

FREE PRINTABLE QUIZ

The Scarlet Letter

Chapter 8

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 8. Answers begin on the answer key page.

PLOT & EVENT

1. What resolution do the Puritan authorities reach regarding Pearl's custody following Dimmesdale's intercession?

- A. Governor Bellingham permits Pearl to stay with Hester, provided she undergoes catechism reviews and attends school and religious meetings.
- B. Reverend Wilson takes temporary guardianship of Pearl until Hester proves herself capable of instructing the child in Scripture.
- C. Governor Bellingham orders Pearl to be placed in an apprentice home under the supervision of the local tithing-men.
- D. The magistrates decide to defer their ruling until Roger Chillingworth completes a physical and psychological assessment of Pearl.

PLOT & EVENT

2. What happens immediately after Hester and Pearl leave Governor Bellingham's mansion?

- A. Roger Chillingworth follows them into the street to demand the identity of Pearl's father.
- B. Mistress Hibbins invites Hester to join a gathering with the Black Man in the forest, which Hester rejects.
- C. A hostile crowd of townspeople gathers outside the gate to mock Pearl's crimson attire.
- D. Reverend Dimmesdale overtakes Hester on the road to caution her against defying the magistrates.

CHARACTER

3. Why does Hester turn specifically to Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale to defend her parental rights?

- A. She knows he owes her a political favor for shielding him from Governor Bellingham's censure.
- B. She believes that as her spiritual pastor, he understands her soul and possesses sympathies the other men lack.
- C. She intends to expose his private hypocrisy before the magistrates if he refuses to speak.
- D. She relies on him because he was appointed by the magistrates as Pearl's official legal guardian.

CHARACTER

4. What proposal does Roger Chillingworth make following Dimmesdale's impassioned defense of Hester?

- A. He suggests using philosophical inquiry into Pearl's nature and traits to deduce the identity of her father.
- B. He suggests removing Dimmesdale from pastoral duties to allow him time to recover from bodily illness.
- C. He proposes taking custody of Pearl himself to study her unusual psychological development.
- D. He recommends forcing Hester to swear an oath disclosing her accomplice under penalty of banishment.

MICRO-DETAIL

5. When Reverend John Wilson asks Pearl who made her, how does she respond?

- A. She recites the opening verse of the Westminster Catechism without hesitation.
- B. She declares that she was plucked by her mother from the wild rose-bush by the prison door.
- C. She refuses to speak entirely and attempts to escape back into the garden.
- D. She states that the Heavenly Father created her out of dust and scarlet thread.

MICRO-DETAIL

6. What characteristic physical gesture does Dimmesdale display when agitated or emotionally distressed?

- A. He clutches his throat as though struggling to breathe.
- B. He paces rapidly back and forth while wringing his hands.
- C. He holds his hand over his heart.
- D. He covers his eyes to shield himself from the light.

MICRO-DETAIL

7. How does the narrator describe Governor Bellingham's appearance in his elaborate ruff?

- A. Like a grand monarch from King James's court presiding over an imperial tribunal.
- B. Like the head of John the Baptist resting in a charger.
- C. Like an ancient Roman magistrate cloaked in austere military garb.
- D. Like a somber medieval inquisitor surrounded by worldly luxuries.

ANALYTICAL

8. How does Dimmesdale's argument frame Pearl's theological purpose in Hester's life?

- A.** As an earthly reward that completely cleanses Hester of her past moral transgressions.
- B.** As an instrument of both sacred retribution and divine preservation that keeps Hester's soul from deeper sin.
- C.** As a permanent burden designed solely to expose the hypocrisy of the Puritan magistrates.
- D.** As an innocent spirit entirely untainted by the fallen nature of her parents.

