

The Scarlet Letter
Lesson 10
The Novel as a Whole

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Lesson 10

The Novel as a Whole

Objectives

- To present the results of the study of symbolism
- To present the results of the study of character development
- To view these elements in the context of the complete novel

Notes to the Teacher

This lesson brings together elements of study done while students were reading the novel. In particular, their ongoing work with symbols and character will culminate in this lesson. Create a “community of scholars” who share their findings and insights in a symposium atmosphere. **Handout 29** presents a schema for analyzing the main characters. It is based on the four classical humors. **Handout 30** may be used to create a group paper, an individual paper, or some type of oral presentation. The important point is that all students are exposed to the full range of possibilities.

Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 27**. Ask students to convene in the groups to which they were assigned to complete **Handout 6** in Lesson 3. Instruct groups to complete the handout and to present their summaries creatively to the class. Students should see how the symbols grow out of the context of the story and the actions of the characters.
2. Distribute **Handout 28**. Ask students to convene in the groups to which they were assigned to complete **Handout 7** in Lesson 3. Instruct groups to complete the handout and to present their information creatively to the class.
3. Distribute **Handout 29**. Have students complete it individually.

Suggested Responses:

1. a. Hester—blood; hot and moist; air
b. Pearl—phlegm; cold and moist; water
c. Dimmesdale—black bile; cold and dry; earth
d. Chillingworth; yellow bile; hot and dry; fire

2. Students should see the actions of Dimmesdale as being aligned closely with the Black Man and that there is a certain quality of melancholia in him. Chillingworth is closely aligned with fire, as shown in the scene in **Handout 11**.
3. Students should see that this may be a valid, although artificial, device. Guide them through the use of this device without going to extremes.
4. Distribute **Handout 30**. This handout lends itself to small group work. There are six possible themes listed, but other themes of your choice may be added or substituted. Help students to understand that theme is an organic outgrowth of the novel, not an artificial imposition. They should also become aware that theme is not necessarily a story’s moral, as in an Aesop fable. Have groups share their work with the rest of the class, or instruct them to do group or individual papers based on their work. These papers can then be shared with the class or collected and photocopied as a collection of critical essays to be distributed.

The Symbol—A Means of Understanding

Directions: Refer to your work on **Handouts 5** and **6** on order to develop an accurate and concrete summary of your findings.

Assigned Symbol_____

1. What stands out in your mind about the symbol as you follow it throughout the novel?
What is the significance of the symbol in relation to the novel?

2. How does the symbol weave itself into the texture of the novel?

3. How does the symbol help you to understand the story?

