Chapter 13

1. What is significant about Hester’s position in the community now that years have

passed?

Hester’s position in the society have changed significantly. The scarlet letter on her breast was described to be “glittering in its fantastic embroidery”, and had “long been a familiar object to the towns people.” Her life has stuck to what puritans viewed as right in the past few years, so she is now gaining respect within the town. The diction fantastic contrasts with the adjectives that was used to describe her before, showing how her position in the society have changed, in a good way. However, it is described as “glittering”, which is very different from the bland greyish colored cloths that puritans usually wear. This shows that while she has fitted into the puritan society, Hester still kept her difference from society, but concealed it deep in her heart and did not reveal it to the public.

2. Compare the feelings of the general public to those of the community leaders

regarding Hester Prynne. Explain why the groups view her differently.

The general public have started to respect Hester for a while, as they have been directly receiving benefits from Hester. They saw first hand of Hester’s submissive response on the judgment of society, and this is what caused them to trust Hester. The governors while having also received services from Hester, they kept their prejudice for a longer period of time. This is likely because the governors are more bound to the puritan views, and are constantly judging Hester on her sin. The change in society shows that Hester is presenting herself as a puritan to the society. She has morphed into a puritan, and she have concealed her free thoughts and believes within her. This shows the ability of puritan’s society in changing an individual’s personality: when Hester was not fallowing the puritan traditions, she was facing a lot of pressure from every one else in the society, and only when she bounded herself to the rules of the puritan society, the disrespect from other people in the society started to lessen.

3. What social and philosophical changes in Hawthorne describing in this chapter?

Hawthorne describes how Hester changed in the social environment. Instead of actively showing her belief, which is against the society, she submissively fallows the rules of the social society, and keeps her thoughts within her self.

4. Explain the statement: “It is remarkable, that persons who speculate the most

boldly often conform with the most perfect quietude to the external regulations of society. The thought suffices them...”

This statement is talking about what Hester is doing. Hester while have her own thoughts about the society, and have things that she wants to do, she does not show what she thinks. She happily fallows the rule of society. This makes it so that people around her stop targeting her as much as before, and thus allows her to live a happier life. Though concealing one’s thought completely within their heart is a torture as they are not able to express them, it is still better than being humiliated by the puritan society. This is ironic as the reason why Dimmesdale is experiencing so much trouble is that he cannot condemn his sins to other people, and thus are feeling the guilt from his actions. Hester on the other hand is struggling from the pressure that society have placed on her, and thus have committed in hiding her thoughts. This shows the difference treatment between woman and man in the puritan society. Dimmesdale being such a coward is worrying about expressing his ideas, while Hester is trying to conceal her ideas from society to avoid trouble.

5. Compare the initial intent behind the scarlet letter to the actual effect on Hester.

The initial affect of the scarlet letter is to remind Hester of her sins, and is a symbol that that the society uses to embarrass her. However, the narrator stated in this chapter that the A have stopped representing adult hood, and instead have started representing Abled instead. This shows that the scarlet letter have became part of Hester’s identity. The Abled also shows Hester’s inner thoughts. Hester is very judgmental on the puritan’s view on woman. The A on her chest is Hester using her own actions to demonstrate to the society that woman are also abled.

6. What does Hester resolve to do and why?

Hester wants to help Dimmesdale. She have seen how much Dimmesdale is suffering, and while Dimmesdale does not know the reason why he is suffering, Hester knows. Hester feels bad for Dimmesdale despite being abandoned by Dimmesdale. This sympathy is causing Hester to want to resolve Dimmesdale’s situation by communicating to Chillingworth. This develops Hester’s character by showing her forgiving and nice side, as she have forgiven Dimmesdale despite the wrongs that he have done her. This also contrasts to show Hester’s ableness, as Hester overcame her sins by herself, and is now helping Dimmesdale to relieve him from his sins.

7. What is Hawthorne’s point comparing Hester’s and Dimmsdale’s reactions to

their sin?

Hester have accepted her sin, and is living on with it while Dimmesdale is still afraid to face the consequences of his sins.

8. What image is Hawthorne evoking with Chillingworth, old, one shoulder higher

than the other, digging up roots and collecting leaves, etc. in the forest?

Hawthorne presents Chillingworth as a very suspicious person. The description “one shoulder higher than the other” is very different from what is expected from a normal person, who would likely have balanced shoulders. His actions of digging up roots and collecting leaves is also different from what a normal person would do, as normal people would usually not be interested in roots and leaves. By showing Chillingworth gather weird ingredients, Hawthorne connects Chillingworth with the image of a witch, who would often use weird ingredients to brew potions. Thus, Chillingworth is characterized as an evil character.

