

# LITERACY GROUPS

1. What are *advantages* and *disadvantages* of living in a society controlled by the church?
2. Hester is protecting two men. Does this make her a strong or a weak character? Who should she be loyal to? The father of her child or her husband?
3. Is Hester a hero or a victim?
4. Arthur Dimmesdale is a polarizing character. Some consider him to be honorable for continuing the work of the Lord and preaching passionately despite his adultery. They view his self-harm, abuse from Chillingworth, and ultimately his death as sufficient punishment. Others consider him cowardly and weak for his refusal to own his guilt in public, denying Pearl the chance to have a father, and for allowing Hester to face punishment (jail time, scarlet letter, ostracization) all alone. What are your thoughts on Dimmesdale?
5. Critics sometimes disagree about whether Hawthorne condones or condemns the adultery of Hester and Dimmesdale. Can either view be supported?
6. Why do you think Hester continues to wear the scarlet letter for the rest of her life, even when she no longer needs to? And why does she come back to the town later in life, even though she is alone (Dimmesdale is dead and Pearl has moved away) when it is a place that held so much pain for her?