor to cope with intense anxiety

The narrator notes that during these moments of severe dread, Dimmesdale's mind involuntarily attempts to relieve itself through a 'lurid playfulness' and 'grisly sense of the humorous.'

10. A. The constant battle between an urge toward remorseful confession and a paralyzing cowardice

The passage depicts Remorse pushing Dimmesdale to the verge of open disclosure while Cowardice continually seizes him and pulls him back, leaving him trapped in guilt.

11. A. The sexton assumes Satan dropped the glove to mock Dimmesdale's spotless purity, unaware the minister himself stood there in guilt.

The dramatic irony lies in the sexton's belief that Dimmesdale's hand is purely innocent and that Satan maliciously placed the glove on the scaffold, whereas Dimmesdale actually dropped it while standing in secret, guilty vigil.

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