**Chapter 14**

1. Notice that Chillingworth is called a “leech” in the chapters in which he interacts

with Dimmsdale, but a “physician” in this interaction with Hester. Considering the definition of “leech,” what do you suppose is Hawthorne’s point in using these two designations?

When Chillingworth is with Dimmesdale, he morphs into an evil being, and thus is called a leech. When he is with Hester, he is able to think logically, and thus is given the title physician. In this chapter, it can be seen that Chillingworth fully recognizes that he have became more evil than before, and he is reflecting upon his actions. This is very different from when he was with Dimmesdale, which his mind was full of the thought of revenge. This can even be seen in this chapter, as when Hester asked if Chillingworth if he is willing to stop his revenge for the sake of himself. Despite having meaningful reflections before, Chillingworth rejects Hester’s request. This is likely because that even he himself acknowledges that he cannot control his want for revenge with he is with Dimmesdale.

2. What is Hester’s response to the announcement that the Council had debated

allowing her to remove her scarlet letter?

Hester rejects to take the scarlet letter off. This is because the scarlet letter have became part of her identity. She sais that “were I worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature, or be transformed into something that should speak a different purpose.” From this line, Hester is directly clashing with Chillingworth, by saying that she have been worth to have the scarlet taken off a while ago that people have changed their view on the letter. With this affect in place, there is no more reason for Hester to take the scarlet letter off, as it have became part of her identity, and the public does not view it as her sin anymore. It have been metaphorically taken off the moment when the townspeople stopped viewing it as a symbol for her adultery.

3. Look again at what you found out about the Anti-Transcendentalists. Why isn’t

forgiveness an opinion?

Chillingworth is digging up plants and gathering them for his medicine. Since nature symbolizes goodness, Chillingworth’s actions is cutting his ties with nature, which thus shows that he is evil.

4. How is the doctrine of predestination reflected in this conversation between

Hester and Chillingworth?

Chillingworth believes in fate, and uses it as the reason for rejecting Hester in forgiving Dimmesdale.

5. Why does Chillingworth believe he has a double reason for punishing

Dimmsdale?

Chillingworth believes this because Dimmesdale have not only took his wife, but have also turned him into an evil human being. While he blames Dimmesdale for both of them, the logical readers can see the mental state of Chillingworth. Chillingworth’s mental state is quite unstable, as he is blaming Dimmesdale for something of his own fault. Dimmesdale was not the cause of him becoming evil, but it was his obsession in vengeance instead. This thus characterizes Chillingworth as evil ,and drastically different from the forgiving image that appeared in the beginning of the book.

6. What does Hester ask of Chillingworth? What is his response?

Hester asked Chillingworth for forgiveness in Dimmesdale, and offered to bring the vengeance on her instead. Chillingworth rejected her, saying that it was all meant to be. This shows Hester’s forgivingness and kindness, as she is willing to take on the sins of Dimmesdale despite of Dimmesdale being a coward and have abandoned her. This contrasts with the image of Chillingworth, who is very focused on vengeance and does not forgive Dimmesdale.

7. What pleas of Hester’s arouse sympathy and admiration in Chillingworth?

Hester arouse sympathy in Chillingworth because of what he have became. Chillingworth have became an evil being filled with desire of vengeance and nothing else. This have motivated him to commit many evil actions that he would consider sinful, and would not have considered performing before.

8. What does Hester ask of Chillingworth? What is his response?

**Chapter 15**

1. What is Hester coming to realize is the true sin she has committed? Why would

Hawthorne consider this a worse sin that her sin with Dimmsdale?

Hester realizes that her true sin is that she has transformed Chillingworth into an evil being. Her sin with Dimmesdale while is a sin in the puritan society, to Hester, it is more like a way that she is voicing her opinion about her complaints of her situation with Chillingworth. Thus her adultery is her expressing her want of freedom and independence. However, Hester’s sin of misshaping Chillingworth is the direct consequence of her trying to voice her opinion. It thus shows how when opinion is forcefully put out, it may harm some people. In this case, Chillingworth’s humanity is what Hester have sacrificed in order to voice her thoughts. Thus, Hawthorne may consider it to me worse than the sins that she have committed with Dimmesdale.

2. What does Hester realize about her “repentance”?

Hester realizes that many of what she is suffering now is caused by her action of marrying Chillingworth in the first place. She blames herself for feeling bitter of Chillingworh’s change. This thus causes Hester to blame herself and consider her action of marrying Chillingworth as her greatest sin.

