

Prime Stage Theatre



Bringing Literature to Life

# The Scarlet Letter

*Written by Carol Gilligan and John Gilligan*  
*Based on the novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne*  
*Directed by Katie Mueller*  
**November 4-13, 2011**  
**New Hazlett Theater**

Generously funded by



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## Bringing Literature to Life

### POST-SHOW CHAT SESSIONS

Stay after the school matinees to ask questions of both the actors and the characters! During the 20-minute post-show chat sessions, delve into the minds and reasoning of the characters and then ask questions of the actors about the rehearsal process, theatre performance, and their experiences working on that particular production. No registration required.

### ADOPT-A-SCHOOL PROGRAM

Prime Stage Theatre's flagship education program strives to increase adolescent literacy through theatre in underserved and underperforming school districts in the Western Pennsylvania area. In this FREE program, schools receive tickets and books for each Prime Stage production, 10 in-school workshops, and professional development opportunities for teachers. If you would like your school to become involved, please download an application at our website, [http://primestage.com/files/pdf/application\\_aas.pdf](http://primestage.com/files/pdf/application_aas.pdf).

### 2011-12 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS — "CREATIVE INQUIRY FOR LITERACY LEARNING"

Bring WONDER into your classroom by introducing creative inquiry into your lessons. Learn how theatre artists use questions and critical thinking in their work, and discover how to use these techniques to inspire your students' love of learning. This season there are three opportunities to expand your creative teaching skills and invigorate your practice: "Introduction to Creative Inquiry," September 10, 2011 at the Allegheny Intermediate Unit #3. "Engaging Disengaged Adolescents," November 7, 2011 at the New Hazlett Theater. "Scientific Inquiry Is Not Just For Science," April 23, 2012 at the Carnegie Science Center. For more information and registration form, visit [http://primestage.com/educators\\_students/workshops.html](http://primestage.com/educators_students/workshops.html) or contact Christina Farrell, Education Director at [cfarrell@primestage.com](mailto:cfarrell@primestage.com).

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEENS, FAMILIES AND ADULTS

Prime Stage Theatre offers opportunities for people of all ages to get involved with the theater. Check out our website to learn about mentorships, volunteering, book readings and many other exciting events. There is something for everyone at Prime Stage! <http://primestage.com/>

# The Scarlet Letter

## Resource Guide

Welcome to **Prime Stage Theatre:**  
*Bringing Literature to Life!*



*Antigone, PST2011*



*The Glass Menagerie, PST 2011*

Dear Educator,

Welcome to the 2011-12 season at Prime Stage Theatre! We had a very successful season last year with acclaimed productions of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *The Glass Menagerie* and *Antigone*. We are thrilled to welcome you this year to three productions that will inspire you to imagine and discover: *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Elephant Man* and *A Wrinkle in Time*.

This Resource Guide is designed to provide historical background and context, classroom activities, and other curricular content to help you enliven your students' experience with the literature. We hope it will inspire you to use theatrical skills and creative thinking in your classroom in order to spark personal connections with the themes and characters in the stories.

If you have any questions about the information or activities in this guide, please don't hesitate to contact me. I'm happy to help and welcome your suggestions!

~Christina Farrell  
Education Director

cfarrell@primestage.com

## Curriculum Connections Corner

Prime Stage Theatre is committed to directly correlating our programs to the PDE Academic Standards. *The Scarlet Letter* and this resource guide may be used to address the following curriculum content standards:

**Arts and Humanities:**  
9.1-9.4

**Reading, Writing, Speaking, & Listening:** 1.1-1.8

**History:** 8.1-8.4



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### Did you know...

- **Prime Stage Theatre** has been in existence for over 13 years.
- **Prime Stage Theatre's** very first production was *A Woman Called Truth* about Sojourner Truth.
- **Prime Stage Theatre** first performed at the Station Square Playhouse (now Hard Rock Café).

### Check out what's inside!

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## Summary—*The Scarlet Letter*

### *The Scarlet Letter* in 30 seconds...

Hawthorne's story begins in a Puritan village near Boston, Massachusetts in the summer of 1642. A young and beautiful woman named Hester Prynne has just been led from the prison, carrying her baby daughter, Pearl. A red letter "A" has been sewn onto her dress as a badge of her shame. An old, hunched stranger appears in the crowd to ask about the woman's crime. He is told that Hester's husband had stayed behind in Europe, but was assumed lost at sea. However, Hester became pregnant from an affair and, despite the urgent pleas from the church elders, will not reveal the name of the baby's father.

It is soon revealed that the old stranger is Hester's husband, a medicine man now going by the name Roger Chillingworth. He introduces himself to Hester and says that he can not blame her for being unhappy married to an old, intellectual man. But he

swears vengeance against her lover, vowing to discover his identity.

Several years pass and although Hester is forced to live on the outskirts of the community, she supports herself through her seamstress work. She has even added golden embroidery to her red letter "A." Pearl has grown into a willful and troublesome girl. The elders wish to take Pearl away from Hester, but the eloquent preacher Dimmesdale convinces them that Pearl's rightful place is with her mother.

Although he is a respected leader in the community, Dimmesdale appears to be wasting away. Chillingworth moves in with him to take care of his health and soon discovers a red letter "A" burned into Dimmesdale's chest. Chillingworth realizes the connection between Hester and the preacher.

Hester sees Dimmesdale's deepening anguish and vows to help. They decide to run away to Europe together after he delivers his final sermon. Just as he steps off the pulpit, however, he reveals the "A" on his chest and dies.

Chillingworth dies a year later, frustrated that he was not able to carry out his revenge. Hester and Pearl leave the village for a while, but Hester returns several years later with the "A" on her chest. She exchanges letters with Pearl, now married and raising her own family. Hester is buried next to Dimmesdale, a single letter "A" marking their shared tombstone.

### ...or less!

A young Puritan woman is marked with a letter "A" for an adulterous affair leading to the birth of a daughter. Her older husband vows to discover the identity of her lover and seek revenge. Her lover, the preacher, suffers from his secret anguish and eventually dies from heartache.

## Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne (July 4, 1804-May 16, 1864) was born in Salem, Massachusetts to a family that descended from the earliest settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. His ancestors included John Hathorne, a harsh Puritan judge at the 1692 Salem witch trials. This fact was both intriguing and disturbing to Hawthorne, who later added a "w" to his name, perhaps to distance himself from his infamous relatives.

Hawthorne's father, a sea captain, died of yellow fever in 1808, so he and his two sisters were raised by his mother and her relatives. He attended Bowdoin College in Maine where he became good friends with the soon-to-be-famous poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and future U.S. president Franklin Pierce.

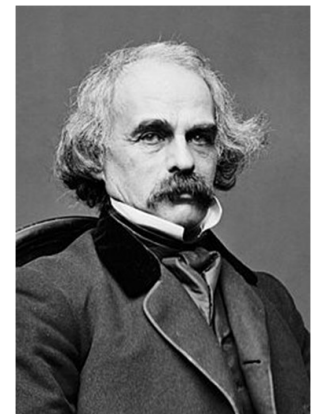
He began writing after college, without much initial success. He took a job as a customs surveyor, but soon left the post to live in commune called Brook Farm which was designed to promote economic self-sufficiency and transcendentalist principles. In 1842 he married Sophia Pea-

body and moved to "The Old Manse," a home in Concord, NH where Ralph Waldo Emerson once lived.

During this time he began writing more seriously. His collection of stories and essays about early America entitled *Mosses from an Old Manse* caught the attention of the American literary community. They were looking for a fresh "American" voice to represent the newly independent country and Hawthorne's stories, which were mainly about America's Puritan roots, portrayed a unique vision of the country and its people.

Hawthorne published *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850. The novel was praised by critics, but didn't earn widespread fame. His other major novels include *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), and *The Marble Faun* (1860).

Franklin Pierce appointed Hawthorne a U.S. Consul in 1853. He traveled in Europe for six years and passed away in 1864 shortly after returning home.



Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1860's  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

**Transcendentalism** was a religious and philosophical movement of the early nineteenth century dedicated to the belief that divinity manifests itself everywhere, particularly in the natural world. It also advocated a personalized, direct relationship with the divine in place of formalized, structured religion. This second transcendental idea is privileged in *The Scarlet Letter*.

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/scarlet/themes.html>

## The Scarlet Letter by Carol Gilligan and John Gilligan

*The Scarlet Letter* has remained a beloved story for over a hundred and fifty years. During that time, many artists and performers have interpreted the novel through playwriting, visual art, dance and other media. Playwright Carol Gilligan, with her husband John, debuted this stage adaptation of Hawthorne's story in 2002.

The play begins by spotlighting various moments leading to Hester's emergence from the prison. Hester writes a letter to her husband Roger, optimistically describing the land and society in the new world. He replies to tell her that he plans to leave Amsterdam and join her soon. The scene shifts and we see Hester and Dimmesdale's romantic encounter, followed by Hester's imprisonment and appearance on the scaffold with baby Pearl.

Throughout the story, the adult Pearl reflects on her mother's life and the choices

she made. Her recollections serve as the framework for retelling Hester's life. Many events are portrayed as they may have been understood through Pearl's perspective.

In Gilligan's adaptation, Chillingworth makes his first appearance on Pearl's seventh birthday. He enters chatting with Dimmesdale about the medicinal wisdom of the Algonquin tribe and discovers Hester defending her rights to raise Pearl to the elders.

Carol Gilligan writes, "Hawthorne's brilliant insight -- he is writing now in 1850, at the time of Brook Farm and the Abolitionist Feminists -- was that the very qualities that render a woman able to see the iron framework of society also disable her as an adulterated woman. He captures it all in the letter A, which, as the story explains, means Able as well as Adultery."

### Discuss with your students: How would you adapt *The Scarlet Letter* as a play?

*Is there anything unclear to you? How could you clarify details, emotions, symbols of themes? What is unnecessary?*

*What is the most important message to you? How could you bring that message to the forefront for the audience?*

*What questions remain unanswered in the novel? How could you add scenes or dialogue to add to the story? Consider the events that happened before or after the events in the novel, or during the passage of time.*

*Theater uses sight and sound! How could you use lighting, costumes, props, sound effects or movement to tell the story?*

## Carol Gilligan



Carol Gilligan, Ph.D., is considered a pioneer whose work continues to reframe our understanding of what it means to be human.

In 1982, Gilligan's groundbreaking and bestselling book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, ushered in a new era of thinking about psychology and reshaped conversations about morality and ethics. Following the publication of *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan continued her exploration of psychological development in a variety of domains, including women's contributions to psychological theory and education and the relational worlds of girls. Her 1992 book (with Lyn Mikel Brown), *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. Her 1996 book, *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship* (with Jill McLean Taylor and Amy Sullivan), studied

economically disadvantaged girls and their struggles to be heard and taken seriously. In her latest book, *The Birth of Pleasure*, Gilligan asks why we relive tragic stories of loss and betrayal.

With her students, Gilligan founded the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development and initiated the innovative prevention projects: Strengthening Healthy Resistance and Courage in Girls, and Women Teaching Girls/Girls Teaching Women. With Kristin Linklater, she directed The Company of Women, an all-women theater troupe that trained with companies of girls. Her prevention projects expanded to include boys (the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology, Boys' Development, and The Culture of Manhood) and highlighted boys' ability to read the human emotional world accurately and to be empathic and self-reflective.

A summa cum laude graduate of Swarthmore College, Gilligan earned a master's degree in clinical psychology from Radcliffe College in 1960 and a Ph.D. in social psychology from Harvard in 1964. She

began teaching at Harvard with the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in 1967 and received tenure as full professor in 1986. From 1992-93, she was the Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at the University of Cambridge in England. In 1997, Gilligan was appointed to a newly endowed professorship at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, The Patricia Albjerg Graham Chair in Gender Studies, Harvard's first position in gender studies. Time magazine named her one of the 25 most influential Americans. Gilligan is currently a University Professor at New York University with appointments in the Steinhart School of Education, the School of Law, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Gilligan is the recipient of many awards including the prestigious Grawemeyer Award in Education, which honors achievements in fields not recognized by the Nobel prizes, such as education and music, and the Heinz Award for her contributions to understanding the human condition.

