DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

Setting Tracker

As you read *The Scarlet Letter*, complete the chart below. In the first column, list the setting found in the novel. In the second column, provide the proper citation information. (page number, paragraph number, etc.). In the third column, list the characters and main events in the structure scene. In the fourth column, describe what idea Hawthorne is communicating with this scene.

Setting	Citation	Description ● *How is the setting described? Include text that describes the setting.*	Central Idea ● *What are the main actions in this setting?* ● *What characters are present here?* ● *How does this setting help convey a central idea of the text?*
Prison	*Chapter 1*	● *"The rust on the ponderous iron–work of its oaken door looked more antique than anything else in the New World...it seemed never to have known a youthful era. Before this ugly edifice… was a grass–plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig–weed, apple–pern, and such unsightly vegetation... " (paragraph 2).* ● *But on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose–bush...and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him." (paragraph 2)*	● *This chapter introduces the Puritan lifestyle. It also contains a description of the prison and the rose-bush.* ● *Hawthorne describes the rose-bush as symbolizing, "... some sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track..." (paragraph 3). It could symbolize Hester.*
Scaffold	*Chapters 2-3* Chapter 12	"In either case, there was very much the same solemnity of demeanour on the part of the spectators as befitted a people among whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful. Meagre, indeed, and cold was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for, from such bystanders, at the scaffold."	Hester is punished by having to stand alone on the scaffold with her small infant child. Pastors attempt to get her to name the father of her child. This shows the cruelty of the Puritan society. A reference to the scaffold is a reference to Hester's punishment and the secret sin in her and Dimmesdale's lives. They meet on the scaffold only in secret and this

	Chapter 23	"...some platform or scaffold, black and weather-stained with the storm of sunshine...beneath the balcony of the meeting house..." "They beheld the minister, leaning on Hester's shoulder, and supported by her arm around him, approach the scaffold..." "...had won a victory. Then, down he sank upon the scaffold!"	emphasizes the hypocrisy of Puritan society. Dimmesdale goes up on the scaffold and takes Hester and Pearl with him to confess his sin in front of the entire town. He finally achieves "peace" (death). This conveys the idea that secret sin is a destructive force.
Hester's Home/ Forest	Chapter 15	"Two of three times, as her mother and she went homeward... and once she seemed to be fairly asleep, Pearl looked up with mischief gleaming in her black eyes."	Pearl discusses the scarlet letter openly with Hester at their home frequently. It shows how the letter is such a part of their life.
Governor 's Hall	Chapters 7-8	"The furniture of the hall consisted of ponderous chairs, the backs of which were elaborately covered with wreaths of flowers..."	The Governor, who is obviously wealthy, is respected even though his sister is literally a witch. This shows hypocrisy.
Dimmesdale's house	Chapters 9-10 Chapter 20	"...assigned to Mr. Dimmesdale a front apartment, with a sunny exposure... The walls hung round with tapestry representing the scriptural story of David and Bathsheba." "The minister was glad to have reached this shelter."	Dimmesdale has lots of secrets, and his punishment of himself in his home demonstrates that. The allusion to David and Bathsheba seems to tie to the central idea of secret sin as well.

		Dimmesdale describes the room as accustomed and the walls as having "tapestried comfort."	Dimmesdale refuses Chillingworth's medicine and throws his election sermon into the fire to begin a new one. He is finally acting less cowardly and more truthful which could explain the comfortable feeling.
Pool	Chapter 14	"Hester bad little Pearl run down to the margin of the water..., she came to a full stop, and peeped curiously into a pool,... 'this is a better place, come thou into the pool...'"	This setting with its water symbolizes a change that will occur with Pearl and Hester.
The peninsula/ forest	Chapter 13 Chapters 16- 20	"One afternoon, walking with Pearl in a retired part of the peninsula, she beheld the old physician..." "Sad brook," "mossy log" The forest is described as a solemn place. This is where Pearl notices how sunlight doesn't shine on Hester. It's also home to secrecy.	Hester can only be truthful in the natural world, such as the peninsula away from the town. Dimmesdale and Hester speak here when Hester reveals that Chillingworth is her husband, and she removes the scarlet letter for the first time. This is the only place these characters are truthful and honest with each other.
The town	Chapter 20 Chapters 21-30	A quiet town. Most of the townspeople know each other. The town is "familiar" to Dimmesdale. The town is vibrant and excited for Election Day. Many visitors are in from other places. This draws attention to Hester's letter.	Dimmesdale runs into the town and ignores his followers. He is tempted by evil thoughts and starts thinking about the "black man." This connects the town to the concept of evil and hypocrisy.

			The townspeople judge Hester and she must remain separate from Dimmesdale in the town. This demonstrates hypocrisy of the society.