

FREE PRINTABLE QUIZ

The Scarlet Letter

Chapter 3

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.
- Written from LumLysia's study edition of the book — not scraped summaries.

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The quiz

The Scarlet Letter — Chapter 3. Answers begin on the answer key page.

PLOT & EVENT

1. According to the stranger's conversation with the townsman, why has he arrived in Boston in the company of a Native American?

- A. He was shipwrecked on the coast and hired a guide to escort him to the settlement.
- B. He was held captive by southern tribes and brought to town to be redeemed.
- C. He came as a missionary diplomat seeking trade agreements with the colony.
- D. He traveled across the wilderness to deliver news regarding Master Prynne.

PLOT & EVENT

2. What sentence did the Massachusetts magistrates decide to impose on Hester Prynne instead of the death penalty?

- A. Perpetual banishment to the wilderness following a public whipping.
- B. Three years of solitary confinement in the town jail without visitors.
- C. Three hours on the pillory platform and wearing a mark of shame for life.
- D. Public confession in church followed by five years of heavy fines.

CHARACTER

3. Why does Hester Prynne find a strange sense of shelter in standing before the staring multitude on the scaffold?

- A. She believes the crowd's sympathy will force the magistrates to commute her sentence.
- B. The public barrier separates her from having to face the newly arrived stranger alone.
- C. The open air and sunlight ease the pain of her newborn infant.
- D. She hopes the biological father will emerge from the crowd to rescue her.

CHARACTER

4. What objection had Arthur Dimmesdale previously raised to Reverend Wilson regarding compelling Hester to confess in public?

- A. He claimed that forcing a woman to expose her heart's secrets before a large crowd violated her nature.
- B. He argued that Hester had already repented sufficiently during her long imprisonment.
- C. He insisted that only the civil magistrates, not the clergy, possessed jurisdiction over confession.
- D. He asserted that the child was too frail to endure the noise of a public inquisitorial assembly.

MICRO-DETAIL

5. What distinct physical feature enables Hester to recognize the white stranger on the edge of the crowd despite his attempts to disguise it?

- A. A deep scar across his forehead extending down his furrowed cheek.
- B. A peculiar slight deformity in which one shoulder rises higher than the other.
- C. A missing finger on the hand he raises to signal silence.
- D. An unusually tall and lanky frame draped in Native American beads.

MICRO-DETAIL

6. What garments and ornamentation distinguish Governor Bellingham as he sits witnessing the scene from the balcony?

- A. A plain wool cloak with iron clasps and an unadorned felt hat.
- B. A dark feather in his hat, embroidery on his cloak, and a black velvet tunic.
- C. A scarlet sash over a steel breastplate with an engraved crest.
- D. A white wig beneath a scholar's skull-cap and a simple black robe.

MICRO-DETAIL

7. What physical gesture does Dimmesdale make immediately after Hester refuses to reveal the father's name?

- A. He raises his hands to heaven in an outspoken condemnation of her stubbornness.
- B. He covers his eyes to conceal tears while weeping openly on the balcony rail.
- C. He holds his hand over his heart and draws back with a long respiration.
- D. He points his trembling finger down at Hester and commands the jailer forward.

ANALYTICAL

8. How does the narrator's comparison of Reverend Wilson to 'darkly engraved portraits' prefixed to old sermon books emphasize the clergy's limitation?

- A. It highlights their intellectual vanity and constant desire for artistic immortality.
- B. It emphasizes their flat, archaic rigidity and inability to properly comprehend complex human emotion.
- C. It underscores their physical frailty compared to the vigorous magistrates.
- D. It suggests that their theological knowledge was purely decorative and unread.

