

FOUR CLASSIC AMERICAN NOVELS

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

THE SCARLET LETTER

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

MARK TWAIN

RED BADGE OF COURAGE

STEPHEN CRANE

BILLY BUDD

HERMAN MELVILLE

THE SCARLET LETTER

SYNOPSIS

Nathaniel Hawthorne prefaces his story of Hester Prynne and *The Scarlet Letter* with a description of the Custom House in which he has worked for three years. He describes the Collector, the old General, in glowing terms; the Inspector is ridiculed as "... a rare phenomenon; ... so shallow, so delusive, so impalpable, such an absolute nonentity, ...". His fellow workers are categorized as aged men who depend on this government service as payment of favors or work accomplished in their youth - long gone. They do not expend much energy on their work. Hawthorne, who had been appointed Surveyor of the Revenue as a political plum, soon finds himself replaced because of the election of President Zachary Taylor.

After his enforced retirement, Hawthorne finds the time for creative writing which results in *The Scarlet Letter*. Having added the introduction on the Custom House to increase the novel's length, the author uses it as the source of his story. He claims to have found the scarlet letter A and some old parchments listing the facts of the tragedy written by a long-dead Surveyor Pue. Based on this supposed evidence, Hawthorne communicates his discovery to the reader. However, this is apparently just a literary device since no physical evidence of the actual existence of these papers or letter has ever been found. The author's description of his Puritan ancestry, his knowledge of early history of New England, and his views about people and politics give readers an insight into the man himself and so make this preface interesting.

Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1642 is the setting for this story of betrayal and its consequences. As the story opens, a beautiful young woman, Hester Prynne, emerges from the jail and walks to the scaffold with her three month old daughter Pearl. Beautifully embroidered on her gown is a letter in scarlet—an A. Spectators comment on the daring "hussy". The Puritan magistrates and

ministers of the town appear and denounce her sin of adultery and pronounce her sentence—forever in that town she must wear the scarlet A symbolizing her adulterous behavior. She is also to remain upon the scaffold in the middle of the market place for three hours where all can gaze upon her shame and take notice that sin will be punished severely. Some of the matrons of the town grumble that the town fathers are too lenient except for one young mother who expresses her pity for Hester. The ministers urge Hester to name the father of her child so that he, too, might stand with her. When she refuses, they ask her pastor, the Reverend Mr. Arthur Dimmesdale, to reason with her lest she lose her soul. The crowd obviously holds the delicate-looking minister in high esteem. In spite of his admonitions, she is silent, and he praises her generous courage.

Hester's sensitive spirit is nearly destroyed in this brief time of public censure. In her agony, in order to avoid going mad, she relives memories of her impoverished by genteel home in England, of her dear parents, and of the older, brilliant scholar who wooed her. She remembers their wedding and travelling to another country in Europe, her departure for America in advance of her husband who is to join her. For two years she has had no word of him, and it appears that he is dead. It is for this reason that Hester has not received the death penalty for her adulterous conduct. The judges are merciful.

As she gazes at the jeering crowd, Hester notices with horror a small, misshapen man standing with an Indian on the edge of the market place. He is explaining that he has spent the last two years as an Indian captive and has been ransomed. Roger Chillingworth is extremely interested in the woman and her child. He introduces himself as a physician and is welcomed into the community.

Later, Hester's jailer summons Roger to help because the woman and the baby Pearl are distraught from their experience. Chillingworth gives the baby medicine to lull her

THE SCARLET LETTER

to sleep. At first Hester fears him because she recognizes her husband, but Roger asks her pardon for having involved her in a loveless marriage and tells her that he bears her no ill will. However, when his wife still refuses to reveal her child's father, Roger insists that he will discover him and take revenge. Threatening to reveal Hester's lover, Roger demands that she keep his own identity as her husband secret. The fearful woman agrees.

When she is released from jail, Hester is able to earn an adequate living because of her skill in needlework. Even though many of the townsfolk mock her, they need her skill and services and pay her well. The exquisitely embroidered A remains on her breast, identifying her to all, including newcomers, as a public sinner. This ridicule is a torment to her, and, yet, Hester does not seek to leave Boston. She tells herself that she must pay for her crime at the site of its commission, but truly she remains because he whom she loves remains.

Dressed in solemn gray with her luxuriant hair tamed inside a plain cap, the scarlet letter emblazoned on her breast, Hester begins a life of retribution. All of her natural buoyancy is stifled. However, she lives vicariously through her growing, mischievous elf of a child. She dresses Pearl resplendently as she can well afford to do. Still, the two are outcasts, socializing with no one. Hester devotes herself to Pearl and watches uneasily as the child develops into a strange, sometimes tormenting sprite, but sunshine follows the girl. The disgraced woman quietly tries to make amends for her sin, serving and helping with time or money wherever she is allowed, even though she is often reviled by the very poor who accept her alms.

Although the town elders are aware of Hester's reform, they seek to take her child from her because they fear she may be an unfit mother. Coming to the governor's house to plead her cause, Hester demands that the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale intercede for her. He does so, saying that Pearl is a constant reminder to Hester of her sin and that she will, therefore, take better care of Pearl's soul because of that fact. The elders agree and Pearl is left in her mother's care even though the men are aware that the three-year-old girl is a very willful child.

As Hester leaves the governor's house, his sister, Mistress Hibbins, an avowed witch, entices Hester to come to the forest to become part of the Black Man's coven. The Puritans fear the forest and the evil spirits they believe inhabit those dark places, especially the Black Man (Satan). Hester refuses and avoids Mistress Hibbins. The author mentions the fact that the woman is burned at the stake many years later as a witch. She is apparently aware of Hester's secret lover and taunts her.

In the meantime Roger has become close friends with Arthur Dimmesdale who has allowed the physician to look after him at the urging of his congregation. The Rev. Mr. Dimmesdale's people are terribly concerned about the obvious decline of their young minister's health. Eventually, the doctor and the clergyman move into the same house and Roger begins a close and careful probing of the man to determine the cause of Dimmesdale's poor health. Roger

suspects the reason may be sickness of the soul, and the minister finally admits the truth of this. Still, he refuses to confess his problem to the doctor even though he knows confession alone will heal him. Dimmesdale feels that some men cannot confess because of their own natures or because such revelations will cause the good that they could do for the Lord to be negated. Chillingworth scoffs at the latter reason, pointing out that good cannot come from evil. The minister is revealed as a hypocrite who lives in fear. He, too, believes that he must stay where he is to expiate his sin. Also, he is well accepted in town.

One day while the minister naps at his desk, Roger sneaks into his study and uncovers Dimmesdale's chest. (The young man is in the habit of holding his hand over his heart.) What Chillingworth sees, fills him with horror and evil glee, for he now knows Hester's secret with certainty. From that time on, Roger Chillingworth seeks his revenge by prodding the minister's wound in a thousand ways. The townspeople notice the strange friendship between the two men leaves both changed. Dimmesdale is failing even more rapidly while gaining a reputation for sanctity; Chillingworth seems to be growing more evil looking. No one can understand their relationship. The minister is vaguely conscious of some threat to his own well-being, but he cannot see his enemy. Consequently, he uses scourges, vigils, and fasting as penance for his failing. A fear of madness haunts him.

One night, seven years after Hester's humiliation, as the town sleeps, Arthur Dimmesdale climbs the scaffold and confesses his guilt to an empty market place. A meteor shower occurs and the stricken minister fancies that the shower has formed a letter A in the sky to illuminate his guilt. While he stands exposed on the scaffold, his friend the Reverend Mr. John Wilson hurries past on his way home from the deathbed of Governor Winthrop. In his haste and in the darkness, Wilson does not look up or notice Arthur. Hester and Pearl also come from the governor's house where Hester has been measuring the body for burial clothes. She and her daughter join Dimmesdale on the scaffold. Hester is appalled by her lover's disintegration. Arthur begs her to help him, and she determines to have Roger release her from her promise of secrecy. She realizes that the minister must know his enemy. Pearl wonders whether Dimmesdale will stand with them in daylight, but he refuses. Unknown to the three, Chillingworth has returned from the governor's and has chanced on the scaffold scene from which he derives great satisfaction.

Several days later, Hester tells Roger that she will reveal her husband to the minister. She no longer fears Chillingworth. She hates him and all memory of him. He, too, is in a pitiful state, far worse than Arthur, for his sin is one of malice, not weakness.

Afterwards, Hester waits for Dimmesdale in the forest where she can be truly herself, truly free. She begs Arthur's forgiveness for her deceit. Arthur is despairing, but Hester urges him to escape either to the wilderness or to Europe. When he cannot decide to go alone, she offers to go with him. They will try to find happiness and be a family. They relax in their joy, and Hester removes her cap and tosses

THE SCARLET LETTER

the scarlet letter aside. Pearl refuses hysterically to come to her mother, however, until Hester replaces the letter on her bosom. Again Pearl questions whether the minister will acknowledge them. Again he cannot; Pearl remains firm against him. The little girl is not totally aware of the meaning of the scarlet letter or Dimmesdale's cowardice. The lovers make plans to leave for Europe on a ship which is even now in the harbor. Arthur wishes to wait until after he has given the Election Sermon which is a high honor.

On his way back to town, the minister is severely tempted to scandalous behavior as he encounters his deacon, an elderly lady, a young maiden from his church, some children, a seaman, and Mistress Hibbins. He begins to fear for his sanity as well as the state of his soul. Feverishly, he begins to write his sermon, refusing Chillingworth's offer of medication.

The holiday scene several days later is described as low keyed. Nevertheless, everyone is congregated in the church or market place to hear the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale's sermon. He and the other notables enter in procession, and, again, Pearl asks her mother why he will not stand with them. The ship's captain approaches Hester and reveals the fact that Roger has also booked passage on the ship as part of their party. There is no escape. Meanwhile, Dimmesdale's awe-inspiring sermon finished, the minister approaches Hester and asks her to stand with him on the scaffold. He is shaking and close to collapse. The ugly, deformed Chillingworth fiercely urges him not to go; the evil man knows he will lose his revenge if his victim mounts the scaffold. Determined, Arthur Dimmesdale publicly repents his sin, is reconciled to Pearl, and dies in Hester's arms. Even then, there are those of his friends who will not believe his guilt.

The town has come over the years to forgive Hester because of her goodness and the suffering she has endured.

In the year following Dimmesdale's death Chillingworth dies, leaving his considerable estate to Pearl. She and her mother then leave for Europe.

