

The Scarlet Letter annotation assignment.

As you read *The Scarlet Letter*, you will be required to “actively” interact with the text. The best way to do this is to annotate your text. Follow the guidelines below as you are reading to best guide yourself through a complex text. Early in the school year, your copies of the book will be collected and your annotations will be graded. Developing this skill will allow you to better read challenging texts we will encounter throughout the school year and serve as a study skill in all forums of academia.

KAMI Google Chrome Extension

Please go to <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/kami-for-google-chrome/ecnphlgnajanjnkmbpancdjoidceilk> and add KAMI extension to your google chrome browser. This will allow you to annotate PDF files.

The Scarlet Letter Text

HOW TO ANNOTATE A TEXT (other suggestions):

1. At the top of the page (on a post-it or in your notes), mark the important **plot** events. Every page will not necessarily be marked.
2. Be sure to figure out any **unfamiliar words** through context or by using a dictionary. You can write the definitions right in the text for yourself (create a list of two per chapter with definitions).
3. Highlight and mark for yourself any **conflicts** that occur with the main character (protagonist). Note your ideas about these conflicts in the text (who / what is involved, attempts to resolve conflicts, etc).
4. Highlight and mark for yourself words and phrases that help describe the personality of **characters**. Note your ideas about the characters right in the text (personality, motivation, fears / dreams, etc).
Mark those supporting passages in your text clearly so that they are easy to find for in class writing/discussion.
5. Highlight and mark for yourself any **symbolism** and note your ideas in the text as to what abstract ideas or concepts these tangible objects may represent. Mark those supporting passages in your text so that they are easy to find for in class writing/discussion.

Once you are completely finished the book and annotating, pick the at least three **theme** stems from the following list that your book addresses. Write those themes on an inside cover or any blank pages of your book AND find supporting evidence from the text to support your ideas. Mark those supporting passages in your text clearly so that they are easy to find for in class writing/discussion.

- Vengeance
- Guilt
- Women vs. Men
- Identity
- Individual/Society

Annotation is a key component of close reading. Effective annotating is both economical and consistent. The techniques are almost limitless. Use any combination of the following:

- Make brief comments in the margins. Use any white space available – inside cover, random blank pages, etc.
- Make brief comments between or within lines of the text. Do not be afraid to mark within the text itself.

- Circle or put boxes, triangles, or clouds around words or phrases.
- Use abbreviations or symbols – brackets, stars, exclamation points, question marks, numbers, etc.
- Connect words, phrases, ideas, circles, boxes, etc. with lines or arrows.
- Underline – CAUTION : Use this method sparingly. Underline only a few words. Always combine with another method such as comment. Never underline an entire passage. Doing so takes too much time and loses effectiveness. If you wish to mark an entire paragraph or passage, draw a line down the margin or use brackets.
- Highlight – use CAUTION – don't highlight everything!
- Create your own code.

If you have any questions regarding the assignment, please feel free to email me at: mrfulton3399@gmail.com

Annotation Rubric: Active Reading to Build Comprehension and Support Analysis

Key Ideas and Details—Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (CCSS #1)

Requirements	3	2	1	0
Process Organization and Demonstration of Active Reading	Notes demonstrate exemplary active reading notes for the text Within Text: Meaningful highlighting, underlining, and/or circling, margins heavily used for explanations Independent from Text: Paraphrasing, direct quotes and clearly evident identifications of purpose/meaning—clear organization that supports referring back to the text—successful/significant effort to address each chapter of novel	Notes demonstrate satisfactory active reading notes for the text Within Text: Highlighting, underlining, and or circling, margins used for explanations Independent from Text: Paraphrasing, direct quotes, with identifications of purpose/meaning—attempt at organization that supports referring back to the text—some effort to address each chapter of the novel	Notes demonstrate attempt at active reading notes for the text	No notes present
FOCUS Elements Characterization Symbol Theme	All elements are identified throughout the majority of the text	Some of the elements are identified	Only one element is identified It is unclear which elements are present and where	None of the three elements are identified
End Product Quantity/ Quality	The quality and quantity of notes is <i>consistent</i> throughout the book	The quality and quantity of notes is of good quality for most of the book—some chapters may be missing or annotations lacking	The quality and quantity of notes is of good quality for less than ½ the book.	Less than 1/3 Or no attempt

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THE SCARLET LETTER

I.

