

Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

SCORE/GRADE:

CONTEXT: *The Scarlet Letter*

Answer the following questions in a single paragraph. Refer to the events of this story to explain your answer. For page-length answers, attach a separate sheet.

***Where and under what conditions did the author live?
How do these conditions make themselves apparent in the story?
Do these details help us understand the story's themes?***

Nineteenth century author Nathaniel Hawthorne hailed from Salem, Massachusetts, where ancestral roots anchored his people for several generations. Among these roots, an undesirable family connection with seventeenth century Puritan John Hathorne (that infamous judge who presided over the Salem Witch Trials) caused the author to change his name to the Hawthorne by which he is still known. This change suggests the author's psychic discomfort with his ancestry – a discomfort which likely fueled his interest in the Puritan mind, so central to the subject matter of his famous novel, *The Scarlet Letter*. Through his narrative, Hawthorne explores how fallen men are brought to repentance.