The Scarlet Letter 3 Essay, Research Paper

The society in which we live in today has evolved a great deal since the seventeenth century. One of the most evident changes was the moralistic attitude towards sins, crimes, and the like. The definition of evil has metamorphasized since the era of Hester Prynne.

Hester Prynne, the principle character in Nathaniel Hawthorne s The Scarlet Letter, was forced to endure public humiliation. She was condemned for her actions and her punishment was to bear the infamous scarlet letter. She wears this scarlet letter A to signify that she is an adulteress and an outcast to society. The Puritans of Boston eschew and mock Hester because of her crime and the scarlet letter she bears. The Puritans illustrate this when they force her to stand upon the scaffold with her scarlet letter for long periods of time.

Dimmesdale, of Nathaniel Hawthorne s The Scarlet Letter, also suffered to a great extent. In fact, he suffered more than Hester, even though his sin was not revealed until his death. Dimmesdale tortured himself with all night vigils, carved an A onto his chest, and he severely whipped himself. He tortured himself not because the Puritan s had punished him, but because he felt an undying guilt for what he had done.

In contrast to the punishments of Hester and Dimmesdale, President Clinton will be punished less severely. President Clinton should not be impeached for the controversy surrounding him. According to Elaine Kamarack, author of The Comeback Kid Can Do It Again, The core issue is simply too trivial to warrant something so traumatic to the nation. She believes that Clinton’s crime is not evil enough to bring about an impeachment. She also writes, “The U.S. Congress would not want to cast a vote inviting into their own lives the kind of scrutiny that Bill Clinton has experienced.” The adulteration and the lying committed by President Bill Clinton are not serious enough to cause an impeachment of the President, thus bringing an examination of the Congress member’s lives in order to discover the other crimes committed in the government.

A Houston Chronicle Editorial states, “President Clinton, to the surprise of almost no one, has figuratively bared the scarlet letter he wears – an ‘L’ for Liar.” President Clinton is on trial because he lied under oath, not because he committed adultery. Few are upset with the fact that he cheated on his wife, but more are upset with the fact that he lied to his followers, the American people. The American people do not see adulteration as a horrible crime, like the Americans of the seventeenth century once did.

On average, 50 percent of the 633 Americans questioned approved of President Bill Clinton as a person, in contrast to the 43 percent that disapproved (Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll). As a president, 62 percent of the 587 questioned Americans approved of President Bill Clinton, as 34.5 percent disapproved (ABC Poll; July 29 and August 17). The American population as a whole does not disapprove of Bill Clinton as a person or a president, whereas the Americans of the 1600s harassed Hester Prynne for her crime.

President Bill Clinton is advancing through the impeachment process because he lied under oath and because he may have obstructed the justice system of the United States, not because he cheated on his wife (Starr Report). Kenneth Starr is not trying to impeach President Clinton because he is an adulterer, but because he is a liar to the American people, whereas if this incident had occurred in the 1600s, Starr would place President Clinton through the execution process.

Where the Americans of the 1600s forced Hester Prynne to withstand public humiliation and Arthur Dimmesdale inflicted self-punishment (he would have been killed had the Puritans discovered his crime) because of their adulterations, the Americans of 1998 do not even frown upon President Bill Clinton for his adulteration.