

11th Grade Summer Reading

Important Note: The Custom House Introductory to *The Scarlet Letter* is not part of the required reading. You may choose to read the introduction if you wish.

The Scarlet Letter is considered by many literary experts to be this country's greatest fictional work depicting the Puritan time period. Published in 1850, the novel takes place in Boston around 1640 over a period of seven years. Though sin is certainly at the heart of the novel, Hawthorne is far more interested in how the main characters deal with sin than the act of sin itself. Keeping this in mind will lead you to a better understanding of major themes in the novel.

Because *The Scarlet Letter* is one of America's first symbolic novels, you should keep in mind what symbolism is. Symbolism is an economic method an author uses to help him/her reveal theme to the reader. An author uses an object to represent or suggest a deeper meaning. The object working as the symbol must literally exist in the novel and evoke for the reader a deeper, more profound meaning beyond the object itself. The color of Hester Prynne's letter "A" for example is symbolic as is the letter itself. The deeper meaning of the letter will change throughout the novel.

Though you are not writing 1 focused essay for the Summer Reading you must write 2-3 paragraphs on each of the following questions in an Essay Format:

ESSAY:

Must be typed in APA format:

12 point font (Times New Roman or Calibri)

Use at least 1 quote from the novel for each question

1. We are defined by our actions, words, habits, relationships, vices, beliefs, religion, possessions, upbringing, where we live, mannerisms, hobbies, interests, etc. A good author creates memorable characters that drive the plot; characters who feel real. No matter how good the plot is, without compelling characters, the novel won't hook the reader. Discuss the techniques the author uses to develop the main character and how it contributes to a theme. Consider the list above; what does the author choose to tell you about his character? What do those things expose about who the character is? What motivates this character? And how does the character advance the theme?

2. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. (Think of how a movie is not always chronological, or perhaps why resolution isn't just a plot twist or final revealing.)

3. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

4. Consider the ways in which a setting can be significant to the overall themes in a work of literature. Discuss the setting of *The Scarlet Letter* and how it contributes to the meaning of the work.