**Chapter 1**

1. What is the setting of *The Scarlet Letter*?

*The Scarlet Letter* is set in the 1630s. It starts with a crowd of men and woman standing in front of a prison. The people are described to be wearing “sad-colored garments” and the prison is described to be “studded with iron spikes” This sad color is to reflect the beliefs of their society – the puritan society. The puritan society does not believe in luxury and is extremely religious. However, the diction “sad” shows that while they believe in this ideology, the people does not really like living this way, but they choose to live in this way of life. Thus, showing the irony of the puritan society.

 2. Why does Hawthorne begin the story with a reflection about the need for a

cemetery and a prison?

Hawthorne begins the story with a reflection about the need for a cemetery and a prison because of the content of the story. The story has strong connection to the society’s view on sins, and treatment of people with them. By showing the puritan’s depiction of the treatment of sinned people, Hawthorne is setting up opportunities for creating irony later in the play. This is especially the case with the contrast between the wild rosebush and the black flowers. With the black flowers representing evil in the society, and the prison being the place that contains them, the red rosebush represents goodness, and shows how goodness are also falsely classified as evilness in many scenarios in the puritan society.

1. What is the significance of the wild rosebush that grows beside the prison door?

The wild rosebush that grows beside the prison door represents Hester. Right before the mention of the rosebush, Hawthorne talked about the “black flower of civilized society” to represent the criminals. This however overlaps with the description that was given to the men and women in the society, as they were described to be wearing “sad-garments and grey”, which are colors very close to black. This connects the people in the society with evilness, showing the defects of puritan society, as goodness represented by the rosebush are also stuck with the black ones in the prison.

1. Who was Ann Hutchinson?

Ann Hutchinson is a colonist and pioneer who organized puritan religious groups and preached to them without being authorized to do so by any church authority. She was tried and excommunicated for championing the rights and dignity of women. With her representing a strong feminist image, having her be described as “sainted” shows the values of the author of appreciating people having equal rights. Her action of walking into the prison also allows the audience to connect her with Hester, who later walks out of the prison. This sets up Hester to be a symbol of a strong woman who rebels against society.

1. What does Hawthorne achieve by his reference to “the sainted Ann Hutchinson?”

Hawthorne reminds the audience of the history accomplished by Ann Hutchinson. This builds a connection with the fallowing story with feminism, guiding the readers to interpret the story in a feminist way, so that the themes are understood correctly by the audience.

**Chapter 2**

1. On what note does this chapter begin?

This chapter begins by continuing the last chapter’s description of the scenery in front of the prison. Something the beginning of the chapter pays attention to is talking about the strictness of the puritan society and their lack of tolerance. This can be connected to the last chapter with the description of the rosebush and the black flower. The rosebush metaphor shows how normal people can be grouped together with criminals. This further extends that idea by showing the cause of this is the strictness of the puritans, as any mistake made by any person would be picked on for the rest of their life.

1. What is Hawthorne saying about the Puritan women of the New World?

In the crowd, there are many woman discussing the sins of Hester, and how badly she should be punished. This shows that many women in the society does not think individually, and only repeats the dominant ideology just in different extent of extremism, This presents a problem of the puritan society, as people lack awareness of what is actually happening around them, and only repeats the opinion of other people. At the end of the day, their thoughts would have all originated from people who have power and controls the society.

1. For what sin is Hester Prynne condemned?

Hester Prynne is condemned for adultery.

1. What is the Old Testament punishment for adultery?

The old testament punishment for adultery is execution in public.

1. What is the public view of Hester’s sin as expressed by the women outside the prison? What do their comments suggest about this society?