The Prison-Door

setting

rose bush



A THRONG of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, st-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison. In accordance with this rule, it may safely be assumed that the forefathers of Boston had built the first prison-house, somewhere in the vicinity of Cornhill, almost as seasonably as they marked out the first burial-ground, on Isaac Johnson's lot, and round about his grave, which subsequently became the nucleus of all the congregated sepulchres of the old church-yard of King's Chapel. Certain it is, that, some fifty or sixty years after the settlement of the town, the wooden jail, already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age, gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. The ponderous iron-work of its oaken door looked more antique than any thing else in the new world. Like all that pertains to crime, it seemed never to have known a youthful era. Before this ugly edifice, and between it and the wheel-track of the street, was a grass-plot, overgrown with burdock, pig-weed, apple-peru, and such unsavory vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society, a prison. On one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came

allusion?

to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him.

This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it,—or whether, as there is fair authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the painted Ann Hutchinson, as she entered the prison-door,—we shall not take upon us to determine. Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom, that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.

story will begin here

preview of text topics?

morality as topic?

The Market-Place

setting

THE GRASS-PLLOT before the jail, in Prison Lane, on a certain summer morning, not less than two centuries ago, was occupied by a pretty large number of the inhabitants of Boston; all with their eyes inflexibly fastened on the iron-clamped oaken door. Amongst any other population, or at a later period in the history of New England, the grim rigidity that petrified the bearded physiognomies of these good people would have augured some awful business in hand. It could have betokened nothing short of the anticipated execution of some noted culprit, on whom the sentence of a legal tribunal had but confirmed the verdict of public sentiment. But, in that early severity of the Puritan character, an inference of this kind could not so indubitably be drawn. It might be that a sluggish bond-servant, or an undutiful child, whom his parents had given over to the civil authority, was to be corrected at the whipping-post. It might be, that an Antinomian, a Quaker, or other heterodox religionist, was to be scourged out of the town, or an idle and vagrant Indian, whom the white man's fire-water had made riotous about the streets, was to be driven with stripes into the shadow of the forest. It might be, too, that a witch, like old Mistress Hibbins, the bitter-tempered widow of the magistrate, was to die upon the gallows. In either case, there was very much the same solemnity of demeanour

characterization of

diff. time period than setting

The Market-Place

strict law for all offenses

on the part of the spectators; as befitted a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and the severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful. Meagre, indeed, and cold, was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for, from such bystanders at the scaffold. On the other hand, a penalty which, in our days, would infer a degree of mocking infamy and ridicule, might then be invested with almost as stern a dignity as the punishment of death itself.

It was a circumstance to be noted, on the summer morning when our story begins its course, that the women, of whom there were several in the crowd, appeared to take a peculiar interest in whatever penal infliction might be expected to ensue. The age had not so much refinement, that any sense of impropriety restrained the wearers of petticoat and farthingale from stepping forth into the public ways, and wedging their not unsubstantial persons, if occasion were, into the throng nearest to the scaffold at an execution. Morally, as well as materially, there was a coarser fibre in those wives and maidens of old English birth and breeding, than in their fair descendants, separated from them by a series of six or seven generations; for, throughout that chain of ancestry, every successive mother has transmitted to her child a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty, and a slighter physical frame, if not a character of less force and solidity, than her own. The women, who were now standing about the prison-door, stood within less than half a century of the period when the man-like Elizabeth had been the not altogether unsuitable representative of the sex. They were her countrywomen, and the beef and ale of their native land, with a moral diet not a whit more refined, entered largely into their composition. The bright morning sun, therefore, shone on broad shoulders and well-developed busts, and on round and ruddy cheeks, that had ripened in the far-off island, and had hardly yet grown paler or thinner in the atmosphere of New England. There was, moreover, a boldness and rotundity of speech among these matrons, as most of them seemed to be, that would startle us at the present day, whether in respect to its purport or its volume of tone.

