



## 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Advanced Placement

### The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorn



#### **Author Bio:**

One of the great American authors of the 19th century, Nathaniel Hawthorne grew up in New England and published his first novel, *Fanshawe*, in 1828. Though he went on to help lay the foundations of the American short story, Hawthorne is more widely known for his novels *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of Seven Gables* (1851). ([Hester Prynne](#), the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter*, is forced to wear the letter 'A' for adultery after she has an affair with the Puritan minister Arthur Dimmesdale.)

Hawthorne's other books include *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) and *The Marble Faun* (1860). From 1853 to 1859 Hawthorne lived in England and in Italy, but returned to the United States and died in 1864.

Hawthorne was good friends with [Herman Melville](#), author of *Moby-Dick*... Hawthorne also knew President [Franklin Pierce](#) and wrote a biography of Pierce for his campaign in 1852.

<http://www.answers.com/topic/nathaniel-hawthorne>

#### **Novel Synopsis:**

When it first appeared in 1850, *The Scarlet Letter* enjoyed scandalous success. New England critics condemned its passionate subject matter. One critic complained that Nathaniel Hawthorne invested adultery with all the fascination of genius, and all the charms of a highly polished style. My preliminary chapter, wryly noted the author, has caused the greatest uproar that has happened here since witch-times. As she emerges from the prison of a Puritan New England town, Hester Prynne defies the dark gloom much as the rose blooms against the prison door. With her illegitimate baby, Pearl, clutched in her arms and the letter A—the mark of an adulteress—embroidered in scarlet thread on her breast, Hester holds her head high as she faces the malice and scorn of the townsfolk. Her powerful, bittersweet story is an American classic that continues to touch the hearts of modern readers with its timeless themes of guilt, passion and repentance. Annotation: In early colonial Massachusetts, a young woman endures the consequences of her sin of adultery and spends the rest of her life in atonement.

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/The-Scarlet-Letter/Nathaniel-Hawthorne/e/9780553210095/?itm=4>

