# The Scarlet Letter Unit Plan

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Day 1 Societal Norms in *The Scarlet Letter*

**Essential Question:** What are the societal norms within your community? How do these norms affect the community?

**Rationale:** To prepare students for analyzing the societal norms within their community and understanding their place in their community (their overall identity), we will be journaling about their communities and having classroom discussions to further analyze the community in which they live. This will build up to students bringing in news articles from their community to analyze what is important to their community, what represents their culture, what others think of their community, how people interact within their community, etc. This ties back to *The Scarlet Letter* in that the main character felt the need to publicly humiliate herself in order to take ownership of her shame. This was a societal norm from her community; adultery was a huge crime that caused ostracism and shame. Students need to understand their community today in order to find their place within their community.

**Objectives:** SWBAT describe the community in which they live in order to begin analyzing how they fit into their community

SWBAT understand the societal norms within their community

SWBAT understand the societal norms and community within the Puritan culture by reading, discussing and comparing Puritan societal norms to the societal norms of today

**Standards:** Reading Informational Text 11-12.3, 11-12.6  
Reading Literature 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.7, 11-12.9  
Writing 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, -12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9

**Materials:** *The Scarlet Letter* novel, journals, pencil, paper

**Duration:** 50 minutes (1 class session)

**Lesson: 1. Hook:** Students will journal in response to the following prompt:  
What are the societal norms in your community? How would you define societal norms? How has this changed over time?

**2. Activity:** Have students work in pairs or groups of three to create a list of societal norms within their community. These can include religious, political, moral, ethical, musical, youth-related, etc.
Ask students what they think the first thing Detroit built when establishing itself as a community. Compare this to the immediate establishment of a prison and a cemetery in Puritan culture. What does this say about Puritan culture?

3. Have students share their lists and discuss as a large group.

4. **Homework**: Read Chapters 5-6 for homework, and continue working on their Scarlet Letter packets.
Day 2: Gender Relations in *The Scarlet Letter*

**Essential Question:** How have men and women been viewed differently both during Puritan times and today?

**Rationale:** One of the main points of *The Scarlet Letter* is the gender differences between men and women. In the novel, the main character wasn't alone in her crime, and her husband who is just as equally in the wrong as she is never comes forward with his crime. In order for students to understand this, they must explore the gender differences and relations within their own community so as to be better able to compare gender relations of our times to the Puritan times.

**Objectives:** SWBAT analyze the gender relations within their community

SWBAT compare the gender relations of today's society to that of Puritan culture

SWBAT understand how woman were viewed and treated in Puritan times as compared to today's times

**Standards:** Reading Informational Text 11-12.3, 11-12.6
Reading Literature 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.7, 11-12.9
Writing 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, -12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9

**Materials:** *The Scarlet Letter* novel, journals, pencil, paper

**Duration:** 50 minutes (1 class session)

**Lesson: 1. Hook:** Students will journal in response to the following prompt:

What do you think of Hester Prynne's husband as a person? What do you think the message of the story is when Hester is serving the punishment for her crime, but her husband walks free? How do gender relations in *The Scarlet Letter* compare to gender relations in your community?

Share journals and discuss.

2. **Activity:** Play the song "Baby Mama" by Fantasia. Class discussion to make the connection between the song and the novel. Students will work in groups of 3-4 to write song lyrics for 'baby mamas" in Puritan times.

3. **Homework:** Students need to write the equivalent of a "blog post" that talks about gender relations in their community. The roles they feel women and men play. Careers that men and women go into. The social norms that dictate what men and women can and cannot do.
Read Chapters 7-9 for homework and continue working on *The Scarlet Letter* packets.

Prepare a list of 10 questions they have on the novel so far. Students will be given a handout that describes socratic seminars and the types of questions to ask during these.
Day 3: Socratic Seminar on Chapters 1-8 in *The Scarlet Letter*

**Essential Questions:** Student Generated Questions used to clear up confusion on the novel so far

**Rationale:** *The Scarlet Letter* is a difficult read and can be confusing to students. Socratic seminars offer the students the opportunity to clear up confusion and get their questions answered by their peers. The teacher is there to guide the conversation, not to lead.

