

CHAPTER 13: “ANOTHER VIEW OF HESTER”

WORDS

abased	effluence	pauper
accost	ethereal	penance
acquiescing	foliage	peril
auspicious	gibe	pestilence
austerity	grovel	proffer
benevolence	ignominy	requital
benign	infamy	scorn
clew	intercourse	self-ordained
concoct	labyrinth	semblance
countenance	luxuriant	severity
despotic	meed	speculation
dreary	morbid	suffice
efficacy	obviated	wreak

QUESTIONS

1. How old is Pearl in this chapter?
2. How has the townspeople’s view changed toward Hester? What do they say the A really means?
3. What powers does the A, as the townspeople report, exhibit? Is this good will, irony, or forgetfulness?
4. How has Hester’s appearance changed?
5. How has Hester’s soul changed? (relate inside and outside)
6. What does Hester resolve to do?
7. What historical person is Hester compared to?
8. What keeps Hester from following in her footsteps?
9. Describe Hester’s thoughts on “the whole race of womanhood.” How does she envision the relationship between men and women? And what are her conclusions?
10. What does Hester intend to do/say with Roger Chillingworth?

11. *Explicate:*

Such is frequently the fate, and such the stern development, of the feminine character and person, when the woman has encountered, and lived through, an experience of peculiar severity. If she be all tenderness, she will die. If she survive, the tenderness will either be crushed so deeply into her heart that it can never show itself more. The latter is perhaps the truest theory. She who has once been woman, and ceased to be so, might at any moment become a woman again. If there were only the magic touch to effect the transfiguration. We shall see whether Hester Prynne were ever afterwards touched, and so transfigured.

12. *Explicate:*

Much of the marble coldness of Hester’s impression was to be attributed to the

- circumstance, that her life had turned, in a great measure, from passion and feeling, to thought. Standing alone in the world,—alone, as to any dependence on society, and with little Pearl to be guided and protected,—alone, and hopeless of retrieving her position, even had she not scorned to consider it desirable,—she cast away the fragments of a broken chain. The world’s law was no law for her mind.
13. *Explicate:*
Everything was against her. The world was hostile. The child’s own nature had something wrong in it, which continually betokened that she had been born amiss,—the effluence of her mother’s lawless passion,—and often impelled Hester to ask, in bitterness of heart, whether for ill or good that the poor little creature had not been born at all.
14. *Explicate:*
A woman never overcomes these problems with any exercise of thought. They are not to be solved, or only in one way. If her heart chance to come uppermost, they vanish.
15. *Explicate:*
Thus, Hester Prynne, whose heart had lost its regular and healthy throb, wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind; now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice; now starting back from a deep chasm. There was a wild and ghastly scenery all around her, and a home and comfort nowhere. At times, a fearful doubt strove to possess her soul, whether it were not better to send pearl at once to heaven, and go herself to such futurity as Eternal Justice should provide.
16. *Explicate:*
The Scarlet Letter had not done its office
17. *Explicate:*
Strengthened by years of hard and solemn trial, she felt herself no longer so inadequate to cope with Roger Chillingworth as on that night, abased by sin, and half maddened by ignominy that was still new, when they had talked together in the prison-chamber. She had climbed her way, since then, to a higher point. The old man, on the other hand, had brought himself nearer to her level, or perhaps below it, by the revenge which he had stooped for.
18. Identify two metaphors and explain their purpose.

NOTES

Men of the sword had overthrown nobles and kings...: the narrator seems to be making a reference to the English Civil War (1642-1649)—which parallels the novel. King Charles I had been deposed and beheaded by May 1649. There also seems to be a hint at the American Revolution, and that all revolutions essentially fail because only the titles and theories are rearranged, not the essential human character.