Eventually Hester returns without Pearl to Boston, wearing the scarlet letter, which the townsfolk now describe as meaning Angel. She is welcomed but chooses to live alone. Frequently, letters arrive, apparently from Pearl, testifying to her happy marriage and the birth of a child.

When Hester dies, she is buried close to the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale's grave. A common gravestone bears the single scarlet letter A on a black base. Uncertain of their future in eternity, the lovers are together in death.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), a direct descendant of the Puritan settlers of New England, was born in Salem, Massachusetts. Two of his ancestors are mentioned in the introductory sketch to *The Scarlet Letter*: William Hawthorne, the "sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor," and John Hawthorne, a notorious judge at the Salem witch trials. Nathaniel Hawthorne was a close friend

of Franklin Pierce, a future President of the United States. During his lifetime he fell in love with and married Sophia Peabody, lived a short time at the Utopian community of Brook Farm, and was acquainted with Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott. Much of his life was spent in poverty, sometimes he got as little as thirty-five dollars for a story. When Pierce was elected President, he appointed Hawthorne United States Consul at Liverpool, England. Although Hawthorne had looked forward to enjoying the romantic atmosphere of Europe, he returned home to Concord ill, depressed and disillusioned. He died in Plymouth, New Hampshire, in 1864.

CRITIC'S CORNER

After being dismissed from the Salem Custom House, Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, which was published in 1850. It may be difficult for the modern reader to appreciate the scandalous success of this novel. New Englanders were scandalized on two main counts:

1. "the fascination of genius, and all the charms of a highly polished style" with which he invested the crime of adultery.
2. The uncomplimentary sketch of the Custom House in which he describes some of his ex-fellow workers.

It is also supposed to have caused the greatest uproar in Massachusetts since the witch trials of the 1690's. Today we admire *The Scarlet Letter* as the pioneer novel in the genre we now call the psychological melodrama.

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences or thought units that have particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this book. Page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. Mother and daughter stood together in the same circle of seclusion from human society; (p. 96)

(Hester's public shame symbolized by the scarlet letter has made her an outcast from human society. Since she has been branded as a sinful woman, none of the good people of Boston will associate with her. They will accept her needlework and her charity but not her society. Hester's ostracism is extended to her daughter, Pearl, who is scorned and reviled by the other children.

... the little Puritans, being of the most intolerant brood that ever lived, had got a vague idea of something outlandish, unearthly, or at variance with ordinary fashions, in the mother and child; and therefore scorned them in their hearts, and not infrequently reviled them with their tongues. (p. 96)

The cruelty of the children that prevents Pearl from having companions of her own age is merely a reflection of an intolerant society that scorns the child for the mother's sin.)

2. "Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence, there has been none!" (p. 183)

THE SCARLET LETTER

(In interpreting this outcry of Arthur Dimmesdale, readers must be aware of the distinction he is making between penance and penitence. Obviously, Dimmesdale thinks of penance as the suffering and punishment he has imposed upon himself for the sin of adultery. In his closet he scourges himself, and on one night he stands upon the scaffold "driven hither by the impulse of Remorse which dogged him everywhere." (p. 144) Clearly Dimmesdale is doing penance, but, like his sin, the penance is done secretly. True penitence, on the other hand, requires the resolution to make amends and the willingness to confess. Venerated by his parishioners as a saintly man, Dimmesdale lacks the courage to make public confession of his adultery. Since he is a sincerely religious man, he suffers the agony of the damned as the result of his cowardly and hypocritical silence.)

3. "Why does the minister keep his hand over his heart?" (p. 174)

(Earlier in the novel the reader learns about Reverend Dimmesdale's peculiar habit:

he was often observed, on any slight alarm or other sudden accident, to put his hand over his heart, with first a flush and then a paleness indicative of pain. (p. 119)

Unlike Hester Prynne, who wears her scarlet letter openly over her heart, Arthur Dimmesdale's scarlet "A" is concealed from public view. His hidden sin has seared his heart so terribly that he suffers both physical and spiritual torment. The precocious child, Pearl, makes an intuitive connection between her mother's scarlet letter and Dimmesdale's hand over his heart:

"And, mother, he was his hand over his heart! Is it because, when the minister wrote his name in the book, the Black Man set his mark in that place? But why does he not wear it outside his bosom, as thou dost, mother?" (p. 179)

After the minister's public revelation of adultery and the tearing away of the ministerial band from his breast, most of the spectators testify to having seen a scarlet letter imprinted on his flesh. Some whisper their belief that the awful symbol is "the effect of the ever-active tooth of remorse, gnawing from the inmost heart outwardly, and at last manifesting Heaven's dreadful judgment by the visible presence of the letter." (p. 240) The minister's hand over his heart is an involuntary and ineffective gesture to assuage unbearable pain.)

4. "Hadst thou sought the whole earth over . . . there was no place so secret,—no high place nor lowly place, where thou couldst have escaped me,—save on this very scaffold!" (p. 236)

(Roger Chillingworth, the leech, has become obsessed with his own peculiar brand of revenge. Even though he

is Hester's wronged husband, he has no desire to see her secret lover either dead or publicly condemned. In fact death or public confession would release the minister from the leech's subtle torment. By posing as Dimmesdale's physician and friend, Chillingworth has insinuated himself into the minister's life. He knows that the secret sin of adultery is eating into Dimmesdale's heart like a cancer. Using all his skill as a physician, Chillingworth strives to keep Dimmesdale alive and, at the same time, increase the minister's suffering through refined mental torture. When Chillingworth books passage on the very ship that is to be the means for Hester and Dimmesdale's escape, it is evident that the leech is ready to pursue the minister to the ends of the earth. Chillingworth's sole purpose in life is Dimmesdale's continuing agony. When the minister climbs the scaffold intent upon confession, Chillingworth makes a desperate attempt at stopping him:

"Madman, hold! what is your purpose? . . . Do not blacken your fame, and perish in dishonor! I can yet save you! Would you bring infamy on your sacred profession?"

The plea fails and the leech's anger and frustration are boundless. The minister has chosen the one escape open to him—the scaffold—the symbol of public shame and punishment. Thus Dimmesdale finally achieves freedom from inner torment and thwarts Chillingworth's revenge.)

5. It is a curious subject of observation and inquiry, whether hatred and love be not the same thing at bottom. (p. 242) (In his conclusion Hawthorne theorizes that hatred and love may be basically the same emotion. Students may accept or reject this theory. Those who reject it may argue that love, which is positive and wholesome, and hatred, which is negative and unhealthy, are direct opposites and, therefore, cannot be considered the same emotion. Those who find some validity in Hawthorne's observation may point out that either extreme love or extreme hatred can be destructive. Unbridled love frequently generates possessiveness and jealousy. The jealous lover can be as cruelly vindictive as the most hate-filled enemy. As Hawthorne observes, the passionate lover and the passionate hater are both dependent upon the object for their love or hatred. When the object is removed, both are forlorn and desolate.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Plot

1. When Roger Chillingworth discovers Hester's adultery, what is his immediate reaction?

THE SCARLET LETTER

(When Roger Chillingworth first appears, he is simply identified as a stranger observing Hester's public shame upon the scaffold. Then the shifting expressions on his face reveal his inner turmoil:

A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one little pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight. (p. 67)

Upon learning that Hester's partner in sin is unknown, the stranger speaks out: "It irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side. But he will be known!—he will be known!—he will be known!" (p. 69) In the next chapter the reader learns that the stranger is Hester's long absent husband. He assumes the name of Roger Chillingworth to keep this fact a secret. Although he seeks no vengeance against Hester for her sin, he is determined to know the name of her secret lover so that he may seek vengeance against the man whom he believes has wronged them both.)

Setting

1. For what reason does Hester remain in Boston after her exposure as an adulteress? When does she leave?

(The author suggests more than one reason for Hester's remaining in Boston where she is daily subjected to public condemnation. One idea, which Hester struggles to resist, thrusts itself upon her contemplation:

There (in Boston) dwelt, there trode the feet of one with whom she deemed herself connected in a union, that, unrecognized on earth, would bring them together before the bar of final judgment, and make that their marriage altar, for a joint futurity of endless retribution. (p. 84)

Finally she compels herself to believe "half a truth and half a self-delusion" as her motive for remaining in New England

Here . . . had been the scene of her guilt, and here should be the scene of her earthly punishment; and so, perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul . . . (p. 84)

Readers may conclude, however, that her true reason for remaining is Arthur Dimmesdale since she and Pearl do leave Boston after his death.)

Character

1. Which character in the novel has endured the greatest suffering? Give reasons for your opinion.

(Readers' opinions may vary significantly. Without a doubt, Hester suffers the greatest ignominy. For seven years she bears the brunt of public condemnation. Hester's daughter, Pearl, is the most innocent sufferer. She endures ostracism not because of any act on her part but because she is the child of an adulterous union. Arthur Dimmesdale

may be regarded as the one who suffers the most severe mental agony. As a minister and a devout Puritan, he is torn between the need to confess and the fear of exposure. Some readers may build a strong case to prove Roger Chillingworth ultimately suffers the most severe punishment. At times even he is shocked at how completely dehumanized he has become. The other characters in Hawthorne's novel eventually find peace. Chillingworth never does. Hester is redeemed through patient endurance and good works. Pearl apparently finds happiness as a wife and mother in Europe. At the moment of his death Dimmesdale frees himself from his private hell through public confession. Only Chillingworth never finds any peace. He dies without redemption—a broken, pathetic, evil old man.)

2. As the story of *The Scarlet Letter* unfolds, Hester, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth all change dramatically. Describe these changes.

(At the beginning of the novel Hester is a young woman of "an impulsive and passionate nature." (p. 64) As she stands on the scaffold in the market place, the silent condemnation of the populace so torments her that she feels "as if she must needs shriek out with the full power of her lungs, and cast herself from the scaffold down upon the ground, or else go mad at once." (p. 64) With the passing of the years Hester learns to endure quietly her outcast state, earn a living through her needlework, and gain limited acceptance from the community for her charity and good works. Hester's solitary life forces her to rely upon her own inner resources. Consequently, after wearing the scarlet letter for seven years, her character, tempered by adversity, grows stronger. When she realizes that Arthur Dimmesdale is suffering unendurable torture because of his secret sin and Chillingworth's devilish revenge, she resolves to save the minister from destruction. Hester is no longer either a weak or an insecure woman. Dimmesdale recognizes that she is now far stronger than he. "Think for me, Hester!" he says. "Thou art strong. Resolve for me!" (p. 87)

Until the very end of the novel Arthur Dimmesdale is regarded as a saintly man and a true minister of God. The community notes only his severe physical decline:

His form grew emaciated; his voice, though still rich and sweet, had a certain melancholy prophecy of decay in it. (p. 119)

Although several opinions are offered to explain the minister's worsening condition, no one seems to suspect the truth. Dimmesdale's physical decline is merely the outward manifestation of his spiritual decay. Secret guilt and shame are destroying him. Dimmesdale is physically, morally and spiritually weakened by his cowardice and hypocrisy.

