Active Reading

*The Scarlet Letter* Chapters 16–24

The novel's climax occurs in the last third of the book. Each chapter, starting with Chapter 16, contributes events that lead inevitably to the climax. As you read these chapters, record in the ovals the significant events that lead to the climax. Record two details that occur after the climax and help conclude Hester's story.

- Hester and Dimmesdale meet in the woods.
Responding
The Scarlet Letter Chapters 16-24

Personal Response
What are your thoughts about how Hester lives out her life?

As a young woman, Hester did not meet her society's expectations. Review the chart you made in the Focus Activity. Compare the modern-day consequences of not meeting society's demands with the consequences Hester experienced.

Analyzing Literature
Recall and Interpret
1. Why does Hester plan to speak to Dimmesdale? What is the result of the meeting?

2. Who else approaches Dimmesdale just as he invites Pearl and Hester to join him near the scaffold? Why does this person wish to prevent Dimmesdale from mounting the scaffold?

3. What happens to Chillingworth after Dimmesdale dies? Why does this happen?
Responding

The Scarlet Letter Chapters 16-24

Analyzing Literature (continued)

Evaluate and Connect

4. In your opinion, what effect does Pearl have on Dimmesdale? What role, if any, does she play in bringing about his confession? Explain your answer.

5. The wearing of the scarlet letter was intended to isolate Hester Prynne from society and to call attention to her sin. Given the way in which Hester’s life ends, do you think that the scarlet letter accomplished what the magistrates intended? Explain.

Literature and Writing

News Report

The narrator admits that witnesses to Reverend Dimmesdale’s confession and subsequent collapse had different ideas about what exactly happened. Suppose that you are a television reporter assigned to the election day events. You, too, witness the scene on the scaffold. Write the text for the live report you make from the base of the scaffold right after Dimmesdale dies.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Is Arthur Dimmesdale a remarkably strong character to have carried his burden of guilt for so many years? Or was he weak for not having the courage to confess? Given what we know about him, would he have been able to “run away” with Hester and Pearl and start a new life? Discuss these issues with other members of your group. Cite evidence from the text to support your opinions.

Learning for Life

Nathaniel Hawthorne is of particular interest to many readers of American literature. Several good Hawthorne Web sites exist, all of which include biographical information as well as links to sites that focus on Salem, Massachusetts, where Hawthorne lived. Do a search on the Internet using the author’s name or the title of one of his novels. Using information you locate, plan a “Hawthorne Tour” on the Internet and create an advertising brochure for it.

Save your work for your portfolio.
Responding
*The Scarlet Letter*

**Personal Response**
With which characters did you sympathize most while you read? With which did you sympathize the least? Explain.

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**Writing About the Novel**
Some readers of *The Scarlet Letter* feel that Hester Prymne was successfully repressed, or restricted, by her Puritan society. Others feel that, in spite of her public disgrace and punishment, she was able to express herself in meaningful ways. What is your opinion? Cite evidence from the novel to support your thoughts as you write a persuasive argument on a separate sheet of paper.

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*Save your work for your portfolio.*

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*The Scarlet Letter Study Guide*