

Name _____

Journeying into Puritan New England: The Setting of The Scarlet Letter

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. The setting of "The Scarlet Letter" shapes the characters by creating a world where societal norms are paramount. The strict moral code and natural environment influence the characters' choices and actions, leading to conflicts and moral dilemmas. For example, Hester Prynne's adherence to the societal norms initially leads to her public humiliation and punishment, while her eventual defiance challenges those norms.
2. The prison and scaffold in the story's setting symbolize judgment and penance. The prison represents the strict enforcement of the town's moral code, where individuals are confined and judged for their sins. The scaffold serves as a public stage for judgment and penance, where Hester is publicly humiliated and Dimmesdale eventually confesses his guilt, highlighting the theme of societal judgment.
3. The architecture and social hierarchy of the town contribute to the atmosphere and conflicts in "The Scarlet Letter." The Governor's mansion represents the authority and privilege of the elite in the town, while the prison symbolizes the consequences of transgressing the moral code. These contrasting locations reflect the societal divide and tensions within the community.
4. The setting of Puritan New England shapes the overall tone and mood of the novel by creating a somber and austere atmosphere. The strict moral code, plain clothing, and religious practices of the Puritans contribute to a sense of seriousness and solemnity. The natural environment, with its harsh climate and dense forests, adds an element of challenge and isolation, enhancing the mood of the story.

