The Living Symbol Of The Scarlet Letter Essay, Research Paper

The Living Symbol of the Scarlet LetterThe Scarlet Letter A, worn by Hester Prynne, was a punishment for the immoral sin of adultery she had committed. Hester was forced to wear the letter upon her bosom for the rest of her life. Following Hester’s act of adultery, she became pregnant with a baby girl whom she named Pearl. “Pearl was a born outcast of the infantile world. An imp of evil, emblem and product of sin, she had no right among christened infants” (Hawthorne 90). Pearl is the living symbol of the scarlet letter displayed by her love of mischief, disrespect of authority that Hester is incapable of controlling, and frequent reminders to Hester of her own sin of passion. Pearl was a child full of mischief. “If the children gathered about her, as they sometime did, Pearl would grow positively terrible in her puny wrath, snatching up stones to fling at them, with shrill, incoherent exclamations that made her mother tremble . . .” (Hawthorne 90). Pearl was like the letter in that she was looked at in the same way; the result of Hesters sinful act of adultery.Pearl shows a disrespect of authority to her mother. When Hester removed the letter from her bosom near the brook, Pearl refused to obey despite her mothers encouragement to come and “meet a friend of mine, who must be thy friend also” (204). Here, Pearl actually forces her mother to wear the scarlet letter after she tossed it away. Pearl not following the orders of her mother is Hesters punishment for not following the order of the law.

Near the brook, “Pearl took some eelgrass, and imitated as best she could, on her own bosom, the decoration with which she was so familiar on her mothers. A letter, the letter A, but freshly green instead of scarlet” (174). Hester asks Pearl if she knows what the scarlet A means. Pearl replies “Truly do I . . . ask yonder old man whom thou hast been talking with. It may be he can tell. But in good earnest now, Mother dear, what does the scarlet letter mean, and why dost thou wear it on thy bosom, and why does the minister keep his hand over his heart?” (174). Under further questioning Pearl denies knowing the meaning of the letter. She asks her mother three times: “what does the letter mean mother, and why dost thou wear it?”(177). Hester is tempted to tell the truth, but instead replies that she wears it for the sake of the gold thread. Pearl reminds Hester of her sin just as the letter upon her bosom does. Pearl is the living symbol of the scarlet letter. Her mischievous behavior, disrespect of authority, and frequent reminders to her mother of her sin, embodies the moral decay so evident in the act of adultery.