

## *The Scarlet Letter* Study Guide Questions

### Introductory

1. Where is the narrator employed?
2. What is the custom house?
3. How did he get the job?
4. What are most of the people who work there like?
5. What is the “father of the custom house” like?
6. What is the general like?
7. What is the narrator taking a break from?
8. What has changed about his name’s use?
9. What is upstairs in the custom house?
10. What does he discover? Whose papers are they?
11. What does he find in Pue’s papers?
12. What are people who work for the government like?
13. Why can’t he write the story now?
14. What happens to allow him to write?

### CHAPTER 1          The Prison Door

1. What is ironic about the utopias established in new world?
2. Why does the rose bush seem out of place in the bleak setting?

### CHAPTER 2          The Market Place

1. What is the crowd waiting for in anticipation outside the jail?
2. What do the women there think the punishment should be?
3. Why are they so upset by the punishment of the letter?
4. Who is it that comes out that they are all waiting for?
5. What is on her dress?
6. What does she look like?
7. What does she think about as she looks at the crowd?
8. What does she see at the end of the chapter?

### CHAPTER 3          The Recognition

1. What does Hester realize?
2. How does she react?
3. What had he been doing before she noticed him?
4. What does he do when he realizes that Hester has recognized him?
5. What does this man ask another?
6. Why was Hester there alone?
7. Had she heard from her husband?
8. What is the answer to the question of who the father is?
9. What does the stranger promise?
10. How does Hester feel about meeting him in that situation?
11. In addition to the townspeople, who is there to see the spectacle?
12. Who is Reverend John Wilson?
13. What is Reverend Dimmesdale reluctant to do?
14. How does he handle the task?
15. What is Hester’s response?

16. Who does she address her response to?
17. What is Dimmedale's reaction?
18. What does Reverend Wilson do?
19. How does Pearl react to the preaching?
20. How does Hester react as she returns to jail?

#### **CHAPTER 4            The Interview**

1. Where is Hester?
2. What is wrong with the baby?
3. Who comes to treat her?
4. What are his qualifications?
5. What is Hester afraid of?
6. What is Chillingworth's response?
7. What is the child's response to his doctoring?
8. What is her fear regarding his potion for her?
9. What is his response?
10. What does Chillingworth say about his role in Hester's current condition?
11. What is her response?
12. What does he say to that?
13. What does Hester say that she has done to him? His reply?
14. What does he want to know? Her reply?
15. How will he know who the father is?
16. What does he ask of her? Why?
17. Who does Hester compare him to?

#### **CHAPTER 5            Hester at Her Needle**

1. Why is it harder for her to leave for good than when she came out to face the crowd?
2. What does she fear will happen to her individuality?
3. What is unusual about her choice of residence?
4. Where does she live? How does she support them?
5. How does she dress the child? Herself?
6. What does she do with most of her earnings?
7. What is her time like in the town?
8. Does she ever get a feeling of relief? How?
9. What do the townspeople say about the scarlet letter?

#### **CHAPTER 6            Pearl**

1. Describe Pearl
2. What is ironic about her name?
3. How does Pearl act?
4. What did Hester find out about disciplining Pearl?
5. What does the peculiar look signify?
6. How does Pearl react to her mother's tears?
7. What saddens Hester about Pearl being able to speak?
8. How does Pearl react to other children?
9. How does Pearl amuse herself?
10. What is her play like?
11. What was the first thing to influence Pearl?
12. What is Hester's fear about Pearl?

13. What does Hester ask Pearl?

#### CHAPTER 7 The Governor's Hall

1. Why does Hester go to the governor's mansion?
2. What is the other reason she goes?
3. What or who do they fear is Pearl's origin?
4. Who is most active in trying to take Pearl away?
5. What is Pearl dressed in-what is it like?
6. What do the children plan to do to them? What does Pearl do?
7. What is so appealing to Pearl about the suit of armor? What is Hester's reaction?
8. How does Hester distract Pearl?
9. What does Pearl do?
10. What stops the fit?

#### CHAPTER 8 The Elf-Child and the Minister

1. Who is there with the governor?
2. What is Chillingworth's relationship with Dimmesdale?
3. What is Wilson's first reaction to Pearl? What changes his reaction?
4. What does the governor say to Hester? What is her reaction?
5. Who is told to question Pearl? How does she react to his grandfatherly ways?
6. What does he ask her? What is her answer?
7. Does Pearl know God?
8. What does Hester say will happen if they try to take Pearl?
9. Who does Hester appeal to for help? Why?
10. How does Dimmesdale react?
11. What does the governor decide after his appeal?
12. What does Pearl do to Dimmesdale? How does Hester react?
13. Who do they meet on the way out? How does Hester respond to her request?

