

Student Essay on How Is Puritan Society Different Than America's Society Today?

How Is Puritan Society Different Than America's Society Today? by Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Essay

Typically, in today's society America is conceptualized as a place of freedom, where a person's opportunities are limited only by his or her ambition and ability and not by his or her social status, race, gender, or other circumstances uncontrolled by birth. In the Puritan society portrayed in the novel, this is not the case. In fact, it is Europe, not America, which the book presents as a place of potential.

In the novel, Puritans are looked at as harsh, unrealistic people. Puritan views "reality" as merely an obstacle to a world beyond this one. This religious party was known for its intolerance of unorthodox ideas and lifestyles. Hawthorne uses the repressive, totalitarian Puritan society as an analogue for humankind in general.

Hester, the woman who was guilty of committing adultery was made into some sort of "living sermon." Her punishment was to wear the scarlet letter "A" at all times for people to see what a disgusting person she was. The Puritan women felt that Hester's punishment was far too less severe for what should be her punishment really should have been. The women argued that, "At the very least they should have put the brand of hot iron on Hester's forehead"(37). Other women argued that she should have been put to death. Thus showing that the Puritan women were of a much "coarser fiber"(36) of those women in today's society.

America, whom has learned from its many mistakes and learned from other nations, has become an outstanding nation known for its freedom. Even though America is portrayed as the strict nation with not much freedom in the novel, this is not the case in today's society.