Scarl et Letter Study Guide

SHORT ANSWER STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

Chapters 1-4
1. Identify Hester Prynne, Pearl, Rev. Mr. Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth.
2. What emblem did Hester have to wear? Why was she sentenced to wear it?
3. What information did Hester refuse to tell the officials and Mr. Dimmesdale?
4. What was the relationship between Hester and Roger Chillingworth?
5. What did Hester promise to Roger Chillingworth?

Chapters 5-7
1. Hester is released from prison. Why doesn't she run away to a different settlement?
2. How did Hester support herself and Pearl?
3. Describe Pearl.
4. Describe Hester's feelings towards Pearl.
5. Why did Hester go to see Governor Bellingham?
6. What did Hester and Pearl see in the breastplate of the armor? What is the significance of the exaggeration?

Chapters 8-10
1. Mr. Wilson asks Pearl, "Canst thou tell me, my child, who made thee?" What is Pearl's answer? Why did she say that?
2. What convinced the Governor to let Hester keep Pearl?
3. How did Roger Chillingworth become Dimmesdale's medical advisor?
4. Who is the leech? Why is he called that in the title of the chapter?
5. Why did Mr. Dimmesdale rush from the room to end the conversation he had with Roger Chillingworth?

Chapters 11-13
1. What does Rev. Dimmesdale's congregation think of him? Why is that ironic?
2. Where did Mr. Dimmesdale go at midnight? Why?
3. What did Pearl ask Mr. Dimmesdale?
4. What "sign" did the meteor make in the sky?
5. Where had Mr. Wilson, Hester, Pearl and Roger Chillingworth been that night, that they would all be walking by the scaffolding at midnight?
6. What was the other view of Hester?

Chapters 14-17
1. What did Hester tell Roger Chillingworth when they met on the peninsula?
2. Why do Hester and Pearl go to the forest?
3. When Mr. Dimmesdale finds out that Roger Chillingworth is out for revenge, he knows his religious career in Boston will be at an end and his life will be miserable. What does Hester suggest?

Chapters 18-21
1. What did Hester have to do by the brook before Pearl would come across?
2. Mr. Dimmesdale kissed Pearl. What did she do in response?
3. How did Rev. Mr. Dimmesdale's attitude change after he decided to leave Boston with Hester?
Chapters 22-24
1. What shocking news did the commander of the Bristol ship bring Hester?
2. What did Mr. Dimmesdale tell the people of New England before he died?
3. What did the people see when Mr. Dimmesdale took off his ministerial band?
4. What happens to Hester, Pearl and Roger Chillingworth?

Vocabulary

Match the vocabulary words to their dictionary definitions.

1. demeanor A. lessen; reduce in amount or degree
2. venerable B. unfortunate; ill-omened
3. ignominy C. manner; way in which a person conducts himself
4. inauspicious D. evil fame or reputation
5. impropriety E. worthy of reverence or respect
6. abate F. something improper, incorrect; not appropriate
7. irks G. dishonor; infamy; disgraceful conduct
8. infamy H. annoys

9. uncongenial A. saturated; permeated
10. inevitable B. disbelief
11. ingenuity C. not possible to explain
12. implied D. not suitable; not agreeable
13. incredulity E. not able to be understood; mysterious
14. inscrutable F. unavoidable
15. imbued G. compelled; urged to action by moral pressure
16. inexplicable H. to express indirectly; hint; suggest
17. impelled I. inventive skill or imagination; cleverness

18. albeit A. wise
19. importunate B. not conducive; harmful; adverse
20. entreaties C. stubbornly persistent in a request or demand
21. enumerated D. although
22. sagacious E. make use of; benefit
23. wary F. pleas; petitions; requests
24. inimical G. listed
25. avail H. cautious

26. unamiable A. lowered in rank; humbled; humiliated
27. iniquity B. covering that darkens or obscures
28. pall C. not good natured; not agreeable
29. impute D. anticipated and disposed of effectively
30. abased E. sin; wickedness
31. benigh F. to attribute
32. insurmountable G. of a kind disposition; gentle or mild
33. obviated H. not capable of being climbed or overcome
#1) You have some opinion about Hester's guilt, her punishment, and whether or not she should be allowed to keep Pearl. Write a letter to Governor Bellingham regarding your opinion about what he should do about Hester.
Consider some of these issues: Should she keep or give up Pearl? Was making her wear the letter "A" a fair punishment? What punishment would you have thought appropriate for Hester, if any?

