

THE SCARLET LETTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Connect:** What is one life lesson we could learn from *The Scarlet Letter*?
2. **Symbolism:** In many old stories the forest symbolizes evil. It is where the devil walks and witches meet. In *The Scarlet Letter* is the forest a setting for good or evil? Or both?
3. **Analyze:** Reverend Dimmesdale does not know of Chillingworth's plan to follow him and Hester to Europe. Why does he decide to confess?
4. **Author's Purpose:** What do you think was actually on Reverend Dimmesdale's chest? Why does Nathaniel Hawthorne, the author of *The Scarlet Letter*, leave what actually happened on the town pillory ambiguous?
5. **Analyze:** Is it fair that Dimmesdale, Hester, and Pearl are denied the chance to live together as a family? Explain.
6. **Characterization:** Why does Chillingworth simply shrivel up and wither away after the death of Dimmesdale?
7. **Symbolism:** Considering the themes of sin, forgiveness, guilt, and revenge, what could each of the four main characters of *The Scarlet Letter* (Hester, Dimmesdale, Pearl, and Chillingworth) symbolize?
8. **Characterization:** After she leaves for Europe, why does Hester decide to return to Boston?
9. **Analyze:** Does Pearl have a happy ending?
10. **Analyze:** Seemingly supernatural events play a big part in the story. List three "supernatural" events and why they are important to the story.
11. **Theme:** What has Hester Prynne's life proved about sin, shame, and forgiveness? Explain.
12. **Symbolism:** Think back to the beginning of the story when the narrator described a wild rosebush growing by the rusted-over prison door. What could the rosebush symbolize?
13. **Analyze:** Many characters in the story are labeled as "evil" by their society. Who is the most evil character in the story?
14. **Analyze:** The Puritans obviously considered their society to be very pure. Explain why Puritan society, as presented here, is actually deeply flawed.