

Think Like a Puritan



Directions: This activity is to be completed with a partner. You may choose your partner (no groups of 3). Only one of you needs to write. Be prepared to share your thoughts with the class - so be creative! You will have fifteen minutes of preparation time.

You are the members of the town council of a small Puritan community in Massachusetts during the late 1600's. You are gathered because a problem has been discovered. A woman whose husband has been in England for the past two years has recently given birth to a baby girl. Obviously, adultery is not tolerated in this community and the woman must be punished.

Unfortunately, this is the least of your problems. The adulteress does not appear to be the least bit remorseful about committing her heinous crime. In fact, she proudly walks with her illegitimate child around the town holding her head up without shame. When asked why she is behaving this way, she replies, "I am not ashamed of what I have done." In addition, the adulteress steadfastly refuses to identify the father of her child. Since this is a very isolated community, the father must be one of the townspeople. Finally, the council has noticed that the child, now almost five years old, has been exhibiting some unsavory characteristics lately — she sings, dances and skips around town (this behavior, of course, is considered sinful in our community). Her mother appears unconcerned with this behavior and lets the child continue with these behaviors.

During this meeting, you must formulate a plan to accomplish the following goals:

1. Determine what punishment should be given to the adulteress and how you can discourage this behavior in the other members of the community.
2. Determine what steps you will take to force the adulteress to divulge the name of the father of the child.
3. Determine what steps you will take to encourage the father of the child to come forward on his own.
4. Determine what punishment you will administer to the father once he is determined.
5. Determine what is to be done with the child. Is this adulteress a fit mother to raise this child?
6. How can the soul of the sinner be saved?

When you have finished your meeting, you will address the community (the class) and outline your plan to them.

The Scarlet Letter Chapters 5 and 6 Questions

Directions: These questions are to be answered individually, in writing. Be prepared to answer each question if/when you are called on. You will have thirty minutes to work on these. If you finish early, you may begin reading tonight's chapters until we talk about the questions.

1. Why does Hester stay in the Puritan settlement? Please note that the narrator suggests more than one possibility -list all possibilities!
2. Describe Hester's home, using at least 2 adjectives. Why do you believe Hester chooses this dwelling?
3. How do the Puritan children behave around Hester's home? Why?
4. How does Hester earn money?
5. What has Hester never been asked to embroider? What is the significance of this exception?
6. Describe the contrast between Hester's clothes and Pearl's clothes. What do you suppose is the "deeper meaning" to the clothing choices, hinted at on page 77?
7. How does the letter affect Hester's day-to-day life? How does she feel each time someone looks upon the letter? Do you believe the punishment "works"?
8. On page 80 is the sentence, "But sometimes, once in many days, or perchance in many months, she felt an eye - a human eye - upon the ignominious brand, that seemed to give a momentary relief, as if half her agony were shared." Respond to this sentence (and the rest of the paragraph). What could this mean?
9. What is the proof that Hester is not completely corrupt?
10. Explain the significance thus far of the name "Pearl."
11. Why does Hester sometimes look at her daughter with dread and fear?
12. Use three adjectives to describe Pearl and explain why you chose them.
13. How does Pearl react to the Puritan children? Why does this reaction make Hester tremble?
14. Why is it significant that Pearl never creates friends to play with, but only enemies?
15. How does Pearl react to the scarlet letter?
16. What does Pearl do that prompts Hester's question, "Child, what art thou?" (91)?
17. Where does Hester say Pearl comes from? Why is Pearl's reaction significant?