



Lesson 04: Nathaniel Hawthorne

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to Nathaniel Hawthorne and his relationship to Puritan society.
- Students will study the primary characteristics of Romanticism and identify them in literature.
- Students will consider the effect of Puritan culture on both literature and the attitudes of Puritan people themselves.
- Students will look for ways that literature offers social critique.
- Students will identify symbolism in literature and understand its rhetorical use.
- Students will interpret the author's point of view about social issues, based on the way the story is told.
- Students will practice the citation of prose and the inclusion of quotations as supporting evidence for their writing.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) was born in Salem, Massachusetts, and many of his novels and short stories analyze the effects of a Puritan underpinning to an increasingly more free and democratic society. His great novel, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), is a tale of a forbidden love between a religious man and a beautiful townswoman. The novel successfully discusses things that would be taboo under the rule of Puritan society, like sexual attraction and religious freedom.

Hawthorne struggled with some of the same issues Washington Irving did through trying to create a distinctly American literature, where one could analyze the past and present at a distance from modern affairs. The problem with this was that America was such a young country it was hard to create the proper sense of separation to make this sort of literature work. The people whose actions shaped the country were either still alive, or were the fathers and grandfathers of the people then living, which made analysis and criticism difficult. He tried instead to funnel his views through a fantasy world, where he could be free to analyze without fear of giving offense.

"I have sometimes produced a singular and not unpleasing effect, so far as my own mind was concerned, by imagining a train of incidents in which the spirit



and mechanism of the fairyland should be combined with the characters and manners of familiar life." - N. Hawthorne

Read the short-story "Young Goodman Brown" through the link below, then answer the following questions.

["Young Goodman Brown" by Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)

Literary Movements

Romanticism is the name of an international movement in arts and philosophy in the late seventeen and eighteen hundreds. The most striking characteristics of Romanticism are a focus on imagination, instead of reason, as the highest faculty of man; and a celebration of nature and natural elements as symbols of the divine. Intuition, creativity, and emotional excesses are more favored than logic and reason; nature and natural phenomena are described in terms of inspiration, or as an escape from the artificial world man created, or used to give a divine spark to common items. The Romantics enjoyed portraying every day events with an element of the fantastic; allusions to myths and folk tales are common. Nationalism will often play a part in Romantic works, which is unsurprising since the American (1776) and the French (1789) revolutions both happened near the beginning of this movement. Romanticism strives to instill a sense of wonder into the otherwise mundane world.

Grading Rubric:

To get a 10: In the first or second submission, assignment questions are completed, facts are correct, responses are thoughtful, presentation is clear, grammar and spelling are correct.

To get a 9: In the first submission, a few assignment questions are incomplete OR a few facts are incorrect OR a few responses are careless OR there are a few grammar and spelling errors. After prompting, all corrections are made in revisions. One or two minor errors may remain.

To get an 8: In the first submission, many assignment questions are incomplete OR many facts are incorrect OR many responses are careless OR there are numerous grammar and spelling errors. After prompting, all corrections are made in revisions. One or two minor errors may remain.

To get a 7: After prompting, a few assignment questions remain incomplete OR a few facts remain incorrect OR a few responses remain careless OR a few grammar and spelling errors remain.

To get a 6: This grade is reserved for administrative use.

To get a 5: Plagiarism, purposeful or mistaken, which will lower your final grade for the course (so be very careful when posting your work!) OR lack of effort, disrespect, or attitude (we are here to communicate with you if you don't understand something). Lesson requirements have been met.



Also be aware that you will have a chance to revise your work. Since revisions result in a lower grade, remember to read the directions carefully and make sure you meet the requirements.

Assignment:

Do not submit text that you have copied from sources, including websites. All of your work should be in your own words. Using copied text would be considered plagiarism. For more information, review our page on [Plagiarism and Citation](#)

You are to answer the following questions in your own words. Please post the questions with your answers in the text box below to submit your work. Remember to use complete sentences, use proper grammar, and don't forget to proofread and spell check your work before submitting it. This may require additional internet research, so be sure to cite your sources.

1. What elements of Romanticism are evident in the selection you had to read? Find several specific lines or passages and explain how they are Romantic.
2. Why do you think Hawthorne picked Salem Village as the setting for this story? (Does it help to know that one of his forefathers was Judge Hathorne, who presided over the Salem witch trials in 1692?)
3. At the time Hawthorne was writing this, "pink" was not a color for girls the way it is today. (In fact, blue was considered a more appropriate color, because that was the color of the Virgin Mary's dress in most of the Church's depictions of her.) Why do you think Faith wears pink ribbons in her cap? Often little girls wore white ribbons, because white symbolized purity. Why can't Faith wear white ribbons?
4. Who is the fellow traveler that Goodman Brown meets? Why in the story does he look so much like Goodman Brown himself?
5. At one point Goodman Brown cries out "My Faith is gone!" Tell me about the multiple meanings this has. (Tell me what is happening in the story at the time that backs up your interpretation.)
6. Can you tell me who is good and who is evil in this story? What did Hawthorne do to make this a difficult task?



7. Historians often note that 17th century Puritanism was primed to believe the worst about humanity, but never recognized the best about humanity. How does Goodman Brown wind up embodying this Puritan flaw? How do you think Hawthorne felt about the Puritan religion, and why?

8. What about the story suggests that it was all a dream? Name specific examples from the text.

9. Do you believe it was a dream, or that it really happened? Why?

10. Did you enjoy this story? Explain briefly why you did or did not like it.

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