

FREE PRINTABLE QUIZ

The Scarlet Letter

Chapter 14

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 14. Answers begin on the answer key page.

PLOT & EVENT

1. What news does Roger Chillingworth convey to Hester when she meets him near the water?

- A. The magistrates have recently debated whether the scarlet letter may safely be removed from her bosom.
- B. The council has decided to formally banish Arthur Dimmesdale from the colony.
- C. The town magistrates have demanded that Hester surrender Pearl into the care of another household.
- D. The elders have ordered Chillingworth to stop providing medical care to the ailing minister.

PLOT & EVENT

2. What explicit intention does Hester declare to Chillingworth during their conversation?

- A. She plans to break her promise of secrecy and reveal his true identity to Dimmesdale.
- B. She intends to petition the magistrates for Chillingworth's immediate banishment.
- C. She intends to leave the settlement with Pearl and return to Europe immediately.
- D. She intends to plead publicly before the congregation for Dimmesdale's forgiveness.

CHARACTER

3. Why does Hester look back with regret on the oath of secrecy she swore to Chillingworth seven years earlier?

- A. She feels that keeping the secret violated her remaining duty to Dimmesdale and enabled Chillingworth's torment of him.
- B. She fears the magistrates will impose harsher penalties if they discover she concealed her husband's identity.
- C. She realizes the oath prevented her from securing financial support for Pearl's upbringing.
- D. She believes the secret gave Chillingworth legal authority to take Pearl away from her.

CHARACTER

4. How does Chillingworth justify his refusal when Hester urges him to forgive Dimmesdale?

- A. He attributes all their actions and suffering to an inescapable, fatalistic dark necessity.
- B. He claims that the Puritan laws strictly forbid showing mercy to adulterers.
- C. He asserts that Dimmesdale has actively plotted to destroy his medical practice.
- D. He argues that Hester alone possesses the spiritual authority to grant forgiveness.

MICRO-DETAIL

5. What does Pearl do when she gazes into the tidal pool while Hester speaks with Chillingworth?

- A. She invites her reflected image to play and wades in mid-leg deep to meet it.
- B. She uses sharp sea-shells to engrave her own name into the wet sand.
- C. She collects floating sea-weed to weave a garland for her mother.
- D. She tries to capture tiny fish swimming among the sea-weed.

MICRO-DETAIL

6. When Hester asks why Chillingworth did not seek direct revenge against her, what reason does he give?

- A. He left her punishment entirely to the scarlet letter itself.
- B. He believed her public confession sufficiently restored his honor.
- C. He claimed he still held too much genuine affection to harm her.
- D. He feared that harming her would provoke the magistrates against him.

MICRO-DETAIL

7. How does Chillingworth describe his former life and character from nine years prior?

- A. As a quiet, studious, and peaceful life dedicated to increasing knowledge and advancing human welfare.
- B. As an intensely ambitious career focused on gaining wealth and influence among European royalty.
- C. As a bitter and resentful existence spent wandering without purpose across foreign lands.
- D. As a strictly pious life committed to religious leadership and theological debates.

ANALYTICAL

8. What literary purpose is served by the description of the 'glare of red light' that periodically emanates from Chillingworth's eyes?

- A. It symbolizes the smouldering demonic malice consuming his soul and transforming his humanity.
- B. It emphasizes the physical strain and eye fatigue caused by gathering herbs in dim light.
- C. It highlights his superior intellectual clarity and scientific enlightenment.
- D. It suggests that he is suffering from a contagious physical illness contracted in the wilderness.

ANALYTICAL

9. What does Chillingworth's closing exclamation, 'Let the black flower blossom as it may!' primarily convey?

- A. A surrender to fatalism that abdicates moral responsibility for the destructive revenge he pursues.
- B. A literal reference to the toxic plants he must gather to concoct a lethal draught.
- C. A hopeful assertion that beauty will eventually emerge from the misery surrounding the scarlet letter.
- D. A sarcastic dismissal of Hester's botanical knowledge and skill in embroidery.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

"It lies not in the pleasure of the magistrates to take off this badge," calmly replied Hester. "Were I worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature, or be transformed into something that should speak a different purport."