From: <http://eomega.org/omega/faculty/>

## Putting it in Context

### Life in Puritan New England:

(From: <http://www.ushistory.org/us/3d.asp>)

New England life seemed to burst with possibilities.

The life expectancy of its citizens became longer than that of Old England, and much longer than the Southern English colonies. Children were born at nearly twice the rate in Maryland and Virginia. It is often said that New England invented grandparents, for it was here that people in great numbers first grew old enough to see their children bear children.

Literacy rates were high as well. Massachusetts law required a tax-supported school for every community that could boast 50 or more families. Puritans wanted their children to be able to read the Bible, of course.

Massachusetts Bay Colony was a man's world. Women did not participate in town meetings and were excluded from decision making in the church. Puritan ministers furthered male supremacy in their writings and sermons. They preached that the soul had two parts, the immortal masculine half, and the mortal feminine half.

Puritan law was extremely strict; men and women were severely punished for a variety of crimes. Even a child could be put to death for cursing his parents.

It was believed that women who were pregnant with a male child had a rosy complexion and that women carrying a female child were pale. Names of women found in census reports of Massachusetts Bay include Patience, Silence, Fear, Prudence, Comfort, Hopestill, and Be Fruitful. This list reflects Puritan views on women quite clearly.

Church attendance was mandatory. Those that missed church regularly were subject to a fine. The sermon became a means of addressing town problems or concerns. The church was sometimes patrolled by a man who held a long pole. On one end was a collection of feathers to tickle the chins of old men who fell asleep. On the other was a hard wooden knob to alert children who giggled or slept. Church was serious business indeed.



*Mary Dyer led to execution on Boston Common, 1660*



*Young man in the stocks*

The Puritans believed they were doing God's work. Hence, there was little room for compromise. Harsh punishment was inflicted on those who were seen as straying from God's work. There were cases when individuals of differing faiths were hanged in Boston Common.

Made famous by author Nathaniel Hawthorne in his book of the same name, the *Scarlet Letter* was a real form of punishment in Puritan society. Adulterers might have been forced to wear a scarlet "A" if they were lucky. At least two known adulterers were executed in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Public whippings were commonplace. The stockade forced the humiliated guilty person to sit in the public square, while onlookers spat or laughed at them.

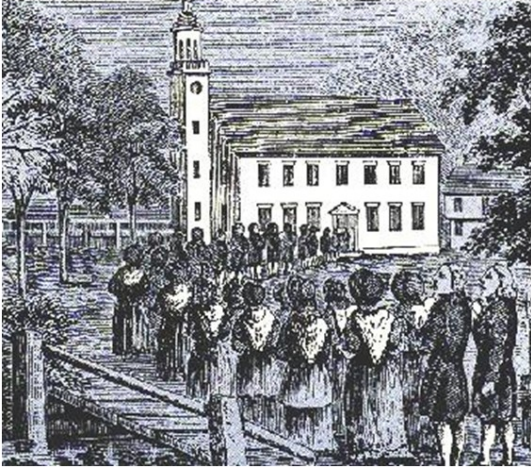
Puritans felt no remorse about administering punishment. They believed in Old Testament methods. Surely God's correction would be far worse to the individual than any earthly penalty.

Contrary to myth, the Puritans did have fun. There were celebrations and festivals. People sang and told stories. Children were allowed to play games with their parents' permission. Wine and beer drinking were common place. Puritans did not all dress in black as many believe. The fundamental rule was to follow God's law. Those that did lived in peace in the Bible Commonwealth.

## Putting it in Context (cont.)

### Puritan Religious Beliefs:

(Adapted from: <http://www.nd.edu/~rbarger/www7/puritans.html> and <http://public.wsu.edu/~campbell/d/amlit/purdef.htm>)



The Puritan religion developed out of dissatisfaction with the Church of England. Its members believed that the Church of England was polluted by politics and man-made doctrines, so they strove towards religious, moral and societal reforms. Their name stems from their desire to "purify" the church and bring it back to its foundation in the Bible. Whereas the Church of England believed in the church's authority to determine one's salvation, the Puritans believed that God alone could determine one's fate. The Puritans rejected the symbols and rituals of the high church. In order to escape persecution for their dissent against the church leadership and the King, they came to America. As the Puritans settled in the New England area, their numbers rose from 17,800 in 1640 to 106,000 in 1700. As they dealt with the challenges of living in an untamed, foreign land, their spiritual bond helped them survive.

Each church congregation was to be individually responsible to God, as was each person. People of opposing theological views were asked to leave the community or to be converted. Unlike Catholic or Anglican churches, the Puritans did not believe that every person in the parish had the right to be a full church member. In order to be elected as a full church member, applicants submitted narratives describing their relationship with God.

believe that every person in the parish had the right to be a full church member. In order to be elected as a full church member, applicants submitted narratives describing their relationship with God.

Their interpretation of the Bible was strict and harsh. They felt that although God could forgive anything, man could forgive only by seeing a change in behavior. Actions spoke louder than words, so actions had to be constantly controlled. Although Puritans believed that God had predetermined whether they would be sent to heaven or hell, they had no way of knowing which group they were in. Therefore, they worked to do good in this life in order to be chosen for the next eternal one.

The Puritans believed that the devil was behind every evil deed. Eloquent ministers warned the persuasiveness of the devil's power. Children were constantly reminded of the devil's presence and were quizzed on Bible at home and school. The education of the next generation was important to further "purify" the church and perfect social living.

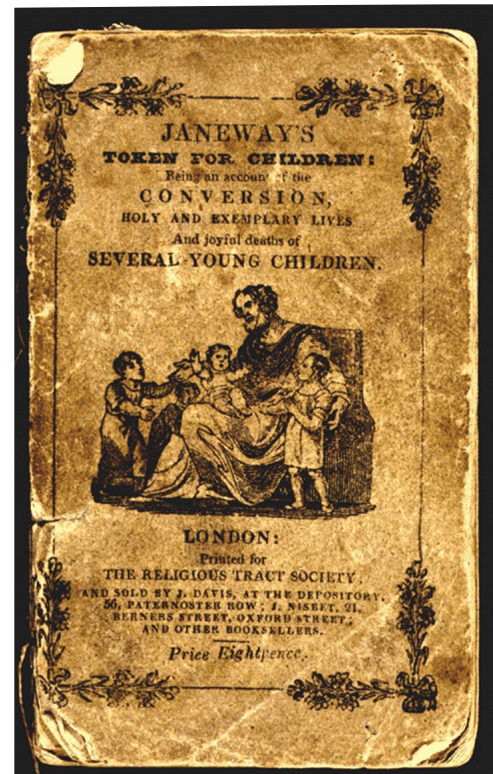
When the Puritans traveled from England, they left some popular pastimes behind them; drama, religious music and erotic poetry. Drama and poetry were considered to promote immorality. Music in worship created a "dreamy" state which was not conducive in listening to God. Instead, they passed their time by reading the Bible and discussing the Greek classics of Cicero, Virgil, Terence and Ovid. They were encouraged to create their own poetry, as long as it was religious in content.