Roger Chillingworth is another character whose

THE SCARLET LETTER

outward appearance reflects a drastic inner change. The first impression he creates is that of a scholarly, meditative man. Just as the minister is spiritually destroyed by hypocrisy, Chillingworth is spiritually warped by his obsession for revenge. The evil in his heart is reflected in his face:

At first his (Chillingworth's) expression had been calm, meditative, scholar-like. Now there was something ugly and evil in his face, which they had not previously noticed, and which grew still the more obvious to the sight the oftener they looked upon him. (p. 126)

Theme

1. Identify at least two basic ideas or themes in *The Scarlet Letter* and explain how Hawthorne develops them.

(Students may identify a variety of themes and any reasonable response should be accepted. An obvious theme deals with the effects of guilt. Hester's guilt, openly acknowledged, eventually cleanses and strengthens her soul. Dimmesdale's hidden guilt tortures him, drives him into hypocrisy and ultimately destroys him. This idea might be stated in terms of a moral precept: Acknowledgement or confession of wrongdoing is an essential step in healing a guilt-ridden heart.

A second theme focuses on the unhappy human condition of isolation and alienation. Because of her adultery Hester is isolated from the other members of the community. She is tolerated for her excellent needlework and for her charity, but her sinful hands are not permitted to touch certain articles—a bride's white veil, for example. Even her charity, although

accepted, frequently is repaid with insults from the very ones whom she has helped. Hester is the most obvious example of human suffering which results from isolation, but the other characters in the novel are also alienated human beings. Pearl, the child of adultery, is rejected by the other children, and her mother fears that she will grow up to be a wild thing. Arthur Dimmesdale is cut off from a totally honest relationship with his parishioners because of his hypocrisy. Roger Chillingworth loses all human compassion through his obsession for revenge.

*A third theme may be found in Hawthorne's criticism of the Puritan way of life. The people of early Colonial Boston are shown to be intolerant and unforgiving toward those who are caught violating the rigid Puritanic code. At the beginning of the novel five women criticize the magistrates for passing too light a sentence upon an adulteress. These women are as ugly and as vicious as those in Charles Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, who sit knitting and watching the condemned lose their heads on the guillotine. A few readers may suggest that vestiges of the Puritanic code still exist in modern America. There are still people who would set themselves up as arbiters of private morality.*

Some students might derive a theme from Chillingworth's obsession for revenge. In the process of destroying the minister's soul Chillingworth destroys his own and ruins any chance he may have had for happiness. Within a year after Dimmesdale's death, Chillingworth himself dies. Revenge destroys Chillingworth, the avenger, more completely than it destroys Dimmesdale.)

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

SYNOPSIS

Huckleberry Finn, the motherless son of the town drunk, lives with the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, who owns a slave named Jim. The boy's life stabilizes during his residence at the Widow's house, but he chafes under the strictures of clean living, good manners, religion, and education. In contrast to the Widow's ways, Huck prefers bare feet, a carefree smoke, and the freedom of the outdoors.

During one of Huck's regular encounters with Pap, who returns to town when he can no longer afford whisky, Pap learns of Huck's share of Injun Joe's treasure. Pap imprisons Huck in a remote cabin on the Mississippi River. At first Huck enjoys Pap's primitive lifestyle; eventually, Pap gets too free with his whippings during his drunken bouts. Freeing himself from the unpredictable discipline of his father, Huck escapes to Jackson's Island and meets Jim, who has run away from Miss Watson to avoid being sold and sent to New Orleans.

Jim and Huck enjoy the freedom of life aboard a raft as they aim for Cairo, Illinois, where Jim can be free. Stealing produce from gardens and henhouses, Huck manages to keep them in food. Huck and Jim encounter various troubles and curiosities, such as a floating house in which a dead man lies and the wreck of the *Walter Scott*, a steamboat on which they foil the plot of two thieves who conspire to kill a third man.

During one of their adventures a steamboat hits their raft and Huck swims ashore. He finds himself in the midst of a bitter, longstanding feud between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons, which results in the death of his newfound friend Buck. When Huck flees the carnage of the feud and again meets up with Jim, they set out with passengers aboard their raft—two humbugs who call themselves the King and the Duke. The Duke and the King perpetrate various fraudulent schemes, the most heartless of which is defrauding three young girls of their inheritance.

Huck rescues the girls' money and hides it in their father's coffin. He tells Mary Jane, his favorite of the three,

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

the whole story about the two con men who are posing as her uncles and sneaks away with Jim. Before Jim and Huck can escape, however, the Duke and the King overtake them. When Huck again tries to escape the two frauds, he finds that the King has sold his share in Jim for forty dollars. Huck searches for Silas Phelps's farm, where the slave has been imprisoned, in order to steal Jim back.

At the farm Huck is welcomed by Aunt Sally, who thinks her visitor is Tom Sawyer. Huck accepts the name and meets the real Tom on the road to his aunt's house, advising Tom to adopt his brother's name and continue the ruse. "Tom" and "Sid" engineer an elaborate plot to free Jim from captivity, even though simpler methods would suffice. The romantic notions Tom has read in boyish adventure stories lead the boys to steal bedsheets, candles, and spoons, and to leave a trail of clues to the noble identity and background of Jim.

The game ends when a stray bullet strikes Tom. Aunt Polly arrives to unravel the inexplicable letters Aunt Sally has sent about "Tom" and "Sid." The story ends happily when Huck learns that Miss Watson has died and set Jim free in her will. Aunt Sally plots to civilize Huck, but Huck, who has "been there before," escapes for the territory.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mark Twain, one of America's most beloved authors, began life as Samuel Langhorne Clemens in Florida, Missouri, in 1835. His boyish adventures along the shores of the Mississippi River provided the background material for many of his works. Early in his formative years he yearned to become a riverboat pilot, but his career was thwarted by the Civil War, which closed the river to commercial traffic.

Clemens set out for the untamed lands west of the Mississippi and pursued the trade of journalist and printer, which he had learned from his older brother Orion. His first work to receive critical acclaim, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," was followed by *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Life on the Mississippi*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and a variety of travel stories, lectures, and satires. Twain died in Connecticut in 1910. He was mourned by people on both sides of the Atlantic.

CRITIC'S CORNER

The success of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1874) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) rests on Twain's affectionate portrayal of boyish adventure in nineteenth-century rural America. However, there is more worth to Twain's writing than the verisimilitude of his dialect and the skill of his storytelling.

Critical studies emphasize the thematic importance of Huck's decision to accept Jim, a runaway slave, as a friend—a triumph for conscience at a time when few people considered blacks to be human beings. Huck symbolizes the yearning of all people for freedom from oppression, whether the oppressor be slave owner or schoolmaster, foster mother or con man.

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the study. Explain the meaning each has in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. he had enough whisky there for two drunks and one delirium tremens, (p. 36)
(*Pap refers to the late stage of alcoholism in which the victim sweats, trembles, and suffers from anxiety and frightening hallucinations. The scene which follows gives graphic testimony to the effects of a life of hard drinking. Huck is so frightened of his father's violent behavior that he makes plans to escape the cabin and run away.*)
2. a mulatter, most as white as a white man, (p. 35)
(*Pap is horrified by the appearance of a well-dressed, light-skinned man of mixed parentage who could vote. Pap's negative reaction leads him to strong words: "Thinks I, what is the country a-coming to? . . . I says I'll never vote ag'in."*)
3. the plain hand of Providence slapping me in the face, (p. 208)
(*During Huck's intense self-examination, he regrets helping Jim escape and describes his loss of Jim as proof that God is displeased with his actions. He attempts to write a letter to Miss Watson telling her of Jim's whereabouts, but he tears up the letter and vows to go to hell before betraying his friend.*)
4. on the scutcheon, (p. 251)
(*Tom attempts to decorate a shield-shaped surface in order to fashion an appropriate coat of arms for Jim. It includes gold on the right side, a purplish horizontal band crossing it, a recumbent dog with a chain underfoot, a green stripe and three lines on a blue field "with the nombril points rampant on a dancette indented." The crest, a black runaway slave offset by red bars, and an Italian motto, "Maggiore fretta, minore atto," completes the picture.*)
5. I got a hairy breas', (p. 282)
(*In his joy with newfound freedom and the forty dollar gift from Tom, Jim reminds Huck that Jim has always been marked for wealth by the amount of hair on his chest, just as he had said when he and Huck met on Jackson Island. (p. 53)*)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Plot

How do Huck and Jim rig the raft for longterm travel?

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

(After their escape from Jackson's Island, Jim and Huck make changes on the raft so that it will serve as their new headquarters. Jim uses planks from the raft to build a wigwam so they will be snug against inclement weather. He builds up a dirt floor to keep dry when waves wash over the floor. They also add an extra steering oar and a forked stick to hang their lantern on so bigger craft can easily see and avoid them)

Character

Compare Aunt Polly and Aunt Sally in their relationships with the boys.

(Both Aunt Polly and Aunt Sally show their sisterhood in more than blood kinship. Both women are natural patsies for the rambunctious doings of Tom and Huck. Both are eager to find good in their charges; both punish with fervor but forgive with love. In separate scenes the two women fall asleep exhausted after grieving for a lost boy, Aunt Polly when she fears Tom has been drowned while playing with Joe Harper, and Aunt Sally when she sits by her lighted candle waiting for the boys' return.)

Theme

How does Huck deal with his moral dilemma?

(Huck has wrestled with his conscience over his part in Jim's escape. Jim intensifies Huck's concern when Jim vows to steal his wife and children and take them to free territory. In Huck's words, "It would get all around that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom; and if I was ever to see anybody from that town again I'd be ready to get down and lick his boots for shame." Huck has been reared to believe that "nigger-stealers" and abolitionists are bad people in that they are depriving the rightful owners of property.