#### CHAPTER 9 The Leech

1. Why didn't Chillingworth say who he is?
2. Why was he accepted as a physician?
3. Why do they think Dimmesdale is not well?
4. Why might Dimmesdale be sick?
5. What do the townspeople think of Dimmesdale?
6. What does Chillingworth do before he treats Dimmesdale?
7. What does Chillingworth suggest about living arrangements?
8. What does do the people of the town think about them living together?
9. Where do Chillingworth and Dimmesdale live?
10. Why don't the friends of Dimmesdale see anything wrong with Chillingworth?
11. Why do some people suspect Chillingworth of evil?
12. How do the people think that Chillingworth has changed over time?
13. Who or what do they think is haunting Dimmesdale?

#### CHAPTER 10 The Leech and his Patient

1. What is Chillingworth trying to do?
2. What can't Dimmesdale see what he is up to?

3. What does Dimmesdale say about revealing his guilt to Chillingworth in an effort to get well?
4. What does Pearl do in the cemetery?
5. What does Pearl say about Chillingworth?
6. What does Chillingworth ask Dimmesdale about his illness?
7. What is Dimmesdale's answer?
8. What does Chillingworth do when Dimmesdale is in a deep sleep?

#### **CHAPTER 11          The Interior of a Heart**

1. What is Chillingworth going to do?
2. How is Dimmesdale starting to feel about Chillingworth?
3. How does he deal with the feelings?
4. What type of parishioners does Dimmesdale best relate to?
5. How do they feel about him?
6. What happens when he tells his flock that he is vile?
7. What does he do to punish himself?

#### **CHAPTER 12          The Minister's Vigil**

1. Where does Dimmesdale go to try to deal with his guilt?
2. What does he do when he is there?
3. Who does he see passing by?
4. Why does Dimmesdale laugh? What happens after that?
5. Why is Hester there?
6. What does he ask them to do?
7. How does he react to holding Pearl's hand?
8. What does Pearl ask of him? What is his response?
9. How does Pearl respond?
10. What do they see in the sky?
11. Who else do they see there? What expression does he have on his face?
12. What does Dimmesdale ask Hester? Why?
13. What is Hester's response?
14. What is Dimmesdale's sermon like the next day?
15. What do the people in town think the A in the sky represents?

#### **CHAPTER 13          Another View of Hester**

1. What has happened to the common people's view of Hester in the past seven years?
2. What do they say that her A stands for now?
3. How does Hester react to people speaking to her and acknowledging her?
4. What has happened to Hester's outward appearance?
5. What does Hester wonder about Pearl?
6. What does Hester resolve to do for Dimmesdale? Why?

#### **CHAPTER 14          Hester and the Physician**

1. What does Chillingworth say to Hester? What is her response?
2. What is Hester shocked to see in Chillingworth?
3. What is he in a word?
4. What does she tell him? What is his reply?
5. What is Hester's response? Chillingworth?
6. What does Chillingworth ask Hester? What is her reply?

7. What is he now? Who made him this way?
8. Why didn't he plot revenge against Hester?
9. What does Hester say she must do?
10. Why does he pity her? Why does she pity him?
11. Will he pardon Hester and redeem himself?
12. What does he tell Hester to do?

#### **CHAPTER 15          Hester and Pearl**

1. How does Hester feel about Chillingworth?
2. What did Pearl do with seaweed while her mother talked to Chillingworth?
3. Does Pearl seem to know what the A signifies?
4. What does she ask about the A?
5. What does Hester realize about Pearl?
6. Does Pearl forget about her questions?
7. Does Hester answer her question candidly?

#### **CHAPTER 16          A Forest Walk**

1. Why is Hester looking for Dimmesdale?
2. Where is she waiting for him?
3. What story does Pearl want her mother to tell her?
4. Who is the Black Man?
5. What does Pearl ask about Dimmesdale?
6. What is Dimmesdale like as he is walking toward Hester?

#### **CHAPTER 17          The Pastor and His Parishioner**

1. What does Dimmesdale ask Hester and then she asks him?
2. Where do they sit to talk?
3. What do they ask each other next?
4. What does Dimmesdale say when Hester tells them the others revere him?
5. Why does Dimmesdale think that he has not repented?
6. What does he wish he had?
7. What does Hester say about a friend?
8. What does she tell him about Chillingworth?
9. What does she finally tell him?
10. How does Dimmesdale react to the news initially?
11. What does Hester do?
12. Does he finally forgive her? What does he say?
13. What is Arthur afraid of? What does Hester think?
14. What does Hester tell him he has to do? Is he easily able to do that?
15. What does Hester suggest?
16. What does he say? What does Hester say?

