



**Rosati-Kain Academy English Department**  
**American Literature Summer Reading/Writing Assignments for the Class of 2028**

We ask that during the summer you read one novel and complete an essay in preparation for your sophomore English class. You are responsible for finding your own copy of the book mentioned below. Online copies are available (like those found on [gutenberg.org](http://gutenberg.org)).

1. Please read *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne; skip “The Custom House” introduction and begin reading Chapter One. On the first day of class, you will take a quiz to test your understanding of the novel. By the way, there are some study questions below to help you with your reading comprehension. It is not necessary to write out answers for these questions; they are to help guide you through the reading. You may, however, take handwritten notes on the novel’s chapters to help you retain information for the quiz (and you may be allowed to use these notes during the quiz).
2. In addition to taking a quiz, you will also discuss this novel at the beginning of the year. To prepare for this discussion, complete the following written assignment. Please write an original, well-developed, five-paragraph essay on the following topic:

*Reflect on what you have learned about the culture and climate of the Puritan era in the novel. Then, choose **one** of the three main characters in the novel and prove that he or she would be considered the biggest sinner **by his or her community**; use at least three reasons as support.*

Please type and double space your essay assignment. Your heading, page numbers, and page citations for quotes should be in MLA format. Use fully developed examples to prove your thesis.

Again, this written assignment is due to your teacher on the first day of English class. It will be checked in and used for discussion and evaluation purposes.

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Chapter One: Describe the Puritan people found in this chapter. What is the setting—time and place—of the novel (beyond the year 1650)?

Chapter Two: Who is the person in front of the crowd? What is sewn onto her dress? What is she holding in her arms?

Chapter Three: Trace the act of “recognition” in this chapter. What is more of Hester’s history? Why is she considered to be a criminal in her society? What is a theocracy?

Chapter Four: Explain why Hester is suspicious of Chillingworth. Give possible reasons why Roger told Hester not to reveal his identity.

Chapter Five: Why is Hester a Puritan “preacher’s symbol”? Why does she decide to stay in Boston? Contrast Hester’s and Pearl’s clothes. Explain the changing effects of the “A” on Hester.

Chapter Six: Use the five aspects of personality (physical, mental, social, moral, and emotional) to characterize Pearl.

Chapter Seven: Why is it ironic that Governor Bellingham purchases gloves from Hester? Should Pearl stay or not stay with her mother?

Chapter Eight: Describe the relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Analyze Pearl’s answers to Rev. Wilson’s questions. Contrast Pearl’s interactions with both ministers.

Chapter Nine: How is “leech” an appropriate name for Chillingworth? What is the community’s attitude toward him in this chapter? Why does Chillingworth live with Dimmesdale? List any possible causes for Dimmesdale’s failing health.

Chapter Ten: Trace changes in Chillingworth’s character. Identify what Chillingworth sees at the end of this chapter while Dimmesdale is asleep.

Chapter 11: How has Chillingworth and Dimmesdale’s relationship changed? How does Dimmesdale’s congregation view him?

Chapter 12: Why does Dimmesdale climb the scaffold at night? Identify the frightening things Dimmesdale sees or hears there. What is the symbolic significance of the red “A” in the sky (note differences in interpretations).

Chapter 13: Debate the following: Has Hester changed for the better or for the worse?

Chapter 14: Is Chillingworth justified in his evil treatment of Dimmesdale? Why does Hester break her promise to Chillingworth about revealing his identity?

Chapter 15: What are Hester’s feelings toward Chillingworth at this point? Should Hester have lied to Pearl about the meaning of the scarlet letter?

Chapter 16: What is significant about Dimmesdale and Hester meeting in the woods and the sun shining on Pearl but not on Hester?

Chapter 17: What are Hester’s plans for Dimmesdale’s future?

Chapter 18: Prove that the narrator believes Hester’s plans for Dimmesdale’s future are immoral.

Chapter 19: Why does Pearl have a tantrum by the brook?

Chapter 20: Debate the following: Will Hester and Dimmesdale live happily ever after?

Chapter 21: What are Hester’s emotions in this chapter? What does Hester learn from the ship captain? Why is this significant?

Chapter 22: Describe the change in Dimmesdale in this chapter. Illustrate the foreshadowing of Dimmesdale’s confession.

Chapter 23: Trace the community’s reaction to Dimmesdale’s sermon. Evaluate Dimmesdale’s decision to confess (both good and bad reasons).

Chapter 24: Why does Chillingworth die soon after Dimmesdale does? What happens to Pearl? Why does Hester return to Boston? Interpret the epitaph on Hester and Dimmesdale’s gravestone.