

## *The Scarlet Letter* — Vocabulary

abomination - anything shamefully disgusting or vile; polluted, sinful wickedness

abstruse - difficult to understand; recondite

accost - to approach and speak to boldly or aggressively, as with a demand or request; to solicit for sex

adduce - to cite as an example or means of proof in an argument

admonish - to reprove gently but earnestly; to counsel (another) against something to be avoided; to remind of something forgotten or disregarded, as an obligation or a responsibility.

ascetic - self-denying and austere; a person dedicated to self-denial

assimilate - to incorporate and absorb into the mind: assimilate knowledge; to make similar; cause to resemble; to absorb (immigrants or a culturally distinct group) into the prevailing culture.

auspicious - suggestive of something beneficial that will likely occur in the future

austere - unadorned, bare; unembellished; severely simple; strict or severe in discipline

baggage - a romping, saucy girl; a woman of loose morals

besmirch - to stain, to sully, to soil

blight - a withering or mildewing, or a stoppage of growth in the whole or a part of something (especially a plant); anything which frustrates one's plans or withers one's hopes; that which impairs or destroys

cabalistic - having a secret or hidden meaning; occult

callous - hard and unfeeling

caprice - an impulse change of mind

commiseration - shared pity or sorrow

consecrate - to make sacred

conspicuous - easy to perceive, obvious; standing out

contagion - any disease easily transmitted by contact

contrived - (adj) too obviously the result of planning or forethought; not spontaneous

contumely - haughty and contemptuous rudeness in speech or manner

deleterious - having a harmful effect; injurious, as in the deleterious effects of smoking

denizen- one who frequents a particular place, as in a bar and its denizens

deportment - manner of conduct or behavior

derisive - vocally abusive; expressing contempt or ridicule

despondent - lacking hope or courage; dejected

dissemble - to conceal the truth of one's feelings or motives; to feign or disguise

eccentric - departing from a recognized, conventional, or established norm or pattern; odd; unconventional

effervescent - bubbling, gay, sparkling

effluence - something that flows out or forth; an emanation

eldritch - strange or unearthly; eerie

emaciated - extremely thin—to the point of illness

eminent - of high rank, station, or quality; noteworthy

emolument - payment for an office or employment; compensation

entice - to lure; to attract by arousing desire

erudition - scholarly achievement

exhort - to urge by strong, often stirring argument, admonition, advice, or appeal

fitful - intermittently stopping and starting

founder - to sink below the surface of the water, as in the ship struck a reef and foundered; to fail utterly, as in he reached the college level but foundered

glower - to stare with sullen anger

gules - the color red, indicated on a blazon (coat of arms) by vertical lines

heterodox - departing from the usual beliefs or doctrines

heterogeneous - not homogeneous; completely different; incongruous

ignominy - shame; dishonor

imbibe - to drink

impropriety - the quality or condition of being improper; an improper act.

importunate - troublesomely urgent or persistent in requesting; pressingly entreating, as in an importunate job seeker

indifference - apathy demonstrated by an absence of emotional reactions; lack of concern

indefeasible - incapable of being annulled or made void

iniquity - gross immorality or injustice; wickedness

inopportune - inappropriate or ill-timed

insubordination - disobedience to lawful authority

inscrutable - difficult to fathom or understand; impenetrable

involuntary - not as a consequence of one's own will; spontaneous

irksome - causing annoyance, weariness, or vexation

languid - showing little or no spirit or animation; listless

latent - existing in potential but not manifest; dormant

lurid - marked by sensationalism; gruesome or shocking; sallow or pallid in color

luxuriant - characterized by rich or profuse growth; producing or yielding in abundance

machinations - crafty schemes or cunning plots for the accomplishment of a sinister deed

masochism - a state or condition in which one accepts and enjoys pain directed at one's self

mien - aspect; air; manner; demeanor; carriage; bearing

mirth - gladness and gaiety, especially when expressed by laughter

mutability - changeableness; inconstancy; variation

odious - hateful or repugnant

panoply - a splendid or striking array, as in a panoply of colorful flags

peal - to sound loudly, as in a pealing of bells

penitence - regret for wrongdoing, contrition

pillory - A wooden framework on a post, with holes for the head and hands, in which offenders were formerly locked to be exposed to public scorn as punishment.

plaintive - expressive of sorrow

pretentious - affectedly making claims to distinction, importance, or excellence

pristine - pure, uncorrupted

prolific - fruitful, productive

propinquity - nearness (especially in place, time, or kinship)

refinement - cultivation and polish, as in manners or taste

relativism - the philosophical doctrine that all criteria of judgment are relative to the individuals and situations/ contexts involved; the philosophical (not political) opposite of relativism is "absolutism"

repining - wishing discontentedly

retribution - punishment for an evil deed (or reward for a good deed)

sable - of the color black, as in heraldry or mourning

scourge - (n) a whip; (v) to whip, chastise, or punish severely

scrutiny - close examination

scurrilous - abusively coarse, vulgar, or foulmouthed

self-flagellation - self-torture, self-lashing, self-beating

sentinel - a guard, a watchman, a sentry

sexton - an employee or officer of a church who is responsible for the care and upkeep of church property and sometimes for ringing bells and digging graves

sumptuary laws - laws which regulate the prices of commodities and the wages of labor; laws which forbid or restrict the use of certain articles, as of luxurious apparel.

tarry - to linger

transgression - a sin; the act of going beyond a law or boundary

tremulous - trembling, quivering

unobtrusive - not in the way

unsavory - distasteful or disagreeable; morally offensive

venerable - worthy or reverence due to age, position, or experience

veneration - profound respect or reverence

verdure - vigorous greenery

vicissitudes - sudden or unexpected changes or shifts often encountered in one's life, activities, or surroundings (usually used in the plural)

vilify - to defame or slander; to speak extremely ill of

vivify - to animate or enliven; to make more lively, intense, or striking

voluptuous - given to the enjoyments of luxury and pleasure; having strong sexual appeal; (of a woman's body) having pleasing curves; sensuous