

## AP English Language and Composition 2101-2011 Summer Reading Assignment: *The Scarlet Letter*

Congratulations on your decision to take Advanced Placement Language and Composition! This is a college-level class that will require commitment and hard work. You will take the AP exam at the end of the year and can potentially earn college English credit. Students study a variety of writers, writing styles, and most importantly, rhetoric, in order to gain a deeper understanding for language. Students will use the Norton Anthology of American Literature as a text book while reading chosen selections as supplemental texts.

This particular AP course covers a broad range of materials usually associated with the reading analysis, and writing expected in college freshman composition. Through frequent timed-writing practices, research papers, formal essays, and practice AP exams, students cultivate a mature use of effective writing and voice. The following is your assigned summer reading. While Spark Notes/Cliff's Notes and a multitude of online resources are available, I caution you to use these sources as supplements. In other words, if you must depend on notations other than your own for understanding, you are more than likely NOT going to be successful in AP English Language.

This summer (summer 2010) you will be reading *The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne. You may skip "The Custom House" introduction. You will also need to purchase your own copy of the text, or check one out from the library. I encourage you all to purchase your own copy for use during the beginning of the school year. Please check used book sites such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble to avoid paying the full price. I believe the price of a new copy is \$6.99. Additionally, two books you may want to purchase are *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* by Anne Lamott and *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E.B. White. These are two books that will assist you with writing and grammar throughout high school and even college.

### *The Scarlet Letter*

The Scarlet Letter is a story of sin, punishment, and redemption, of the human heart in conflict. Consider the nature of sin and the sinner. There are public sins and private sins, sins of love and passion, and sins of cold hearted determination. Consider who the true sinner is in the novel and who suffers to what extent for their sins.

The following is some background information. Read this background information and complete the vocabulary section before you begin reading. Begin reading at the beginning of the novel. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO READ THE "CUSTOM HOUSE" SECTION OF THE NOVEL.**

Original Sin: The Puritans believed in original sin, the belief that man is born in sin that originated with Adam and Eve's disobedience to God and their expulsion from the garden of Eden. The idea of sin was a reality for them. They were on constant guard against those in the community who were engaged in sin. People in this community reported others in the community who they believed were sinful in order that the sinners might be saved and, more importantly, that God would see the community as a whole as free from sin and vigilant on the side of God.

Predestination: Predestination means that God determines who is "elected", admitted to the kingdom of heaven, and, therefore, who is condemned to hell. The Puritan community's goal was to establish "the city on the hill," an idealized version of God's kingdom, obedient to God's will and free from sin. Sin in the community would prevent the elect from being chosen by God. The rooting out of all sin was vital to the salvation of the elect.

Sin/Punishment/Redemption: *Scarlet Letter* is based on a belief in sin as a moral wrong. At the heart of the novel is a child born to a woman whose husband has not been seen for two years. The father of the child is obviously not her husband. The sin of Hester Prynne is a mark on the community as a whole and must be punished. Hester is imprisoned once her condition is known. Her child is born in prison. She serves one year in prison. When she is released, she is condemned to stand on the scaffold in the Market Place for the community to look on the sinner and for Hester and her child to face public humiliation. Hester must also wear a scarlet letter "A" on her breast as a symbol of her sin. In doing these things, Hester serves a public penance for her sin. However, she will not reveal the name of the father, and he is not punished by the community. Hester's missing true husband returns but does not reveal himself to the community. He sets out to find and punish the father. This triangle, husband, wife, and unnamed lover plus the child, Pearl, forms the center of the novel's exploration of sin, punishment, and redemption.

As you read the novel, note the references the characters make to sin, Hester's as well as others. Highlight, underline, make notes in the margins; be an active reader. Hopefully you own this book. If so, mark it up.

### *The Scarlet Letter* Study Guide

Due the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of Class - August 2010

This assignment must be typed, double-spaced, in Times New Roman.

Each section should be clearly labeled.