**Objectives:** SWBAT analyze the novel as a group, without much teacher interference

SWBAT direct their own learning by preparing the questions that the class will then analyze together

**Standards:** Reading Informational Text 11-12.3, 11-12.6
Reading Literature 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.7, 11-12.9
Writing 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, -12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9
Speaking and Listening 11-12.1, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.6

**Materials:** *The Scarlet Letter* novel, notebooks, paper, pencil, Socratic Seminar handout, lists of student generated questions

**Duration:** 50 minutes (1 class session)

**Lesson: 1. Hook:** Students will move the desks into a large circle, extra desks can be put in the middle or the outside, depends on the class size. Students will respond to this prompt once they have moved into their new seating arrangement:

Socratic Seminars were invented by the Greek Philosophy Socrates. He found them to be most valuable for helping his students to learn. He would have a group of his students ask questions of one another based off of an original question, which he posed. Do you think this is a good way to learn? Why or why not? What are the benefits? What are the pitfalls?

**2. Activity:** Socratic Seminar: see handout. Socratic Seminar for today focuses on the theme of shame and humiliation in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*.

**3. Homework:** Read Chapters 10-11 over the weekend and continue working on the Puritan Literature handout.

Write a reflection piece discussing how you feel you did in the Socratic Seminar. Talk about what you brought to the conversation, list some questions you posed, and write about how you could have done better.
**Bring in a Current Events news article from the past 5 years to today that centers on this subject of shame and humiliation. Write an ACT response to the prompt handed out in class.**
Day 4: The Decision to Stay in *The Scarlet Letter*

**Essential Question:** Why does Hester Prynne stay in an uncomfortable situation? Why do people in general stay in situations deemed uncomfortable?

**Rationale:** Hester Prynne's reputation and situation in the town is rather dismal, so oftentimes readers will ask themselves why she even stays in the town at all. It is a really good question for students to analyze and will give them plenty of ACT practice for supporting their opinions by working with quotations from the novel.

**Objectives:** SWBAT evaluate Hester Prynne's situation better by finding quotes that support their opinions for why they think that she stayed

SWBAT justify their opinions for why they believe Hester Prynne stayed in the town by utilizing quotations as evidence

SWBAT determine the reasons why Hester Prynne stayed by dissecting quotations from the novel and analyzing these quotations in groups

**Standards:** Reading Informational Text 11-12.3, 11-12.6  
Reading Literature 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.7, 11-12.9  
Writing 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, -12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9

**Materials:** *The Scarlet Letter* novel, journals, pencil, paper

**Duration:** 50 minutes (1 session)

**Lesson: 1. Hook:** Students will journal in response to the following prompt:  
Why do you think Hester stays in Boston? What factors cause her to stay? How is her lifestyle in Boston? How is she viewed and treated by others? How does she make her living?

Share journals voluntarily.

**2. Activity:** Have students choose a quote from the novel that best expresses why Hester Prynne stays or that best depicts the mother-daughter relationship between Hester Prynne and Pearl. Have students as groups write down responses to these quotes. Encourage illustrations, etc. Post these on the wall when students are done, then have students walk around and read each others' responses. End the activity with a class discussion around the Post-It notes: things students noticed, themes that popped up, lingering questions students have about the mother-daughter relationship, etc.

**3. Homework:** Read chapters 12-14 and continue working on Puritan Lit packet.
Essential Question: How would *The Scarlet Letter* be different if Dimmesdale had repented for his sins?

Rationale: In order to understand the true magnitude of Hester Prynne's crime and subsequent punishment, students must further analyze Dimmesdale's crime, as they are the same. Students will write a sermon addressing Dimmesdale's congregation in order to understand how his congregation might have reacted differently if Dimmesdale had confessed his sin. This sheds new light on Hester Prynne's character as well.

Objectives: SWBAT analyze how the novel would have differed had Dimmesdale admitted his sin to his congregation

SWBAT compare the sins of the various characters in the novel

SWBAT rewrite the novel in order to understand the nature of Dimmesdale's inner turmoil

Standards: Reading Informational Text 11-12.3, 11-12.6
Reading Literature 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.7, 11-12.9
Writing 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, -12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9

Materials: *The Scarlet Letter* novel, journals, paper, pencil

Duration: 50 minutes (1 class session)

Lesson: 1. Hook: Students will journal in response to the following prompt:

Who committed the worst crime in *The Scarlet Letter*? Why is their crime the worst? How does this character's crime compare to others' crime in the novel?

Share journals voluntarily.

2. Activity: Students can work in pairs to create a sermon that Dimmesdale would have written if he were to tell his people his sins. After writing their sermons, students should individually write out how they think the townspeople would respond to Dimmesdale's repentance.