"Goodwives," said a hard-featured dame of fifty, "I'll tell ye a piece of my mind. It would be greatly for the public behoof, if we women, being of mature age and church-members in good repute, should have the handling of such malefactresses as this Hester Prynne. What think ye, gossips? If the Hussy stood up for judgment before us five, that are now here in a knot together, would she come off with such a sentence as the worshipful magistrates have awarded? Marry, I trow not!"

other women judge Hester

women are

"People say," said another, "that the Reverend Master Dimmesdale, her godly pastor, takes it very grievously to heart that such a scandal should have come upon his congregation."

"The magistrates are God-fearing gentlemen; but merciful overmuch,—that is a truth," added a third autumnal matron. "At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead. Madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she,—the naughty baggage,—little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown! Why, look you, she may cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the streets as brave as ever!"

"Ah, but," interposed, more softly, a young wife, holding a child by the hand, "let her cover the mark as she will, the pang of it will be always in her heart."

"What do we talk of marks and brands, whether on the bodice of her gown, or the flesh of her forehead?" cried another female, the ugliest as well as the most untitled of these self-constituted judges. "This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die. Is there not law for it? Truly there is, both in the Scripture and the statute-book. Then let the magistrates, who have made it of no effect, thank themselves if their own wives and daughters go astray!"

"Mercy on us, goodwife," exclaimed a man in the crowd, "is there no virtue in woman, save what springs from a wholesome fear of the gallows? That is the hardest word yet! Hush, now, gossips; for the look is turning in the prison-door, and here comes Mistress Prynne herself."

The door of the jail being flung open from within, there appeared, in the first place, like a black shadow emerging into the sunshine, the grim and grisly presence of the town-beadle, with a sword by his side and his staff of office in his hand. This personage prefigured and represented in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law, which it was his business to administer in its final and closest application to the offender. Stretching forth the official staff in his left hand, he laid his right upon the shoulder of a young woman, whom he thus drew forward; until, on the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled him, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free-will. She bore in her arms a child, a baby of some three months old, who winked and turned aside its little face from the too vivid light of day; because its existence, heretofore, had brought it acquainted only with the gray twilight of a dungeon, or other darksome apartment of the prison.

When the young woman—the mother of this child—stood fully revealed before the crowd, it seemed to be her first impulse to clasp the

infant closely to her bosom; not so much by an impulse of motherly affection, as that she might thereby conceal a certain token, which was wrought or fastened into her dress. In a moment, however, wisely judging that one token of her shame would but poorly serve to hide another, she took the baby on her arm, and, with a burning blush, and yet a haughty smile, and a glance that would not be abashed, looked around at her townspeople and neighbours. On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A. It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore; and which was of a splendor in accordance with the taste of the age, but greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony.

The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance, on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes. She was lady-like, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterized by a certain state and dignity, rather than by the delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace, which is now recognized as its indication. And never had Hester Prynne appeared more lady-like, in the antique interpretation of the term, than as she issued from the prison. Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped. It may be true, that, to a sensitive observer, there was something exquisitely painful in it. Her attire, which, indeed, she had wrought for the occasion, in prison, and had modelled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity. But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfigured the wearer,—so that both men and women, who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time,—was that SCARLET LETTER, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself.

"She hath good skill at her needle, that's certain," remarked one of the female spectators; "but did ever a woman, before this brazen husky,

PEARL is 3 months old here

Effect of Scarlet Letter

CHARACTERIZ. OF HESTER

iron-hard
unkindly

The Scarlet Letter

← characteriz.
of towns women

contrive such a way of showing it! Why, gossips, what is it but to laugh in the faces of our godly magistrates, and make a pride out of what they, worthy gentlemen, meant for a punishment?"

"It were well," muttered the most iron-visaged of the old dames, "if we stripped Madam Hester's rich gown off her dainty shoulders; and as for the red letter, which she hath stitched so curiously, I'll bestow a rag of mine own rheumatic flannel, to make a fitter one!"

"O, peace, neighbours, peace!" whispered their youngest companion. "Do not let her hear you! Not a stitch in that embroidered letter, but she has felt it in her heart."

