*Scarlet Letter* study guide name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 1 (pages 41-42)**

1. How are the men gathering in front of the prison door characterized?

2. What is a "Utopia"?

3. Who was Ann Hutchinson?

4. Why does Hawthorne talk about Hutchinson (who is not a character in the novel) in this chapter? What does she symbolize?

5. What was growing in front of the jail?

**Chapter 2 (pages 43-51)**

1. What is the setting (time and place) of the novel?

2. Who is Mistress Hibbins?

3. What is an Antinomian? A Quaker?

4. What sort of government do the people of Salem have?

5. How does Hawthorne describe the women of Salem?

6. Why, according to one of the women gathered outside the jail, is Rev. Dimmesdale "deeply hurt and embarrassed" (44)?

5. Some of the women considered Hester's punishment to be too lenient. What are some of the things they would have preferred as punishment for Hester's sin?

6. What crime did Hester commit? What is Hester's punishment?

7. What does the "A" stand for?

8. Why do the women think that Hester is "brazen" (47)?

9. How long does Hester have to stand on the gallows?

10. Where did Hester grow up? What was her childhood like?

11. Why did she agree to marry the man studying medicine?

12. Why did Hester's husband agree to take the job in Salem? Where and how did they live before coming to Salem?

13. Why did Hester arrive in Salem before her husband?

14. What is believed to have happened to Hester's husband?

15. What does Hester do to earn a living in Salem?

**Chapter 3 (pages 52-59)**

1. Who is the man Hester recognizes in the crowd?

2. What happened to Hester's husband?

3. Who is the father of Hester's child?

4. What is the usual punishment for adultery? Why was Hester saved from this fate?

5. How is Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale described?

6. What does Dimmesdale urge Hester to do?

**Chapter 4 (pages 60-65)**

1. Where is Hester in this chapter?

2. Who, in reality, is Roger Chillingworth? Where did he learn so much about medicine?

3. What does Chillingworth give Hester's child? Why does Hester suspect it might be poison?

4. What two "wrongs" does Chillingworth admit to doing to Hester?

5. What does Chillingworth vow to do?

6. Explain the importance of this quote: "For he who bears the secret creates his own Hell here on earth, and the longer he lives, the longer will he suffer" (28).

**Chapter 5 (66-73)**

1. Why does Hester choose to stay in Salem? What does she do to earn a living?

2. Where does Hester take up residence?

3. Describe Pearl's clothing.

4. What does Hester do with her money?

5. How was Hester "like a ghost" (33)?

6. What power does the scarlet letter "endow" Hester with?

**Chapter 6 (74-82)**

1. Why does Hester name her daughter Pearl?

2. How does Hawthorne contrast Pearl with Hester?

3. How does Pearl show maturity beyond her years?

4. How does Pearl show a disregard for authority?

5. How does Pearl demonstrate an "independent behavior" (38)?

6. How does Pearl demonstrate "anger and hostility" (39)?

7. How does Pearl respond to the scarlet letter?

**Chapter 7 (83-89)**

1. Describe the governor's mansion.

2. Why has Hester visited the governor's mansion?

**Chapter 8 (90-97)**

1. Hester says the scarlet letter is "teaching me" (48), but she does not explain what lesson it is teaching her. What lessons do you suppose the letter is teaching her?

2. Describe Hester's religious beliefs and what she is teaching Pearl about religion.

3. According to Pearl, who made her?

4. How does Dimmesdale convince Bellingham to allow Hester to keep Pearl?

5. What does Chillingworth call Pearl?

6. At the end of the chapter, what does Hibbins offer to Hester? What is Hester's response?

**Chapter 9 (98-106)**

1. Why does Chillingworth not come forward "to be pilloried beside" Heseter (98)?

2. Why was Roger Chillingworth "a brilliant acquisition" for the town (99)?

3. How does the town view Dimmesdale's failing health? How do they justify his illness?

4. What are Dimmesdale's physical ailments? How does he manifest his illness?

5. What's making Dimmesdale sick?

6. Why does Dimmesdale believe that he " 'need[s] no medicine' " (101)?

7. How does Chillingworth convince Dimmesdale to let him move in and treat him?

**Chapter 10 (107-115)**

1. How is Chillingworth "like a miner searching for gold" (107)?

2. Where does Chillingworth find plants to use as medicines to treat Dimmesdale?

3. What does Chillingworth say about Pearl? What is his opinion of her?

4. Dimmesdale claims that Pearl is no " 'principle of being' " besides " 'the freedom of broken law' " (111). Huh? What he mean?

5. Wait a sec. Is Pearl a transcendentalist? Aw, dude! She totally is!

6. " 'I commit myself to the one Physican of the Soul' " (113). According to Dimmesdale, who is the only "doctor" that can cure him? (It's not Dr. Feelgood or Dr. Strangelove or even Dr. Seuss.)

7. Um, creepy much? What does Chillingworth do at the end of this chapter? How is Chillingworth described in this moment of creepiness?

**Chapter 11 (116-121)**

1. It's pretty obvious what is making Dimmesdale feel guilty, right?

2. How does Chillingworth's treatment of Dimmesdale change?

3. How have Dimmesdale's sermons improved?

4. What does it mean that Dimmesdale "scourged" himself? What was he doing?

5. What other two ways does Dimmesdale punish himself?

6. "To the untrue man, the whole universe is false" (121). So Dimmesdale is untrue to his passions, his society, his child, his lover and himself. That means his "whole universe is false," or, rather, that everything he believes is fake or a lie. What is Hawthorne telling us about Dimmesdale's religious beliefs and his desire for redemption?

