

FREE PRINTABLE QUIZ

The Scarlet Letter

Chapter 6

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 6. Answers begin on the answer key page.

PLOT & EVENT

1. When the children of the settlement gather near Pearl in the town, how does she react toward them?

- A. She remains silent and hurries to hide behind her mother's skirts.
- B. She flies into a puny wrath, flinging stones and shouting shrill, incoherent cries.
- C. She eagerly tries to participate in their games of scourging Quakers and fighting Indians.
- D. She politely answers their inquiries before Hester pulls her away.

PLOT & EVENT

2. During the summer afternoon game in the cottage, what specific target does Pearl pelt with wild-flowers?

- A. The embroidered scarlet letter fastened to Hester's bosom
- B. The small wooden cradle standing in the corner of the cottage
- C. The dark bonnet that conceals Hester's glossy hair
- D. The doorway opening out toward the surrounding forest

CHARACTER

3. Why does Hester bestow the name 'Pearl' upon her newborn child?

- A. Because the infant displays a calm, pale, and tranquil complexion
- B. Because she was purchased at great price and is her mother's only treasure
- C. To fulfill a scriptural injunction given to her by the Puritan magistrates
- D. To symbolize a hope that the child will remain completely unstained by sin

CHARACTER

4. What characterizes Hester's choice regarding how she dresses Pearl for the public eye?

- A. She dresses her in coarse, rustic weeds to demonstrate penitence to the colony.
- B. She purchases the richest tissues and allows her imagination full play in decorating Pearl's garments.
- C. She clothes her strictly in the dark, severe uniforms mandated by Puritan law.
- D. She dresses her in plain hand-spun wool to avoid drawing unnecessary attention in town.

MICRO-DETAIL

5. What was the very first object in her life of which Pearl appeared to become consciously aware?

- A. The affectionate smile on her mother's face
- B. The bright sunlight coming through the cottage window
- C. The gold embroidery of the scarlet letter on Hester's chest
- D. The reflection of her own eyes in the cradle mirror

MICRO-DETAIL

6. In Pearl's solitary imaginative play, how are the solemn pine trees and garden weeds cast?

- A. The pine trees are guardian spirits, and the weeds are wild animals.
- B. The pine trees represent Puritan elders, and the uprooted weeds are their children.
- C. The pine trees represent prison walls, and the weeds are town magistrates.
- D. The pine trees are forest demons, and the weeds are innocent martyrs.

MICRO-DETAIL

7. When Hester tells Pearl that her 'Heavenly Father sent thee,' how does the child respond?

- A. She touches the scarlet letter and positively asserts that she has no Heavenly Father.
- B. She breaks into a rage of grief and begs Hester never to mention God again.
- C. She asks whether her Heavenly Father will allow her to return to Eden.
- D. She falls silent and recites a scriptural verse she heard from the elders.

ANALYTICAL

8. How does the allusion to 'sowing broadcast the dragon's teeth' characterize Pearl's inner nature?

- A. It emphasizes her agricultural skill in cultivating wild plants near the cottage.
- B. It conveys her persistent perception of the world as an enemy against whom she must wage battle.
- C. It reveals her hidden desire to be accepted by the magistrate's household.
- D. It illustrates her profound remorse for the shame her birth brought upon Hester.

ANALYTICAL

9. According to the narrator, how is Hester's emotional turmoil during pregnancy reflected in Pearl's character?

- A.** It made Pearl completely passive, melancholic, and incapable of asserting her will.
- B.** It caused Pearl to inherit the chaotic, defiant, and conflicted warfare of Hester's own spirit.
- C.** It resulted in Pearl possessing an unyielding obedience to civil and religious laws.
- D.** It shielded Pearl from ever experiencing passion, anger, or erratic changes of temper.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

She saw the children of the settlement, on the grassy margin of the street, or at the domestic thresholds, disporting themselves in such grim fashion as the Puritanic nurture would permit; playing at going to church, perchance; or at scourging Quakers; or taking scalps in a sham-fight with the Indians; or scaring one another with freaks of imitative witchcraft.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