3. Why does Hester hate Chillingworth?

Hester hates Chillingworth because Chillingworth treated her as in how the society generally perceives woman. Chillingworth convinced Hester that she was feeling happiness, but she later realizes that she was actually not happy. This shows that Chillingworth is treating Hester like his property, and enjoyed the feeling of Hester serving him in his house, which gives him a sense of superiority. This also explains why Chillingworth is so focused on his vengeance on Dimmesdale, as he has lost this feeling of superiority from Hester, and Hester have betrayed him to go with another man.

4. Hester refuses to answer Pearl’s question about the meaning of the “A.” Why

does Hester not confide in Pearl?

Hester does not answer Pearl’s question about the meaning of the “A” because she does not want to pollute Pearl’s innocence. She have already made Chillingworth into a dark and evil person, and she want to protect Pearl from the evilness from the world. She also chooses not to tell Pearl because she does not want Pearl to know that she is the product of a sin that she have committed.

5. Why does Hawthorne portray Pearl as such a wild child?

Wild creates a vast and gloomy image, which forms a sublime atmosphere around the child. With Pearl being such a young child, which is the opposite of sublime, this connects Pearl with the idea of nature. This novel is written in the romantic era, which has a deep appreciation of the beauties of nature. This connects Pearl with the goodness of the world, showing Pearl’s difference with the grey boring Puritan society, that is the opposite of natural.

6. How have Hester’s conversations with Chillingworth and Pearl changed her

attitude toward herself and her sin?   
 Hester’s conversation with Chillingworth and Pearl changed her attitude towards her sins. She have lied about the scarlet letter for the first time, to Pearl. This shows that she is starting to see the affects that the scarlet letter was meant to give her start to take place. When Hester was by herself, she did not feel guilt of the letter, and instead had a sense of pride in it as it provided her the ability to express her difference from the society. However, as Pearl starts to grow older and older, her mother like nature start to kick in, causing her to pay more attention to the surround environment and well being of Pearl. For the better of Pearl, she has to sacrifice parts of her own identity, and now, she is starting to comply to the rules of society for the better of Pearl.

**Chapter 16**

1. Explain the significance of the sunlight imagery.

The sun is commonly used as a symbol in religion for god. Thus, the light coming from the sun, sunshine, represents the view of god. The sunshine does not shine on Hester. This shows that Hester is not accepted by heaven as she is sinned, and thus is not being payed attention to. This shows that Hester while wants to help make the world a better place by being vocal of her opinions, cannot do it as she is sinned. Her sinned image to the puritan society twists the meaning of what she is trying to say, and interprets it as evilness and will thus not believe in her. However, Pearl is not sinned, and is thus accepted by the sunshine. This shows that Pearl has hope and the ability to make changes. Pearl is already resembling Hester’s ideology as Hester constantly uses Pearl to express herself: such as putting luxurious clothing to dress up Pearl.

2. When Hester determines to warn Dimmsdale about Chillingworth, why does the

meeting take place in the forest?

The forest is a grand, vast, gloomy place. This again brings up the sublime feeling, as the forest is while being scary, also beautiful at the same time. This sublime beauty of nature is much appreciated during the romantic era. The reason why the sublime is appreciated is because while it evokes the sense of danger, it creates a sense of large amount of energy. This is the case for the conversation to be placed in the forest. The forest is dark and gloomy, and thus has a sense of danger in it, which is probably why the it is often connected to the bad man. However, there is still beauty to be appreciated. Hester and Dimmesdale while are discussing about how to free themselves from their sin, which is evil, have good intentions in Hester’s part of Dimmesdale’s well being, which should be respected.

3. Explain the probable allusion in the line “the minister and she would need the

whole wide world to breathe in.”

Hester and Dimmesdale is already being compressed by the pressure put on them from the society, judging them based on their sins. Their discussion have the intension to free themselves from the consequences of their sins, and thus need to take place in an open area. They are in the narrow area created by the society, and if they want to resolve the situation in another narrow path, they will not improve their current situation.

4. What positive significance does the forest begin to take on?

The forest is the connection to nature. Pearl fits in well with the environment because she is innocent. Thus, the nature will serve her well. The forest is also different from the puritan society: it is wide and vast, and it has room for Hester and Dimmesdale. Unlike the society, which purposely compressed the “room” for sinners like Hester with the aim of making them feel bad of the sin that she have committed.

