

SURVEY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE  
\* \* \* ENGLISH 3 \* \* \*  
2011 SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT

Instructions

- Read and annotate *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- You do not need to read "The Custom House" (Introductory Chapter)
- Define each vocabulary word
- Respond to the guide questions as you read
- Use complete sentences
- Responses must be on a separate sheet of paper and handwritten in ink
- Due the first day of class

Chapters 1-5

iniquity                  mien                  lurid                  retribution                  ignominy

1. As Hester emerged from the prison, what action reveals her forcefulness of character? Considering the charge against her, do you think this behavior is brazen or admirable? Explain.
2. How is the stranger's mental and physical condition reflected in his appearance?
3. What characters in Chapter Two function as a Greek chorus, supplying background information and commenting on the action?
4. What does Chillingworth mean when he tells Hester, "I seek no vengeance, plot no evil against thee. Between thee and me the scale hangs fairly balanced.?"

Chapters 6-10

caprice                  decorum                  erudite                  mutable                  pestilential  
capricious                  decorously                  erudition                  mutability                  pestilence

1. What factors in Pearl's heredity and environment account for her personality? Why do some people think she is the devil's child?
2. How does the scarlet letter appear when it is reflected in the polished breastplate of the suit of armor? What is the significance of this?
3. What change comes over Chillingworth after he arrives in Boston? What causes this change?
4. According to Dimmesdale, why do men keep their sins hidden from the world?

## Chapters 11-15

acrid	hypocrite	peril	sere	bane	odious
preternatural	spectral	dank	pall	pristine	vigil
ethereal	penance	scurrilous	wreak	fiend	

1. Dimmesdale's flock increasingly comes to think of him as a "miracle of holiness." What is the minister's opinion of himself?
2. How does Hawthorne explain Dimmesdale's vision of the letter "A" illuminated in the night sky? Why does he offer different explanations for phenomenon?
3. Why doesn't Dimmesdale immediately recognize Chillingworth as a hateful person?
4. Why does Hawthorne say that "the scarlet letter had not done its office"?
5. On what basis does Hester say of her husband, "He betrayed me! He has done me worse wrong than I did him"?

## Chapters 16-20

denizens	imperious	imputed	malevolent	misanthropy
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1. Dimmesdale told Hester, "Of penance, I have had enough! Of penitence, there has been none!" What is the difference between penance and penitence? What does the minister mean by this speech?
2. Do you think Hester and Dimmesdale will be able to leave as planned?

## Chapters 21-24

apotheosized	effervescence	necromancer	plebeian	probity
transitory				

1. Why are the members of the Puritan community prepared to enjoy themselves on the day of the Election Sermon?
2. How is the vigor expressed by Dimmesdale on the day of the Election Sermon related to his lightened step on his return from the forest?
3. Why does Hester listen intently to Dimmesdale's sermon even though she is outside the church and can't hear the words?
4. "Hadst thou sought the whole earth over, there was no one place so secret, -- no high place or lowly place, where thou couldst have escaped me, -- save on this very scaffold!" Is Chillingworth correct in this?
5. What does Hawthorne see as Chillingworth's major flaw? Do you agree? Explain.
6. Why does Hawthorne give so many alternative explanations for the presence or absence of a mark upon the minister's breast? What does he accomplish by doing this?