10. What does the narrator's portrayal of the Puritan children's games in this passage reveal about their upbringing?

- A.** Their recreation naturally reflects and internalizes the harsh intolerance and violence of Puritan culture.
- B.** They maintain an innocent detachment from the religious and political conflicts of adult society.
- C.** Their pastimes show a deep rebellion against the strict rules established by their parents.
- D.** They are encouraged to engage in peaceful and inclusive community activities.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

It was a look so intelligent, yet inexplicable, so perverse, sometimes so malicious, but generally accompanied by a wild flow of spirits, that Hester could not help questioning, at such moments, whether Pearl were a human child. She seemed rather an airy sprite, which, after playing its fantastic sports for a little while upon the cottage floor, would flit away with a mocking smile.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

11. Based on this passage, how does Pearl's 'peculiar look' emotionally affect Hester?

- A.** It reassures Hester that Pearl possesses a normal, lighthearted childish innocence.
- B.** It prompts Hester to question Pearl's humanity and fear that the child is an elusive, mocking spirit.
- C.** It angers Hester into using severe physical discipline and Scriptural rebuke.
- D.** It convinces Hester that Pearl will soon integrate smoothly into the village community.

Answer key

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

1. B	2. A	3. B	4. B	5. C
6. B	7. A	8. B	9. B	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. She flies into a puny wrath, flinging stones and shouting shrill, incoherent cries.

When other children gather around her, Pearl does not seek acquaintance; instead, she becomes furious, throwing stones and uttering shrill cries that sound like witch anathemas to Hester.

2. A. The embroidered scarlet letter fastened to Hester's bosom

Pearl entertains herself by gathering wild-flowers and throwing them directly at Hester's breast, dancing whenever she hits the scarlet letter.

3. B. Because she was purchased at great price and is her mother's only treasure

Hester names her daughter 'Pearl' not for a calm or pale physical aspect, but because she was bought with all Hester had—her mother's sole treasure of great price.

4. B. She purchases the richest tissues and allows her imagination full play in decorating Pearl's garments.

Rather than dressing Pearl in plain or rustic clothes, Hester buys the finest fabrics available and indulges her artistic imagination in crafting magnificent attire.

5. C. The gold embroidery of the scarlet letter on Hester's chest

The text notes that the first object Pearl ever seemed to notice was not a mother's smile, but the glittering gold embroidery of the scarlet letter.

6. B. The pine trees represent Puritan elders, and the uprooted weeds are their children.

During her play, Pearl envisions the somber pine trees as Puritan elders, while treating the ugliest garden weeds as their children, whom she uproots and smites mercilessly.

7. A. She touches the scarlet letter and positively asserts that she has no Heavenly Father.

Pearl touches the scarlet letter with her forefinger and firmly denies having a Heavenly Father, asserting that He did not send her.

8. B. It conveys her persistent perception of the world as an enemy against whom she must wage battle.

The classical allusion to the dragon's teeth (which sprang up as armed soldiers) illustrates Pearl's innate hostility; she never creates imaginary friends, only adversaries to fight.

9. B. It caused Pearl to inherit the chaotic, defiant, and conflicted warfare of Hester's own spirit.

The narrator explains that Hester's impassioned and conflicted state during gestation transmitted to Pearl her defiant temper, desperate moods, and internal moral disorder.

10. A. Their recreation naturally reflects and internalizes the harsh intolerance and violence of Puritan culture.

The grim nature of their games—scourging Quakers, fighting Indians, imitating witchcraft—demonstrates how thoroughly the children reflect the severe, punitive, and intolerant atmosphere of Puritan society.

11. B. It prompts Hester to question Pearl's humanity and fear that the child is an elusive, mocking spirit.

The inexplicable, mocking, and sprite-like expression in Pearl's eyes leads Hester to question whether her daughter is truly human or an intangible, otherworldly spirit.

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