The public views Hester’s sins as unforgivable, especially the women in the crowd, they cannot imagine performing such an action. They mostly believe that Hester deserve more than what was given to her as punishment. This suggests that the society lacks understanding of individual’s situation. Hester presents her self proud in front of the crowd. However, even when she tries to disguise herself as proud, she still feels anxious as she holds the baby closely to hear chest. This shows the society’s lack of understanding for other people. This is likely because each person in the puritan society is more distance from each other, causing them not to emphasize on each other’s situations and only care about what they feel in the situation. The ironic thing is that quite often, they do not even have their own understanding of the situation, and relies on repeating other people’s opinion in keeping themselves relevant.

1. What is Hester’s punishment?

Hester’s original punishment would have been death. However, since his husband have died, her punishment has became to be humiliated by the public for 3 hours. While many people believe that this punishment is better than killing Hester, Hester ironically thinks the opposite. There are many instances throughout the three hours that Hester wished that she could be sentenced to death instead.

1. What is surprising about the “A” Hester has sewn for herself? What might this indicate?

The “A” that Hester has sewn for herself is represents adultery, as that is the sin that she processes. This makes the A a symbol for Hester’s sin. Interestingly, when she leaves the prison, she presents the A on her chest proudly to the crowd. This shows that she is rebelling against the strict rules of the society which she is living in, again building that feminist theme. While the cause of her adultery is still unknown, her pride of presenting the A in front of the crowd shows that it is likely that it is not her fault. If it was her fault of the adultery happening, she would not been able to present the A with such confidence.

1. What is accomplished by Hawthorne’s allusion to the Madonna and Child?

Hawthorne’s allusion to the Madonna and Child presents Hester as a holy image. This shows how puritans view situation differently based on personal judgement. Both Marry and Hester are mothers who care a lot about their child. However, since Hester has the sin “adultery” placed on her shoulder, her love towards her child to the crowd seems like her appreciation of her sin. On the other hand, since Mary is the holy mother from the bible, her love toward her child is holy, to the crowd. This shows how puritans view the same thing differently based on different circumstances

1. Considering the common use of physiognomy in pre-twentieth-century literature, what might Hawthorne be suggesting by portraying Hester as extremely beautiful?

By portraying Hester as a extremely beautiful person, Hawthorne is suggesting Hester’s nature of being beautiful. With the consideration of physiognomy, beauty is commonly used to represent goodness. This contrasts with Hester’ s situation, showing the extremity of the puritan society’s beliefs. This also verifies my prediction from before, that there were likely other reasons than lust causing Hester to betray her husband.

1. What does the Flashback reveal about Hester’s past?

The flashbacks reveal that Hester have had a complex past, further verifying my prediction about the cause of the adultery.

**Chapter 3**

1. What purpose does the conversation between the townsman and the stranger at the

beginning of this chapter serve?

The conversation comes right after the stranger exchanges glances with Hester and his motion of putting his fingers up to his lips. This exchange of glances shows that the stranger must know something about Hester’s past. Him asking the townsman instead of communicating more with Hester shows that he does not want to be involved within the situation that Hester is in. This suggests that maybe the stranger is directly involved in the adultery that Hester have performed. This characterizes he man negatively, as while knowing part of the truth, he does not let away anything that he knows, nor tries to help Hester.

2. Why wasn’t Hester sentenced to death for her adultery?

Hester was not sentenced to heath for her adultery because her husband was heard to be dead on a ship, releasing some of the sins on her shoulder.

3. Where has the stranger been? What motion does he make to Hester?

The stranger have been outside of the country learning medicine. This can be connected with the disappearance of Hester’s husband, making him very suspicious to actually be Hester’s husband.

4. Who is Dimmesdale? What appeal does he use to convince Hester to reveal the

baby’s father?

Dimmesdale is a stranger that have learnt the secrets of Indian medicine. At least this is what he claims. He suspiciously exchanges glances with Hester and even does a “shush” motion to stop Hester from talking. This shows that he likely is involved in the entire situation of Hester and her child.

5. What is Hawthorne foreshadowing with the stranger’s prediction that the name of

the father will eventually be disclosed?

