

Hothorne's The Scarlet letter deals with many themes, the most powerful being punishment. In this novel, Hester Prynne becomes a highly respected person in a Puritan society by overcoming one of the harshest punishments, the scarlet letter. This object on "her bosom"; however, does the exact opposite of that which it was meant for. Eventually, Hester Prynne inverts all the odds against her due to her courage, pride and effort.

Hester went beyond the letter of the law and did everything asked of her in order to prove that she is "able." Hester became quite a popular seamstress, admired all over the town of Boston for her work. Hester is modest in everything that she does. Hester herself wears only poor clothing while she embroiders marvelous works for the rest of Boston. The only piece of clothing forbidden to create was the wedding veil. How could a woman wearing the scarlet letter create a dress that represents the values of marriage; having committed sin as she did to be involved in the marital bonds of another couple. Although she does the job willingly and rarely ever looks back to the horrid past behind.

The scarlet letter was constantly worn by Hester with pride and dignity. Hester knew that what was done in the past was wrong and that the scarlet A was the right thing to do, therefore it is worn with a sense of pride. The child, Pearl, is "a

blessing and as a reminder of her sin." As if the scarlet A were not enough punishment there "was a brat of that hellish breed" which would remind Hester of what happened in the past. The "brat" could have been given away to Governor Bellingham yet Hester proclaimed that Pearl "is my happiness!...Ye shall not take her! I will die first!" Not a person in Boston, nor Hester herself thought highly of the little child and Hester refused to let Pearl go. Hester carried the kid around only because it was a direct reflection of her sin and to cast away her sin as freely as that to give it away would be unjust and unfair to Hester and Pearl. From now on Hester would continually and proudly be near Pearl.

Hester would go against the grain in everything she did. Very rarely did she ever give up hope; never did she complete a job poorly. In the city of Boston "many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength." By now the people of Boston believe in Hester and accept her because Hester is

an arduous, productive worker in the puritan society. The townspeople were reconsidering whether Hester was still worthy of wearing the scarlet letter by the time Hester was about to leave with Dimmesdale. The people of Boston realized what a good job Hester had done wearing it and what once was evil inside of Hester turned into good.

The fact that Hester committed adultery was soon forgotten by the people around Hesters' everyday life. Yet another meaning for the scarlet letter was brought about when a meteorite appeared above Boston, a sexton thought it represented the word "Angel" coming from above. What was once an ignoble member of the puritan way of life became a decorous woman. This turn in events was inevitable because of Hesters ability to defy the odds.