

Symbols and Symbolism in Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter - The Symbol of Pearl

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The Symbol of Pearl

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's, *The Scarlet Letter*, Pearl, is the human symbol of the sin of adultery in the fact that she leads her mother, Hester Prynne, and Arthur Dimmesdale to accept and admit to their sin. Pearl is the beautiful daughter of Hester and Dimmesdale. She is the living symbol of the scarlet letter and has unique traits that make her sometimes appear as a demon. Her love for nature and freedom, her spirit, her wildness, her loneliness and separation from the world, her curiosity, and her innocent but symbolic comments reveal her distinct personality. [Pearl](#) senses and knows things she should not, making her a symbol. Pearl is also the living symbol of Hester and Dimmesdale's connection, as displayed in the following passage.

"In her was visible the tie that united them. She had been offered to the world, these seven years past, as the living hieroglyphic, in which was revealed the secret they so darkly sought to hide, -- all written in this symbol, -- all plainly manifest, -- had there been a prophet or [magician](#) skilled to read the character of flame! And Pearl was the oneness of

their being" ([Hawthorne](#) 141). Pearl is a beautiful, misbehaved child. The first thing that Pearl ever notices is her mother's 'A' across her chest. As a child, Pearl throws rocks at the scarlet letter, making a game out of it. Growing up, Pearl is not accepted by anyone. She screams at other children, knowing that they do not accept her. Not knowing what a true friend is, she makes imaginary enemies to fight with. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Pearl is referred to as "one of those naughty elves or fairies or...a little bird of scarlet plumage" (Hawthorne 97). The comparison of Pearl to an elf or fairies adds a sense of alienation and mystery to her personality. When she is compared to a red bird, the emphasis of color increases the visual sense of Pearl's character, and the comparison to a bird indicates that she is full of wild energy. (Chiquita)

Initially Pearl symbolizes the shame of Hester's public punishment for adultery. Then as Pearl grew older, she symbolizes the wreck of Hester's life and mental state by harassing her mother over the scarlet 'A' which is embroidered on her dress (Yang). Pearl is a symbol for Hester's scarlet letter.

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