

The Scarlet Letter
Pre-reading Activity #1
Analysis of the Time Periods

In order to understand the novel The Scarlet Letter, you will need to know about the time period in which it was set as well as the time period in which it was written. Before you begin your research, however, there are some questions that you need to answer about your own beliefs. Although you will discuss the following questions with your group, you may answer according to your own beliefs.

1. How does our society view the following concepts? How are these concepts portrayed in books? Magazines? TV shows? Movies?
 - Sin
 - Adultery
 - Illegitimacy
 - Guilt
 - Punishment
 - Crime
 - Evil
 - Forgiveness
 - Revenge
 - Justice
2. Are there degrees of "sin"? Explain.
3. Are there crimes that should receive the death penalty?
4. Do people have the right to punish a person that they believe has betrayed them?
5. Which rules or laws should be absolutes? Should there be flexibility within laws? Can we guarantee fairness and equity?

Research Challenge One

The Scarlet Letter was published in the 1850's. What was America like during this time? What was Hawthorne's world like? What type of literature was being written? What did the people of this time period believe about sin, morality, illegitimacy, guilt, punishment, crime, evil, forgiveness, revenge, and justice? What philosophy was developed? Was Hawthorne a proponent of this philosophy? What impact did the philosophy have on the culture of the time period? What beliefs about religion were prevalent during this time period? Was there a relationship between religion and government?

Research Challenge Two

The Scarlet Letter was set in the 1640's. What was America like during this time? What was Puritan world like? What type of literature was being written? What did the people of this time period believe about sin, morality, illegitimacy, guilt, punishment, crime, evil, forgiveness, revenge, and justice? What impact did religion have on the culture of the time period? What beliefs about religion were prevalent during this time period? Was there a relationship between religion and government? Where did Hawthorne get his ideas about the Puritans? How was Hawthorne's family connected to the Salem Witch Trials?