Hester Prynne In Puritan Time Period

Life is centered around a hard source of rigid beliefs. Many follow a lifestyle that trails a certain type of way to live. This could lead to a mindless disaster within yourself and your community. In The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne harshly criticizes the Puritan society. From hypocrisy to forgiveness, Hawthorne uses hidden messages and motifs to express his criticism of society and to spread his messages throughout the novel. A social judgment explored by Hawthorne is that a majority perspective differs on individuality. Meaning puritans in the book have a different perspective on individuals based on sins. Various characters best exemplify the social judgment presented in the novel. Puritanical society's ideals suppress the desire to come out as a sinner because this will change how you viewed. Public humiliation for sins was prominent in puritanical times and people wanted to avoid it at all costs. We see this with two main characters in Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. Puritan society represses the need to express emotions and utterly destroys their fellow companions. Hawthorne makes it this way to show the audience how dastardly the Puritan society was back then and to show his disliking towards the religious society.

The Puritan time period is considered one of the holiest periods of all time. Hawthorne proves this statement wrong by telling the story of Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth. "She never battled with the public, but submitted, uncomplainingly, to its worst usage; she did not claim it, in requital for what she suffered; she did not weigh upon its sympathies." (123). The story takes place during the Puritan time period where people live a religious lifestyle. The message in the story was quite split by practicing judgment. They insulted and made hurtful remarks towards the sinner for their amusement. The children even thought it was acceptable to do so. In this story, Hester commits adultery with the holy figure of Reverend Dimmesdale. The two sinners suffer from their sin. While one sin was covered, the other was out in the open. Nathaniel Hawthorne presents the idea that wrongdoings in society are used to amuse the crowd even though they are just as guilty as the sinner for laughing at the sinners.

In Chapter 3, I examine Dimmesdale as the Puritanical contrast to Hester who is antiPuritan. The minister tries to follow the structures of society but must hide his sins of adultery and hypocrisy to remain angelic within the community. The guilt resulting from his sin drives him to perform un-Puritan like in privacy. This reliance on good works marks a deviation from Puritan ideals. The Puritans felt that any person was capable of doing something good for selfish desires. Mankind (meaning puritan society), not only Dimmesdale, is fallen. This is why Dimmesdale is not able to buy his way into heaven with his marvelous sermons, although they bring numerous new members into the grace of God. Dimmesdale knows in his mind and heart that he is a sinner of the worst kind and therefore cannot hope to be worthy of redemption in the Puritan sense. Dimmesdale is forced to live in shame in private doors away from the puritan judgment. The puritans scold Hester with stares and side talks. Imagine if they found out that the Minister who brings God into their life was just as much as a sinner. Hawthorne allows the reader multiple visits into the reverend's mind. Part of this is accomplished by journeying with Dimmesdale into the deep parts of his soul. Hawthorne states that "by the constitution of his [Dimmesdale's] nature, he loved the truth, and loathed the lie, as few men ever did. Therefore, above all things else, he loathed his miserable self! The only truth, that continued to give Mr. Dimmesdale a real existence on this earth, was the anguish in his innermost soul, and the

undissembled expression of it in his aspect” (144, 146). In all Dimmesdale is held back from telling the truth about his sin due to the puritan judgment he would receive.

The Puritans not only believed sin to be wrong but also felt that those who sin must be restricted from society. Since the whole group had promised obedience to God, the whole group would suffer for the sins of any member, unless that member was punished. Due to this belief in collective guilt, and to keep their bond with God, the Puritans could not allow any member of their society to continue sinning once the sin had come to their attention. We see this with Hester throughout the book. She is criticized for being an adulterer but after the scolding from the Puritans, she never sinned again. She grew and shined brighter as a character. Another flaw in Puritan society is the fact that they do not like sin, but without sin, there would be no mistakes for humanity to grow. Hester changes from despised adultery to a contributing member of society by slowly participating again. It is true that at first some tasks were refused her, but Hester “never battled with the public, but submitted uncomplainingly to its worst usage; she made no claim upon it, in requital for what she suffered; she did not weigh upon its sympathies” (Hawthorne 160). Through the pain of repeated disgrace for her sin, Hester gets from the community. Even tho she has Pearl to show for her sin; Hester slowly but surely makes up for her sin and is somewhat expected by society. Puritans should take note and realize that to grow you must make mistakes.

Ultimately, the main characters in The Scarlet Letter are very much affected by the Puritan society and their moral judgment. Puritan society denies the need to express emotions that then dismantles their fellow town members. Perception does indeed play a huge role in this book. We see the damage of judgment throughout the book done to the holy Reverend Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne. This same judgmental repression allows for the death of Dimmesdale and the rebirth of Hester Prynne to shine through right in the faces of the readers. Bust most importantly Purititional society provides an example of a terrible society and that's exactly what Hawthorne wanted to portray.