

**Choosing a Thesis--brainstorming:**

- Identify a character or symbol that stood out for you as you read
- Ask some questions regarding the development of that symbol or character as the story progressed
- Use those questions to create an arguable statement that can be supported with textual evidence

**Example:** I thought it was interesting to see how the theme of revenge played out in the story, as viewed through the character Roger Chillingworth.

**Questions:** What was RC like at the beginning? How does HP remember him? What is his first reaction upon learning of her crime? What does he take on as his mission after speaking with her? How is his physical appearance described early on, vs. later in the story? How does his quest for revenge affect other characters (AD)? How is his story resolved?

**Possible Thesis Statement:** (use for inspiration – do not copy!)

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne uses the characterization of Roger Chillingworth to show how unbridled revenge results in the destruction of oneself and others, and that only the confession of guilt can free one from its devastation.

*\*literary element = characterization; theme = revenge*

**Example:** It is interesting to see how the scarlet letter goes from something Hester wears to something she IS.

**Questions:** How does Hawthorne first introduce the SL? How does Hester react to wearing it? What are some of her early thoughts about it? How does the community react to it? How does Pearl react to it? What does the letter represent early vs. later in the book? How does wearing it change Hester?

**Possible Thesis Statement:** (use for inspiration – do not copy!)

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the development of the scarlet letter as a symbol mirrors the transformation of the character Hester Prynne from a state of sin to a state of grace.

*\*literary element = symbol; character = Hester*

**Example:** Pearl is a fascinating child. Wild, precocious, overwhelming to her mother; yet her very reason for living.

**Questions:** What is Pearl's purpose? What is the meaning of her name and why is this ironic? What is she like in the beginning, as a baby, and to what is this behavior attributed? What is she like as a 3-year-old? How does Hester dress her? How is she treated by Hester? How is she treated by the community, including the children? How does she react to others? In what way is she a living scarlet letter?

**Possible Thesis Statement:** (use for inspiration – do not copy!)

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne develops Pearl's nearly demonic, yet oddly playful personality with imagery and uses symbolism to personify the scarlet letter through her.

*\*literary elements = imagery, symbol; character = Pearl*

**Example:** In spite of Hester's nearly hopeless situation (alone with a child, shunned by her community, branded a sinner), she is able to persevere and overcome the odds to raise her child and live her life.

**Questions:** What has Hester done? How is she presented vs. how the community is presented? What are Hester's options? What does she choose to do? How is the scarlet letter meant to cure her sin? How does her personality help her overcome her difficulties? What symbols does the author use to show her strength?

***Possible Thesis Statement:*** (use for inspiration – do not copy!)

Nathaniel Hawthorne uses symbolism throughout *The Scarlet Letter* to develop the misdeeds of Hester Prynne and the hypocrisy of the Puritan society, but also to show the hope that shines through dark threads of the scarlet letter.

*\*literary element = symbolism; character/theme = Hester/Hypocrisy*

**Due Thursday (10/14):** on an MLA-formatted document, develop a thesis statement using the above guidelines (10 points)