

Context:

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, published in 1850, reflects classic Romantic ideals. During the 19th century, Romanticism emerged as an intellectual and artistic reaction against the perceived strictness and oppression of the preceding age. Such ideals, characterized by the elevation of the emotional over the rational, prompted individuals to reevaluate their relationships to religious and governmental institutions as well as relationships with other human beings and the natural world. Through The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne explores the individual’s quest to find meaning and experience beyond Puritanism’s political norms and traditional roles.

The Romantic yearning to share emotional and spiritual experiences outside of the bounds of Puritanical society norms places individuals at odds within their culture. Exploring such Romantic yearnings as the innate need to feel a connection to others runs counter to Puritanical ideals. In addition to risking disapproval and scorn from church and public officials, individuals must endure the gamut of emotions, from joy to sorrow, when pursuing emotional intimacy with others. In response to that anxiety, individuals might shy away from pursuing emotional intimacy; however, the human spirit cannot survive in a vacuum. Individuals need community, so Romantics must find a place to exist even within a society that does not value the same ideals.

<i>Tenets of Puritanism</i>	<i>Romanticism</i>
The Supremacy of Divine Will: All natural phenomena are explained as being the will of God. The Depravity of Man: All humans are naturally depraved. The Doctrine of the Elect: People are chosen by God to become one of the elect, one of the people who will receive divine salvation. Free Grace: Only the elect receives free grace (forgiveness) Predestination: God chooses who will be banned and who will not. Theocratic Government: The government is controlled by and made up of ministers and church members.	Values feeling and intuition over reason. Places faith in inner experience and the power of imagination. Shuns the artificiality of civilization and seeks unspoiled nature. Prefers youthful innocence to educated sophistication. Reflects on nature’s beauty as a path to spiritual and moral development. Champions individual freedom and the worth of the individual. Finds beauty and truth in exotic locales, the supernatural realm, and the inner world of the imagination. (Holt Literature and Language Arts: 5 th Course)

Essay Prompt:

Hawthorne has referred to The Scarlet Letter as a work of Romanticism. In a well-written essay, agree or disagree with Hawthorne’s assertion that his novel reflects Romantic ideals. Upon considering the characteristics of Romantic literature, was he correct in his claim or was his novel more indicative of Puritan beliefs?

Use the table above, notes from the Powerpoint and evidence from the novel to support your claim. This assignment will be due on November 14th by 11:59 pm to turnitin.com It must be 3 pages, MLA format.