

# Hawthorne and the Lesson of Agonizing Estrangement Essay

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In the infamous work *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne recurrently implements symbols and hyperbole as he masterfully renders these elements onto the prominent members of his novel. Riddled with symbolism, Hawthorne's novel highlights two methods of agonizing estrangement, isolation and alienation, depicting the cultural imprint of the Puritanical system within the historical context of the novel. The disdain for this societal construction is a subtle, yet palpable element represented throughout the novel as attentive readers detect incongruity between Hawthorne's ideals and Puritanical paradigms. Hawthorne denotes the destructive tension Puritan notions and confinements place on humanity, both spiritual and physical, and this is especially displayed through the lives of [Hester Prynne](#), Pearl, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth. I believe by liberally accentuating these forms of estrangement, Hawthorne intends to disclose the societal detriment of hypocritical Puritan ethics which in his perspective inherently result in the destruction of human souls.

Hawthorne initiates his discussion of estrangement with protagonist and recently convicted adulteress, Hester Prynne. Hester exists within the most visible confines of isolation

suffering extreme ignominy throughout the storyline as the Puritan system subjects her to damnation, and therefore seclusion from the customary lifestyle of a Boston townspeople. Hester lives as the symbol of iniquity, an outcast to the Puritan community, and ultimately as a soul abominable to God. Hawthorne devotes a significant portion of the novel fixated on the brashness of the Bostonian people and the negative connotations aimed toward Hester. The attitudes of the odious townspeople reve...

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...ht of all as he watches his humanity unraveled before him being sucked further and further into darkness of the soul and overcome by evil. These three examples of agonizing estrangement are experienced in variance per each character and depicted uniquely by Hawthorne throughout his best-selling novel, yet it's important to note they all have analogous culminations. I believe Hawthorne was attempting to call to attention the major fallacies of the Puritanical system he was raised in because he perceived the dangers inherent and devastating potentials presented when hypocritical, grace-lacking philosophies take societal roots in the lives and souls of people. This is one of many crucial takeaways Hawthorne proposed to impart to his audience through this legendary work of art.

#### Work Cited

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. [The Scarlet Letter](#). Ann Arbor: Borders Classics, 2006.

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