ANALYTICAL

9. How does Dimmesdale's public plea for Hester to name her 'fellow-sinner' create dramatic irony in the chapter?

- A. His passionate speech warns against living a lie of hypocrisy, the exact burden he carries if he is her partner.
- B. His speech subtly promises Hester that the church will grant her complete legal exoneration if she speaks.
- C. He commands Hester to name the stranger standing at the perimeter of the crowd.
- D. He inadvertently reveals to Governor Bellingham that John Wilson orchestrated the entire scandal.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one little pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight. His face darkened with some powerful emotion, which, nevertheless, he so instantaneously controlled by an effort of his will, that, save at a single moment, its expression might have passed for calmness.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

10. What does the simile comparing the stranger's fleeting expression to a snake reveal about his character?

- A. He possesses an underlying malice and venomous intensity that he can swiftly suppress under a veneer of calm.
- B. He suffers from a recurring neurological affliction contracted during his wilderness captivity.
- C. He intends to poison the town magistrates to exact revenge for their treatment of Hester.
- D. He is terrified of the Puritan authorities and seeks an immediate escape route.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

Hester Prynne, meanwhile, kept her place upon the pedestal of shame, with glazed eyes, and an air of weary indifference. She had borne, that morning, all that nature could endure; and as her temperament was not of the order that escapes from too intense suffering by a swoon, her spirit could only shelter itself beneath a stony crust of insensibility, while the faculties of animal life remained entire.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

11. Based on the passage, what psychological defense does Hester adopt to survive the remainder of her public ordeal?

- A.** She enters an ecstatic religious trance where she visualizes heavenly angels.
- B.** She retreats behind an unfeeling, protective numbness while her physical senses persist.
- C.** She faints repeatedly to avoid listening to the minister's condemning sermon.
- D.** She openly mocks the preacher's words to demonstrate her disdain for the law.

Answer key

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

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

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Answers explained

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

1. B. He was held captive by southern tribes and brought to town to be redeemed.

The stranger explains that he suffered mishaps by sea and land, was held captive among heathen people to the south, and was brought to Boston by his companion to be ransomed.

2. C. Three hours on the pillory platform and wearing a mark of shame for life.

The townsman explains that out of tenderness and considering her circumstances, the magistrates sentenced her to stand three hours on the pillory and wear the scarlet mark for the rest of her life.

3. B. The public barrier separates her from having to face the newly arrived stranger alone.

Hester feels that the immense crowd acts as a barrier, shielding her from an intimate, dreadful one-on-one confrontation with the stranger whom she recognizes.

4. A. He claimed that forcing a woman to expose her heart's secrets before a large crowd violated her nature.

Wilson recounts that Dimmesdale opposed questioning Hester publicly because he felt it wronged a woman's nature to compel her to bare her secret grief and shame before the multitude.

5. B. A peculiar slight deformity in which one shoulder rises higher than the other.

Hester observes that although he attempts to hide it with his heterogeneous clothing, one of the man's shoulders is visibly higher than the other.

6. B. A dark feather in his hat, embroidery on his cloak, and a black velvet tunic.

The text details Bellingham's attire explicitly: a dark feather in his hat, embroidered border on his cloak, and a black velvet tunic beneath.

7. C. He holds his hand over his heart and draws back with a long respiration.

Upon hearing Hester's refusal, Dimmesdale leans over the balcony with his hand over his heart and exhales deeply, whispering about the strength of a woman's heart.

8. B. It emphasizes their flat, archaic rigidity and inability to properly comprehend complex human emotion.

By likening Wilson to an antique engraved portrait blinking uncomfortably in the sunlight, Hawthorne illustrates how dogmatic, bookish Puritan elders lack the living empathy needed to navigate human passion and suffering.

9. A. His passionate speech warns against living a lie of hypocrisy, the exact burden he carries if he is her partner.

The speech is fraught with dramatic irony as Dimmesdale eloquently warns that hiding a guilty heart compels one to 'add hypocrisy to sin,' articulating his own emotional and moral plight.

10. A. He possesses an underlying malice and venomous intensity that he can swiftly suppress under a veneer of calm.

The serpentine imagery indicates deep-seated malice and sinister emotional turmoil that is immediately submerged beneath an iron, disciplined composure.

11. B. She retreats behind an unfeeling, protective numbness while her physical senses persist.

Because she does not faint, Hester's mind retreats beneath a 'stony crust of insensibility' and weary indifference to endure the overwhelming barrage of public condemnation.

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