

## ***The Scarlet Letter* AP Practice**

**Use the following passage from Chapter 3 of *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Recognition," to answer questions 1-8.**

1 From this intense consciousness of being the object of severe and universal observation, the wearer of the scarlet letter was at length relieved by discerning, on the outskirts of the crowd, a figure which irresistibly took possession of her thoughts. An Indian, in his native garb, was standing there; but the red men were not so infrequent visitors of the English settlements, that one of them would have attracted any notice from Hester Prynne, at such a time; much less would he have excluded all other objects and ideas from her mind. By the Indian's side, and evidently sustaining a companionship with him, stood a white man, clad in a strange disarray of civilized and savage costume.

2 He was small in stature, with a furrowed visage, which, as yet, could hardly be termed aged. There was a remarkable intelligence in his features, as of a person who had so cultivated his mental part that it could not fail to mould the physical to itself, and become manifest by unmistakable tokens. Although, by a seemingly careless arrangement of his heterogeneous garb, he had endeavoured to conceal or abate the peculiarity, it was sufficiently evident to Hester Prynne, that one of this man's shoulders rose higher than the other. Again, at the first instant of perceiving that thin visage, and the slight deformity of the figure, she pressed her infant to her bosom, with so convulsive a force that the poor babe uttered another cry of pain. But the mother did not seem to hear it.

3 At his arrival in the market-place, and some time before she saw him, the stranger had bent his eyes on Hester Prynne. It was carelessly, at first, like a man chiefly accustomed to look inward, and to whom external matters are of little value and import, unless they bear relation to something within his mind. Very soon, however, his look became keen and penetrative. A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one little pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight. His face darkened with some powerful emotion, which, nevertheless, he so instantaneously controlled by an effort of his will, that, save at a single moment, its expression might have passed for calmness. After a brief space, the convulsion grew almost imperceptible, and finally subsided into the depths of his nature. When he found the eyes of Hester Prynne fastened on his own, and saw that she appeared to recognize him, he slowly and calmly raised his finger, made a gesture with it in the air, and laid it on his lips.

4 Then, touching the shoulder of a townsman who stood near to him, he addressed him in a formal and courteous manner.

5 "I pray you, good Sir," said he, "who is this woman?--and wherefore is she here set up to public shame?"

6 "You must needs be a stranger in this region, friend," answered the townsman, looking curiously at the questioner and his savage companion; "else you would surely have heard of Mistress Hester Prynne, and her evil doings. She hath raised a great scandal, I promise you, in godly Master Dimmesdale's church."

7 "You say truly," replied the other. "I am a stranger, and have been a wanderer, sorely against my will. I have met with grievous mishaps by sea and land, and have been long held in bonds among the heathen-folk, to the southward; and am now brought hither by this Indian, to be redeemed out of my captivity. Will it please you, therefore, to tell me of Hester Prynne's,--have I her name rightly?--of this woman's offences, and what has brought her to yonder scaffold?"

8 "Truly, friend, and methinks it must gladden your heart, after your troubles and sojourn in the wilderness," said the townsman, "to find yourself, at length, in a land where iniquity is searched out, and punished in the sight of rulers and people, as here in our godly New England. Yonder woman, Sir, you must know, was the wife of a certain learned man, English by birth, but who had long dwelt in Amsterdam, whence, some good time ago, he was minded to cross over and cast in his lot with us of the Massachusetts. To this purpose, he sent his wife before him, remaining himself to look after some necessary affairs. Marry, good Sir, in some two years, or less, that the woman has been a dweller here in Boston, no tidings have come of this learned gentleman, Master Prynne; and his young wife, look you, being left to her own misguidance----"

9 "Ah!--aha!--I conceive you," said the stranger with a bitter smile. "So learned a man as you speak of should have learned this too in his books. And who, by your favor, Sir, may be the father of yonder babe--it is some three or four months old, I should judge--which Mistress Prynne is holding in her arms?"

10 "Of a truth, friend, that matter remaineth a riddle; and the Daniel who shall expound it is yet wanting," answered the townsman. "Madam Hester absolutely refuseth to speak, and the magistrates have laid their heads together in vain. Peradventure the guilty one stands looking on at this sad spectacle, unknown of man, and forgetting that God sees him."

11 "The learned man," observed the stranger, with another smile, "should come himself to look into the mystery."

12 "It behooves him well, if he be still in life," responded the townsman. "Now, good Sir, our Massachusetts magistracy, bethinking themselves that this woman is youthful and fair, and doubtless was strongly tempted to her fall;--and that, moreover, as is most likely, her husband may be at the bottom of the sea;--they have not been bold to put in force the extremity of our righteous law against her. The penalty thereof is death. But, in their great mercy and tenderness of heart, they have doomed Mistress Prynne to stand only a space of three hours on the platform of the pillory, and then and thereafter, for the remainder of her natural life, to wear a mark of shame upon her bosom."

13 "A wise sentence!" remarked the stranger, gravely bowing his head. "Thus she will be a living sermon against sin, until the ignominious letter be engraved upon her tombstone. It irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side. But he will be known!--he will be known!--he will be known!"

1. The first paragraph reveals that as she stands on the scaffold. Hester feels--
  - a. ashamed
  - b. confused
  - c. self-conscious
  - d. defiant
2. Which of the following most clearly indicates that the stranger and Hester know each other?
  - a. the way the stranger is dressed
  - b. the stranger's asking to hear the story of the woman on the scaffold
  - c. the stranger's laying his fingers on his lips
  - d. the fact that the stranger has been held captive by Indians
3. In paragraph 3, the simile comparing the stranger's expression to a snake suggests something--
  - a. complicated
  - b. sinister
  - c. confusing
  - d. fanciful
4. Which of the following is an antonym for *ignominious* in paragraph 13?
  - a. honorable
  - b. ignoble
  - c. famous
  - d. enormous
5. From his words to the townsman, the reader can predict that the stranger will--
  - a. try to locate Hester's husband
  - b. speak to the magistrates about Hester's sentence
  - c. seek to discover the father's identity
  - d. befriend Hester and her baby
6. The townsman's attitude toward the magistrates could best be described as--
  - a. scornful
  - b. indifferent
  - c. ambivalent
  - d. respectful
7. What is paragraph 12 mainly about?
  - a. The penalty for adultery is usually death.
  - b. For several reasons, Hester is given a relatively light sentence.
  - c. The magistrates assume Hester's husband is no longer alive.
  - d. Hester must wear a mark of shame for the rest of her life.
8. Read the following dictionary entry.

**careless** (kar' lis) *adj.* **1.** effortless **2.** negligent **3.** inconsiderate **4.** cheerful

Which definition best matches the meaning of the word *careless* as it is used in paragraph 2 of the passage?

  - a. Definition 1
  - b. Definition 2
  - c. Definition 3
  - d. Definition 4