### Puritan Education:

Puritans formed their first formal school in 1635, which was the first free schooling for children in history. Four years later, the first American College was established; Harvard in Cambridge. The first printing press arrived in 1638 and by 1700 Boston became the second largest publishing center of the English Empire. The Puritans were the first to write books for children, and to consider how to communicate appropriately with children. At a time when other Americans were physically blazing trails through the forests, the Puritans efforts in areas of study were advancing our country intellectually.

**"Without the heart it is no worship. It is a stage play.  
It is an acting of a part without being that person,  
really. It is playing the hypocrite."**

**STEPHEN CHARNOCK, Puritan Theologian**



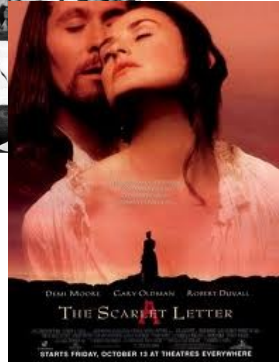
## The Scarlet Letter in Art



Lillian Gish in *The Scarlet Letter* film, 1926



Penguin Classics  
"fashion" book  
cover



Demi Moore and Gary Oldman in *The Scarlet Letter* film, 1995



This work, by Kim Radatz, is titled "*The Scarlet Letter (99 Lashes)*". It refers, in part, to the story of an Iranian woman that was facing stoning for the crime of adultery. It is a delicate dress, with bright, blood-red accents around the collar, and running down its length to the stones below. The Iranian penal code specifies that the guilty are to be partially buried, and the stones to be used must not be too big, "so as not to kill the victim immediately" (quote taken directly from KR's tag for the work).

<http://art-taco.blogspot.com/2011/03/artists-invitational-franklin-street.html>  
<http://kimradatz.com/>

Nathaniel Hawthorne, regarded this painting by Hugues Merle in 1859, as the finest illustration of his novel. Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth appear in the background. Merle's canvas reflects some of the same 19th-century historical interest in the Puritans as Hawthorne's book, a fascination that reached its peak with the establishment of Thanksgiving as a national holiday in 1863. By depicting Hester and her daughter, Pearl, in a pose that recalls that of the Madonna and Child, Merle underlines *The Scarlet Letter's* themes of sin and redemption.



- In the Tool song "The Grudge" the line 'Unable to forgive your scarlet letterman' is a reference to the novel.
- In the Hole recording of "Old Age" there is a lyric "no one knows she's Hester Prynne".
- The band Jars of Clay have a song entitled "Scarlet" on their album *The Eleventh Hour*, which refers to the novel.
- The band Casting Crowns alludes to *The Scarlet Letter* in "Does Anybody Hear Her" from *Lifesong*, "They can't see past her scarlet letter, and we've never even met her".
- The 1993 novel, *The Holder of the World* by Bharati Mukherjee re-wrote the story, placing it in present day Boston, Colonial America, and seventeenth century India during the spread of the British East India Company.
- In the novel *Speak*, Hairwoman, the English teacher, refers to *The Scarlet Letter* in her lesson. The novel's protagonist is a freshman in high school who is ostracized from her fellow schoolmates during the school year, much as Hester Prynne was ostracized.
- *The Music Man* character Harold Hill sings a line in the song "The Sadder But Wiser Girl" about his desire for a strong-willed woman: "I smile, I grin, when the gal with a touch of sin walks in. / I hope, and I pray, for a Hester to win just one more 'A'."

From: [http://www.search.com/reference/The\\_Scarlet\\_Letter](http://www.search.com/reference/The_Scarlet_Letter)



# Glossary

## What is... What!?!?

Hawthorne uses a rich and complex language throughout *The Scarlet Letter*. We have listed some of the words that are infrequently utilized today.

Have students record unfamiliar words as they encounter them while reading the book. Students should then look up definitions in a dictionary. Vocabulary activities could include a word wall, word ball or new sentence generation.

