

## Characterization in *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne

### Annotation Guide

**Directions:** Complete the following guided reading and annotation to support your analysis of character in *The Scarlet Letter*.

#### Chapters Three and Four

**Activity One:** Read paragraphs 1-3 of Chapter 3 of *The Scarlet Letter* which focus on describing Chillingworth.

List connotative diction that reveals Chillingworth's character:

"strange disarray of civilized and savage costume," "small" "furrowed visage,"  
"remarkable intelligence," "conceal...peculiarity," "thin visage," "look...keen and penetrative"

Looking at the connotative diction you highlighted, what kind of character is the author creating in Chillingworth?

Chillingworth stands out as an intelligent yet odd man. He's definitely thoughtful yet strange.

**Activity Two:** Look again at paragraphs 1-3 of chapter 3 of *The Scarlet Letter*.

Highlight in a different color figurative language used to describe Chillingworth.

Complete the following:

Hawthorne compares Chillingworth to a snake in order to show that Chillingworth is a negative and evil force. This comparison shows this because snakes symbolize evil in general, but particularly Chillingworth is described as a "writhing horror."

**Activity Three:** Review Chillingworth’s dialogue in chapter 4.

List details that reveal Chillingworth’s characters in this dialogue.

"Better physician," "medicine is potent for good," "sinless conscience," "scheme of vengeance," "burning shame may still blaze upon thy bosom," "bear about thy doom on thee"

List 2-3 character traits that you can infer Chillingworth possesses based on the textual evidence you identified in the dialogue.

- Serious
- Vengeful
- Sad

**Chapter Six**

**Activity Four** Read the first five paragraphs of Chapter 6 of *The Scarlet Letter* which focus on Pearl.

- Write the quote that reveals the meaning of Pearl’s name "But she named the infant 'Pearl,' as being of great price- purchased with all she had..."

**Activity Five:** Fill the chart with words that Hawthorne uses to describe aspects of Pearl’s character.

Physical Description	Behavioral Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "No physical defect"</li> <li>• "Perfect shape"</li> <li>• "Natural dexterity"</li> <li>• "Native grace"</li> <li>• "Attire...impressed"</li> <li>• "Magnificent"</li> <li>• "Proper beauty"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Dark and wild peculiarity"</li> <li>• "Trait of passion"</li> <li>• "Lacked reference and adaptation"</li> <li>• "Could not be made amenable to rules"</li> </ul>

How does the contrast in Pearl’s physical and behavioral description develop her as a character?

Pearl is outwardly beautiful but behaviorally wild. This develops her because such a strong beauty the Puritans approve of, but they disdain Pearl because of her strong personality.

**Activity Six:** Read paragraphs 7-9.

- List words and phrases that describe the setting.

"Little Puritans...intolerant brood," "Mother's cottage," "pine-trees aged, black, and solemn,"

- List words and phrases that describe Pearl's behavior in each setting.

Town- "outbreaks of a fierce temper"

Cottage- "creative spirit," "wonderful...state of preternatural activity"

**Activity Seven:** Respond to the following in 5-8 complete sentences: How does Hawthorne use Pearl's character to help develop settings in Chapter 6? What does this reveal about Pearl, Hester, and/ or Puritan society?

In chapter 6 Hawthorne describes Pearl's interactions with the community in Hester in town as well as outside of town in the woods. Pearl is beautiful and intelligent in both settings; however, in town the rebuke of the children forces her to, "...grow positively terrible in her puny wrath, snatching up stones to fling at them..." Yet, when she's alone with Hester she can act naturally and is not forced to change her actions because of the weight of her mother's sin. Additionally, the townspeople's discussion of Pearl as a child of demons makes even Hester question Pearl's nature. This reveals Pearl to be another symbol of her mother's sin, Hester to be buried under the weight of her sinful burden, and the Puritans to be cruel and judgemental as they bring the mother and daughter down.

## Chapter Eight

**Activity Eight:** Read the last five paragraphs of Chapter 8 of *The Scarlet Letter* which focus on an interaction between Mistress Hibbins and Hester Prynne.

**Activity Nine:** Fill the chart with connotative diction that Hawthorne uses to describe each woman.

<u>Mistress Hibbins</u>	<u>Hester Prynne</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "bitter-tempered"</li> <li>• "ill-omened"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Triumphant"</li> </ul>

Complete the following:

In chapter 8 Hawthorne depicts Mistress Hibbins as *evil* and *devious* by describing her with words like "ill-omened," "bitter-tempered," and "witch" while Hester's personality seems more cheerful and heavenly because of the use of diction such as "triumphant," "frailty," and "saved" describing her.

**Activity Ten:** Respond to the following in 5-8 complete sentences: What is Hawthorne's purpose for including Mistress Hibbins in the story. What does she represent?

Mistress Hibbins asks Hester, "Wilt thou go with us to-night? There will be a merry company in the forest; and I well-nigh promised the Black Man that comely Hester Prynne should make one." This demonstrates how she seems to represent the evil that Puritan society fears. Because she is the sister of the governor, she seems to also represent the moral blindness of Puritan society. She, a revered sister of a powerful politician, is meeting with the devil which contrasts with Hester who is happily caring for her child. This further shows the hypocrisy of the Puritans.