When Tom arrives at the Phelps farm and agrees to

assist in the theft of the runaway slave, Huck, momentarily jolted to discover "Tom Sawyer a nigger-stealer," breathes a sigh of relief. His idol, whose opinion Huck values more than all others, shares Huck's enthusiasm for setting Jim free. As they walk home after seeing the Duke and King after their tar-and-feathering, the boys agree that "a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway.")

Style

How does Twain use coincidence to link Tom and Huck in their final adventure?

(Jim's location on the Phelps farm and Tom's arrival for a visit to Aunt Sally occur at a fortuitous moment. Just as Huck is cranking up a good explanation of his appearance, he is able to adopt the easiest alias of all. Becoming Tom Sawyer is a snap compared to his flawed attempt at Sarah Mary Williams. It is also easy for Tom to assume the role of Sid Sawyer. The simplicity of their roles leaves their imaginations free to concoct a proper escape plan for Jim.)

Critical Comment

Mark Twain has been called the true fountainhead of American literature. By what right does he deserve such adulation?

(Twain deserves praise for depicting the speech patterns, habits, beliefs, and rural lifestyle of nineteenth-century America. While he makes no attempt to hide the greed and corruption of petty thieves, murderers, child abusers, drunkards, or scoundrels, he juxtaposes and equally decent set of thrifty, hardworking, kindhearted, and likeable characters who justify the reader's understanding of and pride in his American heritage.)

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

SYNOPSIS

The Red Badge of Courage is a story of war as it is perceived through the senses of a raw recruit going into battle for the first time. The war is the American War Between the States and the battle is the Battle of Chancellorsville although Stephen Crane, the author, has chosen to name neither. Most of the action of this short novel covers only two days and is not nearly as important as the psychological reaction of the novel's central character, Henry Fleming, who is generally referred to simply as "the youth."

The story begins with a description of the army encamped within sight of enemy campfires. The tall soldier (Jim Conklin), who has been washing his shirt at the brook, runs back to the camp with the rumor that their regiment will be moving into battle the next day. The rumor generates a debate between the tall soldier and the loud soldier (Wilson) while the youth

(Henry Fleming) listens. The youth remembers his earlier illusions about grand and glorious battles. He also remembers his loving but down-to-earth mother against whose wishes he has enlisted. Now after months of drilling and marching he worries about how he will behave in battle.

The next morning the regiment learns that the tall soldier's rumor is a mistake. However, this news does not relieve the youth's anxiety because he still does not know whether he will be brave or cowardly in battle. The tall soldier seems quietly confident and the loud soldier boastfully proclaims his courage. Having grown up with both young men, the youth wants to believe that he will perform in battle at least as well as they. He concludes that only actual combat will establish his courage or cowardice.

One morning the order finally comes for the regiment to move. The troops cross the river, and the youth realizes that the battle is imminent. Although the tall soldier retains his

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

calm, the loud soldier becomes depressed and gives the youth a yellow envelope to send to his family if he is killed. The regiment takes its position near the edge of a grove of trees. The enemy attacks, and the youth forgets himself in the heat of battle. After the enemy is repulsed, the youth believes that his courage is now confirmed because he has not panicked. However, when the enemy attacks the second time, the youth does panic and runs while most of his comrades hold the line.

Moving away from the sound of battle, the youth seeks solace deep in the woods. Briefly he derives comfort from nature until he finds a rotting corpse in a beautiful natural setting. Fleeing this dreadful scene, the youth attaches himself to a procession of wounded soldiers. He walks beside a tattered soldier, who shames him by asking about his wounds. The youth wishes that he had a "red badge of courage." Then he is shocked to see the horribly wounded tall soldier. The tattered soldier advises the youth to lead his dying friend off the road because the artillery wagons are approaching. In the field the tall soldier dies in agony. The youth and the tattered soldier move on, and it becomes evident that the tattered soldier is also dying. When the mortally wounded man again questions the youth about his wounds, the youth is so overcome with shame that he deserts the tattered soldier.

The youth finds himself close to the fighting again and encounters a group of soldiers retreating in panic. He tries to stop one of the soldiers to find out what has happened, but the terror-stricken man hits him in the head with a gun butt. Ironically, the youth has received a red badge of courage from a comrade rather than from the enemy.

With the help of a cheery soldier the youth returns to his own regiment. To his surprise and relief his comrades are unaware of his earlier cowardly behavior. They assume that he became separated from the regiment when he was wounded. The loud soldier, who is no longer a noisy braggart, is very thoughtful and compassionate toward the youth, giving up his own bed so that the youth will have a place to sleep.

The next morning the youth awakens, fully rested after a good night's sleep. The full realization that no one has observed his cowardly behavior helps to restore the youth's confidence and self-pride. The regiment marches to relieve another unit. When the enemy attacks, the youth fights so fanatically that his companions call him a "war devil." After a brief lull in the battle the regiment, with the youth and the loud soldier in the lead, charges the enemy position. When the color sergeant is killed, the youth and the loud soldier save the flag. After a short dispute, the youth keeps the flag. Then the battered regiment retreats to form up for another charge. The youth, still carrying the flag, is in the forefront of the final charge. The remnants of the regiment overrun the enemy position and capture the enemy's flag. The sound of gunfire gradually dies out, and orders come for the regiment to retreat, giving up the ground that they have won at such great cost. The youth and the loud soldier, who have both matured considerably, accept this reversal philosophically.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stephen Crane (1871-1900) was born in Newark, N.J., the son of a Methodist minister. He attended preparatory school

and studied for one year at Syracuse University. His major study for a literary career came from free-lance writing. His first book, *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets* was published during this free-lance period and shows the degree of poverty with which he came in contact.

Because Crane did not conform to the pattern of the day and because of his sympathy for the poor, he was personally misunderstood. His life was not a happy one. He was living abroad when he died at the age of 29 in Germany.

CRITIC'S CORNER

With its publication in 1895, *The Red Badge of Courage* brought almost instant international fame to Crane. The story and the manner in which it depicts the life of a raw recruit in the Civil War was widely hailed by veterans of the great conflict for the ability to actually show combat as it was. This was even more astounding since Crane had never seen combat himself and had to draw solely from his own vivid imagination and his readings.

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this book. Page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. Nothing whatever about returning with his shield or on it (p. 5)

(Student readers may need to be reminded of the youth's romantic conception of war. They will recall that he had dreamed of a heroic "Greeklike struggle." When the greatest of the Greek warriors, the Spartans, went off to war, their wives and mothers expected them to come back with their shields or on them. A warrior returning with his shield would be victorious because if he had fled, he would have abandoned his heavy shield. The other alternative for the Spartan warrior was to have his corpse brought back to Sparta carried on his shield. The youth is disappointed over his leavetaking because his mother is involved in homely tasks, gives simple advice, and therefore does not encourage the youth in his romantic illusions.)

2. Red Badge of Courage (p. 50)

(The youth is amid wounds but has no wound—no red badge of courage. He feels that the soldiers can see his shame. His strange notion is that persons with torn bodies are peculiarly happy, and the youth desires a wound so that he can be happy also and show the world a wound as his badge of courage.)

3. Red sun was pasted in the sky like a wafer. (p. 55)

(If readers perceive the wafer as a communion wafer, then some religious symbolism is suggested. The red sun "pasted in the sky like a wafer" could be a symbol for the tall soldier's (Jim's) wound and sacrifice—a sacrifice that starts the youth on his road to

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

redemption. There are other religious allusions that support a symbolic interpretation. For example—"the passion of his wounds," "his bloody hands and wounded side," and "something rite-like in these movements of the doomed soldier" all suggest the possibility of a comparison between Christ's sacrifice and Jim Conklin's.

It should be pointed out that symbolic interpretation is not essential to an appreciation of the novel. In fact, some critics reject any symbolism in this line and regard it as simple naturalistic description.)

4. Greek-like struggles would be no more. Men were better, or more timid. Secular and religious education had effaced the throat-grappling instinct, or else firm finance held in check the passions. (p. 7)

(The youth reflects that the great, heroic battles are of the past. Men like Achilles and Hector are no more. Modern civilization has made men afraid. The church and the school have eliminated the savage instincts of the warrior hero. Possibly the growing concern for business and trade—the growth of the middle class—has destroyed the uplifting nature of glorious war.)

The more critical reader may observe that these thoughts reveal the immaturity of the youth at this time. Some may point out that the wars of the past were, in their way, just as dirty and ignoble for the ordinary soldier as the wars of today. Unfortunately, history reveals no change in the basic nature of man. He is no better, but he probably is no worse. The glorification of the past and the desire to live in a bygone day is fairly typical of an immature, romantic dreamer. (Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Miniver Cheevy" might be read by one or all students so that they might compare the similar attitudes of the youth and Miniver Cheevy, who "dreamed of Thebes and Camelot, and Priam's neighbors." The poem may be found in many American literature anthologies.)

5. He felt a quiet manhood, non-assertive but of sturdy and strong blood. He knew that he would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and found that after all, it was but the great death. He was a man. (pp. 124-125)

(The youth feels convinced that he can now face death without flinching. His newly acquired manhood is not bombastic but deep and quiet. The youth has come close to the great death and recognizes it as merely the natural end of all things.)

The change in the youth is psychological. With maturity, he has achieved perspective. He can now live with himself—with his act of cowardice and his act of courage. The future seem optimistic.

Readers must decide for themselves whether the change in the youth is temporary or permanent.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and

you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Plot

Describe what happens to the youth between his flight and his return to the regiment.

(Because of his flight, the youth is filled with great shame and now wanders and suffers experiences that profoundly affect him.)

1. He first tries to escape into the deep woods and derive comfort from nature. In a natural chapel he finds a rotting corpse that horrifies him and sends him back closer to the battle area.

2. He joins a column of wounded soldiers where he meets the tattered soldier and witnesses the death of his friend, the tall soldier, who had remained with the regiment after the youth had fled.

3. Grief-stricken, the youth finds himself nearer the battle. He is afraid to return to his regiment because his comrades might ridicule him.

4. Trying to find out what is happening in the battle the youth stops a retreating Union soldier. The soldier in his panic cracks the youth in the head with a rifle butt.

5. Now wounded, the youth is befriended by a soldier with a cheery voice, who leads him back to his regiment (pp. 64-70)

Theme

What seems to be Crane's attitude towards war itself? Support your answer with evidence from the novel. Would the wars of the Twentieth century change or confirm Crane's attitude? Give reasons for your conclusions.

