

Before reading



- 1** Listen to the first two paragraphs of Chapter 3. Then fill in the gaps with the correct words.

As Hester was standing on the, she saw, in the distance, an who was standing next to a white man. The white man had strange and was small in stature. There was remarkable in his features. Hester noticed that one of the man's was higher than the other. When she that the man had a thin, face and a slight deformity, she pressed her child to her breast with such, that the poor infant out.

The stranger had his eyes on Hester. At first, he looked at her But after a while, his look became intense and Then, a look of horror his face. He tried to his strong emotions, and soon he to be calm.

Now read the text and check your answers.



CHAPTER THREE

The Recognition

As Hester was standing on the platform she saw, in the distance, an Indian who was standing next to a white man. The white man had strange clothes and was small in stature. There was remarkable intelligence in his features. Hester noticed that one of the man's shoulders was higher than the other. When she realized that the man had a thin, weary¹ face and a slight physical deformity, she pressed her child to her breast with such force, that the poor infant cried out.

The stranger had set his eyes on Hester. At first, he looked at her carelessly. But after a while, his look became intense and penetrating. Then, a look of horror crossed his face. He tried to control his strong emotions, and soon he appeared to be calm.

At this point, he met Hester's eyes. She appeared to recognize



1. weary [wɪəri] : exhausted.

The Scarlet Letter

him. He slowly raised his finger, and put it on his lips.

He then asked a townsman the following question. "Who is this woman and why is she on the platform?"

"You must be a stranger in this area, my friend," answered the townsman, looking curiously at the man and his Indian companion, "otherwise you would have heard of Mistress Hester Prynne and her evil doings. She has created a scandal in Master Dimmesdale's church."

"Really?" said the man. "I am a stranger. I have travelled by land and sea, and I have been a prisoner of the Indians. Please tell me of this woman's offences."

"That woman, sir, was the wife of a well-educated man, English by birth, who had lived in Amsterdam for a long time. One day he decided to settle in Massachusetts. Therefore, he sent his wife first, and he remained in Amsterdam to look after some business. Two years have passed, and the young woman has never received any news from her husband."

"I understand," replied the stranger. "And who is the father of the infant?"

"The matter is a mystery. Madame Hester refuses to speak. Our Massachusetts magistrates have been merciful¹ with Hester Prynne. They say that she is young and fair,² and was strongly tempted to her fall. Moreover, it is likely that her husband may be at the bottom of the sea. If the magistrates had followed the law to its extreme, the penalty would have been death! Instead, the penalty is to stand on the platform for three hours. And then, to

1. **merciful** : willing to forgive instead of punishing.
2. **fair** : (here) very attractive, beautiful.

wear the mark of shame on her breast for the rest of her life.”

“A wise sentence,” said the stranger. “She will be a living sermon against sin until the shameful letter is engraved ¹ on her tombstone. ² It upsets me that the partner of her shame is not standing on the platform by her side. But he will be known!—he will be known!—he will be known!”

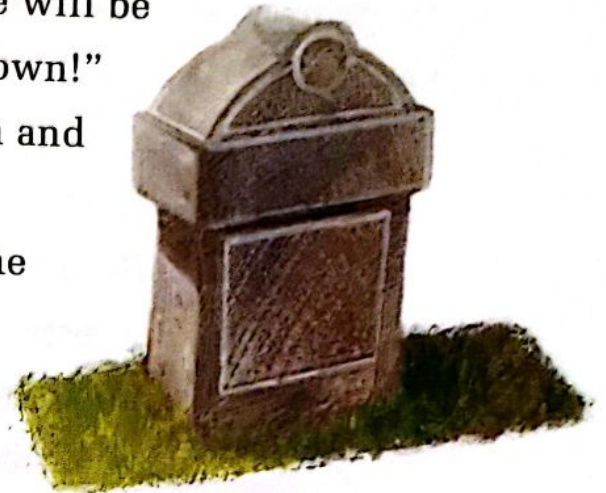
He bowed ³ courteously to the townsman and left the crowd with his Indian companion.

Hester stood on the scaffold, staring at the stranger. In her heart she was thankful that the crowd, dreadful in itself, was there to separate her from him—to protect her from him! She dreaded the moment when she would have to meet him alone, face to face.

Several important men of authority and religion had assembled at the meetinghouse to discuss and judge Hester Prynne’s case. These older men were, without doubt, good, wise, just and virtuous. But they were not capable of judging the good and evil in a woman’s heart.

Governor Bellingham, head of the community, was present. The famous Reverend John Wilson, the oldest clergyman in Boston, called out Hester’s name.

“Hester Prynne,” said the clergyman, “I have tried to persuade my young brother, Reverend Dimmesdale, to deal with you in discussing



1. **engraved** : cut on wood, stone, metal.

2. **tombstone** :



3. **bowed** [baud] : bent forward the upper part of his body, as a sign of respect.

The Scarlet Letter

the vileness ¹ of your sin. Reverend Dimmesdale is your pastor and knows you better than I. Hester Prynne, you must not continue to hide the name of he who tempted you to this grievous ² fall.

"Reverend Dimmesdale does not agree with me. He feels that it is against the nature of a woman to force her to open the secrets of her heart to the world. Who will deal with this poor sinner's soul?"

There was a murmur among the dignified occupants of the balcony.

