

FREE PRINTABLE QUIZ

The Scarlet Letter

Chapter 9

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 9. Answers begin on the answer key page.

PLOT & EVENT

1. How do Roger Chillingworth and Arthur Dimmesdale come to reside in the same house?

- A. The magistrates issue an official order commanding the physician to oversee the minister.
- B. Dimmesdale's friends arrange the lodging with a pious widow after Chillingworth drops a hint.
- C. Hester Prynne secretly petitions the church elders to provide medical shelter for Dimmesdale.
- D. The church elders construct a new parsonage equipped with a private scientific laboratory.

PLOT & EVENT

2. What rumor from an aged handicraftsman contributes to the growing suspicion surrounding Chillingworth?

- A. He had been seen in London associating with Doctor Forman, a conjurer linked to a famous murder.
- B. He had previously been expelled from a German university for conducting illicit necromancy.
- C. He had provided the lethal poison used in a notorious political assassination in Newgate.
- D. He had secretly renounced Christianity while living among Native American medicine men.

CHARACTER

3. Why does Chillingworth choose to conceal his true identity and marriage rather than claim Hester Prynne?

- A. He fears the Puritan authorities will execute him for having abandoned his wife abroad.
- B. He is unwilling to share her public degradation and seeks freedom to pursue a dark purpose.
- C. He intends to return to Europe immediately after securing his inherited property in Boston.
- D. He hopes to preserve his standing so he can be appointed the colony's chief magistrate.

CHARACTER

4. When pressed by elders and Chillingworth to accept medical treatment, how does Dimmesdale initially justify his reluctance?

- A. He professes that his physical frame is entirely healthy and requires no mortal intervention.
- B. He believes that accepting foreign medicine violates the strict orthodoxy of the Puritan church.
- C. He expresses contentment to let his earthly labors and sins end if God wills his death.
- D. He suspects that Chillingworth harbors an unspoken malice and mistrusts his remedies.

MICRO-DETAIL

5. Prior to Chillingworth's arrival, what constituted the primary medical care available in Boston?

- A. A devout deacon-apothecary and a barber who performed occasional surgical procedures.
- B. A licensed physician from Oxford assisted by a circle of traditional midwife healers.
- C. Native American herbalists hired by the town magistrates to dispense wild remedies.
- D. A rotating council of church deacons who treated illness solely through prolonged fasts.

MICRO-DETAIL

6. What subject is depicted on the tapestries hanging in Dimmesdale's apartment in the widow's house?

- A. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.
- B. The Scriptural story of David, Bathsheba, and Nathan the Prophet.
- C. The martyrdom of the early Christian Apostles in ancient Rome.
- D. The visionary descent of the New Jerusalem from the Book of Revelation.

MICRO-DETAIL

7. What recurring physical habit does Dimmesdale exhibit whenever he experiences sudden alarm or distress?

- A. He involuntarily sinks to his knees in spontaneous, silent prayer.
- B. He shields his eyes with his hand to shut out the gaze of onlookers.
- C. He clutches his throat as though suffocating from stifled speech.
- D. He presses his hand over his heart, accompanied by a flush and paleness.

ANALYTICAL

8. How does Hawthorne use the metaphor of an open window admitting 'a freer atmosphere' into Dimmesdale's study?

- A. To signify the intellectual liberation Dimmesdale briefly tastes before retreating into rigid orthodoxy.
- B. To illustrate the healing power of natural herbs in purifying the minister's decaying physical health.
- C. To expose the dangerous political ideas infiltrating the Puritan colony from Continental Europe.
- D. To represent the minister's public confession bringing immediate spiritual renewal to his flock.

ANALYTICAL

9. What does the progressive change in Chillingworth's facial expression symbolize over the course of the chapter?

- A. His growing physical exhaustion from tirelessly nursing the town's sick.
- B. The tragic loss of his intellectual faculties due to exposure to toxic chemicals.
- C. The external manifestation of his moral degeneration and vengeful obsession.
- D. His silent suffering over Hester's refusal to acknowledge him as her husband.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

So Roger Chillingworth—the man of skill, the kind and friendly physician—strove to go deep into his patient's bosom, delving among his principles, prying into his recollections, and probing everything with a cautious touch, like a treasure-seeker in a dark cavern.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

10. In this passage, what does the comparison of Chillingworth to a 'treasure-seeker in a dark cavern' emphasize about his investigation?

