

Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

SCORE/GRADE:

WORLDVIEW: *The Scarlet Letter*

Study questions 6a. and 6b. 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.

***Do the story's answers to these questions
tell the truth as the author saw it?***

According to Hawthorne's narrative, it is not the Law but hypocrisy which is the greatest source of unhappiness in the story. His morality tale exposes human nature as evil and depraved. Evading this truth isolates the individual, keeping him in the torment of conscience, away from the freedom of forgiveness and the comfort of reconciliation, which embody divine mercy.

The circumstances of the story are ripe with hypocrisy. The good wives' wagging tongues, the magistrates' lack of compassion, Chillingworth's deceit, and Dimmesdale's secret sin all underscore the ubiquitous nature of human sin. All are flawed. The public nature of Hester's adultery draws censure and isolates her from the community. She wears the scarlet letter, but it does not change her heart. This seeming confession ironically represents another form of hypocrisy. Public censure is not the same thing as repentance. While Hester submits necessarily to her public shame, inside she plays the rebel.

Like Dimmesdale, Hester remains miserable and lonely until her heart is changed. Led to repent to Dimmesdale for her part in his torment, she experiences relationship born of the forgiveness extended by a fellow sinner. When Dimmesdale exercises leadership in public repentance at his death, she follows him into true penitence and trust in divine mercy. That she receives. The townspeople do no violence to her or to Pearl. She returns to the colony to finish her days in the community, a minister of grace and empathy to other sinners.

Hawthorne's depiction of human nature, the evils of hypocrisy, and the importance of walking in the light resonate with traditional Christian doctrines. His depiction of the freedom wrought by true penitence

likewise resonate with this teaching. Though he censures the Puritan application of theonomy, his morality tale imbibes an orthodox Christian understanding of human nature and the divine economy of sin and redemption.