

**Hester Prynne: Angel Pioneer of Sin & Punishment
(A Poetry Collection Inspired by *The Scarlet Letter*)
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Thesis/Summary

Within Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the protagonist Hester Prynne is shunned, shamed, and tormented because of the sins associated with her actions by her Puritan community. However, instead of succumbing to the weight of her punishment, she instead reinvents herself from said sin. She then redefines what it means to be "a sinner" and displays how the transformative power of punishment can lead to rebirth. Hester Prynne becomes a pioneer woman within the novel, traversing between the old traditional Puritan world, and that of a new world of her own making. Within her new journey Hester Prynne goes from a character only depicted as a sinner and adulterer, to an angelic woman with overflowing mercy and strength. This creative research project in the form of a poetry collection explores how Hester Prynne's fall from grace allowed her to rise towards the role of an angelic figure in her Puritan community.



Anne Bradstreet/Womanhood

While Hester Prynne is only a fictional character within Hawthorne's novel, her act in revolutionizing womanhood/motherhood can be compared to real life Puritan woman Anne Bradstreet. Not just a Puritan but a mother, wife, and poet, Anne Bradstreet also became a pioneer of her own time through her writing. In her work she explored the role of women in society and the conflict of public life vs. private life. Bradstreet also introduced the idea of "private grief" by giving attention to the private feelings/lives of women inside the home. This idea is related to Hester Prynne's own private grief in the poem "Martyr Mother", where it's expressed that she had no choice but to carry her grief/emotions alone in her house on the outskirts of the town/society she lived in. Bradstreet also often compared motherhood to divine or religious ideas, and this idea is used in the same poem to expand on the idea of Hester being compared to Biblical figures within her role of womanhood/motherhood.

Poetry

The poems in this collection are written in the POV of Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and even from the POV of Nathaniel Hawthorne discovering *The Scarlet Letter* in the novel's section titled "The Custom House." For this collection I researched and wrote in a variety of forms of poetry, including: the sonnet, the haiku, the ode, the villanelle, and the ekphrastic poem. Several of the poems are also inspired by the style of Anne Bradstreet and her poetry, mimicking her use of structure and meter. Poetry was chosen as an outlet for this creative research project to tell Hester Prynne's story in a new way. The poems written in her perspective allowed me to describe the complexity of her journey and character development; as well as allowing me to depict how the themes of the novel pushed Hester to journey into a foreign and unexplored world of sin and womanhood.

Symbolism/Biblical References

In the novel, there are a variety of symbolic and Biblical references made in relation to Hester Prynne and the other main characters. There are many allusions drawn between Hester Prynne and Queen Esther from the Bible, in the similarity of their names, the secrets they held to protect a lover, and the fact that they were both seen as "disobedient women." A comparison is also drawn between Adam from the Bible and Arthur Dimmesdale, as they both fell into temptation and were exposed to evil. Visual symbolic imagery is also used throughout the novel, such as the color red. For Roger Chillingworth, the color represents hatred and revenge, but for Hester Prynne red represents her suffering and passion. Hester Prynne's daughter Pearl is often symbolic of the force of nature, displaying her mother as a liminal character able to exist in a space between nature/Pearl and the Puritan town that fears them.



SCAN
HERE FOR
POETRY

