

# **Student Essay on The Impact of Burdens as Portrayed in The Scarlet Letter**

## **The Impact of Burdens as Portrayed in The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne**

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# Essay

Burdens beared within the soul will eventually outwardly manifest themselves on the body as portrayed in *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. This credence is apparent in Hester Prynne, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth. All three of these characters attempt to relieve themselves of their burdens in various ways.

For example, Hester, who is not obligated to stay in Boston, believes that, "the scene of her guilt...should be the scene of her earthly punishment; and so perchance the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul." She also anticipates that by wearing the scarlet letter she might possibly rid herself of the burden she carries in her soul. Another example is that of Dimmesdale. Dimmesdale has been suffering from severe health problems and does not appear to be improving, "And whether it were his failing health, or whatever the cause might be, his large dark eyes had a world of pain in their troubled and melancholy depth." Dimmesdale's illness can neither be cured by medicine nor religion; furthermore his recuperation is hindered by his incapability to confess his adultery with Hester. He repeatedly clutches at his chest as though his heart troubles him, inadvertently sending Roger Chillingworth indications that he has a guilty conscience. This leads Chillingworth to scrutinize every one of Dimmesdale's actions in hopes to confirm his theory that the reason for his guilt has all to do with Hester's scarlet letter. Chillingworth deceives the community into believing that he is there to aid Dimmesdale in his convalescence, when truly he is only seeking to remove the burden is his own soul by avenging the man with whom his wife replaced him.

It is obvious that the burdens carried by Hester Prynne, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth had an effect on not only their souls, but on there very being.