

Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

SCORE/GRADE:

WORLDVIEW: *The Scarlet Letter*

Study questions 11a. through 11c. in the Worldview Socratic List. Answer the questions with respect to this story in your own notes. Then, in the lines below, answer the following question in a single page, using the details of the story to support and explain your response. For page-length answers, attach a separate sheet if necessary.

How do the geographical details of the author's life resonate with the presuppositions suggested by the text?

Possible student response:

The author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, descended from Massachusetts Bay Puritans. He felt a part of them, the area, and the history.

And yet, though invariably happiest elsewhere, there is within me a feeling for old Salem, which, in lack of a better phrase, I must be content to call affection. The sentiment is probably assignable to the deep and aged roots which my family has struck into the soil. It is now nearly two centuries and a quarter since the original Briton, the earliest emigrant of my name, made his appearance in the wild and forest-bordered settlement, which has since become a city. (Hawthorne 20)

Hawthorne was born and raised in Salem, Massachusetts, famous for their 17th century witch hunt. Hawthorne's great uncle, a John Hathorne, presided over these and is remembered as the only judge who stood by his decisions. Hawthorne felt such shame for this connection that he changed his name with the addition of a "w."

The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present phase of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to the residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor—who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trode the

unworn street with such a stately port, and made so large a figure, as a man of war and peace—a stronger claim than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face hardly known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a better persecutor; as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity toward a woman of their sect, which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any good record of his better deeds, although these were many. (Hawthorne 20-21)

Hawthorne explores these histories, their good and their evil, in his novel.

This exploration serves as a memoriam, a warning, an apology, and a study of man's nature, his grandeur and his misery. The tale represents a sincere attempt to reconcile himself with the ancestors of his past so that he might know himself in the present. "...[L]et them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine" (Hawthorne 21). Consequently, he takes up the subjects of human depravity, law, and grace and their subsequent effects on man's individual and corporate freedom and bondage.