(Crane neither condemns nor glorifies war. His attitude seems completely objective. If there is an attitude, it is that war is a part of the natural order of things—a part of nature. Like nature herself, war is indifferent to human life and completely irrational. As was indicated earlier, none of the men or officers makes any reference to fighting for a noble cause. Mad flight and courageous fighting both seem to grow out of the same emotions. The men never know the reasons for their orders and are moved back and forth in apparent aimlessness. The composite body of men, like a monstrous reptile, seems to move without conscious thought. When fighting is taking place, Crane frequently uses animal images to describe the men—

To the youth the fighters resembled animals tossed for a death struggle into a dark pit. This further emphasizes the concept that war is a part of indifferent and irrational nature. War then is incompatible with truly civilized behavior.

It is doubtful that modern warfare would change Crane's concept of war. In fact, some readers might observe that modern warfare, as the result of automatic weapons and systems, may give a soldier even less conscious control or understanding. He is more like a part of a machine and machines are also indifferent to man.)

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

Style

Explain how Crane makes use of color. Is this effective?

(On nearly every page, Crane makes some reference to color. The constant repetition of color words may create the impression of a painting rather than that of a story. The most predominant color is red. In the first paragraph the reader is made to see "the red eyelike gleam of hostile camp fires." Throughout the novel red is used to describe blood, fire, rage, and the color of the flag. (An interesting quantitative study might be to count the total number of times Crane uses the words red, or crimson.) Crane almost overwhelms his reader with color. Below are just some of the phrases that students may find: . . . blackforms . . . the crimson rays . . . crimson roar . . . red of blood and black of passion . . . liquid brown mud . . . red sickness of battle . . . deep murder red . . . suit of yellowish brown, etc.)

Irony

Crane makes extensive use of irony in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Site specific examples of irony in the novel.

(The novel is rich in irony, and students should be able to find many examples. The following are a few possibilities.

a. *The youth had believed that real war was a series of death struggles, but the only foes he has seen were some pickets along the river bank, who were a friendly, philosophical lot.*

b. *The youth had the impression that the colonel and his horse are gigantic. Before the general, the colonel stammers like a little boy.*

c. *The officers fail to stand in the picturesque attitudes that the youth had expected.*

d. *The tattered soldier babbles about his friend, who died without realizing that he had been mortally wounded. Ironically, the tattered soldier slips into delirium and is dying without knowing it.*

e. *The whole battle is ironic—the youth flees because he believes the regiment will panic, but the regiment holds. Later, the youth and his regiment succeed in capturing an enemy position, but they are ordered back to where they started because the Union Army had lost the battle which is ironic because the Union Army wins the war.)*

Setting

There are many references in the novel to nature. What seems to be Crane's concept of man's relationship to nature? Do you agree?

(At times nature seems to provide a contrast to the ugliness of war. On p. 43 . . . the youth felt a flash of astonishment at the blue, pure sky and the sun gleaming on the trees and fields. It was surprising that Nature had gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment. At other times nature seems to reflect the bloody events.

The red sun was pasted in the sky like a wafer. (p. 55) The description on page 44 and vivid description of the rotting corpse in the beautiful natural chapel effectively establish Crane's naturalistic viewpoint—a viewpoint that portrays nature as neither friendly nor hostile, but indifferent. Life is an accident, and nature is unconcerned because nature is unthinking. The following short poem by Stephen Crane explicitly shows nature's indifference to man:

A man said to the Universe:

"Sir, I exist!"

"However," replied the universe,

"The fact has not created in me

A sense of obligation."

Readers should be encouraged to reflect on this viewpoint and take issue with it if they see fit.)

BILLY BUDD

SYNOPSIS

At noon on a hot July day in 1797, the year of the Great Mutiny, the British merchant ship, the *Rights of Man*, as it nears home port, is stopped by a British man-of-war, the H.M.S. *Indomitable*. Lieutenant Ratcliffe pounces on an orphaned twenty-one-year-old foretopman, Billy Budd, also known as "Baby Budd," and forces him to join his crew. Cheerfully, Billy bids farewell to the men and submits to impressment, although Captain Graveling complains that he is losing his best man.

Billy receives a similar assignment aboard the *Indomitable* and easily makes friends with officers and crew. Only one person, John Claggart, the master-at-arms, dislikes and envies him, although he, too, liked Billy well enough when Billy first came aboard and continues to give the appearance of approval and friendship. Billy, who is

somewhat naive, is surprised when he is accused of simple infractions, such as spilling soup. He seeks the advice of the Dansker, an amiable Scandinavian and veteran sailor, who warns Billy that Claggart, whom he refers to as "Jemmy Legs," is deliberately finding fault.

With the aid of false information from a corporal named Squeak, a disreputable informer, Claggart builds his case against the handsome sailor. One night as he sleeps on deck, Billy is asked to join a group of similarly impressed sailors in a mutiny, but he becomes agitated and stutters out his refusal, threatening to toss the petitioning afterguardsman into the sea. Bill discusses the incident with the Dansker and decides not to report it. Claggart implies to Captain Edward Fairfax "Starry" Vere that Billy was involved in the planned insurrection. Vere, doubtful of Billy's complicity in mutiny, decides to pursue the matter discreetly in his quarters.

BILLY BUDD

When Billy is forced to face his accuser, he is again unable to express himself because strong emotion causes him to stammer. In the heat of his frustration, Billy hits Claggart on the forehead and kills him. Captain Vere, despite the fact that he sympathizes with Billy, convenes the ship's officers and tries Billy according to naval regulations. Because other English vessels have suffered uprisings and because England is at war with France, Billy is made an example and found guilty. Claggart's body is committed to the sea.

Billy remains in irons under guard during the night. The chaplain attempts to counsel the condemned sailor, but Billy appears to be in a trance. Returning at midnight, the chaplain tries to explain the theology of salvation. He departs from the uncomprehending foretopman by kissing him on the cheek. The next day, all crew members are summoned to watch the execution. Billy is hanged at dawn from the yardarm and dies blessing Captain Vere. Billy's body is wrapped in his hammock and buried at sea.

Later, the *Indomitable* engages in a battle against the French ship *Atheiste* in the Mediterranean. Captain Vere is mortally wounded by a musketball and is taken ashore at Gibraltar. Before his death, Captain Vere twice murmurs Billy's name. Rumors in the naval chronical distort the facts of the incident, claiming that Billy, a foreigner, stabbed Claggart, a respectable middle-aged British officer. The crew, like Captain Vere, continues to support their dead comrade's memory and keep as a memento of his execution a bit of the wooden spar on which he was hanged. They write a poem from Billy's point of view which describes his execution and burial.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Herman Melville (1819-1891), descendent of two illustrious American families, received little literary acclaim during his lifetime. Following setbacks in family finances he went to sea at the age of 20. His experiences on the *Acushnet*, a whaler, formed the nucleus of one of his most famous sea stories, *Typee*. His most famous novel, *Moby Dick*, published in 1851, earning for itself the name "that wicked book," was rejected by the reading public. His second best work, *Billy Budd*, was discovered in his desk after Melville's death and published in 1924.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Billy Budd embodies Melville's belief that natural goodness attains ultimate victory over evil, a philosophy which bolstered the author during his long neglect by the public. The success of this tale of arbitrary justice produced revivals in the form of drama, film, and opera. Its haunting beauty has found a place among critics who continue to argue its meaning. For the reader it offers a subject worthy of high regard: a study of the nature of goodness and innocence.

MEANING STUDY

Below are words and phrases that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning each has in *Billy*

Budd. Page numbers refer you to the context from which each item is taken.

1. monomania (p. 50)
(a mental disorder such as Claggart's hatred of Billy in which a rational individual demonstrates irrationality on one subject.)
2. frigate (p. 50)
(a fast, medium-sized sailing ship of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which carries 28 to 60 guns.)
3. dog watch (p. 51)
(either of two duty periods half the length of the normal period, one from 4 to 6 P.M., and the other from 6 to 8 P.M.)
4. foretop (p. 14)
(the platform at the head of a ship's front mast.)
5. mutiny (p. 19)
(an open resistance of soldiers or seamen against the authority of their commanders.)
6. impressed (pp. 9-10)
(forced or coerced into service of the public, a practice of the eighteenth century particularly aimed at relieving shortages of manpower by the strong-armed removal of merchant sailors from free duty to an enforced period of service to the military.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. Provide the defense of your opinions with references taken from the book.

Plot

At what point in the story does Claggart accuse Billy of mutinous activity?

(*The Indomitable, substituting for a suitable fighting ship, gives chase to an enemy frigate. Following the escape of the enemy ship, Captain Vere paces the deck "somewhat chaffed at the failure of the pursuit." At this time Claggart chooses to hover at the Captain's elbow to await an audience so that he may report Billy for misconduct.*)

Character

Describe Captain Vere's death.

(*Captain Vere receives a deathblow aboard the Indomitable on the return passage to the English fleet. Upon active engagement with the French battleship Atheiste the captain is "hit by a musketball from the porthole of the enemy's main cabin." He is carried below and laid alongside the other wounded until he can be put ashore. Lingered a few days under the influence of painkilling drugs, Captain Vere murmurs, "Billy Budd, Billy Budd" shortly before his death.*)

Irony

How does the author incorporate irony in Billy's farewell to the merchant crew?

BILLY BUDD

(Billy's salutation, "And good-by to you too, old Rights of Man," underscores the ironic meaning of the ship's name, taken from the writings of Thomas Paine, the great pamphleteer of the Revolutionary War era. Billy receives no human rights, no opportunity to choose his destiny, and certainly no escape from sure punishment for his crime. The author's subsequent remarks about the lieutenant's retort indicate that Billy is incapable of satiric intent, insinuation, or "sinister dexterity." At this point in the narrative the author juxtaposes the innocence of the hero alongside the gravity of a situation which allows impressment of human beings. In respect to Billy's short lifespan, he knows no "rights of man.")

Style

Why does the author include the news dispatch?

(The naval authorities version of the story indicates an awareness on their part of Billy's innocence of any wrongdoing. The fictional details strain at justification for the execution, emphasizing how Claggart has been "vindictively stabbed in the heart." A further removal of facts replaces the identities of both men with outrageous exaggerations—that Billy was "no Englishman, but one of those aliens adopting English cognomens" and that Claggart was "respectable and discreet." The tone of the

article suggests premeditation and falsification in an attempt to inform the reader of "the enormity of the crime and the extreme depravity of the criminal." The conclusion, "Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard H.M.S. Indomitable," ignores the enormity of the crime of impressment and the extreme depravity of the English military in its attempts to provide able-bodied sailors by whatever methods necessary.)