3. Homework: Read Chapter 15-17 for homework and continue working on the Puritan Lit packet.
Day 6: Symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*

**Essential Question:** How do symbols function in this novel?

**Rationale:** Symbolism is prevalent in all aspects of literature and needs to be understood by students in order to make the connection between fictional literature and everyday life.

**Objectives:** SWBAT understand how symbolism functions in a novel

SWBAT describe a symbol to the class

SWBAT provide evidence from the text for the symbol they are describing to the class

**Standards:** Reading Informational Text 11-12.3, 11-12.6
Reading Literature 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.7, 11-12.9
Writing 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, -12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9

**Materials:** *The Scarlet Letter* novel, journals, paper, pencil

**Duration:** 50 minutes

**Lesson: 1. Hook:** Students will journal in response to the following prompt:

What symbols have you noticed so far in the reading of this novel? How do these symbols function in the novel?

A symbol is a person, place, or thing that has a literal meaning, but also stands for something larger.

**2. Activity:** Students will be given a symbol from the novel to analyze in pairs. They must find quotes from the text that discuss the symbol, and should prepare a short writing for the class on how this symbol functions within the novel. Students will voluntarily present their symbols to the class.

Students are to discuss as a large group what types of symbols they see in their daily lives. What do these symbols represent? How do these symbols function, or affect their lives?

**3. Homework:** Read Chapters 18-20 for homework and continue working on the Puritan Lit packet.
Day 7: Characterization in *The Scarlet Letter*

**Essential Question:** How would social networking have affected characterization and the unfolding of events in this novel?

**Rationale:** Now that the students have had plenty of time to learn about the main characters in the story, the students can create a social networking page that fully portray their understanding of the main character.

**Objectives:** SWBAT understand the dynamic attributes of each character by creating a social networking site for one character and viewing the other groups' pages

SWBAT compare the unfolding of events in the novel to how these same events would have unfolded if we had social networking during Puritan times

SWBAT justify the social networking page for their character by providing evidence from the novel

**Standards:** Reading Informational Text 11-12.3, 11-12.6
Reading Literature 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.7, 11-12.9
Writing 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, -12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9

**Materials:** *The Scarlet Letter* novel, paper, pencil, markers

**Duration:** 50 minutes (1 class session)

**Lesson: 1. Hook:** Students will journal in response to the following prompt: How would social networking have changed this story? Choose a character to write about and explain how social networking would have affected the course of their life within the facts and evidence present in the novel.

**2. Activity:** Students will either be given or will choose a character for which they will create a Facebook page or Twitter feed for. They will need to include a picture for how they see these characters, an "About Me" page, some status updates, favorite things, etc.

When the social networking page is finished, students will have the opportunity to share their "pages" and will need to write a reflection page on which public humiliation would have been worst; Hester Prynne's humiliation and shame during Puritan times, or today's humiliation and shame with the addition of social networking.

**3. Homework:** Read Chapters 20-23 for homework and continue working on Puritan Lit packet.
Essential Question: How do you feel about the ending of the novel? How are societal norms of Puritan culture fought?

Rationale: At the end of the novel, Dimmesdale confesses his sin to the townspeople. It is worthwhile to discuss this with the students because at this point Dimmesdale has committed adultery and hidden his sin. This is even more impactful than the usual sinner because he is a minister. Understanding this pivotal scene in the novel helps students to truly understand Puritan culture and their religious belief systems.

Objectives: SWBAT understand the impact of Dimmesdale's confession

SWBAT rewrite the story of Hester Prynne in a different medium in order to show their understanding of the novel

Standards: Reading Informational Text 11-12.3, 11-12.6
Reading Literature 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.7, 11-12.9
Writing 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, -12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9

Materials: The Scarlet Letter novel, journals, paper, pencil

Duration: 50 minutes

Lesson: 1. Hook: Students will journal in response to the following prompt:
   What was your reaction to Dimmesdale's confession and subsequent showing of his "mark"? How did the townspeople react? Do you think there reaction was warranted? How does Dimmesdale's confession go against Puritan culture? Has your culture and community experienced a situation similar to Dimmesdale's going against his cultures beliefs?

   Share journals voluntarily.

2. Activity: Work in groups to translate the story of Hester Prynne into a different medium; comic strip, poetry, short story, song lyrics, etc. Make sure to use evidence from the novel and to keep true with Puritan culture.

   Share poetry, short stories, lyrics, etc. if time.

3. Homework: Finish the novel and finish the Puritan Lit packet.