

QCQ Chapters 12-16

1. “By thy first step awry, thou didst plant the germ of evil; but, since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity. Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a kind of typical illusion; neither am I fiend-like, who have snatched a fiend’s office from his hands. It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may!” (Hawthorne 157-158)
2. This quote exemplifies the theme of evil through Chillingworth’s inability to stop the evil that has already commenced despite Hester’s appeal to him. Once the seed of evil has been planted, the “black flower” must blossom and gain control of Chillingworth. Therefore, he believes that Hester is not evil, though she has planted its seed, and that he has merely taken the devil’s office. Hawthorne demonstrates his criticism of Puritanism’s oppressive nature that seems to pervade society, creating a necessity for things such as the “black flower”. Hawthorne alludes to the first chapter, where he implies the hypocrisy of the Puritans’ utopia, noting that it is one that creates evil. The image of the physician gathering herbs shows the continuation of Chillingworth’s treatment of Dimmesdale.
3. What is the meaning of Chillingworth’s statement that neither he nor Hester are truly evil?