What is the effect of so little dialogue in the narrative?

(Because Herman Melville chooses to narrate the events in his own voice, he cultivates a mythic quality in the story. The characters assume the identities of protagonist and antagonist from Greek mythology, representing the deeper, more meaningful aspects of human relationships. The lack of trivial conversation reduces the reader's involvement with peripheral characters. The overall effect is one of distillation—the reduction of the elements of plot to barest minimum for intense scrutiny and internalization. The reader comes away from the story of Billy Budd with a realization that Melville has offered ringside seats to his audience and then treated them to more human drama than they might have chosen to absorb. In summary, Billy Budd is hardly reading for a summer's day; rather, it is the revelation of consequences suffered by human beings caught up in any political situation which negates the worth and dignity of a single man.)

THE SCARLET LETTER

VOCABULARY TEST

Locate within this paragraph synonyms for each word below. Place your answers in the blanks.

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison. In accordance with this rule, it may safely be assumed that the forefathers of Boston had built the first prison house somewhere in the vicinity of Cornhill almost as seasonably as they marked out the first burial ground, on Isaac Johnson's lot and round about his grave, which subsequently became the nucleus of all the congregated sepulchres in the old churchyard of King's Chapel. Certain it is that, some fifteen or twenty years after the settlement of the town, the wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. The rust on the ponderous iron-work of its oaken door looked more antique than anything else in the New World. Like all that pertains to crime, it seemed never to have known a youthful era. Before this ugly edifice, and between it and the wheel-track of the street was a grass plot, much overgrown with burdock, pigweed, apple peru, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society, a prison. (pp. 55-56)

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. _____ friendly | 9. _____ neighborhood |
| 2. _____ tombs | 10. _____ mete |
| 3. _____ view | 11. _____ center |
| 4. _____ refers | 12. _____ untouched |
| 5. _____ continually | 13. _____ amassed |
| 6. _____ building | 14. _____ greenery |
| 7. _____ heavy | 15. _____ paradise |
| 8. _____ founders | |

THE SCARLET LETTER

COMPREHENSION TEST

Part I: True or False (30 points)

In the space provided write **T** if the statement is completely true or write **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. Nathaniel Hawthorne writes the Custom House preface to add to the length of *The Scarlet Letter*.
- _____ 2. Satire is used extensively in the preface to describe the Custom House employees.
- _____ 3. The author enjoys his work there very much.
- _____ 4. Boston in the seventeenth century is the setting for the story.
- _____ 5. Hester Prynne is a young married woman who has had a child from an adulterous relationship.
- _____ 6. Hester refuses to name her child's father.
- _____ 7. Hester's husband demands the death penalty for his wife.
- _____ 8. Her neighbors are sympathetic and help her with her baby.
- _____ 9. An Indian offers to raise the child.
- _____ 10. A physician takes pity on Hester and promises his total support.
- _____ 11. Roger Chillingworth is identified as Hester's husband.
- _____ 12. Arthur Dimmesdale feels that Hester is an evil woman for not naming her lover.
- _____ 13. The Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale develops tuberculosis.
- _____ 14. Hester promises her husband that she will not reveal his identity.
- _____ 15. Chillingworth and Dimmesdale become friends.
- _____ 16. Pearl's father punishes himself for not acknowledging his sin.
- _____ 17. The child is gaily dressed by her mother.
- _____ 18. Pearl lives up to her name as she develops into a spotlessly perfect little girl.
- _____ 19. Hester's lover stands on the scaffold one night to reveal his guilt, but is not exposed.
- _____ 20. Hester's husband cannot discover with certainty who Pearl's father is.
- _____ 21. The distressed Hester finally reveals her husband's name to her lover.
- _____ 22. Pearl knows exactly what the scarlet letter represents and deliberately taunts her mother with it.
- _____ 23. The lovers meet in the forest with the Black Man.
- _____ 24. Hester and her lover decide to stay and face the world whatever the consequences.
- _____ 25. Roger books passage for Europe on a ship docked in Boston harbor.
- _____ 26. Hester cherishes the scarlet letter as a gift from her lover.
- _____ 27. The minister's Election Sermon is solemnly denounced by the other clergymen.
- _____ 28. Roger Chillingworth dies and wills his entire estate to Pearl.
- _____ 29. Hester leaves Boston but returns eventually to live out her life among its people.
- _____ 30. Roger and Hester's lover are buried together.

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Complete each of the following statements with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the phrase in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Nathaniel Hawthorne's ancestors are (a) Puritans (b) Indians (c) Russians.

THE SCARLET LETTER

- _____ 2. He is fired from his job in the Custom House because he is (a) incompetent (b) of the wrong religious background (c) in the wrong political party.
- _____ 3. Hester's child is (a) the offspring of a bad marriage (b) the smartest one in town (c) illegitimate.
- _____ 4. The Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale is (a) Hester's pastor (b) Roger's brother (c) Mistress Hibbins' lover.
- _____ 5. Boston's townsfolk think Hester is (a) a lady of the European nobility (b) an adultress (c) a teacher.
- _____ 6. The governor decides whether or not Hester may be (a) a reliable seamstress (b) an unfit mother (c) a witch.
- _____ 7. Hester's lover refuses to reveal himself because he is (a) a coward (b) a sailor (c) insensitive.
- _____ 8. Roger Chillingworth is (a) a young man (b) deformed (c) Hester's father.
- _____ 9. Hester's lover finally (a) reveals his guilt publicly (b) flees with his Indian friends (c) sails for Europe.
- _____ 10. Hester dies (a) in England (b) in Boston (c) in the forest.

Part III: Matching (20 points)

In the space provided write the letter corresponding to the character or place that applies to the descriptive phrase.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ 1. provides the setting for this story | A. Pearl |
| _____ 2. wears the scarlet letter A on her breast | B. Mistress Hibbins |
| _____ 3. has a sister who is a witch | C. the beadle |
| _____ 4. is the place of public punishment | D. the forest |
| _____ 5. is the beautiful but difficult child of the novel's heroine | E. John Wilson |
| _____ 6. stands with the adulteress' husband in the opening scene | F. the indian |
| _____ 7. is the minister who intercedes for Hester | G. Chillingworth |
| _____ 8. determines to track down the woman's partner in sin | H. the deacon |
| _____ 9. is the woman who is aware of the couple's secret and taunts them | I. Hester Prynne |
| _____ 10. is the source of the supposed evidence which is the basis of this story | J. the governor |
| | K. the Custom House |
| | L. New England |
| | M. the scaffold |
| | N. Dimmesdale |
| | O. the ship's captain |

Part IV: Sequence (10 points)

Decide in what chronological order the incidents listed occurred. In the space provided, number these statements from 1 (first in time) to 5 (last event to occur).

- _____ A. The lovers meet in the forest.
- _____ B. The physician attempts to stop his rival from confessing his guilt on the scaffold.
- _____ C. The adulteress mounts the scaffold alone.
- _____ D. Pearl's future with her mother is jeopardized.
- _____ E. Hester's husband is revealed to her.

Part V: Essay Questions (20 points)

1. Describe how Hawthorne's use of colors—black, red, gray—influences the reader's perception of the moral and emotional tone of *The Scarlet Letter*.
2. Discuss some of the themes presented by the author in this novel.

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

VOCABULARY TEST

Part A:

Complete these quotations taken from the novel with vocabulary words from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. The June rise used to be always luck for me; because as soon as that rise begins here come _____ floating down, and pieces of log rafts. . . .
- _____ 2. A towhead is a sand bar that has cottonwoods on it as thick as _____ teeth.
- _____ 3. There was a clock on the middle of the mantelpiece, with a picture of a town painted on the bottom half of the glass front, and a round place in the middle of it for the sun, and you could see the _____ swinging behind it.
- _____ 4. When we was three-quarters of a mile below we _____ up our signal lantern. . . .
- _____ 5. All of a sudden he _____ all the tea in Boston Harbor overboard, and whacks out a declaration of independence, and dares them to come on.
- _____ 6. I'll answer by doing the Highland fling or the sailor's hornpipe; and you—well, let me see—oh, I've got it—you can do Hamlet's _____.
- _____ 7. He is the thinnest kind of an _____—has come here with a lot of empty names and facts which he picked up somewheres. . . .
- _____ 8. The people that *buys* the property is the suff'ers; because as soon's it's found out 'at we didn't own it—which won't be long after we've slid—the sale won't be _____, and it'll all go back to the estate.
- _____ 9. They tackled missionarying, and _____, and doctoring, and telling fortunes, and a little of everything; but they couldn't seem to have no luck.
- _____ 10. Then we started for the house, and I went in the back door—you only have to pull a _____ latchstring, they don't fasten the doors—but that warn't romantical enough for Tom Sawyer; no way would do him but he must climb up the lightning rod.
- _____ 11. Next day Tom stole a _____ spoon and a brass candlestick in the house, for to make some pens for Jim out of and six tallow candles
- _____ 12. . . . he stormed right along, and said any man that pretended to be an Englishman and couldn't imitate the _____ no better than what he did was a fraud and a liar.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| A. astronomical | F. heaves | K. mesmerizing | P. skiff |
| B. buckskin | G. hoisted | L. pendulum | Q. soliloquy |
| C. cordwood | H. illustrious | M. prevarication | R. temperance |
| D. effusions | I. imposter | N. pewter | S. valid |
| E. harrow | J. lingo | O. renowned | T. vigilance |

Part B:

Using leftover words from the list above, make sentences about Huck's adventures.

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

COMPREHENSION TEST

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match each quotation with the name of the speaker. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Why, where was you raised? Don't you know what a feud is?
- _____ 2. Dat's de good ole Cairo at las', I jis knows it!
- _____ 3. Sarah's my first name. Some calls me Sarah, some calls me Mary.
- _____ 4. I don't deny it, I was most putrified with astonishment when you give me that smack.
- _____ 5. But if only *half* a man—like Buck Harkness, there—shouts 'Lynch him! lynch him!' you're afraid to back down
- _____ 6. Take this six thousand dollars, and invest for me and my sisters any way you want to, and don't give us no receipt for it.
- _____ 7. . . . And here am I, forlorn, torn from my high estate, hunted of men, despised by the cold world, ragged, worn, heartbroken, and degraded to the companionship of felons on a raft!
- _____ 8. Say, when a cow's laying down, which end of her gets up first?
- _____ 9. Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry—why don't you try to behave?
- _____ 10. Say, lemme hear you read.

