

WHS Book Rationale

Title: *The Scarlet Letter*

Author: Nathaniel Hawthorne

- **Intended Audience**
 - English 11 Honors / English 11

- **Brief summary and educational significance**
 - Set in 17th century Boston village, young mother of a child out of wedlock Hester Prynne looks to her clandestine lover for comfort as she faces the wrath of her aging, revenge-fueled husband.

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**
 - Themes of sin and consequences, stigma, shame, difference between sin and crime, morality and legality. Conflict between emotion and intellect.
 - Hawthorne's expose of the hypocrisy of early American Puritan society.
 - Symbolism, revenge, female identity, lack of fatherhood, women's roles in Puritan society, punishment fitting the crime, Romanticism, historical connections to Salem witch trials, separation of church and state.

- **Potential problems**
 - Infidelity, illegitimate child, society's treatment of an adulteress.

- **Addressing potential problems**
 - Opportunities for class discussion.