

QCQ Chapters 17-20

1. “For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticizing all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church. The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread.”
2. This quote supports the theme of punishment, by describing the effect that Hester’s punishment has had on herself. Hester’s condemnation to wear the scarlet letter has brought about her estrangement from society, consequently separating her from its regulations and institutions. The author makes the argument that Hester, in contrast to Dimmesdale, has been brought beyond the restrictions of Puritan society due to her display of her sin. Hawthorne explains that Hester’s view of moral institutions is similar to the Indian’s view of the church, clarifying her criticism and lack of reverence for the Puritan church and its instruments of punishment. Hawthorne analogizes the scarlet letter to a passport, showing that by wearing her sin, Hester is allowed to accept her fate and change.
3. What does Hester learn through seven years of wearing the scarlet letter?