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Aunt Polly | H. Boggs |
| B. Aunt Sally | I. Jim |
| C. Tom Sawyer | J. Mrs. Judith Loftus |
| D. Buck Grangerford | K. Sid Sawyer |
| E. Colonel Sherburn | L. Mary Jane Wilks |
| F. Duke of Bridgewater | M. Miss Watson |
| G. Huck Finn | N. Pap Finn |

Part II: True/False (30 points)

Mark the following statements **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Huck is moved when he sees Aunt Sally, asleep by the candle at the window.
- _____ 2. The King rescues Huck when Shepherdsons chase Buck from the scene of the ambush.
- _____ 3. Jim receives a bullet in the leg during his escape from Phelps's farm.
- _____ 4. Jim warns that Huck should stay away from water and predicts that he will die by hanging.
- _____ 5. In the skiff that floats by the canoe is a search party looking for Miss Hooker's remains.
- _____ 6. Huck drags a sack of rocks through the yard to prove that he has been murdered and dumped into the river.
- _____ 7. Jim hides Pap's face from Huck in the floating house.
- _____ 8. To save Jim from bounty hunters, Huck paints him blue and hides aboard the *Walter Scott*.
- _____ 9. Huck fails to convince Judith Loftus that he can thread a needle.
- _____ 10. *The Royal Nonesuch* earns enough money for the King and Duke to leave town in triumph.

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

VOCABULARY TEST

Part A:

Match the underlined words in the following quotations with antonyms from the list that follows. Place the letter of your response in the blank at left.

- _____ 1. He stood, erect and tranquil, watching the attack begin against a part of the line that made a blue curve along the side of an adjacent hill.
- _____ 2. The brigade was jaunty and seemed to point a proud thumb at the yelling wood.
- _____ 3. The round red discharges from the guns made a crimson flare and a high, thick smoke.
- _____ 4. Having stirred this prodigious uproar, and, apparently, finding it too prodigious, the brigade, after a little time, came marching airy out again with its fine formation in nowise disturbed.
- _____ 5. They struck savagely and powerfully at each other for a period of minutes, and then the lighter-hued regiments faltered and drew back, leaving the dark-blue lines shouting.
- _____ 6. The splitting crashes swept along the lines until an interminable roar was developed.
- _____ 7. Particular pieces of fence or secure positions behind collections of trees were wrangled over, as gold thrones or pearl bedsteads.
- _____ 8. Many heads surged to and fro, floating upon a pale sea of smoke.
- _____ 9. A knowledge of its faded and jaded condition made the charge appear like a paroxysm, a display of the strength that comes before a final feebleness.
- _____ 10. But they were in a state of frenzy, perhaps because of forgotten vanities, and it made an exhibition of sublime recklessness.
- _____ 11. The space between dwindled to an insignificant distance.
- _____ 12. With this terrible grin of resolution he hugged his precious flag to him and was stumbling and staggering in his design to go the way that led to safety for it.

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. agitated | F. gesticulated | K. selflessness |
| B. agreed | G. ghoul | L. shortlived |
| C. contrivances | H. implosions | M. somber |
| D. doubt | I. paltry | N. subsided |
| E. escalated | J. relaxation | O. swarthy |

Part B:

Paraphrase each of the twelve quotations above into simpler English.

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

COMPREHENSION TEST

Part I: Vocabulary (20 points)

Match each underlined word with its definition listed below. Write the letter of the definition in the space provided.

- _____ 1. A certain light-haired girl grew demure and sad at the sight of his blue and brass.
- _____ 2. A house standing placidly in distant fields had to him an ominous look.
- _____ 3. The youth's old fears of stupidity and incompetence reassailed him.
- _____ 4. A sad silence was upon the little guarding edifice.
- _____ 5. The tall soldier was at the rendezvous.
- _____ 6. A moral vindication was regarded by the youth as a very important thing.
- _____ 7. There was a mighty altercation.
- _____ 8. The corpse would not relinquish its trust.
- _____ 9. These intent regiments apparently were oblivious of all larger purposes of war.
- _____ 10. The third captive preserved a stoical and cold attitude.

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| A. justification | G. impassive |
| B. revenge | H. cowardice |
| C. building | I. fight |
| D. give up | J. shy |
| E. threatening | K. lack of ability |
| F. meeting place | L. totally unaware |

Part II: True or False (10 points)

In the space provided write **T** if the statement is completely true or write **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. The youth suspects that present-day war is not the grand struggle it was in other ages.
- _____ 2. The tall soldier seems terribly worried about how he will behave during the impending battle.
- _____ 3. The loud soldier remains a swaggering braggart throughout the two days of fighting described in the novel.
- _____ 4. After fleeing the battle in panic, the youth seeks consolation in nature.
- _____ 5. The tall soldier falls dead in the road and an artillery wagon runs over his body.
- _____ 6. An enemy bullet grazes the youth's head and provides him with his red badge of courage.
- _____ 7. The youth learns that neither courage nor cowardice is important if neither is observed by others.
- _____ 8. The attitude of the officers shows that in war individuals have no importance.
- _____ 9. In *The Red Badge of Courage* Stephen Crane states clearly and explicitly that war is a monstrous evil.
- _____ 10. *The Red Badge of Courage* is more concerned with the psychological impact of war than with war itself.

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Complete each of the following statements with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Before his first battle the youth's chief problem is (a) fear of pain (b) fear of death (c) how his comrades will react to a real battle (d) how he will react to a real battle.
- _____ 2. The columns of marching men are **not** described as (a) moving monsters (b) long serpents (c) motley collection of insects (d) huge crawling reptiles.
- _____ 3. During the first battle the officers and men of the regiment are described as fighting in (a) heroic poses (b) picturesque attitudes (c) every conceivable posture (d) grim, disciplined uniformity.
- _____ 4. Shortly after his panic and flight from battle the youth tries to justify his action by telling himself that (a) the rest of the regiment panicked (b) he was acting in accordance with the natural law of self-preservation (c) his first duty was to preserve his life so that he could fight again (d) his mother would be heartbroken if he were killed.
- _____ 5. When the youth returns to his regiment, the loud soldier (a) condemns him for his cowardice (b) forgives his cowardice (c) boasts about his own bravery in battle (d) treats him thoughtfully and compassionately.
- _____ 6. The climax of the novel occurs when the youth (a) runs away in panic (b) witnesses the death of the tall soldier (c) finally receives his wound (d) leads his regiment in an infantry charge.
- _____ 7. The novel ends with (a) total victory for the Union Army (b) the regiment's total destruction (c) the regiment's digging into its new position (d) the regiment's orderly retreat.
- _____ 8. An underlying idea in *The Red Badge of Courage* is that nature is (a) a comfort to suffering humanity (b) hostile to humanity (c) indifferent to suffering humanity (d) friendly to humanity.
- _____ 9. *The Red Badge of Courage* suggests that courage is (a) absolute fearlessness in battle (b) temporary absence of selfishness (c) knowing when to run and knowing when to fight (d) absolute loyalty to one's ideals.
- _____ 10. The best descriptive label for *The Red Badge of Courage* is (a) action novel (b) psychological novel (c) moralistic novel (d) anti-war novel.

Part IV: Sequence (10 points)

In the space provided write the letter of the following events in the order in which they occur in the novel.

1. _____ A. The youth deserts the dying tattered soldier.
2. _____ B. The regiment charges an enemy position.
3. _____ C. The loud soldier gives the youth a yellow envelope to deliver to his family.
4. _____ D. A panic-stricken comrade hits the youth in the head with a gun butt.
5. _____ E. A cheery soldier guides the youth back to his regiment.

Part V: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. Is the youth, Henry Fleming, a coward or a hero? Use evidence from the novel to support your opinion.

2. Does *The Red Badge of Courage* have more than one setting? Explain fully.

BILLY BUDD

VOCABULARY TEST

Part A:

Match the underlined words in the following quotations with antonyms from the list that follows. Place the letter of your response in the blank at left.

- _____ 1. Although Billy was not aware of it, the fellow, with a sidelong watchful glance, had perceived Billy first
- _____ 2. Captain Vere who had been seated for a time rose to his feet, addressing the interrogator.
- _____ 3. Reasonable discontent growing out of practical grievances in the fleet had been ignited into irrational combustion
- _____ 4. But why leave it to them? Why not subpoena as well the clerical proficient?
- _____ 5. Shrewd ones may also think it but natural in Billy to set about sounding some of the other impressed men of the ship
- _____ 6. The night so luminous on the spardeck but otherwise on the cavernous ones below, levels so like the the tiered galleries in a coalmine—the luminous night passed away.
- _____ 7. . . . the purser, a rather ruddy rotund person more accurate as an accountant than profound as a Philosopher, said at mess to the surgeon, "What testimony to the force lodged in willpower. . . ."
- _____ 8. But this muscular spasm you speak of, is not that in a degree more or less invariable in these cases.
- _____ 9. The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary.
- _____ 10. To the surprise of the ship's company, though much to the lieutenant's satisfaction Billy made no demur.
- _____ 11. For his gallantry in the West Indian waters as flag-lieutenant under Rodney in that admiral's crowning victory over De Grasse, he was made a post-captain.
- _____ 12. There was no moon as yet; a haze obscured the starlight.

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| A. acquiescence | F. dense | K. overlooked |
| B. answerer | G. elongated | L. prefigured |
| C. banish | H. illuminated | M. satisfaction |
| D. control | I. observance | N. wan |
| E. cowardice | J. overcast | O. worthless |

Part B:

Paraphrase each of the twelve quotations above into simpler English.