**Chapter 12 (122-131)**

1. Where does Dimmesdale go?

2. Who hears Dimmesdale's terrifying scream?

3. Who joins Dimmesdale on the scaffold?

4. Why was Hester out in the middle of the night?

5. What does Pearl ask Dimmesdale to do? What is Dimmesdale's response?

6. What do the streaking meteors in the sky symbolically form?

7. Who sees the family standing on the scaffold?

8. What does Chillingworth say to Dimmesdale?

9. What possession of Dimmesdale's is found on the scaffold and returned to him?

**Chapter 13 (132-138)**

1. "[T]he outcast of society at once found her place" (133). What place is that?

2. Describe Dimmesdale's condition!

3. What does Hester suspect Chillingworth of?

4. Compare Hester's current condition with her situation seven years ago.

5. What are some of the rumors about what the "A" stands for?

6. Note this: "her rich and luxuriant hair had either been cut off, or was so completely hidden by a cap, that not a shining lock ever once gushed into the sunshine" (135). So what do you suppose this is symbolically telling us about Hester?

7. Hey! Ann Hutchinson is mentioned again. Why?

8. "The scarlet letter had not done its office" (137). What did it have left to do?

**Chapter 14 (139-144)**

1. Chillingworth reveals that the Governor has considered doing what? What is Hester's response?

2. Hester studies Chillingworth. How has Chillingworth changed?

3. Find a quote that reveals what Chillingworth has been doing to Dimmesdale.

4. What does Hester mean when she says that they "are lost in a moral maze" (86)?

5. What does Hester want to reveal to Dimmesdale?

**Chapter 15 (145-150)**

1. What does Hester admit regarding Chillingworth?

2. What does Pearl do while she is playing?

3. What two questions does Pearl keep asking her mother?

4. Why does Hester lie to Pearl about the scarlet letter? How does she feel about lying?

**Chapter 16 (151-156)**

1. Symbolically, why does the sun not shine on Hester? (And don't say something about how she sinned because Hawthorne doesn't believe she sinned and probably doesn't believe in sin at all.)

2. What does Hester tell Pearl regarding "the Black Man"?

**Chapter 17 (157-164)**

1. How does Dimmesdale believe he could've found peace?

2. " 'I am neither man nor minister, but some grotesque shadow whose soul had died long ago but whose body has not yet fallen into the grave' " (102). What does Dimmesdale mean when he says this?

3. Why does Dimmesdale believe his faith is not very strong?

4. What is on Dimmesdale's chest?

5. How does Dimmesdale react to Hester's revelation?

6. What is a Hippocratic Oath? Has Chillingworth kept it?

7. What are some of the options Hester presents to Dimmesdale at the end of the chapter?

**Chapter 18 (165-169)**

1. This is the climax of the novel. How so?

2. What has the Scarlet Letter taught Hester?

3. "His spirit rose, as it were, with a bound" (167). "A crimson flush" glows on Hester's cheek. Read between the lines and explain what Hawthorne is suggesting happens out in the woods.

4. What two symbolic gestures does Hester make that show her freeing herself from the bounds of society?

5. Pearl is shown petting/playing with four distinct animals. What are they? What is the symbolism here?

**Chapter 19 (170-175)**

1. What were Dimmesdale's concerns regarding Pearl's appearance?

2. How does Pearl react when she sees her mother without the scarlet letter?

3. What does Pearl do after Dimmesdale kisses her?

**Chapter 20 (176-185)**

1. What are Hester and Dimmesdale's plans?

2. What "holiday" is it in Salem, and what are Dimmesdale's responsibilities during this holiday?

3. What urge does Dimmesdale have while walking through the town?

4. Summarize the conversation Dimmesdale and Hibbins have.

5. What does Dimmesdale inform Chillingworth of?

**Chapter 21 (186-193)**

1. HOLIDAY TIME!!!

2. How does Pearl stand out from the rest of the crowd?

3. Hawthorne again criticizes the "Puritanic gloom" of the townspeople (189). How does he describe them in this passage?

4. What does the shipmaster reveal to Hester?

**Chapter 22 (194-202)**

1. What speech is Dimmesdale to deliver?

2. Summarize Hibbins' discussion with Hester.

**Chapter 23 (203-210)**

1. How does the crowd react to Dimmesdale's speech?

2. Where was Hester during Dimmesdale's speech?

3. How had Dimmesdale become the people's "saint and . . . hero" (142)?

4. How does Dimmesdale's appearance change after he finishes his speech?

**Chapter 24 (211-216)**

1. What are the explanations for the "A" upon Dimmesdale's chest?

2. How do some people explain why Dimmesdale embraced Hester?

3. What happens to Chillingworth? What does he do for Pearl?

4. Where does Pearl go?

5. What does Hester return to Salem and do?

6. What marks Hester's grave

5. How does Pearl greet Dimmesdale?

6. What does Chillingworth try to prevent Dimmesdale from doing?

7. What does Dimmesdale reveal to the crowd?

8. What happens to Dimmesdale?