*PDE Academic Standards 1.7-1.8*

**ADDUCED:** to bring forward as in argument or as evidence.

**ALLOY:** to reduce the purity of by mixing with something debasing.

**ANIMADVERSION:** adverse and typically ill-natured or unfair criticism.

**ANTINOMIAN:** one who rejects a socially established morality.

**APOTHEOSIS:** elevation to divine status.

**APPELLATION:** an identifying name or title.

**ARMORIAL:** relating to or bearing heraldic arms.

**ASPERITY:** roughness of manner or of temper.

**AUGURED:** foretold.

**BAGGAGE:** a contemptible woman; prostitute.

**BEDIZEN:** to dress in a gaudy or vulgar manner.

**BENEFICENCE:** an office to which the revenue from an endowment is attached: fief.

**BOON:** a favor sought.

**BROADSWORD:** a sword with a broad blade for cutting rather than thrusting.

**BUCKLER:** a shield worn on the left arm.

**CABALISTIC:** esoteric doctrine or mysterious art.

**CAPRICE:** a sudden, impulsive change: whim.

**CHIRURGICAL:** surgical.

**CHOLERIC:** bad tempered; irritable.

**CLARION:** a clear, shrill medieval trumpet.

**CLEW:** clue.

**COLLOQUY:** an especially formal conversation.

**COMMODIOUSNESS:** comfortable or conveniently spacious: roomy.

**CONTAGION:** the spread as of an idea, emotion  
**CONTUMACIOUSLY:** stubbornly disobedient; rebellious.

**CONTUMELY:** rude language or treatment arising from haughtiness and contempt.

**DEARTH:** scarcity, lack, or famine.

**DENIZENS:** an inhabitant: resident.

**EMBOWED:** arched.

**EMOLUMENT:** advantage.

**EPOCH:** a point in time marked by the beginning of a new development or state of things.

**ERUDITION:** extensive knowledge acquired chiefly from books.

**ESCUTCHEON:** a protective or ornamental shield.

**EXIGENCES:** a state of affairs that makes urgent demands.

**EXTANT:** not destroyed or lost.

**FAIN:** rather

**FARTHINGALE:** a support worn in the 16th century beneath a skirt to expand it at the hip line.

**GALLIARD:** gay, lively.

**GULES:** the heraldic color red

**HALBERDS:** a weapon consisting typically of a battle ax and pike mounted on a handle about six feet long.

**HEATHENISH:** barbarous.

**HETERODOX:** holding unorthodox opinions or doctrines.

**HEWN:** strictly conformed.

**HORNBOOK:** a child's reading book consisting of paper protected by a sheet of transparent horn.

**IGNOMINIOUS:** shameful.

**INDEFATIGABLE:** incapable of being fatigued.

**INDEFEASIBLE:** not to be annulled or made void.

**INIMICAL:** hostile

**LEES:** the settling of liquor during fermentation and aging: dregs.

**LOQUACITY:** exceedingly talkative.

**MACHINATION:** a scheming action or artful design intended to accomplish some evil end.

**MALEFACTRESSES:** a person who violates the law or does evil.

**MALIGNANT:** disposed to cause deliberate harm.

**MEED:** a fitting return or recompense.

**MISANTHROPY:** a hatred or distrust of mankind.

**MORION:** high-crested helmet with no visor.

**MOUNTEBANK:** any charlatan or quack.

**MUSTER:** formal military inspection.

**NECROMANCER:** a person who is believed to communicate with the spirits of the dead for purposes of magically revealing the future of influencing the course of events.

**NUGATORY:** having no force: inoperative.

**ODIOUS:** exciting or deserving hatred

**OBEISANCE:** a bodily gesture, as a bow, expressing respect.

**OBVIATED:** to dispose of; making unnecessary.

**PANOPLY:** full suit of armor.

**PARAMOUR:** an illicit lover.

**PERADVENTURE:** perhaps.

**PHANTASMAGORIC:** constantly changing scene.

**PHYSIOGNOMIES:** the facial features held to show qualities of mind or character by their configuration or expression.

**PLEBEIAN:** one of the common people.

**POTENTATE:** one who wields controlling power.

**PROGENITORS:** an ancestor in the direct line: forefather.

**QUAFF:** to drink (a beverage) deeply.

**REGIMEN:** to organize.

**REMONSTRANCE:** objection.

**SAGAMORES:** a subordinate chief of the Algonquian Indians of the north Atlantic coast.

**SCROFULA:** a form of tuberculosis.

**SCURRILOUS:** grossly and offensively abusive.

**SEDULOUS:** diligent in application or pursuit.

**SEPULCHRES:** burial vault built of rock or stone.

**SERE:** withered.

**SOMNAMBULISM:** sleepwalking.

**SOMNIFEROUS:** hypnotic.

**SUMPTUARY:** designed to regulate habits on moral or religious grounds.

**TROW:** believe.

**TRAMMELED:** something that restricts activity or free movement: hindrance.

**UNFEIGNEDLY:** not pretending.

**VENERABLE:** made sacred especially by religious or historical association.

**VICISSITUDE:** unexpectedly changing circumstances.

**WORMWOOD:** something bitter and grievous: bitterness.

**WOTTEST:** to have knowledge of or to know.



**John Winthrop (1587-1649)** was the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony and served as governor for twelve (nonconsecutive) terms. A self-proclaimed "Saint of God", Winthrop became angered in 1636 when **Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643)** began to hold Bible study meetings in her home which offered her own interpretations of the scripture, including the story of Adam and Eve. She spoke against inequality for women, racial prejudice and the legal authority of the clergy. For these beliefs, she was charged with **ANTINOMIANISM**, as well as "lewd and lascivious conduct" for having men and women in her house at the same time during her Sunday meetings. Hutchinson was eventually banished from the colony and her the Puritan Church. She moved to Portsmouth, Rhode Island and is still considered one of the leaders in women's rights and religious freedom.



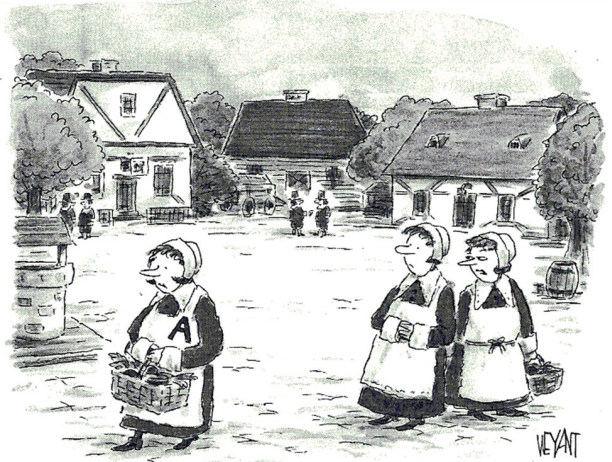
Anne Hutchinson, Puritan dissident.

## Pre-Reading and Pre-Show Activities

Prime Stage's mission, *bridging literature, life and learning*, encourages students to approach literature with curiosity and personal relevance. **The activities below are intended to spark enthusiasm, interest and inquiry into the story before they have read the text or attended the performance.**

**A is for...:** Prior to reading the story, look at the cartoon and ask students to insert their own word for what the "A" could represent. For example, what if the "A" stood for Accomplished, Arrogant, Astronaut or Adorable? How would the townspeople feel about the woman? Create imaginary dialogue for the scene or write a short back story explaining why woman is wearing the letter.

**Purpose:** As students make predictions and create their own stories, they will tap into important themes in *The Scarlet Letter* such as multiple meanings of symbols and isolation from the community. They will also begin to wonder about the social expectations of the community in the picture and draw parallels to their own lives. Refer to these connections as students read the story to challenge their assumptions and clarify themes in the story.



