

# Scarlet Letter Vocabulary Guide

Here are words you will hear in the play by the characters listed and when they occur.

## Act I

### Prologue

HAWTHORNE: The reasons and justifications for which I returned to Salem are **myriad**

**Definition - countless or extremely great in number.**

### Act I Scene 1

HESTER: **Troth**, I have walked that plot between many times in my life...

**Definition - truth.**

GOODWIFE: I'll bestow a rag of mine own **rheumatic** flannel to make a fitter one!

**Definition - relating to rheumatism which is a condition of inflammation or pain in muscles**

CHILLINGWORTH: A wise sentence. Thus will she be a living sermon against sin, until the **ignominious** letter be engraved upon her tombstone.

**Definition - marked with or characterized by disgrace or shame**

BELLINGHAM: Good Master Dimmesdale, the responsibility of this woman's soul lies greatly with you. **It behooves you**, therefore, **to exhort** her to repentance and to confession,

**Definition "behooves" - it is appropriate**

DIMMESDALE: Hester Prynne. Thou hearest what this good man says, and seest the accountability under which I labor. Heaven hath granted thee an open **ignominy**, that thereby thou mayest work out an open triumph over the evil within thee and sorrow without.

**Definition - public shame or disgrace.**

### Act I Scene 2

CHILLINGWORTH: And I you. (He kneels, opens his bag, and begins to mix a concoction of medicines for the baby.) My old studies in **alchemy**, and **my sojourn** for above the past year among native peoples well . . .

**Definition "Alchemy" - medieval chemistry, with attempts to convert metals into gold.**

**Definition "sojourn"- temporarily staying in one place**

CHILLINGWORTH: True. It was my folly. I have said it. But up to that **epoch** of my life, I had lived in vain.

**Definition - the beginning of a distinctive period in the history of someone.**

CHILLINGWORTH: One thing, thou that wast my wife, I would enjoin upon thee. Thou hast kept the secret of thy **paramour**.

**Definition - a lover in an adulterous relationship. In other words an illicit lover.**

### Act I Scene 4

CHILLINGWORTH: You would tell me, then, that I know all? He to whom only the outward and physical evil is laid open, knoweth oftentimes but half the evil which he is called upon to cure. A bodily disease, which we look upon as while and entire within itself, may after all be but a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part. And you, my friend, as he whose body is the closest **conjoined and imbued** and identified, so to speak, with the spirit whereof it is the instrument.

**Definition "conjoined"- to join together**

**Definition "imbued"- inspired with a feeling**

#### Act II Scene 1

CHILLINGWORTH: Victims of a passion so **imbued** with religious sentiment . . .

**Definition - inspired with a feeling**

#### Act II Scene 2

CHILLINGWORTH: If my poor powers were responsible for any **modicum** of Master Winthrop's comfort, then God hath blessed me, indeed. I am sorry I could not do more to cure what ails him.

**Definition - a small portion**

#### Act II Scene 3

DIMMESDALE: until the sky turns red with dawn's first light and risk nothing more than the dank, chill night air should creep into my bones. Stiffen my frame with rheumatism, and clog my throat with **catarrh** and cough.

**Definition - excessive buildup of mucus in the nose or throat**

#### Act II Scene 4

WILSON Truly. I believe souls, more souls than one, were brought to the truth by the **efficacy** by that sermon.

**Definition - the ability to produce a desired or intended result**

CHILLINGWORTH: Aye! Of evil! And found it. Found it there within him! But he knew not that the eye and hand were mine! He fancied himself given over to a fiend, to be tortured with frightful dreams and desperate thoughts, the sting of remorse and despair of pardon, as a foretaste of what awaits him beyond the grave. But it was the constant shadow of my presence, the closest **propinquity** of the man whom he had most vilely wronged, and who had grown to exist only by this perpetual poison of direst revenge!

**Definition - being close to someone or something**

#### Act II Epilogue

HAWTHORNE: Yet one tombstone served for both, with a simple, cryptic inscription that read, "On a field, sable, the letter "A" **gules**."

**Definition - the color red in the design, display, and study of coats of arms indicated by parallel vertical lines**