

# THE SCARLET LETTER

Essential  
Questions

# THE SCARLET LETTER

- The “A” undergoes several transformations in the novel.
  - Answer one of the following questions using the CSQT strategy.
- What does the “A” signify in “The Marketplace”?
- What does the “A” signify in “The Minister’s Vigil”?
- What does the “A” signify in “Another View of Hester”?

# HAWTHORNE AS A ROMANTIC

- **Romantics believed:**
  - **People were inherently good**
  - **Society corrupted individuals**
  - **Freedom was superior to law**
  - **Emotion was superior to reason**
  - **Children were free and models for the rest of us**
  - **Nature was holy**

# HAWTHORNE AS A PURITAN

- Puritans believed:
  - People were inherently sinful
  - Society was necessary for survival
  - The law was superior to freedom
  - Reason overrode emotion
  - Decisions were made for the collective good
  - Children were miniature adults and should be held to the same standards.
  - The forest was the devil's domain

# HAWTHORNE AS A DARK ROMANTIC

- Gothics believed:
  - People were inherently depraved, and often passionate or obsessive
  - Settings ought to be dark, old, and creepy (often included a decaying structure)
  - An atmosphere of mystery and suspense could be enhanced by plot
  - Foreshadowing and dreams should play a large role
  - Forlorn, depressed characters were important
  - Nature was dark and foreboding (overgrown vegetation)

# FELIX CULPA (FORTUNATE FALL)

- The Fortunate Fall lens suggests that sin is the source of wisdom and spiritual enlightenment.
- What do Hester and Dimmesdale gain as they pay for their sins?
- Respond to the following question with a CSQT answer, and be prepared to share your thoughts when everyone finishes.
  - Can *The Scarlet Letter* be understood through the felix culpa lens as a story of redemption? Why or why not?

# INDIVIDUALISM VS. CONFORMITY

- Will our main characters side with themselves, or submit to their society's expectations?
  - Decide which you believe, and write a CSQT response defending your position. We will debate when you finish.