

American Literature- Summer Reading Assignment: *The Scarlet Letter*

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Overview

This summer, you will read *The Scarlet Letter* and track how a central theme develops throughout the novel. Your work must be completed by hand and will be submitted during the first week of school.

In addition, you will complete an in-class essay during Week 2 of school based on the novel. This essay will be a graded assessment and will count as a major writing grade.

Part 1: Handwritten Reading Journal (Required)

You will keep a **handwritten journal** as you read. This is not optional and must be neatly completed.

Requirements

- Use a notebook or loose-leaf paper (stapled and labeled)
- Write one entry per reading chunk (see pacing below)
- Each entry should be 8–10 complete sentences minimum
- Include at least one quoted passage per entry (with page number)

What to Include in Each Entry

For every entry, respond to ALL of the following:

1. **Summary (2–3 sentences)**
What happened in this section?
2. **Theme Tracking (3–4 sentences)**
Choose ONE theme you are noticing and explain how it is developing.
3. **Text Evidence (1 quote minimum)**
Include a meaningful quote and explain what it reveals about the theme.
4. **Personal Reflection (2–3 sentences)**
What is your reaction? What questions or connections do you have?

Reading Chunks:

- Entry 1: Chapters 1–4
- Entry 2: Chapters 5–8
- Entry 3: Chapters 9–12
- Entry 4: Chapters 13–16
- Entry 5: Chapters 17–20
- Entry 6: Chapters 21–24

Possible Themes to Track

(Choose ONE theme to focus on throughout your journal)

- Sin and guilt
- Public vs. private identity
- Judgment and hypocrisy
- Isolation and belonging
- Strength and resilience
- The role of society in shaping identity

Part 2: Theme One-Pager

After finishing the novel, you will create a **one-pager** that visually represents your chosen theme and how it develops across the text.

Requirements

- Must be completed on one full sheet of paper (front only)
- Must be handwritten and colored (no digital submissions)
- Must include both visuals and written analysis

Your One-Pager Must Include:

1. Theme Statement (Top or Center)

- A clear, original statement about your theme

2. At Least 6 Key Moments from the Text

- Brief descriptions of six important moments that develop the theme
- Include at least 2 direct quotes (with page numbers)
- Moments should come from the beginning, middle, and end of the novel

3. Visual Representation

- Symbols, drawings, or images that represent the theme
- Must clearly connect to the novel

4. Character Connections

- Show how at least **two characters** connect to the theme

- Explain their role in developing or challenging it

5. Analysis (5–6 sentences total)

- Explain how the theme develops from beginning to end
- Describe what Hawthorne is suggesting about society or human nature

Week 2 In-Class Essay

During the **second week of school**, you will write an **in-class essay based on the novel**.

What to Expect

- You will respond to a thematic or analytical prompt about *The Scarlet Letter*
- You will be required to use:
 - Textual evidence from the novel
 - Your summer reading journal
- This essay will be completed in class without notes beyond your journal

Essay Focus

The essay will assess your ability to:

- Develop a clear thesis
- Analyze how theme is developed across the novel
- Use specific evidence to support claims
- Demonstrate understanding of author's purpose

Submission Requirements (First Week of School)

You must bring:

- Your handwritten reading journal
- Your completed one-pager