ANALYTICAL

9. How does Hester's interaction with Mistress Hibbins functionally support Dimmesdale's defense of her custody?

- A.** It provides immediate evidence that having Pearl preserves Hester from succumbing to witchcraft and demonic temptation.
- B.** It proves that Hester is an active participant in occult rituals whenever Pearl is absent.
- C.** It demonstrates that the community's leaders are incapable of controlling witchcraft in Boston.
- D.** It reveals that Hester values social acceptance above her personal devotion to her daughter.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

"Pearl," said he, with great solemnity, "thou must take heed to instruction, that so, in due season, thou mayest wear in thy bosom the pearl of great price. Canst thou tell me, my child, who made thee?" Now Pearl knew well enough who made her; for Hester Prynne, the daughter of a pious home, very soon after her talk with the child about her Heavenly Father, had begun to inform her of those truths which the human spirit, at whatever stage of immaturity, imbibes with such eager interest.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

10. Based on the excerpt, what causes Pearl's refusal to answer Mr. Wilson's catechism correctly?

- A.** A genuine ignorance of Christian doctrine resulting from Hester's neglect.
- B.** A sudden, perverse impulse that overpowers her actual knowledge of religious truths.
- C.** An intense fear of the magistrates that paralyzes her ability to speak.
- D.** A desire to intentionally deceive the ministers to protect her mother.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

Pearl, that wild and flighty little elf, stole softly towards him, and taking his hand in the grasp of both her own, laid her cheek against it; a caress so tender, and withal so unobtrusive, that her mother, who was looking on, asked herself,—“Is that my Pearl?” Yet she knew that there was love in the child’s heart, although it mostly revealed itself in passion, and hardly twice in her lifetime had been softened by such gentleness as now.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

11. What does Pearl's gesture toward Dimmesdale reveal about their dynamic in this scene?

- A.** Pearl exhibits an uncharacteristic, instinctive gentleness and spiritual affinity toward the minister.
- B.** Pearl attempts to mock Dimmesdale's solemnity by imitating his physical weakness.
- C.** Pearl seeks physical protection from Governor Bellingham by hiding behind Dimmesdale.
- D.** Pearl mistakes Dimmesdale for an old acquaintance from her early infancy.

Answer key

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

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

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Answers explained

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

1. A. Governor Bellingham permits Pearl to stay with Hester, provided she undergoes catechism reviews and attends school and religious meetings.

Governor Bellingham agrees to leave Pearl with Hester for the time being, provided that the child is examined in her catechism and sent to school and religious meetings when appropriate.

2. B. Mistress Hibbins invites Hester to join a gathering with the Black Man in the forest, which Hester rejects.

As Hester departs, Bellingham's sister, Mistress Hibbins, leans out of a window and invites her to a forest gathering with the Black Man, an offer Hester refuses because she must care for Pearl.

3. B. She believes that as her spiritual pastor, he understands her soul and possesses sympathies the other men lack.

Hester pleads with Dimmesdale because he was her pastor, had charge of her soul, and possessed the emotional insight and sympathies needed to understand her bond with Pearl.

4. A. He suggests using philosophical inquiry into Pearl's nature and traits to deduce the identity of her father.

Chillingworth muses whether a philosopher could analyze Pearl's temperament and physical constitution to determine the identity of her father.

5. B. She declares that she was plucked by her mother from the wild rose-bush by the prison door.

Despite knowing the correct theological answer, Pearl perversely tells Mr. Wilson that she was not made at all, but was plucked by Hester from the prison-door rose-bush.

6. C. He holds his hand over his heart.

The text notes that Dimmesdale habitually places his hand over his heart whenever his nervous temperament is thrown into agitation.

7. B. Like the head of John the Baptist resting in a charger.

Hawthorne writes that the wide circumference of Bellingham's elaborate ruff beneath his gray beard made his head look like that of John the Baptist in a charger.

8. B. As an instrument of both sacred retribution and divine preservation that keeps Hester's soul from deeper sin.

Dimmesdale argues that God gave Hester the child to serve as both a painful reminder/torture for her sin and a saving grace to preserve her soul from Satan.

9. A. It provides immediate evidence that having Pearl preserves Hester from succumbing to witchcraft and demonic temptation.

Hester explicitly tells Mistress Hibbins that she would have gone to the forest had Pearl been taken; thus, her maternal duty instantly saves her from Satan's snare, proving Dimmesdale's point.

10. B. A sudden, perverse impulse that overpowers her actual knowledge of religious truths.

The excerpt explains that Pearl knew the proper doctrinal answers from Hester's teaching, but an innate, tenfold perversity took hold of her at the wrong moment.

11. A. Pearl exhibits an uncharacteristic, instinctive gentleness and spiritual affinity toward the minister.

Pearl's soft caress of Dimmesdale's hand is an exceptionally rare display of tenderness, surprising even Hester and indicating an innate, spiritual connection to him.

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