"Accountant."

**Rule Book:** In *The Scarlet Letter*, the town represents strict structure and rules, whereas the woods represents a space where society's rules do not apply. Ask students to create a list of rules and punishments for various places. What are the rules and punishments at school? At home with your parents? At home with your friends? Is there a place where no rules or punishments apply? Ask students to consider why the rules and punishments have been created. Are they formally written or simply understood? What would happen if the rules or punishments disappeared? After making the lists and discussing, compare to the rules and punishments in Puritan society (see Pages 6-7.)

**Purpose:** As students think about *why* our rules have been established they may be more successful in understanding why the Puritan society was so strict. As they argue against the rules that they dislike, they will become aware of their own moral compass through which they may develop compassion for the characters in the story. They will also be aware of the symbolic importance of the town vs. the wilderness.



**TV Talk Show:** Select a current event or an article from a magazine or newspaper that describes a person who is accused of committing a crime or immoral act. In small groups, ask the students to write or improvise a statement about the incident from diverse multiple perspectives. How does the victim respond? The nosy neighbor? The best friend? Invite the groups to appear on a pretend TV Talk Show to express their opinions and emotions. Ask questions to reveal the motivations behind each group's opinions and the nuances of their ideas.

**Purpose:** This experience will encourage students to consider the motivations behind multiple characters in *The Scarlet Letter* and approach the story with the understanding that Hester's story is full of complex, sometimes contradictory, emotions. By acting out a contemporary scenario, students will be able to connect the story to familiar issues.

**Story Box:** Just as the narrator uncovers information about a woman named Hester from the past, invite your students to create a story of their own based on artifacts. Present a box containing clues from the story. These might include: a red cloth letter "A," a record of a trial and/or imprisonment for a woman named Hester Prynne, a birth certificate for Pearl with no father listed, a cemetery record of a burial of Hester Prynne near Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale, a ship log from Chillingworth's boat, letters between Hester and Chillingworth, Pearl's red hair ribbon, etc. (These can be made to look authentic, but can be just as effective if done informally.) Ask students to piece together the clues to create a story of what they think might have happened. What can they guess about the characters and society based on the clues?

**Purpose:** Students will become intrigued by the juicy clues in the box and their imagination will carry them into the story. Instead of feeling like an outdated novel, students will recognize their own ideas within Hawthorne's story. As students read the book, continue to compare their story with Hawthorne's and use the students' own writing to illuminate difficult text.

## Reading Activities

Prime Stage’s mission, *bridging literature, life and learning*, encourages students to make personal connections to literature through meaningful, interactive exploration of the text and themes. **The activities below are intended to enliven, clarify and enrich the text as they read the novel.**

**Hester on the Scaffold:** Chapter II, The Market-Place, states: “Had there been a Papist among the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the Divine Maternity, which so many illustrious painters have vied with one another to represent; something which should remind him, indeed, but only by contrast, of that sacred image of sinless motherhood, whose infant was to redeem the world.” Compare these two portraits. List adjectives to describe the women and the crowds, then identify how they are alike and different. Which adjectives are used by Hawthorne to describe Hester and the crowd in this chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*?



**Left:** The Virgin Mary in Glory, by Provost Jan.



**Right:** The Scarlet Letter by Arthur Ignatius Keller.

**Purpose:** Students will have a visual guide to help them understand Hawthorne’s quote. As they generate their own list of adjectives, they will become aware of the descriptive language used by Hawthorne. Students may also recognize the irony of the religious community’s punishment of Hester for the conception of a fatherless child and form their own judgments.

**Pearl’s Diary:** Chapter VI, Pearl, states: “...Hester sometimes burst into passionate tears. Then, perhaps, - for there was no foreseeing how it might affect her, - Pearl would frown, and clench her little fist, and harden her small features into a stern, unsympathizing look of discontent. Not seldom, she would laugh anew, and louder than before, like a thing incapable and unintelligent of human sorrow. Or— but hits more rarely happened—she would be convulsed with a rage of grief, and sob out that she had a heart, by breaking it.” Ask your students to choose one of the emotions expressed in the previous text and create a diary entry for Pearl. What is she thinking that causes her to act the way she does? Compare the students’ responses—what causes Pearl’s contradictory reactions?

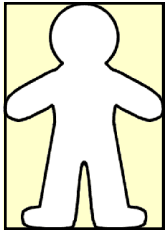
**Purpose:** Students will develop understanding of the complexity of Pearl’s character and situation. They will synthesize the information they have learned thus far to form a conclusion. By comparing ideas with peers, they will gain tolerance for diverse points of view.

**The Fate of Pearl:** Chapter VIII, The Elf-Child and the Minister, describes Governor Bellingham’s efforts to have Pearl removed from Hester’s care. Assign small groups various roles in the Puritan community (church leaders, a married mother, a widowed mother, Pearl, Hester, Dimmesdale, etc.) OR imagine the story in a modern, abstract context (Pearl’s therapist, a social worker, Pearl’s teacher, Pearl’s future husband, etc.) Pretend Gov. Bellingham has asked them to present their opinions as to whether or not Pearl should be allowed to stay with Hester. Students may find clues from the text to support their opinions as well as site their personal feelings on the matter.



**Purpose:** Students will discover personal relevance to Hester’s plight as they form and support their opinions. They will be required to make discriminations of textual evidence and convince others of their conclusions.

## Reading Activities (cont.)



**Internal and External Change (Role on the Wall):** Chapter IX-XI, discusses the relationship of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale. By this point in the story, both men have changed internally and externally. Create two large outlines of a body on poster paper to represent Chillingworth and Dimmesdale. Inside the outline, write factors that affect the character internally (guilt, jealousy, spirituality, knowledge, etc.) Around the outside of the outline, write factors that affect the character externally (role in the community, laws, duty, etc.) On the outline itself, write examples of how these factors are physically affecting the characters (pale face, holds hand on heart, “visage sooty with smoke,” etc.) Encourage students to quote directly from the text, as well as summarize in their own words.

**Extension:** After students have identified the internal and external factors, have them create a “stylized walk” for each character. Begin walking normally, then imagine guilt or jealousy eating away your heart, shoulders, spine, knees, face. How does your walk change?