The grim beadle now made a gesture with his staff.

"Make way, good people, make way, in the King's name," cried he. "Open a passage; and, I promise ye, Mistress Prynne shall be set where man, woman, and child may have a fair sight of her brave apparel, from this time till an hour past meridian. A blessing on the righteous Colony of the Massachusetts, where iniquity is dragged out into the sunshine! Come along, Madam Hester, and show your scarlet letter in the market-place!"

A lane was forthwith opened through the crowd of spectators. Preceded by the beadle, and attended by an irregular procession of stern-browed men and unkindly-visaged women, Hester Prynne set forth towards the place appointed for her punishment. A crowd of eager and curious schoolboys, understanding little of the matter in hand, except that it gave them a half-holiday, ran before her progress, turning their heads continually to stare into her face, and at the winking baby in her arms, and at the ignominious letter on her breast. It was no great distance, in those days, from the prison-door to the market-place. Measured by the prisoner's experience, however, it might be reckoned a journey of some length; for, haughty as her demeanour was, she perchance underwent an agony from every footstep of those that thronged to see her, as if her heart had been flung into the street for them all to spurn and trample upon. In our nature, however, there is a provision, alike marvellous and merciful, that the sufferer should never know the intensity of what he endures by its present torture, but chiefly by the pang that rankles after it. With almost a serene deportment, therefore, Hester Prynne passed through this portion of her ordeal, and came to a sort of scaffold, at the western extremity of the market-place. It stood nearly beneath the eaves of Boston's earliest church, and appeared to be a fixture there.

In fact, this scaffold constituted a portion of a penal machine, which now, for two or three generations past, has been merely historical and traditionary among us, but was held, in the old time, to be as effectual

SYMBOL -

public penance / disc

The Market-Place

an agent in the promotion of good citizenship, as ever was the guil among the terrorists of France. It was, in short, the platform pillory; and above it rose the framework of that instrument of discipline, so fashioned as to confine the human head in its tight and thus hold it up to the public gaze. The very ideal of ignominy embodied and made manifest in this contrivance of wood and There can be no outrage, methinks, against our common nature whatever be the delinquencies of the individual, — no outrage flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame; as the essence of this punishment to do. In Hester Prynne's instance, however, as not unfrequently in other cases, her sentence bore she should stand a certain time upon the platform, but was undergoing that gripe about the neck and confinement of the her proneness to which was the most devilish characteristic of this engine. Knowing well her part, she ascended a flight of wooden and was thus displayed to the surrounding multitude, at about height of a man's shoulders above the street.

Had there been a Papist among the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the im Divine Maternity, which so many illustrious painters have vied one another to represent; something which should remind him, if but only by contrast, of that sacred image of sinless motherhood, infant was to redeem the world. Here, there was the taint of deep in the most sacred quality of human life, working such effect, that world was only the darker for this woman's beauty, and the more for the infant that she had borne.

The scene was not without a mixture of awe, such as must invest the spectacle of guilt and shame in a fellow-creature, society shall have grown corrupt enough to smile. Instead of staring at it. The witnesses of Hester Prynne's disgrace had not yet beyond their simplicity. They were stern enough to look upon death, had that been the sentence, without a murmur at its severity; had none of the heartlessness of another social state, which would only a theme for jest in an exhibition like the present. Even had been a disposition to turn the matter into ridicule, it must have been repressed and overpowered by the solemn presence of men more dignified than the Governor, and several of his counselors, a judge in general, and the ministers of the town; all of whom sat or stood on the balcony of the meeting-house, looking down upon the platform. such personages could constitute a part of the spectacle, without risking the majesty or reverence of rank and office, it was safe.