- A. His obsessive and invasive desire to excavate the hidden secrets of Dimmesdale's inner soul.
- B. His selfless dedication to discovering an elusive medicinal cure for the minister's bodily ailment.
- C. His hope of finding buried material wealth left behind by the early founders of the colony.
- D. His scientific objective to document the physiological symptoms of rare psychosomatic diseases.

READ THIS PASSAGE, THEN ANSWER

To sum up the matter, it grew to be a widely diffused opinion, that the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, like many other personages of especial sanctity, in all ages of the Christian world, was haunted either by Satan himself, or Satan's emissary, in the guise of old Roger Chillingworth.

PASSAGE ANALYSIS

11. According to the passage, how do the townspeople view Dimmesdale's struggle, and what tone does the narrator strike at the end of the chapter?

- A.** The people suspect Dimmesdale of heresy, while the narrator argues that the minister is entirely blameless.
- B.** The people assume Dimmesdale will surely triumph, whereas the narrator ominously questions whether victory is secure.
- C.** The people fear Dimmesdale has already surrendered to evil, but the narrator assures the reader of his swift recovery.
- D.** The people dismiss the conflict as harmless melancholy, while the narrator reveals that Dimmesdale is feigning illness.

Answer key

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

1. B	2. A	3. B	4. C	5. A
6. B	7. D	8. A	9. C	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. Dimmesdale's friends arrange the lodging with a pious widow after Chillingworth drops a hint.

The text states that at a hint from Chillingworth, Dimmesdale's friends arranged for the two men to lodge together in the home of a pious widow near the cemetery.

2. A. He had been seen in London associating with Doctor Forman, a conjurer linked to a famous murder.

An elderly artisan claimed to have seen Chillingworth in London under another name in the company of Doctor Forman, who was implicated in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury.

3. B. He is unwilling to share her public degradation and seeks freedom to pursue a dark purpose.

Chillingworth resolves not to be pilloried beside Hester on her pedestal of shame, preferring to vanish from his old life and direct his faculties toward a new, dark pursuit.

4. C. He expresses contentment to let his earthly labors and sins end if God wills his death.

Dimmesdale tells Chillingworth that he would be content for his labors, sorrows, sins, and pains to end in the grave if it were God's will, viewing himself as unworthy.

5. A. A devout deacon-apothecary and a barber who performed occasional surgical procedures.

The chapter explains that medical guardianship had rested with an aged deacon and apothecary whose piety substituted for a diploma, along with a surgeon who combined surgery with barbering.

6. B. The Scriptural story of David, Bathsheba, and Nathan the Prophet.

Dimmesdale's room is adorned with tapestries showing the biblical account of David, Bathsheba, and the prophet Nathan, symbolizing adultery and prophetic rebuke.

7. D. He presses his hand over his heart, accompanied by a flush and paleness.

The narrator notes that whenever Dimmesdale experiences slight alarm or sudden accident, he puts his hand over his heart, showing a flush followed by paleness.

8. A. To signify the intellectual liberation Dimmesdale briefly tastes before retreating into rigid orthodoxy.

Hawthorne compares conversing with Chillingworth's liberal intellect to opening a window into a stifling study; however, the air is too chill, causing both to retreat quickly into church orthodoxy.

9. C. The external manifestation of his moral degeneration and vengeful obsession.

Chillingworth's countenance changes from calm and scholar-like to something 'ugly and evil,' reflecting how his malicious quest to unmask Dimmesdale deforms his soul.

10. A. His obsessive and invasive desire to excavate the hidden secrets of Dimmesdale's inner soul.

The simile underscores Chillingworth's calculating, predatory scrutiny as he probes deep into Dimmesdale's private conscience and memories to uncover his hidden guilt.

11. B. The people assume Dimmesdale will surely triumph, whereas the narrator ominously questions whether victory is secure.

The community confidently expects the holy minister to win an unquestionable victory over Satan's emissary, but the narrator concludes with a grim observation that 'the victory [was] anything but secure.'

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