Governor Bellingham spoke in an authoritative voice, "Master Dimmesdale, the responsibility of this woman's soul is yours. You must convince her to repent ³ and confess."

The whole crowd looked at Reverend Dimmesdale, a young clergyman, who had come from the great English universities, bringing all his learning to the wilderness. He was eloquent and deeply religious. He had a striking aspect with large, brown, melancholy eyes, and a mouth which tended to tremble. This expressed both nervous sensibility and a great power of self-control. The young minister had a worried, almost frightened look. He was simple and childlike, but his sermons, which reflected his purity of thought, affected his listeners like the speech of an angel.

"Speak to the woman, my brother," said Mr Wilson. "She must confess the truth!"

"Hester Prynne," said Reverend Dimmesdale, leaning over the balcony and looking into her eyes, "you have heard what Reverend Wilson said. I ask you to confess the name of your

1. **vileness** : wickedness, evil.

2. **grievous** : seriously harmful.

3. **repent** : be sorry for wrongdoing.

The Recognition

fellow sinner. Do not have pity for him. Your silence will not save his soul. Your silence will only make him add hypocrisy to sin. It is better for him to join you on the platform than to hide a guilty heart all through his life."

The young pastor's voice was sweet, rich, deep and broken. He was able to evoke sympathy from the crowd.

Hester shook her head.

"Woman, do not go beyond the limits of Heaven's mercy!" cried Reverend Wilson. "Speak out the name! That name and your repentance could help to take the scarlet letter off your breast."

"Never!" replied Hester, looking into the deep and troubled eyes of Reverend Dimmesdale.

"Speak, woman!" said another stern ¹ voice from the crowd. "Speak and give your child a father!"

"I will not speak!" answered Hester, turning as pale as death.

"She will not speak," murmured Reverend Dimmesdale, who was leaning over the balcony with his hand on his heart. He moved back with a long sigh. "What strength and generosity in a woman's heart. She will not speak!"



1. **stern** : severe, serious.

- 1 a. Who did Hester recognize in the crowd?
- b. What were Hester's "evil doings"?
- c. Why didn't the magistrates follow the law to its extreme?
- d. Why were Governor Bellingham, Reverend Wilson, Reverend Dimmesdale and other men of authority assembled at the meetinghouse?
- e. How did Reverend Dimmesdale try to convince Hester to reveal the name of her lover?

2 Match the two parts of the following sentences.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> In the distance, Hester saw | a. who lived in Amsterdam. |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> He slowly raised his finger | b. was at the bottom of the sea. |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> The woman was the wife of an Englishman | c. that the crowd separated her from him. |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Two years had passed | d. an Indian who was standing next to a white man. |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> It was likely that her husband | e. and the woman had never received any news from her husband. |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Hester was thankful | f. and put it to his lips. |

Who said or did what?

3 Match the characters with the information below. Put the letters a-f in the correct boxes. Some names can be used more than once.

- a** Hester Prynne
- b** the stranger
- c** the townsman
- d** Reverend John Wilson
- e** Governor Bellingham
- f** Reverend Dimmesdale

- 1** ☐ "Speak out the name!"
- 2** ☐ "You must be a stranger in this area."
- 3** ☐ "Hester Prynne, you must not continue to hide the name of he who tempted you to this grievous fall."
- 4** ☐ "Master Dimmesdale... you must convince her to repent and confess."
- 5** ☐ "The matter is a mystery."
- 6** ☐ "Your silence will not save his soul."
- 7** ☐ "I will not speak!"
- 8** ☐ "Do not go beyond the limits of Heaven's mercy."
- 9** ☐ "Your silence will only make him add hypocrisy to sin."
- 10** ☐ "Never!"
- 11** ☐ "She will be a living sermon against sin until the shameful letter is engraved on her tombstone."
- 12** ☐ "What strength and generosity in a woman's heart!"

Relative clauses

4 Look at these sentences:

The building **which** frightened her was the dark prison.
She saw an Indian **who** was standing next to a white man.

"Which" and "who" are the subject of the verb in the relative clause and cannot be omitted.

Now look at these sentences:

The Indian (**who**) he spoke to yesterday is a friend.
The evil doings (**which**) he mentioned were true.

"Who" and "which" are the object of the verb and can be omitted.

Look at this dialogue between a stranger and a Puritan of Boston. Decide whether who or which are needed, and circle the correct word in the brackets.

Stranger: Who is the young woman on the scaffold?

Puritan: She is a woman (*who, which, omit*) came from Amsterdam.
She is the one (*who, which, omit*) has greatly upset
Reverend Dimmesdale's congregation.

Stranger: What has she done?

Puritan: Oh, the sin (*who, which, omit*) stains her soul is a terrible one. The sin (*who, which, omit*) she committed is difficult to pronounce. A woman (*who, which, omit*) commits such a sin is evil.

Stranger: What is it?

Puritan: It is a sin (*who, which, omit*) we Puritans punish severely. It is adultery! Reverend Dimmesdale, a holy man (*who, which, omit*) has studied in England, is deeply bothered by the sin (*who, which, omit*) I have just mentioned.

Themes for thought, discussion and writing

- 5** What are the forms of “punishment” for adultery in our society? Where is adultery punished in a more severe way?
- 6** Why do you think Hester refused to repent and reveal her lover’s name?
- 7** Governor Bellingham and several important town leaders were present at the meetinghouse, which was both a church and a government building. Why do you think Hester’s adultery was such an important public issue?