

Name _____

The Scarlet Letter Characters and Their Roles

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Hester Prynne's character evolves from a woman burdened by shame and isolation to a strong and independent individual who finds self-respect and purpose. Throughout the novel, she transforms from a submissive and obedient wife to a symbol of defiance against societal norms. Her experiences help her discover her inner strength and resilience.
2. Nathaniel Hawthorne uses symbolism to convey deeper themes in the story. Pearl symbolizes both the consequences of Hester's actions and the potential for goodness and joy. The scarlet letter symbolizes the public shame and judgment imposed on Hester. These symbols help convey themes of sin, redemption, and the duality of human nature.
3. The theme of hypocrisy is prevalent in "The Scarlet Letter" as it highlights the stark contrast between the public image and private realities of the characters. For example, Reverend Dimmesdale, a revered clergyman, hides his sin while preaching morality. Governor Bellingham enforces strict moral standards but is blind to the hypocrisy within his own family. These examples demonstrate the theme of hypocrisy in the novel.
4. Roger Chillingworth's relentless pursuit of revenge leads to his moral degradation and the suffering of others. He becomes consumed by hatred and obsession, losing his humanity in the process. His actions ultimately contribute to the tragic outcome of the story and emphasize the theme of sin and retribution.