Introductory paragraph: introduce yourself as a concerned citizen of Boston and stating your point. Follow that with a few paragraphs giving reasons for your point. (Each reason would be a topic sentence.) Fill in the paragraphs with examples supporting your reasons.
Concluding paragraph thanks the governor for his time and his consideration of your opinions.
#2) Explain the use of symbolism in The Scarlet Letter.

What one statement can you make about all the different symbols in the book? What effect did the symbols have on your understanding and/or enjoyment of the book? Were the symbols effectively used by the author?

Could the element of symbolism have been handled better in the book? How or why not? Things that made you believe your statements are true. What evidence or support is there for your statement?

Introductory paragraph introduce the one main statement you formulated above.

Follow that paragraph with paragraphs that support your one main statement. Use one of each of your items of evidence or support as the topic for each of the paragraphs in the body.

Concluding paragraph in which you tie up and/or summarize the ideas you have presented.

#3) PRETEND: You have been to a party at the home of an acquaintance. Some people at the party were drinking alcohol; some were doing drugs. You were not necessarily involved with either of these activities; nevertheless, you were attending the party. The police came in and arrested all nine of you who were in the room. You were carted off to jail to wait for a bond review. You are sitting in jail. What are your thoughts?

Beware. Clarity may be your key enemy in this assignment.

Make your thoughts clear so that your reader will understand what you are thinking about and how you feel.

#4) EXPLAIN: How could The Scarlet Letter be seen as a story of good versus evil? Explain your answer in detail using events and ideas from the text.

#5) "Finding [this rose-bush] so directly on the threshold of our narrative . . . we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers, and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow."

---A. What "sweet moral blossom" were we intended to find in The Scarlet Letter? Answer in detail using support from the events or ideas in the text.

---B. Why is The Scarlet Letter a "tale of human frailty and sorrow" and why does it have a "darkening close"? Explain fully.

#6) Define "sin" as it is set forth in The Scarlet Letter and compare and contrast Dimmesdale and Chillingworth.

#7) Are Rev. Dimmesdale's actions believably motivated? Explain why or why not. Give examples from the text.

#8) Explain the meaning and the importance of the three scaffold scenes.

#9) What are the main themes of the book?
MORAL CHOICE SITUATIONS – AT LEAST ½ page each

1. You're in a store. You spot a small item you really want, but you don't have enough money to pay for it. There is no alarm tag on the item, so if you take it, no alarm will sound as you exit the store. You look around. There is only one other person in the store, and the clerk is busy ringing up his sale. Would you slip the item into your coat pocket? Why?

2. Your parents have told you to go straight home after school, but your friends want you to go out with them for a little while. Your parents won't be home for at least three hours. Would you go with your friends or go home? Why?

3. You forgot to study for your science test. The paper of the person next to you is easily legible with just a glance or two. Would you peek and cheat or not? Why?

4. You saw your best friend's girl/boy friend on a date with someone else. Your friend thinks the girl/boy friend is only seeing him/her. Do you tell your friend that his/her girl/boy friend is cheating on him/her? Why?

5. You got into trouble at school, but no one at school called your parents to tell them. After dinner one of your parents asks you how things are going at school. Do you tell the parent about the incident of trouble? Why?

6. You and an acquaintance have a huge argument at lunchtime. You are absolutely furious. Your acquaintance is in your next class. Before class starts, he/she had dumped his/her stuff on a desk and has gone to the hallway. You see something of importance, though of no great monetary value, in plain sight in his/her pile of belongings on the desk. You know that he/she would be hurt by missing that item (perhaps a homework paper or project, a favorite baseball card, a letter from a girl/boy friend, etc.) Would you take the item out of spite? Why?

7. You see two class mates cheating on a test. Do you tell the teacher? Why?

8. You see a team member taking drugs prior to a game. He/she does not know that you have seen him/her. Would you tell the coach? Why?

9. Was Hester's affair with Dimmesdale justifiable since her husband was missing and presumed dead? Answer as if you were a Puritan. Why?

PERSONAL RESPONSES: At Least 1/2 page each

1. Did you enjoy reading The Scarlet Letter? Why or why not?

2. If abortion were an option for Hester, do you think she would have chosen it?

3. Was Dimmesdale a good minister? Explain why or why not.

4. Would you have liked being an early settler in New England? Explain why or why not.

5. Hester and Dimmesdale both seemed to need to feel a sense of punishment for their sin/crime. Do you think most people feel that way? That is, do most people feel the need to be punished for bad actions they consciously commit?