BILLY BUDD

COMPREHENSION TEST

Part I: Multiple Choice (50 points)

Complete each of the following statements with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Claggart uses Squeak to (a) invent comments that Billy has supposedly made (b) find the person who has spilled the soup (c) learn who is calling Claggart *Jemmy Legs* (d) lay little traps for Billy.
- _____ 2. Captain Vere indicates to the surgeon that (a) he doubts Claggart is dead yet (b) Claggart's death must be kept secret from everyone on board (c) he must drag the body into the compartment where Billy waits (d) Billy is innocent, but must hang for his crime.
- _____ 3. The one flaw which keeps Billy from being a conventional hero is (a) his lack of a father (b) his stuttering (c) his feminine, adolescent face (d) his illiteracy.
- _____ 4. After Billy recognizes the afterguardsman in daylight, Billy (a) fails to report the incident to the authorities (b) nods in friendly fashion toward the conspirator (c) makes a casual reply to him (d) labels the man as a *cat's paw*.
- _____ 5. Captain Vere turns his back and then begins to pace to-and-fro after (a) Claggart implicates William Budd (b) the surgeon finds no life in the body (c) the three officers sit silently and exchange looks (d) the enemy ship escapes the *Indomitable*.
- _____ 6. Rumor concerning Claggart's past maintains that he (a) never talks about his previous life (b) has been involved in a swindle (c) is an insolvent debtor (d) has been discovered stealing among the hammocks during a night watch.
- _____ 7. The senior lieutenant notices that (a) Captain Vere is old enough to be Billy's father (b) the captain of marines is an unusual choice for service in naval court (c) the condemned man suffers less than does Captain Vere (d) the men cannot know "the responsibilities of the sleepless man on the bridge."
- _____ 8. After the incident of the mess, Claggart (a) is eaten away by deep desires to take action against Billy (b) begins to smile knowingly at the after-guardsman (c) urges the armorer and the captain of the hold to question all impressed sailors (d) causes more minor incidents which are meant to worry Billy.
- _____ 9. The surgeon thinks Captain Vere should (a) question Billy in private (b) report his suspicions directly to the captain of marines (c) delay judgment and refer the case to the admiral (d) settle the matter with promptness.
- _____ 10. In his address to his men Captain Vere (a) comments on the consequences of violating discipline (b) states the facts of the case (c) warns the men about the dangers of mutiny (d) calls the crew to a meeting in his quarters.
- _____ 11. The shipmaster regrets Billy's impressment into service aboard the *Indomitable* because (a) Billy makes no comment about leaving the merchant ship (b) Billy has brought peace to the quarreling crew members (c) the carpenter is making a special chest-of-drawers for him (d) Billy has never been instructed in naval decorum.
- _____ 12. At his hanging Billy receives (a) kind treatment from the chaplain (b) a blessing from Captain Vere (c) the farewell of his friend Donald (d) no opportunity for a last word.
- _____ 13. Captain Vere notes that a sailor's buttons attest to (a) the rigor of martial law (b) the clash of military duty with moral scruple (c) an obligation to compassion (d) his allegiance to the King.
- _____ 14. Billy shows respect for the old Dansker because (a) the old sailor renames him "Baby" (b) Billy fears he will suffer punishment similar to the afterguardsman (c) the old man is wise and experienced (d) Billy depends on the old man's defense against "Jemmy Legs."

BILLY BUDD

- _____ 15. When Claggart reports a possible mutiny (a) Captain Vere refuses to be unduly disturbed by the possibility (b) Captain Vere is surprised at Billy's lack of tact (c) Lieutenant Ratcliffe recalls Billy's farewell to the crew of the *Rights of Man* (d) Captain Vere congratulates Lieutenant Ratcliffe for selecting "a King's bargain."
- _____ 16. Other officers refer to the Captain as "Starry Vere" because of (a) his opinions about the recent mutinies (b) his isolation from them (c) his bachelor life (d) his bookish nature.
- _____ 17. Captain Vere plans to keep the questioning a secret by (a) sending Albert to fetch Billy (b) threatening Claggart with the yardarm for false testimony (c) refusing to hear Claggart's charge in public (d) approaching Billy while he is still on watch.
- _____ 18. The first lieutenant claims he believes Billy (a) after the foretopman denies he is a part of a mutiny (b) when Billy explains his speech impediment (c) after Billy describes the cause of the deed as a mystery (d) when Billy acknowledges Captain Vere's charges but not Claggart's.
- _____ 19. Claggart refers sarcastically to Billy as "handsome" after (a) Billy has problems stowing his bag (b) Billy announces that "Jemmy Legs is down on me!" (c) Billy spills soup on the deck (d) he exclaims to Billy, "Look where you go!"
- _____ 20. In the last hours before his death, Billy (a) witnesses the burial-at-sea of his victim (b) lies in irons between two guns of the upper gundeck (c) questions the chaplain about salvation (d) kisses the chaplain on the cheek.
- _____ 21. The lieutenant falteringly suggests (a) a mitigated penalty (b) hanging Billy in the early morning watch (c) that they condemn Billy or let him go (d) that Billy's intent is not pertinent to the case.
- _____ 22. The story of Billy Budd takes place shortly before (a) the Great Mutiny at Spithead (b) the introduction of firearms to Europe (c) Nelson's victory at Trafalgar (d) the *Monitor's* defeat of the *Merrimac*.
- _____ 23. Red Pepper, the forecastleman, agrees that (a) impressed sailors should band together (b) the afterguardsman deserves discipline for sneaking around (c) Billy stutters when he is angry (d) it is too hot to sleep below deck.
- _____ 24. Captain Vere's command to Billy that he defend himself results in (a) a mysterious darkening of Billy's bulging eyes from violet to purple (b) Billy's inability to breathe (c) Billy's refusal to speak (d) a single rapid blow of Billy's right hand.
- _____ 25. During the incident precipitated by the spilling of the soup, Claggart shows an inkling of (a) intellectualism (b) envy (c) secretiveness (d) punctiliousness.

Part II: Match (12 points)

Which character speaks each line from the book?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| _____ 1. A man-trap may be under his ruddy-tipped daisies. | A. afterguardsman |
| _____ 2. There now, who says that Jemmy Legs is down on me? | B. Billy Budd |
| _____ 3. Slip into the lee forechains, Billy, there is something in the wind. | C. Captain Graveling |
| _____ 4. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd; and it's the happy family here. | D. Captain Vere |
| _____ 5. Do you come to me, Master-at-Arms, with so foggy a tale? | E. Claggart |
| _____ 6. Well, something have been the matter for you st-st-stuttered. | F. forecastleman |
| _____ 7. Fated boy, what have you done! | G. naval chronicle |
| _____ 8. I have eaten the King's bread and I am true to the King. | |
| _____ 9. But let not warm hearts betray heads that should be cool. | |
| _____ 10. The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary. | |

THE SCARLET LETTER

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. congenial | 6. edifice | 11. nucleus |
| 2. sepulchres | 7. ponderous | 12. virgin |
| 3. aspect | 8. forefathers | 13. congregated |
| 4. pertains | 9. vicinity | 14. vegetation |
| 5. invariably | 10. allot | 15. Utopia |

COMPREHENSION TEST ANSWER KEY

Part I: True or False (30 points)

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 11. T | 21. T |
| 2. T | 12. F | 22. F |
| 3. F | 13. F | 23. F |
| 4. T | 14. T | 24. F |
| 5. T | 15. T | 25. T |
| 6. T | 16. T | 26. F |
| 7. F | 17. T | 27. F |
| 8. F | 18. F | 28. T |
| 9. F | 19. T | 29. T |
| 10. F | 20. F | 30. F |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. B |
| 2. C | 7. A |
| 3. C | 8. B |
| 4. A | 9. A |
| 5. B | 10. B |

Part III: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. L | 6. F |
| 2. I | 7. N |
| 3. J | 8. G |
| 4. M | 9. B |
| 5. A | 10. K |

Part IV: Sequence (10 points)

- A. 4
- B. 5
- C. 1
- D. 3
- E. 2

Part V: Essay Questions (20 points)

Answers will vary.

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. C | 5. F | 9. K |
| 2. E | 6. Q | 10. B |
| 3. L | 7. I | 11. N |
| 4. G | 8. S | 12. J |

COMPREHENSION TEST ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. L |
| 2. I | 7. F |
| 3. G | 8. J |
| 4. B | 9. M |
| 5. E | 10. N |

Part II: True/False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T | 11. T |
| 2. F | 7. T | 12. T |
| 3. F | 8. F | 13. T |
| 4. T | 9. T | 14. F |
| 5. F | 10. F | 15. F |

Part III: Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Aunt Polly | 6. deaf |
| 2. Buck | 7. testament |
| 3. King | 8. Pap |
| 4. coffin | 9. Tom |
| 5. Jim | 10. letter |

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- 1. A 5. O 9. J
- 2. M 6. L 10. K
- 3. H 7. B 11. E
- 4. I 8. N 12. D

COMPREHENSION TEST ANSWER KEY

Part I: Vocabulary (20 points)

- 1. J 6. A
- 2. E 7. I
- 3. K 8. D
- 4. C 9. L
- 5. F 10. G

Part II: True or False (10 points)

- 1. T 6. F
- 2. F 7. T
- 3. F 8. T
- 4. T 9. F
- 5. F 10. T

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- 1. D 6. C
- 2. C 7. D
- 3. C 8. C
- 4. B 9. B
- 5. D 10. B

Part IV: Sequence (10 points)

- 1. C. The loud soldier gives the youth a yellow envelope to deliver to his family.
- 2. A. The youth deserts the dying tattered soldier.
- 3. D. A panic-stricken comrade hits the youth in the head with a gun butt.
- 4. E. A cheery soldier guides the youth back to his regiment.
- 5. B. The regiment charges an enemy position.

Part V: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.

BILLY BUDD

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- 1. K 7. N
- 2. B 8. D
- 3. M 9. O
- 4. C 10. A
- 5. F 11. E
- 6. J 12. H

COMPREHENSION TEST ANSWER KEY

Part I: Multiple Choice

- 1. D 6. B 11. B 16. D 21. A
- 2. D 7. C 12. A 17. A 22. C
- 3. B 8. A 13. D 18. D 23. B
- 4. A 9. C 14. C 19. C 24. D
- 5. C 10. B 15. A 20. B 25. B

Part II: Matching

- 1. E 7. D
- 2. B 8. B
- 3. A 9. D
- 4. C 10. G
- 5. D 11. D
- 6. F 12. B

Part III: True/False

- 1. T 8. T
- 2. F 9. T
- 3. T 10. F
- 4. F 11. F
- 5. F 12. T
- 6. T 13. F
- 7. T

Part IV: Essay Questions (25 points)

Answers will vary.



A DIVISION OF HERTZBERG NEW METHOD, INC.

PERMA-BOUND • VANDALIA ROAD • JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS 62650

Call toll free 1-800-637-6581