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## The Scarlet Letter

Nature plays a significant role in the novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, authored by Nathaniel Hawthorne. One of the significant natural elements in this novel is the forest. Notably, the forest is an element that symbolizes several ideas pertaining to the relationship between nature and individuals and society at large. The forest, as a natural element, is also helpful in defining the relationships amongst Dimmesdale, Hester Prynne, and Pearl. Despite being married to Chillingworth, Hester Prynne falls in love with Dimmesdale, who sires her a baby girl, Pearl. Pearl establishes a strong connection and bonding between Prynne and Dimmesdale. Pearl also becomes curious of the bizarre connection between Prynne and Dimmesdale. In the novel, Pearl is acknowledged with the red color. Arguably, this identification is made so as to represent her as evil. However, Pearl proves to be passionate and lovely to Prynne and Dimmesdale and the red color is a symbol of the love that Prynne has for Dimmesdale and Pearl.

While in the forest, Pearl asks Dimmesdale whether he promises to hold her hand and that of Prynne. This is confirmed by Hawthorne when he notes that “But will you promise,” asked Pearl, “to take my hand, and mother’s hand, tomorrow at noon?” The forest symbolizes a refuge for both Prynne and Dimmesdale. After Prynne and Dimmesdale fall in love affair, and give birth to Pearl, Prynne feels ashamed of herself and she is even alienated from the community. Similarly, Dimmesdale feels guilt for his sins, and consequently, his physical as well as spiritual health deteriorates significantly. Both Prynne and Dimmesdale feel that they do not fit in the society, and therefore they find refuge in the forest. In addition, the forest symbolizes the role of nature of providing shelter to human beings. While under the forest, Prynne and Dimmesdale feel unshackled from the stringent laws of society that would impose stringent punishment to them due to their sins. Therefore, under the shelter of the forest, Prynne and Dimmesdale are able to exercise their freedom of speech, and they communicate effectively with one another.

Moreover, Prynne lives in a forested area in Boston outskirts. As a result, Prynne is avoiding regular contact with other people in Boston. Therefore, the forest can be viewed as offering protection to Prynne and Dimmesdale from the wickedness of society. The forest also acts as symbol of relationship whereby nature empowers individuals. Despite the sin between Prynne and Dimmesdale, these two together with Pearl live in truth and love. Therefore, the forest offers empowerment to Prynne and Dimmesdale to live in love and truth. When they meet in the forest, both Prynne and Dimmesdale feel that their lives have positively changed and their love for one another is emboldened.

As Dimmesdale, Hester Prynne, and Pearl enter into chapters 16 to 19, Chillingworth walks away from her marriage with Prynne, and Prynne proceeds to look for Pearl with who she discusses the interpretation of the scarlet letter. Prynne acknowledges that it is a sin to hate Chillingworth, her husband, and after the marriage separation, together with Pearl, she proceeds to the forest to meet Dimmesdale. Therefore, it can be argued that Prynne and Dimmesdale meet in the forest while guilt of their sins and feeling alienated from society. The forest may

symbolize an avenue where the truth is about to illuminate itself. Notably, as Prynne and Pearl walk into the forest sunlight avoids Prynne deliberately. In this regard light may be representing the truth. Thus, the fact that light seems to avoid Prynne may be an interpretation that she might not get the truth. As these characters leave the chapters 16 to 19, Prynne takes away the scarlet letter and recommends that nature supports their plan. However, Pearl seems unhappy with the new version of Prynne. Pearl also forces her mother to reattach the scarlet letter to her chest, implying that she is happy with the old identity of her mother.

Moreover, the natural element of the forest transforms Dimmesdale, Hester Prynne, and Pearl immensely. Notably, these characters find refuge in the forest. In the forest, Prynne and Dimmesdale renew their love and trust for one another, and the forest plays a critical role in this change. Conversely, the forest provides shelter and a favorable environment for Prynne and Dimmesdale. They find peace in the forest and are free to communicate with one another. While in society, Prynne and Dimmesdale felt alienated and not in peace because of their sins. Therefore, while in the forest, these characters feel accepted. Pearl also acts as the bond between Prynne and Dimmesdale.

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