

The Scarlet Letter Literary Device

Writer: Nathaniel Hawthorne | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Symbols

The Scarlet Letter "A": At first, the scarlet letter "A" marks Hester's shame and punishment. Over time, it becomes a sign of her endurance, compassion, and ability. The same symbol that condemns her turns into one that honors her strength.

The Scaffold: The scaffold is the stage of truth in the story. Hester's public shame, Dimmesdale's secret guilt, and his final confession all happen there. It represents confession, moral judgment, and the exposure of hidden sin.

The Meteor: The meteor that lights the sky in the shape of an "A" reflects divine awareness. To Dimmesdale, it reminds him of his guilt; to others, it means "Angel." The symbol shows how signs can carry different meanings for different hearts.

Pearl: Pearl is the living symbol of Hester's sin and love. She is wild and pure at once—born from wrongdoing yet representing innocence. Through Pearl, Hester's shame becomes her greatest treasure and moral strength.

The Rosebush by the Prison Door: The rosebush blooming beside the dark prison door symbolizes hope and moral beauty. It suggests that even in a world of sin and punishment, there can still be kindness, forgiveness, and grace.