With the stranger saying this, Hawthorne shows that the stranger does have some sort of connection with Hester. Especially being the suspicious person himself, this also shows that his identity will be revealed.

6. What is ironic about Dimmesdale’s reaction to Hester’s refusal to name the father

of her child?

Dimmesdale’s reaction to Hester’s refusal to name the father of her child is being calmed and relieved, which compared to before, which he was extremely stressed. This suggests something about the situation, that Dimmesdale might very likely be the father of the child, and he is afraid of being exposed.

7. Explain the allusion in the townsman’s telling Chillingworth, “that matter remaineth a riddle; and the Daniel who shall expound it is yet a-wanting.”

**Chapter 4**

1. Who does the stranger Hester recognized in the crowd that afternoon turn out to

be?

The stranger that Hester have recognized in the crowd that afternoon turned out to be her actual husband which every one thought of have died on a boat in the sea.

2. Why does Hester fear Chillingworth

Since Chillingworth is her past husband and she have betrayed him, Hester is scared that Chilling worth is going to take revenge upon her and her daughter. While this might seem like something small, this reflects the lack of trust between people in the puritan society. The social framework is very intense, and people constantly need to keep track of what other people are doing in order to keep themselves safe.

3. Again, given the use of physiognomy in literature, what is Hawthorne suggesting

by Chillingworth’s aged, deformed appearances?

Chillingworth’s aged aspect of his appearance shows that he is probably respected within the puritan community, and have a relatively high social status. This is true as he is a doctor, whom usually receive a lot of respect from people. His deformed appearance suggests that he is not the nicest person in the story, and is quite possibly connected to wards evilness. This hints again that the reason why Hester have performed adultery is not wholly to be blamed on herself.

1. Explain Chllingworth’s attitude toward Hester.

Chillingworth stresses first to Hester to not expose his identity. This shows that he cares more about him self than Hester’s situation, and that he is very afraid of shame. He is doing this to avoid being shamed by the public. He however does not try to revenge upon the sins that Hester have performed. This could be because that he is a forgiving character or that he just want to keep the entire thing a secret from now on, and live as a different person to avoid shame. He however offers Hester some drugs, which Hester did not trust. This drug did not cause immediate hard, and this thus shows that Chillingworth is a good doctor who suits the characterization of a doctor, and that he still cares about Hester slightly in his heart.

1. What does Chillingworth intend to do and why?

Chillingworth asked Hester the identity of the real father of the child. This shows that he is very much ashamed of what have happen to him, and that he is seeking for revenge.

1. What does Chillingworth ask Hester to promise? Why does she agree?

Chillingworth asks Hester to promise to not give away his identity. The reason of this is that he is too ashamed to expose this history of his, and that it will remind him of the feel of betrayal. However, he also mentioned that “it might be for other reasons”. This ambiguity shows that he probably also have his personal reasons why he does not want to reveal his identity. Or else, he would likely reveal his identity and search for the father of the child to revenge himself to get back his honor. Hester agrees because Chillingworth have stopped asking for the father’s real identity. Because of that she does not want to give away the true identity of the child, she agrees to also keep Chillingworth’s identity as a secret.

1. What is foreshadowed by Chillingworth and Hester’s exchange at the end of the chapter?

Chillingworth and Hester’s exchange at the end of the chapter foreshadows that Chillingworth is quite unhappy of Hester’s betrayal on him, and that he is planning on revenge. Maybe this revenge will not cause the soul of Hester, but Chillingworth hints that it will cost the soul of someone else by saying “Oh, no. Not yours” This shows that he is going to seek revenge on someone that Hester strongly cares about. Judging on the context of their conversation previously talking about the child’s father, it is likely that Chillingworth is trying to seek revenge by killing the father of the child. However, the ambiguity could also be pointing to the baby, as Hester have shown her care in the baby when Chillingworth gave her the medicine: she thought about the baby’s safety before her own safety.