5. What negative significance does the forest begin to take on?

A link between the forest and evilness is also created. This is the danger part of the sublime nature of the forest. This part of the forest represents the evilness in society. Not the evilness that the townspeople believe exist in Hester, but the pure evilness that can be clearly observed from Chillingworth, and what he is doing to Dimmesdale. This evilness is starting to affect Hester, and its affects can be already being seen on Dimmesdale.

6. In what way does Hester acknowledge her sin to Pearl?

Because partially she got annoyed of Pearl asking her, and that she wanted to let some of it go to release its pressure on her.

**Chapter 17**

1. How is Hawthorne advancing his theme of the difference between revealed and

secret sin?

Dimmesdale represents revealed sin and Hester represents secret sin based on their situation. In this scene, Dimmesdale is placed directly besides Hester to show how the two type of sins differ. Dimmesdale is pale, weak and scared while he barely manages to walk through the forest. Hester on the other hand hides inside forest, but is in great health conditions. This is very similar to what happens in real life. While Hester is perceived to be evil by the townspeople, similar to how Dimmesdale perceived her as evil when she first talks, Hester is in perfect health conditions, meaning that the sin has very little affect on her. Dimmesdale on the other hand is unhealthy, showing how guilt can plague on person.

1. Explain the distinction Dimmsdale makes between penance and penitence.

Dimmesdale feels the guilt from his actions. However, he does not regret what he have done. This shows that he is still thinking of Hester, and values their relationship. This is also evident from the extent of guilt that he is feeling. He would not care about Chillingworth as much, and most of his guilt is probably coming from the situation that he have put Hester in.

3. What do we learn is the emotional connection between Hester and Dimmsdale?

Why is this significant to the developing theme of the book?

The emotional connection between Hester and Dimmesdale is the sin that they have. This is being represented by the scarlet letter, as it represents adultery, their sin. This is significant to the developing of the theme of the book, as the scarlet letter has changed its meaning over time. It was initially meant to represent Hester’s sin and for the purpose of shaming her. However, her sin have became “Able” in the eyes of the public, and now even to Hester herself, it has became her connection to the one that she loves. This shows that the sin placed on Hester by the puritan society have little significance when compared to other things in life, thus proving the inaccurate judgement of the puritan society.

4. Do you believe Hester is to blame for Dimmsdale’s suffering during the past

seven years? Why or why not?  
Hester is not to blame for Dimmesdale’s suffering for the past seven years. The main reason that Dimmesdale considered Hester to be his reason of Hester suggests that his guilt came less from his religion, but instead his care for Hester. Starting from when Hester went on the scaffolding instead the moment he committed the sin, Dimmesdale was troubled by what he have caused Hester to experience. Thus, when he was told that Hester knew that Chillingworth have been torturing him, he blames his suffer on Hester because of the immediate sense of betrayal that he is feeling. However, this is not really the case, and even Dimmesdale realizes soon after he calms down. Dimmesdale’s suffering is to mostly blame on himself, as he is the one that ran away from the consequences, and does not want to reveal his identity to the public.

5. What theme about nature of sin finally begins to emerge in Hester and

Dimmsdale’s conversation?

It shows that sin is subjective. While one party may find a sin offending for particular reasons, other people may see the opposite and find the sin totally reasonable. This is the case between Hester, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale. Chillingworth feels betrayed, and thus thinks that Hester and Dimmesdale is sinned. However, to Hester and Dimmesdale, they are only seeking their true love, and thus justifies their action. This thus shows that sins are dependant on the benefits that an individual may obtain from the situation. If a certain event is bad for an individual, then it is sinful, and if it is beneficial, then it is not sinful.

6. Here is a key question for Hawthorne and the Anti-Transcendentalists: can a

“polluted soul” do good for others?

A polluted soul does not do good for other. This is shown in several different aspects from the book. Firstly, the “polluted soul” of Hester (caused by her being sinned) caused her to fail her attempt to change the world, and gave up her independent thoughts from the society. It is also shown in this scene as Hester and Dimmesdale are two polluted souls of common sin, and they are both suffering from their actions. They both need to wear the scarlet letter. While Hester’s scarlet letter is exposed to the public to see, Dimmesdale’s scarlet letter is hidden, but engraved into his flesh on his bosom.

7. Who are the heartless people with laws of iron to whom Hester refers?

The heartless people with laws of iron are the towns people. They do not care about what Hester and Dimmesdale feel, they do not try to understand why the adultery even took place. They just place their blind judgment upon who is right and who is wrong based off of their intuition.

