Hester As A Rebel

What is a rebel? A rebel is described as a person who rises in opposition or armed resistance against an established government or ruler. A rebel is Hester Prynne. Cast into the 17th century Puritan America in The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Hester was expelled from society and instantly reported as an adulteress. Although mocked and alienated, she emerges as a rebel. She continually fights against the norm to voice her opinion, defies the status quo, and rebels as a proponent of feminism and individuality. She rebelliously encourages women to strive for equal representation in a male dominated society.

Hester Prynne has deliberately opposed the values of the church to the Puritan community which emphasize purity and holiness. Hester committed a sinful act of passion and lust by bearing a child with an unidentifiable father. She has committed adultery and is branded for her shameful crime to wear the letter A on her breast. Yet Hester continually fights against the norm. Although Hester should repent fully for her guilt and conform to puritan values, she silently rebels by embroidering the once dark and mysterious letter A, to a scarlet decorative gold threaded letter. Her rebellion continues as she simply refuses to give away the identity of her lover. Despite her public ridicule and shame and humiliation, Hester fights against the Puritan society's patriarchal values. Hester cries out that, “God gave her into my keeping. I will not give her up!” (Hawthorne, 103). She demonstrates once again that women are neither weak nor helpless and that they too can have a voice. She will not let anyone take anything away from her.

Near the end of the novel, Hester had finally been rewarded through her rebellious actions and was accepted by the puritan community. This is how she defies the status quo. Not only accepted but recognized for her strength for “…The letter was the symbol of her calling…They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman’s strength,” (Hawthorne, 146). Through her suffering Hester has transformed into a mother figure to the women of the community. She can sympathize with, and counsel the women whose struggles and challenges she once faced as well. Finally she has gained respect from the other good wives that once held prejudices against her. While the community's puritan women once shunned her non traditional views, they now represent the current beliefs of those around her.

Hester debunks the shaloow traditional portrayal in the Puritan culture of women being dependent on men. Although once dependent on her spouse, Roger Chillingworth, Hester discovers that she does not need to remain dependent on her husband for money and security. Instead, by her fine needlework, she can bring in a “subsistence of the plainest and most ascetic description, for herself, and a simple abundance for her child,” (Hawthorne, 77). She does not call for any help from Governor Dimmesdale or her husband Chillingworth. Rather the women can earn their own living without relying on another as a source of income. Hester stood firm in her femisy belief that women should be allowed to take positions equal to those held by men in puritan society.

Hester Prynne is a rebel. She emerges as a new woman who is putting out a positive message. She is encouraging women to strive for equal representation and status in a male dominated society. Her rebellious spirit, self reliance, and strong mind are her driving forces. Through her

rebellious nature, she is able to continually fight against the traditional norm in order to voice her opinion. Through her challenging experience Hester has created a new life for herself, apart from the life she once had. Hester used to be perceived as a sinner walking in darkness. Yet now Hester is seen as a preacher walking in the light. She is a rebel.