

Study Questions/Guide for Chapters 13-16

Chapter 13, Another View of Hester

1. Public opinion about Hester has undergone a change since her stand on the scaffold seven years ago. What are the reasons?
 2. Hawthorne has previously commented on Hester's tendency to introspection. In this chapter he pursues that theme, placing Hester's thoughts within the larger framework of history. Why might these thoughts be dangerous?
 3. Your reaction to Hawthorne's famous paragraph on "the whole race of womanhood." Note his tone.
 4. What does he mean by concluding, "The scarlet letter had not done its office"?
 5. What drives Hester to her interview with Chillingworth?
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Chapter 14, Hester and the Physician

1. What changes does Hester observe in Chillingworth's appearance?
2. She tells Chillingworth that she is also responsible for the minister's decline. What is the physician's reply?
3. Chillingworth describes the effects of his ministrations on Dimmesdale. He then seems to realize the effects of those efforts on himself. Does this remind you of another Hawthorne work?
4. Who does Chillingworth blame for his transformation? Your reaction?
5. Hester tells Chillingworth of her resolve to reveal his identity to Dimmesdale. What is his response?
6. Why does she ask Chillingworth to forgive the minister?

7. What is Chillingworth's response? What does he mean by his "old faith" and even more so by the phrase "a dark necessity?"
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Chapter 15, Hester and Pearl

1. Of what crime does Hester most repent?
 2. Hester questions Pearl about the scarlet letter. What is Pearl's reply?
 3. Pearl's persistent "tendency to hover about the enigma of the scarlet letter" turns Hester's thoughts about her daughter into another direction. What does she consider?
 4. But when Pearl repeatedly asks what does the scarlet letter mean, what is Hester's reply, indicating that "some new evil had crept into... [her heart], or some old one had never been expelled"?
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Chapter 16, A Forest Walk

1. In the third paragraph of the chapter (starting: "The road, after the two wayfarers...") how many recurring motifs do you find in this paragraph as well as from the short stories we've been reading?
 2. Hawthorne is setting up the little brook for further symbolic interaction in the next chapter. For now, contrast its characteristics with Pearl's personality.
 3. What is Dimmesdale's physical state as he moves through the forest?
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"Ethan Brand" Hint: Keep this short story hovering in your consciousness (as we have done with the earlier two) while you finish the novel.

1. What is little Joe's response to the "roar of laughter" and what is his father's rejoinder. Note this contrast between father and son throughout the short story.
2. Check out the second paragraph in Chapter 10 of *SL*. Unlike Bartram the present lime-burner, Ethan Brand's occupational isolation lead him to what quest?

3. What is the little boy's reaction to Ethan Brand's face? Again, Hawthorne has his characters looking into faces and discovering...
4. Where does Brand say he's discovered the Unpardonable Sin?
5. Then Brand laughs. Note Hawthorne's comment.
6. Bartram tells his son to go into the village and announce the return of Ethan Brand. Then he has regrets, what are they?
7. What is one of the stories Bartram remembers about Ethan Brand and his search for the Unpardonable Sin?
8. How does Brand distinguish himself from the Devil?
9. What is Brand's explanation of the Unpardonable Sin?
10. The stage agent, Lawyer Giles, and the local doctor, all alcoholics, approach Brand and he dismisses them. Why?
11. An old man asks Brand about his daughter. What were the circumstances of the relationship between Brand and this daughter?
12. Little Joe puts his head into the diorama; why does his expression change? Meaning?
13. Brand looks into the box and sees...?
14. What does the Jew of Nuremberg represent?
15. How do you understand the dog's performance?
16. Brand laughs again, with what result?

17. Joe and his father leave Bartram to watch the fire. What is Joe's reaction?
18. Why did Brand become a fiend?
19. Laughter again...what has happened?
20. What is the morning like when Bartram and Joe awaken?
21. What do they discover?
22. What do you think is Hawthorne means by *heart*?
23. This story, at least, is published after the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*. Do you see any stylistic differences between it and the novel?