

The Scarlet Letter

Chapters 14–19

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: consecration, deleterious, despondency, faculty, imperious, inured, irrevocable, sanctity, stigma, subjugated

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

Vocabulary Sections for this Book:

Section 1 · Introductory and Chapters 1–3 · Hester and the scarlet letter

Section 2 · Chapters 4–8 · Hester's needle and her child

Section 3 · Chapters 9–13 · The physician and the minister

Section 4 · Chapters 14–19 · Hester and the old physician

Section 5 · Chapters 20–24 · The minister returns to town

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com
(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. The **consecration** of the new chapel drew worshippers from every village.

- A. a costly rebuilding
- B. a setting apart as holy
- C. a festive reopening

2. Skipping sleep night after night has a **deleterious** effect on your health.

- A. lasting
- B. harmful
- C. tiring

3. After failing the exam twice, a heavy **despondency** settled over him.

- A. deep hopeless gloom
- B. bitter resentment
- C. restless frustration

4. She has a remarkable **faculty** for recalling names and faces.

- A. a clever learned trick
- B. a strong personal liking
- C. a natural mental power

5. With an **imperious** wave, the manager ordered everyone back to work.

- A. commanding and domineering
- B. hurried and impatient
- C. vague and uncertain

6. Years on the night shift had left her **inured** to the noise of the city.

- A. worn down by it
- B. fascinated by it
- C. used to it and unbothered

7. Once you sign the contract, the decision is **irrevocable**.

- A. impossible to undo
- B. legally binding
- C. hard to explain

8. Visitors lowered their voices to respect the **sanctity** of the temple.

- A. deep silence
- B. great age
- C. sacredness

9. There is still a **stigma** attached to asking for help with money.

- A. a heavy cost
- B. a mark of shame
- C. a hidden danger

10. The empire **subjugated** every tribe along its expanding border.

- A. brought under control
- B. drove out and scattered
- C. made alliances with

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

the utmost passion of her heart — her deepest and most wholehearted love; the narrator warns against marriage when that love is not fully returned

passport — something that grants free passage or access; here, figuratively, the scarlet letter as Hester's pass into forbidden regions of thought

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	B
2	B
3	A
4	C
5	A
6	C
7	A
8	C
9	B
10	A

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 “In a word, old Roger Chillingworth was a striking evidence of man’s faculty of transforming himself into a devil, if he will only, for a reasonable space of time, undertake a devil’s office.”

As it is used in the passage, the word “faculty” most nearly suggests that humans possess

- A. an inborn power to make themselves evil
- B. a duty to resist their darker urges
- C. a fate they are powerless to escape

2 “... might it suffice him that every wholesome growth should be converted into something deleterious and malignant at his touch?”

Which statement about Chillingworth is best supported by the passage?

- A. his touch turns healthy life harmful
- B. he leaves growing things unharmed
- C. he nurtures rare and useful plants

3 “We are not, Hester, the worst sinners in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man’s revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!”

It can reasonably be inferred that Dimmesdale judges the gravest sin to be

- A. a cold-blooded attack on the human spirit
- B. concealing one’s guilt from the church
- C. not resisting forbidden passion

4 “What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other.”

Hester’s insistence on a “consecration of its own” chiefly serves to

- A. recall a holy rite from their past
- B. sanctify a love the world condemns
- C. deny that any wrong occurred

5 “It was the last expression of the despondency of a broken spirit. He lacked energy to grasp the better fortune that seemed within his reach.”

It can reasonably be inferred that Dimmesdale rejects Hester’s plan because he is

- A. bound by duty to stay at his post
- B. doubtful that she truly loves him
- C. too crushed in spirit to act on it

6 “So speaking, she undid the clasp that fastened the scarlet letter, and, taking it from her bosom, threw it to a distance among the withered leaves. ... The stigma gone, Hester heaved a long, deep sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departed from her spirit. O exquisite relief!”

Which statement about the scarlet letter is best supported by the passage?

- A. it had shielded Hester from harm
- B. it had marked Hester with public shame
- C. it had been a comfort to Hester

7 “Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past ...”

The narrator’s ironic phrase “what men call the irrevocable past” serves to

- A. warn her guilt can never be undone
- B. show that her youth is gone for good
- C. stress that what seemed lost returns

8 “Such was the sympathy of Nature—that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth—with the bliss of these two spirits!”

The passage most strongly suggests that the forest’s wild Nature is

- A. guided by Christian higher truth
- B. tamed by the colony’s strict laws
- C. never brought under human control

9 “As her mother still kept beckoning to her, and arraying her face in a holiday suit of unaccustomed smiles, the child stamped her foot with a yet more imperious look and gesture.”

In the passage, Pearl is characterized as

- A. timid and eager to please
- B. commanding and expecting obedience
- C. confused and frightened

10 “... Hester Prynne, who, however inured to such behaviour on the elf-child’s part at other seasons, was naturally anxious for a more seemly deportment now.”

According to the passage, Hester reacts to Pearl’s outburst as someone who is

- A. long accustomed to such behavior
- B. alarmed by a wholly new defiance
- C. secretly amused by the tantrum

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	'Faculty' here is the older sense – an inborn capacity of the mind, not a school staff.
2	A	
3	A	Character comprehension. The wrong options are the lovers' adultery and Dimmesdale's concealment; the key is that he ranks Chillingworth's cold violation of a heart above both.
4	B	Theme comprehension. Hester does not deny the sin; she claims it held its own holiness – the novel's tension between private sanctity and public condemnation.
5	C	Event comprehension. Earlier he pleads duty ('I dare not quit my post'); here the narrator attributes his refusal to a broken spirit, not principle.
6	B	
7	C	The key turns on the irony: the past men call 'irrevocable' is, for this hour, briefly undone.
8	C	
9	B	
10	A	

Teacher Context: Chapters 14–19

Hester confronts Chillingworth and begs him to release the minister from his torment, then arranges to meet Dimmesdale in the forest. There she urges him to flee with her and Pearl, and for a moment they imagine a future free of shame. Section ends at the brookside, before the minister returns to town, keeping the forest reunion as one arc.