

# *Understanding The Scarlet Letter*

## *Character – Pearl*

Pearl is a very odd child, in that she seems to have information that other, older characters do not have. She seems to know the whole story, including the identity of her father, even while she is a newborn baby. She is so odd and so wise that Hester sometimes believes that she is not really a child at all, but rather an imp or angel sent to punish or help her. Try reading her dialogue, especially the things that she says to her mother or father, in a different way, not as the words of a young child, but of someone who is much wiser than the one she is speaking to.

Find five quotes that show the kind of behavior that Hester both fears and marvels at, the kind of unearthly behavior that suggests that Pearl is more than she seems to be. On the left, write the quotes with their page numbers. In the right column, try to explain why she behaves the way she does – is she carrying out some Heavenly mission of forgiveness, or is she punishing her father and mother for their sins?

<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)





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## *Theme – Sin and Guilt*

If sin is a transgression against God or society or neighbors, then it must necessarily cause a separation between the sinner and any one of those. It must also cause a sense of guilt in the sinner until the relationship is restored and the sin is forgiven. Hester's sin separates her from her village, both physically and emotionally, and yet she prefers her public shame to the private guilt which she senses in others. In particular, she wishes her lover would confess and share her punishment, rather than punishing himself. By showing these two people reacting so differently to their own sin and guilt, the author makes it seem as if a person could bear any shame or reproach, but not guilt and self-loathing.

Find five quotes that show a character reacting to sin and guilt. Write the quotes on the left with the page numbers. On the right, describe their reaction.

<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)