#### I. Vocabulary

Thematic Language: Define each of these words in reference to the philosophic ideas.

Sin Penance Redemption Hypocrisy Puritans Salvation Allegory Evil

Literary Terms: Define these terms using a Literary Terms dictionary you find online, a print dictionary you may have at home, or a dictionary at the public library. Do not use the common definition found in an ordinary dictionary.

Attitude Imagery Rhetoric Metaphor Diction Symbolism Novel

Archaic Language: This novel was written in 1850 and reflects the language of that time. Look up any words you do not know to be certain that you understand the story. The following are some of the words that you may not know. There may be others. LOOK ALL OF THEM UP AND WRITE THE DEFINITIONS.

visage enmity mollify propinquity pristine exhort iniquity mountebank  
mien abased venerable vilify petulant sagacity cadence efficacy insidious vex  
profane fortitude

## II. Characters

Identify these major characters, their sin, and their salvation. Please write in paragraph form and provide a brief analysis, WITH SUPPORTING EVIDENCE, for each character, their sin, and their salvation!

Hester Prynne Rev. Dimmesdale Roger Chillingworth Pearl

Identify these minor characters and at least one significant fact they add to the meaning of the novel. Again, as stated above, your identification of each character must be in paragraph form and offer some sort of analysis with support. In other words, answer “why” and “how”; explain your reasoning.

Mistress Hibbins Governor Bellingham

Reverend Mr. Wilson Governor Winthrop

## III. Recurring Images (Make notes as these images occur.)

You must interpret them (find the deeper, symbolic ideas) and explain their significance to the major themes of the novel.

- a) Note the event/moment in the novel where this image occurs (include page #)
- b) who is involved
- c) the context of that moment.

At the end of the novel, interpret the meaning of this image as it appears in the novel. This interpretation and analysis will form the basis of a class discussion in August when you arrive back at the schoolhouse.

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A. Black Man: (devil, evil, that which is feared will leads humans astray, refers to Chillingworth at times.)

B. Forest: where the black man lives, away from civilization, unknown.

C. Letter A: meaning changes. Be certain you know all of the meanings.

D. Church/Bible/Religion: Church and state are one, the church laws are the state's laws.

E. Scaffold: place of punishment; note who is there, when, and what happens at that place in the community. There are three scaffold scenes in the novel.

F. Sunshine/Light and Darkness: Who, where, why?

#### IV. Nature of Relationships

Describe the nature (the emotional tie or commitment, service rendered, or damage done)

of the relationships in this web.

Hester

Dimmesdale

Chillingworth

Pearl

V. Discuss the Allegory in the novel. Compare to the Bible story of sin and redemption (Adam and Eve).

The Scarlet Letter paper will be due the second week of school following class discussion of the various ideas explored in your reading. To prepare for the paper, chose one major character for your paper. You will analyze the strategies Hawthorn uses to 1) develop this character and 2) use this character to illuminate his themes (moral lessons, message) in this novel.

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- A. Chose your character – Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, or Pearl.
- B. Each character has two or more chapters in the book dedicated to them: one in the beginning and another (or more) later on.
- C. Take notes on this character: Note page numbers for use in your citations in paper.
  - 1) Physical description – How does this lead to understanding theme?
  - 2) Actions of character
    - a. In relation to self
    - b. In relation to others
  - 3) Speeches of character
    - a. What character says to others
    - b. Internal dialogue (what character thinks)
  - 4) What others say and do in relation to this character.
- D. Write a brief (two paragraphs) on the role you see this character playing in the debate of sin, penance, redemption, and salvation.
- E. Be ready to discuss your character as well as the others when you return.

The due date for the above material will either be August 30, 2010 or September 1, 2010, depending on what day your class falls on at the beginning of the school year.

I look forward to seeing what you discover about the assigned literature, what you discover about yourself, and how you interpret the characters of the novel in relation to the reality in which you live.

Keep it real!

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