ITMAN how does society

inferred that the infliction of a legal sentence would have an earnest and effectual meaning. Accordingly, the crowd was sombre and grave. The unhappy culprit sustained herself as best a woman might, under the heavy weight of a thousand unrelenting eyes, all fastened upon her, and concentrated at her bosom. It was almost intolerable to be borne. Of an impulsive and passionate nature, she had fortified herself to encounter the stings and venomous stabs of public contumely, wreaking itself in every variety of insult; but there was a quality so much more terrible in the solemn mood of the popular mind, that she longed rather to behold all those rigid countenances contorted with scornful merriment, and herself the object. Had a roar of laughter burst from the multitude,—each man, each woman, each little shrill-voiced child, contributing their individual parts,—Hester Prynne might have repaid them all with a bitter and disdainful smile. But, under the leaden infliction which it was her doom to endure, she felt, at moments, as if she must needs shriek out with the full power of her lungs, and cast herself from the scaffold down upon the ground, or else go mad at once.

Yet there were intervals when the whole scene, in which she was the most conspicuous object, seemed to vanish from her eyes, or, at least, glimmered indistinctly before them, like a mass of imperfectly shaped and spectral images. Her mind, and especially her memory, was preternaturally active, and kept bringing up other scenes than this roughly hewn street of a little town, on the edge of the Western wilderness; other faces than were lowering upon her from beneath the brims of those steeple-crowned hats. Reminiscences, the most trifling and immaterial, passages of infancy and school-days, sports, childish quarrels, and the little domestic traits of her maiden years, came swarming back upon her, intermingled with recollections of whatever was gravest in her subsequent life; one picture precisely as vivid as another; as if all were of similar importance, or all alike a play. Possibly, it was an instinctive device of her spirit, to relieve itself, by the exhibition of these phantasmagoric forms, from the cruel weight and hardness of the reality.

Be that as it might, the scaffold of the pillory was a point of view that revealed to Hester Prynne the entire track along which she had been treading, since her happy infancy. Standing on that miserable eminence, she saw again her native village, in Old England, and her paternal home; a decayed house of gray stone, with a poverty-stricken aspect, but retaining a half-obliterated shield of arms over the portal, in token of antique gentility. She saw her father's face, with its bald brow, and reverend white beard, that flowed over the old-fashioned Elizabethan ruff; her mother's, too, with the look of heedful and anxious

Character of Hester → Background - Life

her burden

Hester

love which it always wore in her remembrance, and which, even since her death, had so often laid the impediment of a gentle remonstrance in her daughter's pathway. She saw her own face, glowing with girlish beauty, and illuminating all the interior of the dusky mirror in which she had been wont to gaze at it. There she beheld another countenance, of a man well stricken in years, a pale, thin, scholar-like visage, with eyes dim and bleared by the lamp-light that had served them to pore over many ponderous books. Yet those same bleared optics had a strange, penetrating power, when it was their owner's purpose to read the human soul. This figure of the study and the cloister, as Hester Prynne's womanly fancy failed not to recall, was slightly deformed, with the left shoulder a trifle higher than the right. Next rose before her, in memory's picture-gallery, the intricate and narrow thoroughfares, the tall, gray houses, the huge cathedrals, and the public edifices, ancient in date and quaint in architecture, of a Continental city; where a new life (had) awaited her, still in connection with the misshapen scholar; a new life, but feeding itself on time-worn materials, like a tuft of green moss on a crumbling wall. Lastly, in lieu of these shifting scenes, came back the rude market-place of the Puritan settlement, with all the townspeople assembled and levelling their stern regards at Hester Prynne,—yes, at herself,—who stood on the scaffold of the pillory, an infant on her arm, and the letter A, in scarlet, fantastically embroidered with gold thread, upon her bosom!

Could it be true? She clutched the child so fiercely to her breast, that it sent forth a cry; she turned her eyes downward at the scarlet letter, and even touched it with her finger, to assure herself that the infant and the shame were real. Yes!—these were her realities,—all else had vanished!

Symbol

III.

SHE RECOGNIZES CHILLINGWORTH IN CROWD

Motif of touching the A begins with Hester!

FROM this intense consciousness of being the object of severe and universal observation, the wearer of the scarlet letter was at length relieved by discerning, on the outskirts of the crowd, a figure which irresistibly took possession of her thoughts. An Indian, in his native garb, was standing there; but the red men were not so infrequent visitors of the English settlements, that one of them would have attracted any notice from Hester Prynne, at such a time; much less

Symbol of the marriage