**Purpose:** This experience will allow students to identify the factors that have changed these characters over time. It will prepare students for the live performance by engaging in the job of the actor. By observing a physical change in themselves and others, they will develop a kinesthetic empathy for the characters.

**Write a Script:** Carol Gilligan’s stage adaptation combines text from Hawthorne’s novel with her own language. Compare the following excerpts and discuss Gilligan’s choices in adapting the language. Consider style, dramatic emphasis, rhythmic flow, etc. What does it sound like to read each passage out loud? Ask your students to re-write this scene in their own way. How would the style change if it included modern language or slang? What do you feel are the most important points to include? How can you make the scene dramatic for an audience? Have students perform their re-written scenes for the class.

**Extension:** What if this scene were done as a silent movie? How would you portray the emotions through action, gesture and facial expression alone? Write an “action script” and perform for the class.

“...Since that day, no man is so near to him as you. You tread behind his every footstep. You are beside him, sleeping and waking. You search his thoughts. You burrow and rankle in his heart! You clutch is on his life, and you cause him to die daily a living death; and still he knows you not. In permitting this, I have surely acted a false part by the only man to whom the power was left me to be true!”

“What choice had you?” asked Roger Chillingworth. “My finger, pointed at this man, would have hurled him from his pulpit into a dungeon, - thence, peradventure, to the gallows!”

“It had been better so!” said Hester Prynne.

“What evil have I done the man?” asked Roger Chillingworth again. I tell thee, Hester Prynne, the richest fee that ever physician earned from monarch could not have bought such care as I have wasted on this miserable priest! But for my aid, his life would have burned away in torments, within the first two years after the perpetration of his crime and thine. For, Hester, his spirit lacked the strength that could have borne up, as thine has, beneath a burden like they scarlet letter. O, I could reveal a goodly secret! But enough! What art can do, I have exhausted on him. That he now breathes, and creeps about on earth, is owing all to me!”

“Better he had died at once!” said Hester Prynne.

Chapter XIV, Hester and the Physician, Nathaniel Hawthorne

HESTER: No man is so near to him as you. You tread behind his every footstep! You are beside him, sleeping and waking, burrowing and tangling his heart. Yet still he knows not who you are.

CHILLINGWORTH: Never did mortal suffer what that man has.

HESTER: Haven’t you tortured him enough?

CHILLINGWORTH: He feels an influence dwelling always upon him. By some spiritual sense, he knows no friendly hand is pulling at his heartstrings... for the Creator never made another being so sensitive as he.

HESTER: Better he had died at once.

Act One, Scene 12, Carol Gilligan

**Purpose:** By making their own choices about language and style, students will be able to decipher the nuances of Hawthorne style. Using Gilligan’s example of adaptation, students will have a model on which to build their own writing. As students listen to the performances of their peers, they will think critically about the creative choices of others.

**Symbol Wall:** As you read, keep track of various symbols that are presented throughout the story. (There are lots to choose from!) Draw or write the symbols on large chart paper and identify categories; religious, personal, patriotic, nature, etc. Encourage students to add symbols that are meaningful to them as well.



**Purpose:** Students will read with purpose as they search for symbols. They will connect Hawthorne’s symbolism with their own.

## Post-Reading and Post-Performance Activities

Prime Stage's mission, *bridging literature, life and learning*, encourages students to reflect on their learning. **The activities below are intended to provide opportunity to synthesize the learning and make personal meaning after they have read the text or attended the performance.**

**Scarlet Letter Quilt:** Throughout the novel the scarlet letter comes to represent many things. For example, Chapter XVIII, A Flood of Sunshine, states, "The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dares not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers, - stern and wild ones, - and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss." Ask each student to find an example from the book in which the scarlet letter serves as a metaphor or symbol and create a picture to represent it. Combine the pictures to form a "Scarlet Letter Quilt." Discuss the quilt as a class. Which pictures show the quilt in a positive way, which show it in a negative way? How is it viewed by different characters?

**Adaptation:** The teacher may assign specific metaphors to each student to assure many ideas are represented. Students may be given a specific quote from the book to interpret.

**Purpose:** This experience will allow students to tap into an important theme in *The Scarlet Letter* and re-express their understanding through their own creativity. Comparison and discussion of their peers' work will facilitate a broader interaction with this theme.

**Epitaph:** Explain to students that an epitaph is a short, one-sentence description of a person on their gravestone. If possible, provide pictures of some epitaphs or have students perform Internet research to get a sense for the wording and tone of epitaphs. Next, have students write epitaphs for one or more of the following characters: Hester, Dimmesdale or Chillingworth. Students can share their epitaphs aloud in a dramatic reading over a "body." (This can be represented by a student or an article of clothing.) In what ways were the epitaphs for each character similar and different? What were the most believable epitaphs and why? How did some of the epitaphs employ irony, satire, and other language devices?

**Extension:** Ask students to write a 3 paragraph obituary for one of the characters from *The Scarlet Letter*, choosing a point of view to write the obituary from—a modern feminist? A Puritan preacher? An Algonquin Indian? Pearl? In preparation, have students read and analyze obituaries from the local newspaper, paying attention to form, structure, and generic conventions. What details did the story provide? What details did students have to imagine and create?

**Purpose:** This experience encourages students to summarize the stories and traits of each character while expressing their own opinions. It provides an opportunity to discuss how characters may be perceived differently from multiple viewpoints.

**Hindsight:** There are many choices in *The Scarlet Letter* in which characters made pivotal choices that greatly impacted their lives. In small groups, ask students to identify a pivotal moment for a specific character. Then write or improvise a monologue spoken by that character as they "look back on their life." (The character may be in the afterlife or much older.) The monologue should explain whether or not the character would have made the same choice—why or why not. Read monologues aloud to the class and compare opinions. Which choices would make for dramatic storytelling and which would not?

**Purpose:** Students will identify how each character's choices impacted the plot and uncover points of conflict and drama within the story. Students will ask "what if?" to re-imagine and challenge their understanding of the story.

