**What Does It All Mean?**

**(A Lesson in Symbolism)**

The town magistrates sentenced Hester to wear the scarlet "A" for the rest of her life so all would recognize her as an adulterous. Over time, however, newcomers did not know the history of Hester's badge and asked its significance. Some townspeople remembered its origin, but others forgot, or transformed its meaning to indicate "able" in deference to Hester's steady performance of tasks benefiting the sick and needy. Just as the scarlet letter took on new significance during Hester's lifetime, so may it hold meanings beyond those associated specifically with Hester's sin. Within the novel, the "A" might be enlarged to embrace all those who, like Hester, have been alienated or who feel alone. It might even be interpreted to symbolize America, a country born in the sin of revolution but which eventually prospered - just like Pearl. Throughout the book Hawthorne uses symbols to deepen the themes in the book.

Although the "A" is the most prominent symbol in *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne uses many other symbols throughout the novel. Select one or more of the following symbols and explain its meaning within the context of the story:

\*NOTE: Page number listed below may be incorrect as I used a different version of the novel from the one you will be reading.

black (pp. 116, 129, 132, 168)

the forest (pp. 175, 189)

the brook (pp. 178)

the roses (pp. 56, 112)

Indians (pp. 66)

Hester's clothing, particularly her formal cap (p. 192)

Pearl's clothing (pp. 102-103)

Pearl's name (p. 91)

meteor (p. 149)

golden embroidery on the "A" (p. 60)

1. Which symbol in the book do you find most interesting? Why? You can write this on the back of your poster, just a paragraph or two.

2. Each student will be given a symbol from the novel.

3. Students will create a poster for this symbol. On the poster you must include:

 The name of the symbol, along with an illustrative image (can be abstract or concrete)

 Quotes that refer to this symbol (directly or indirectly), indicating page number and chapter

 A paragraph of text that explains why you think the symbol you chose is a part of the book – how does it bring greater meaning to the story?

Part of your grade will be based upon overall imagination and effort.