The Scarlet Letter Essay, Research Paper

THE SCARLET LETTER

Since the dawn of time people have read, studied andenjoyed

books in which the hero or heroes fall from grace.No matter who

those heroes are- the human race in The Bible,the demon prince Lestat

in Anne Rice’s “Vampire Chronicles”or a certain Thane of Cawdor in

“Macbeth”- sin plays a greatpart in all of their downfalls and

subsequent ressurections.And the three main characters in

Hawthorne’s “The ScarletLetter”-Dimmesdale, Chillingsworth, and

Hester Prynne- are no different. All three characters are flung from

the normal rolesthat society has laid upon them- minister, housewife,

doctor-into new roles- sinner, whore, and vengance crazed

sadist.These new roles are not necessarily apparent to all in

town.However, even though the townspeople do not know of

thesinners, God does. And in God’s eyes, whose sin was greater?That,

I cannot answer. But in this mere mortal’s opinion, thesin of

Chillingsworth far outdid the sin of Dimmesdale orHester Prynne, for

Chillingsworth’s sin was one of revengeand one of secrecy. He was not

driven by an anger at his ownsin, but by the sin of others. He used

deception andmanipulation to make the life of another miserable. He

wasnot flung from society’s view as if he were a dirty secretlike Hester

was; he was embraced by it. However, his sin didtake it’s toll. He was

disfigured horribly and became atwisted man, scarred by sin. He also

was robbed of thepleasure of destroying Dimmesdale which was his

reason forliving. He died shortly after Dimmesdale. Hester Prynne,

however, was the complete opposite ofChillingworth in that her sin

gave her life, not destroyedit. She took her punishment and embraced

it, using it torebuild herself not as a pathetic sinner, but as a pseudo-

saint. At first, the town shunned her as a sinner. However,after they

saw that she was good, and her sin was of love,the same town

embraced and loved her. Her sin drew her moredeeply into the society

of Boston than she ever was before.And when her time to die came,

she did so with honor. HesterPrynne – sinner and saint. However,

Hester’s sin was shared. Whereas she was asinner on the outside and a

saint on the inside, ArthurDimmesdale is the reverse, both literally

and figuratively.On the outside, a town minister, inside an adulterer.

Of allthe characters, Dimmesdale is the most pitiful. A man sopenitent

that he whips himself, but so afraid that he cannotconfess his sin; a

sin which takes a great toll on him. Hiscountenance is disfigured in

the shape of what we assume tobe an A on his chest (that or a cow

shaped birthmark) and hissoul is eaten by his guilt. Arthur does later

confess, and aweight is lifted from his being. And with that weight

gone hefinally dies in peace. Sin has always been and will always be

a part of human life and literature. And as long as there is sin, people

willreact to it in different ways; some will hide it, some willembrace it,

some will rot from it. But no matter how the sin is handled or dealt

with, it will always leave it’s mark. Forme, the mark of sin will always

be symbolized as a scarlet A on a black background. 