

FREE PRINTABLE QUIZ

The Scarlet Letter

Chapter 15

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 15. Answers begin on the answer key page.

PLOT & EVENT

1. What causes Pearl to abruptly stop her seashore game of throwing pebbles at beach-birds?

- A. She notices her mother calling her back from the water's edge.
- B. She sees that a pebble has struck a small bird and broken its wing.
- C. She loses her footing among the rocks and drops her apron of stones.
- D. She becomes distracted by an approaching jellyfish stranded in the sand.

PLOT & EVENT

2. How does Hester initially evade Pearl's persistent inquiries about why she wears the scarlet letter?

- A. She claims that the magistrate forced her to wear it as a punishment for vanity.
- B. She tells Pearl that she wears the letter purely for the sake of its gold thread.
- C. She explains that Roger Chillingworth designed the embroidery as a family crest.
- D. She pretends not to hear Pearl and directs her attention toward the incoming tide.

CHARACTER

3. Why does Hester view her past marriage to Roger Chillingworth as her 'crime most to be repented of'?

- A. She believes she wronged him by squandering his scholar's fortune on superficial comforts.
- B. She regrets convincing him to leave his European university to relocate to the Massachusetts colony.
- C. She resents having allowed herself to reciprocate his cold affection and pretend she was happy beside him.
- D. She fears that her deceitful vows condemned his soul to demonic corruption in the wilderness.

CHARACTER

4. What realization temporarily prompts Hester to consider confiding her secret griefs to Pearl?

- A. She realizes Arthur Dimmesdale has completely abandoned both of them to their fate.
- B. She senses Pearl is beginning to exhibit genuine remorse for her mischievous behavior.
- C. She perceives in Pearl an earnest maturity and the potential capacity for true friendship and sympathy.
- D. She fears that Roger Chillingworth will manipulate Pearl if Hester does not explain the truth first.

MICRO-DETAIL

5. When Pearl creates an imitation of her mother's scarlet letter using eel-grass, what color is her version?

- A. Fresh green
- B. Dull gray
- C. Deep brown
- D. Pale white

MICRO-DETAIL

6. As Hester watches Chillingworth depart into the woods, what does she fantastically imagine happening beneath his footsteps?

- A. Flames bursting from the soil to consume his tracks
- B. The green grass turning withered and brown from his touch
- C. Coiling serpents emerging from the ground to guide his path
- D. The earth sinking into deep pits filled with stagnant seawater

MICRO-DETAIL

7. What threat does Hester make to Pearl the following morning when Pearl continues questioning her about the minister?

- A. To banish her to live alone in the forest
- B. To shut her into the dark closet
- C. To take away her mermaid garments
- D. To send her to Master Dimmesdale for catechism

ANALYTICAL

8. How does the narrator interpret the moral consequence of Hester's lie to Pearl regarding the scarlet letter?

- A. It proves Hester has finally freed herself from the Puritan magistrates' authority.
- B. It suggests that a protective guardian spirit or moral anchor has abandoned her.
- C. It indicates that Hester has adopted Chillingworth's cunning methods of deception.
- D. It reveals that Pearl's innocence has successfully shielded Hester from guilt.

ANALYTICAL

9. What thematic contrast is established between Pearl's green letter 'A' and Hester's embroidered scarlet letter?

- A. Pearl's letter reflects untamed nature and innocence, contrasting with the social guilt and man-made sin of Hester's emblem.
- B. Pearl's letter symbolizes sea-born witchcraft, contrasting with the ecclesiastical purity represented by Hester's embroidery.
- C. Pearl's letter represents scholarly herbalism, contrasting with the earthly passion associated with Hester's design.
- D. Pearl's letter signifies physical mortality, contrasting with the eternal damnation promised by Hester's punishment.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

She possessed affections, too, though hitherto acrid and disagreeable, as are the richest flavors of unripe fruit. With all these sterling attributes, thought Hester, the evil which she inherited from her mother must be great indeed, if a noble woman do not grow out of this elfish child.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

10. In the excerpt, what metaphor does the narrator employ to characterize Pearl's emerging affections?

- A. The stormy surge of a tidal wave
- B. The acrid and disagreeable taste of unripe fruit
- C. The sharp thorns of a wild briar rose
- D. The fleeting warmth of winter sunshine

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

Would he not suddenly sink into the earth, leaving a barren and blasted spot, where, in due course of time, would be seen deadly nightshade, dogwood, henbane, and whatever else of vegetable wickedness the climate could produce, all flourishing with hideous luxuriance?

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

11. Which botanical imagery in the excerpt reinforces Hester's perception of Chillingworth as an embodiment of moral corruption?

- A.** Drifting eel-grass and withered birch-bark
- B.** Deadly nightshade, dogwood, and henbane
- C.** Barren sea-weed and crushed snail-shells
- D.** Poisonous mushrooms and tangled brier roots

Answer key

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

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

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Answers explained

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

1. B. She sees that a pebble has struck a small bird and broken its wing.

Pearl discontinues pelting the beach-birds when she realizes she has injured a gray bird with a white breast, feeling grief over harming a creature as wild as herself.

2. B. She tells Pearl that she wears the letter purely for the sake of its gold thread.

Unwilling to pay the price of true honesty, Hester tells Pearl that she wears the scarlet letter solely for its decorative gold-thread, marking the first time in seven years she has lied about the symbol.

3. C. She resents having allowed herself to reciprocate his cold affection and pretend she was happy beside him.

Hester considers her greatest sin to be tolerating and reciprocating Chillingworth's lukewarm grasp and letting him persuade her that their passionless union was true happiness.

4. C. She perceives in Pearl an earnest maturity and the potential capacity for true friendship and sympathy.

Hester observes an unprecedented earnestness in Pearl's gaze and considers whether Pearl's precocity means she is old enough to become a trusted companion and confidante.

5. A. Fresh green

Pearl uses fresh green eel-grass from the seashore to fashion her own letter 'A' upon her bosom to mimic her mother's emblem.

6. B. The green grass turning withered and brown from his touch

Hester looks after Chillingworth to see if the tender spring grass will become blighted, sere, and brown where he steps.

7. B. To shut her into the dark closet

Losing her temper at Pearl's unrelenting inquiries, Hester speaks with uncharacteristic sharpness and threatens to lock her into the dark closet.

8. B. It suggests that a protective guardian spirit or moral anchor has abandoned her.

The narrator reflects that by being false to the letter's significance, Hester may have driven away the stern guardian spirit that had overseen her heart during her seven years of penance.

9. A. Pearl's letter reflects untamed nature and innocence, contrasting with the social guilt and man-made sin of Hester's emblem.

The green hue of Pearl's eel-grass letter connects her to the natural, unfallen vitality of the sea and woods, in contrast to the rigid, artificial, and guilt-laden scarlet letter imposed by society.

10. B. The acrid and disagreeable taste of unripe fruit

The narrator describes Pearl's fledgling affections as currently sharp and unpalatable, comparing them directly to the rich yet disagreeable flavors found in unripe fruit.

11. B. Deadly nightshade, dogwood, and henbane

Hester imagines the earth responding to Chillingworth's malice by producing noxious and deadly plants such as nightshade, dogwood, and henbane in his wake.

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