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

10. According to Hester in this excerpt, how can the scarlet letter truly be removed or lose its power?

- A. Only through internal, natural, or spiritual transformation, rather than by an earthly decree of the magistrates.
- B. Only by appealing to a higher secular court beyond the local Puritan magistrates.
- C. Only when Arthur Dimmesdale publicly wears a matching badge before the community.
- D. Only when Pearl reaches adulthood and no longer needs maternal protection.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

The unfortunate physician, while uttering these words, lifted his hands with a look of horror, as if he had beheld some frightful shape, which he could not recognize, usurping the place of his own image in a glass. It was one of those moments—which sometimes occur only at the interval of years—when a man’s moral aspect is faithfully revealed to his mind’s eye. Not improbably, he had never before viewed himself as he did now.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

11. What psychological insight does this passage reveal about Chillingworth's self-perception?

- A.** He experiences a rare and startling moment of insight where he confronts his own moral degeneration.
- B.** He is terrified because he believes a supernatural phantom is standing behind him on the beach.
- C.** He fears that the townspeople have discovered his medical deception and will place him on trial.
- D.** He realizes that his physical eyesight has become irreparably damaged by his herb studies.

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. The magistrates have recently debated whether the scarlet letter may safely be removed from her bosom.

Chillingworth informs Hester that a magistrate whispered to him that the council had been debating whether the scarlet letter might be removed from her bosom.

2. A. She plans to break her promise of secrecy and reveal his true identity to Dimmesdale.

Hester firmly states that she must break the oath of silence she made seven years ago so that the minister will recognize Chillingworth's true character.

3. A. She feels that keeping the secret violated her remaining duty to Dimmesdale and enabled Chillingworth's torment of him.

Hester explains that while she cast off obligations to society, she retained a duty to Dimmesdale, which she feels she betrayed by enabling Chillingworth to torture him unsuspected.

4. A. He attributes all their actions and suffering to an inescapable, fatalistic dark necessity.

Chillingworth tells Hester that he lacks the power to pardon, invoking an old fatalistic belief that everything that has occurred is governed by 'dark necessity.'

5. A. She invites her reflected image to play and wades in mid-leg deep to meet it.

The text describes Pearl seeing her reflection in the tidal pool, inviting the visionary child to take her hand, and stepping mid-leg deep into the water.

6. A. He left her punishment entirely to the scarlet letter itself.

Chillingworth explicitly tells Hester, 'I have left thee to the scarlet letter,' noting that if the letter has not avenged him, he can do no more.

7. A. As a quiet, studious, and peaceful life dedicated to increasing knowledge and advancing human welfare.

Chillingworth looks back on his life nine years ago as earnest, studious, quiet, and peaceful, devoted to knowledge and the advancement of human welfare.

8. A. It symbolizes the smouldering demonic malice consuming his soul and transforming his humanity.

The red light emerging from Chillingworth's eyes visualizes the internal corruption and 'devil's office' that has transformed the studious scholar into a fiend.

9. A. A surrender to fatalism that abdicates moral responsibility for the destructive revenge he pursues.

The 'black flower' metaphor encapsulates Chillingworth's belief that their tragedy is an unalterable fate ('dark necessity'), allowing him to rationalize his cruelty as destiny.

10. A. Only through internal, natural, or spiritual transformation, rather than by an earthly decree of the magistrates.

Hester states that the magistrates do not have the genuine power to remove the badge; if she were truly worthy to be free of it, it would fall away of its own nature or transform in meaning.

11. A. He experiences a rare and startling moment of insight where he confronts his own moral degeneration.

The passage highlights a rare moment of clarity in which Chillingworth's true 'moral aspect' is revealed to his mind's eye, causing him to recoil with horror at the fiend he has become.

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