Scarlet Letter Essay, Research Paper

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Scarlet Letter

In Hawthorne’s, The Scarlet Letter, life evolves around a rigid and harsh Puritan view. In this society people are not free to express themselves as well as they are today. This is very sad because it is a necessity for humans to be able to express their deepest thoughts and desires. Unfortunately the Puritan society did not permit this so people had to find other ways to satisfy their needs. For two of these characters the satisfying of their urges condemn their fate in life. Hester and Dimmesdale, a reverend, have an affair, which costs Hester life, as she knew it. The only place where these two people were free was in the confinements of the forest. As much as freedom and confinement is a paradox it makes perfect sense. You will gain the freedom of expression in the confinement of that expression. The forest was the only place this could be accomplished. The forest was Hester and Dimmesdale’s sanctuary throughout the novel because they could freely communicate their love, their sin, and their future plans.

Being able to confess to someone a sin you have committed is one of the finest feelings. The forest provided that ability to Hester and Dimmesdale. At one point Hester comes right out and brings up the committed sin. “What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so!” (pg. 179) When Dimmesdale first hears this bold statement he is somewhat distraught and tells Hester to “Hush!” and then he realizes the freedom they have. “ May God forgive us both! We are not…the worst sinners in the world.” (pg. 179) There is no way that Dimmesdale would have become this bold if he were in spectacle of the Puritan society. Once again a warm blanket that the forest lay upon Hester and Dimmesdale.

It is apparent that there is a mutual love between Hester and Dimmesdale. Although there are very few quotes which will directly state this fact there are many that will allude to this obvious fact. At one point Hester begs for Dimmesdale’s forgiveness and he grants it to her. I don’t think he grants it to her because of his religious beliefs but because he loves Hester. I also don’t believe that Hester would be so worried about Dimmesdale’s forgiveness if she did not love him. “ ‘Though shalt forgive me! Though shalt forgive… Will though yet forgive me?…’ (Hester) ‘I freely forgive thee.’ (Dimmesdale)” (pg. 179) This is evidently love. Of course there is no possible way that these young people could confess their love in public, they will barely allude to it in private.

It is quite clear that the two lovers can express their future plans in the confinement of the forest. The ultimate plan is for the two characters to up and leave the town of Boston. “Let us not look back. The past is gone! Wherefore should we linger upon it now!” (pg. 185) This is a clear example of how free the two are to talk about their future plans to leave. In no other section of Boston would either of the two dared to speak about such a thing. “She had not known the weight, until she felt the freedom.” (pg. 185) Concise statement which states quite clearly that just talking about their future plans made them feel many times more free than before, a luxury only available in the forest.

The forest was Hester and Dimmesdale’s sanctuary throughout the novel because they could freely communicate their love, their sin, and their future plans. If these characters did not have the forest the outcome of the story would have been completely different and the entire plot would be deviant from the intended. Isn’t it weird that something as wild as the forest can, through confinements of society, become a comforting, tranquil shelter?

Bibliography

None neccesary other than the book, The Scarlet Letter