8. This chapter ends on an optimistic note. What is the source of the optimism?

The source of optimism is the possibility of the future for Hester and Dimmesdale. They now finally see a hope in escaping their situation, escape the puritan society. They are planning on taking a boat to another country, away from where they are living, so Hester does not need to be bothered by other people’s judgment, and Dimmesdale does not need to be bother by his guilt.

**Chapter 18**

1. What contrast does the narrator point out between Hester and Dimmsdale’s ability

to leave town?

Hester have grown enough reputation so that other people are willing to take her on their ship. Dimmesdale on the other hand have little experience breaking the law. The narrator does not conceive his action of adultery as bad because he was just fallowing his passion.

1. Why does Dimmsdale decide to flee with Hester?

Dimmesdale decided to flee with Hester because of two reasons. Firstly, he cares about Hester. It is also for is own good, as his guilt felt in the current state has plagued him.

1. What is significant about the title of this chapter?

The sunshine in the title is representing hope, the hope of Hester and Dimmesdale’s bright future. “flood” is suggesting that it is overwhelming, but a sunshine usually does not harm, and a flood of it may certainly suggest that the future is extremely bright. However, the slight overwhelming feel also may suggest that this flow of sunshine may be too much for Hester and Dimmesdale.

4. How does Hawthorne reinforce his idea that nature is sympathetic with the union

of Hester and Dimmsdale?

Hawthorne reinforce his idea that nature is sympathetic since Hester and Dimmesdale have met in the forest, which is away from the puritan society. The sunshine representing hope that shines upon Hester and Dimmesdale also shows the same point

1. Why would children dislike Dimmsdale?

Children dislike Dimmesdale because Dimmesdale is sinned. Pearl being the sin have embraced Dimmesdale the first time she met him. However, as Dimmesdale still refuses to reveal his sin the public, Pearl does not want to be associated with him, and thus washes his kiss off.  
  
**Chapter 19**

1. Beyond Hester’s explanation, why won’t Pearl come to Hester without the scarlet

letter?

Hester explains that Pearl does not come to Hester without the scarlet letter is because Pearl does not appreciate changes without a reason, she does not understand why Hester would take it off. The significance of this is that Pearl, who represents Hester’s true, inner-self, does not want to return to Hester, as her sin has became part of her identity and Hester without the scarlet letter is not longer the same person.

2. What is significant about the fact that Pearl will not bring her the scarlet letter, but

makes her pick it up for herself?

Normally, this would be considered quite disrespectful, but there is a reason behind Pearl’s actions. The scarlet letter represents Hester’s sins, but do does Pearl. The reason why Pearl wants Hester to pick it up herself is because Hester need to take up the burdens of her sin, such as how she openly embraced it on the scaffolding. With Pear being a symbol for Hester’s inner-self, it shows that Hester is kind of throwing away her inner thoughts, and complying with the rules of society. Pearl is reminding Hester the importance of her inner self. The reason why Hester is throwing away her independence is because of Dimmesdale, who she want to escape with, but also who represents the puritan view. This can also be seen from Hester’s choice of wearing grey clothing in the previous chapters.

3. Why won’t Pearl show any affection to Dimmsdale? Why does she want him to

walk with them hand-in-hand in the marketplace?

Pearl does not show affection to Dimmmesdale because Dimmesdale represents the puritan society’s views, as he is positioned highly in the puritan world. It is also because Dimmesdale is being a coward and refuses to accept the consequences of his sin like how Hester did. Representing Hester’s internal thoughts, Pearl ask Dimmesdale to also confess his sins to the public, but Dimmesdale refuses.

4. This chapter begins on the same optimistic note that ends the previous chapter. On

what kind of note does the chapter end? Why?

This chapter ends with the sentence “no more cheerful for the addition”, showing that it does not continue to develop the same level of optimism. This shows that Hester’s feminist side (represented by Pearl) is directly conflicting with her interest in Dimmesdale (represented by Dimmesdale himself). This opposition is what caused the end of the development of the optimism.

**Chapter 20**

1. What would account for Dimmsdale’s sudden change?

His meeting in the forest with Hester.

2. In terms of Hawthorne’s theme contrasting hidden sin versus revealed sin, how

can you explain Dimmsdale’s change in this chapter?

Dimmesdale’s change can be explained as while he does not want to give up his social position, he really wants to expose his sinned nature. After seeing Hester’s revealed sin’s affect, he yearns to be like Hester. Therefore, Dimmesdale have the strong urge to perform sinful action to expose his sinned nature to the society.

3. Why is the chapter called “The Minister in a Maze”?

It shows how Dimmesdale is lost, in terms of whether he should expose his sinned nature or keep concealing it.