#### **CHAPTER 18          A Flood of Sunshine**

1. Why is it easy for Hester to imagine leaving?
2. Why does he decide to go with her?
3. How does he feel after he says he will go?
4. What does Hester do to symbolize leaving the past behind? Then what happens to her?
5. What does Hester tell him he must do? What is his reply?

6. What is Pearl doing while they talk?
7. What happens to Pearl in nature?

#### **CHAPTER 19      The Child at the Brookside**

1. Why did Dimmesdale dread Pearl?
2. How do they feel as they see Pearl coming toward them?
3. What does Hester tell him as Pearl approaches?
4. Why is Pearl finding it hard to return to her mother?
5. Why is Pearl pointing at her mother? What does Pearl do?
6. What does Hester realize? What does Hester do?
7. What is Pearl's response? What is Pearl willing to do now?
8. What does Pearl do that is unlike her? How does she ruin the impact of that?
9. What does Pearl ask about Dimmesdale?
10. What does Hester tell her?
11. How does Pearl react to Dimmesdale?
12. What does Dimmesdale do to try to ingratiate himself with Pearl? What does she do?

#### **CHAPTER 20      The Minister in a Maze**

1. What are Hester and Arthur's plans for the future? Why are they leaving America?
2. Who will make the arrangements for the ship? Why?
3. Why is Dimmesdale glad that they are leaving in four days?
4. What is different about Dimmesdale as he returns to the village?
5. What seems different about the people and things in the town now?
6. What does Dimmesdale feel like doing as he enters the village?
7. Who does he meet as he is trying to decide if he made a deal with the devil?
8. What does this person accuse him of doing?
9. What does he think about her accusation?
10. What does he think when he reaches his study? Who comes to his door?
11. What does the physician now realize about the minister?
12. What does he refuse from Chillingworth?
13. What does he do with his old sermon?

#### **CHAPTER 21      The New England Holiday**

1. What is happening that day?
2. How is Hester dressed?
3. What is Hester thinking about the letter?
4. How is Pearl dressed?
5. What does Pearl want to know?
6. What does she ask about the minister?
7. What is her reply? Pearl's?
8. What have the Puritans forgotten?
9. Who was Roger Chillingworth seen with? The captain of the ship
10. What does the captain of the ship tell Hester?
11. Why is the captain surprised by her reaction?
12. What is Chillingworth doing after she is done talking to the captain?

#### **CHAPTER 22      The Procession**

1. Why is there a procession?

2. Who is in the procession?
3. What is different about Dimmesdale?
4. What is Hester feeling as she watches him?
5. What does Pearl ask?
6. What does Pearl say next?
7. What does Mistress Hibbins say to Hester? What does she seem to know?
8. What does Hester hear of Dimmesdale's sermon?
9. What is Pearl doing during the sermon?
10. Who tries to kiss her? What does he give her?
11. What message does he give her for Hester? How does Hester react?
12. What do the people from the country and the Indians and sailors do to Hester?
13. Meanwhile, ironically, what look is being given to Dimmesdale?

## **CHAPTER 23          The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter**

1. What is the reaction to Dimmesdale's sermon?
2. How does the crowd react to Dimmesdale's talk as the group processes by to the town hall?
3. What causes the shouts to die down?
4. Who tries to help him? What does Dimmesdale do?
5. Who else is concerned about him?
6. What does he do when he sees Hester and Pearl by the scaffold?
7. What do they do?
8. What does Dimmesdale tell Hester?
9. What does he say to the crowd?
10. What does Chillingworth keep saying?
11. What does he ask of Pearl? What does she do?
12. What does Hester ask of him? His response?
13. What are his dying words?
14. How do the Puritans react?

## **CHAPTER 24          Conclusion**

1. What are the theories about how the A appeared in Dimmesdale's flesh?
2. What do some witnesses say about the scaffold scene?
3. How does Hawthorne address this?
4. What happened to Chillingworth after Dimmesdale's death?
5. How long after this does Chillingworth die?
6. What happens to his property there and in Europe?
7. What happens to Pearl and Hester?
8. What does Hester do several years later?
9. Where is Pearl?
10. What happened to the scarlet letter?
11. What happens when Hester dies?
12. What is the shared tombstone like?