**Reflection Snapshots:** After your students attend the performance, ask your students to recall highlights by using their bodies to create frozen "snapshots" of what they saw. Prompts may include: Show me a moment when Hester was isolated from the community. Show me a moment that surprised you. Show me a moment in which you saw Dimmesdale's guilt. As students create the moment, ask them to explain their ideas. Pay attention to physical details such as posture or facial expression. Discuss in detail how the actors used physicality to bring the characters to life.

**Purpose:** This activity is a great assessment of the students' attention to the performance and comprehension of details. It provides struggling writers another means in which to convey their ideas.

ABLE

PEARL

ANGEL

Passport

Status

Adultery

human

shame

Heart

Acceptance

SCAR

imagination

PASSION

Artist

## Attending the Performance

### House rules (...and we don't mean your mama's house!)

It goes without saying that when most children today hear the word "theatre" they think "Oh, MOVIE theatre." And with that thought comes all of those things that we do at movie theatres: eat popcorn, drink noisily from soda cups, put feet on the seat, text message—and the list goes on from there. But live theatre is just that: it's LIVE with LIVE HUMANS who react and respond to the audience, something that we at Prime Stage think is the beauty of the theatre experience. Because of this, live theatre requires a higher level of respect between the audience and performer in order for the experience to be a positive one.

**Please review the following "house rules" with your students prior to attending our production:**

—Please stay together with your group and wait for the ushers to help you all find your seats.

—Please turn all cell phones and pagers **completely off** before the performance. If you are texting during the performance, you will be asked to leave.

—No photography or video taping.

—Please stay in your seat until the intermission or the end of the show.

—No eating, drinking, or chewing gum during the performance or inside the theatre house.

—While we encourage active listening and appropriate responses to the play such as laughing or clapping, please do not talk to your neighbors during the performance.

—Be polite and attentive. Show your appreciation by clapping—the actors love to see how much you enjoyed the show!

*PDE Academic Standards 1.6, 9.1*

### Thinking Like a Critic

Critics play a very important role in theatre. They are often the first to see the show and can write a wonderful—or a horrendous—review for all the world to see. Prepare your students to attend the show by "thinking like a critic."

**Read** the following questions before the show.

**Think** about the questions as you're watching the show and write your answers in a notebook or journal during intermission or on the bus ride home.

**Write** a critique of the show based on your responses.

*PDE Academic Standards 9.1-9.4, 1.4-1.5*



*"I would rather be attacked than unnoticed. For the worst thing you can do to an author is to be silent as to his works. An attack upon a town is a bad thing; but starving it is still even worse." ~ author Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)*

**Actor choices**—How did they move and speak? Did they seem like people we know? How did they relate to other characters?

**Designer choices**—What design element captured your attention the most—the set, costumes, lights, or sound—and why? How did the design elements work together to support the entire production? What choices did the designers make in materials, colors, intensity, detail, etc.? Were the design elements more descriptive or suggestive? What symbols were in the design elements?

**Director choices**—What was the style, pace, and rhythm of the play? What stage pictures helped to tell the story? How did the director unify all the elements of the production?

**Interpretation**—Did the director make a statement about life now? How did the characters, design, and play make you feel? What did the play mean to you? What might it mean to others?

**Evaluation**—Why do you suppose the playwright wrote the play? Why was the play produced now? When were moments where the storytelling was very clear? When were moments you were confused about the story? Who would enjoy the play and why?

**Remember—it's all about choices!** Whether you loved the play or not, identify the specific choices that made you feel that way!



Bringing Literature to Life

**new hazlett theater**  
center for the performing arts

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**BOOKED YOUR TICKETS YET???**

Prime Stage Theatre's student matinees for *The Scarlet Letter* will be held from November 8-10, 2011. All performances begin at 10 AM at the New Hazlett Theater and are followed by a brief post-show chat session.

Tickets are \$10 per student.

Book after Sept. 14 by emailing [studentmat@primestage.com](mailto:studentmat@primestage.com) or calling 412.841.7353.

Matinees fill up quickly so BOOK EARLY!

**Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss gender roles in *The Scarlet Letter*. How does the story frame the role of women in society? Compare the novel and the play—do they project the same point of view?
2. What did the Magistrates hope to accomplish through Hester's punishment? Were they successful?
3. Why do you think Hester continues to wear the scarlet letter even when she's given the choice to remove it? Would you make the same choice?
4. Why do you think Dimmesdale kept his secret for so long? If you were Dimmesdale, would you reveal your secret?
5. Why does Chillingworth choose to torture Dimmesdale and Hester when he could simply reveal that he is Hester's husband? What does this imply about justice? About evil?
6. Why do you think Hawthorne included Native Americans in the novel? What role do they play?
7. If Hester is the protagonist, who is the antagonist?
8. How do the townspeople change their attitude toward Hester over time? Why do you think this happens?
9. Do you think Hawthorne has an optimistic or pessimistic attitude about human nature? What evidence supports your idea?

*PDE Academic Standards 1.1, 1.3, 1.6*

**Resources for your Classroom**

**BOOKS**

Bremer, Francis. *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.

Gilligan, Carol. *The Birth of Pleasure*. Vintage, 2003.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press, 1993.

Haviland Miller, Edwin. *Salem Is My Dwelling Place: Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. University of Iowa Press, 1992.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Tales and Sketches*. Library of America, 1982. (A complete collection of novels and short stories.)

Ryken, Leland. *Wordly Saints: Puritans As They Really Were*. HarperCollins Publishing, 2010. (Available as an E-Book.)

Wineapple, Brenda. *Hawthorne: A Life*. Random House, 2004.

**DVDs**

*The Scarlet Letter*. dir. Rick Hauser. PBS film version, 1979. (Truest to the text from the novel, although not great technical quality.)

*The Hawthorne Legacy—The Scarlet Letter*. DVD, dir. James H. Bride. 2011. 30 minutes.

**INTERNET RESOURCES**

TeacherVision. Study Guide for The Scarlet Letter with discussion questions and resources. <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/reading/resource/4056.html/>

The Glencoe Literature Library. *Study Guide for The Scarlet Letter*. [http://www.glencoe.com/sec/literature/litlibrary/pdf/scarlet\\_letter.pdf](http://www.glencoe.com/sec/literature/litlibrary/pdf/scarlet_letter.pdf)

New England History.info: Puritan Laws and Character. <http://www.usahistory.info/NewEngland/Puritans.html>