

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The House of the Seven Gables

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss the parts of a novel: characterization, tone, theme, plot, point of view, and setting.
2. Discuss Hawthorne's beliefs about the nature of sin.
3. Explain the use of symbolism in the novel, particularly the following:
 - A. the framed portrait of old Colonel Pyncheon
 - B. references to Eden
 - C. Maule's curse
 - D. flowers
4. Identify and understand examples of the following literary devices:
 - A. foreshadowing
 - B. irony
 - C. metaphor
 - D. personification
5. Discuss the philosophical ideas presented in the novel, such as
 - A. democracy vs. aristocracy
 - B. isolation vs. immersion in society
 - C. the idea of permanency
 - D. the idea of redemption
6. Interpret the main ideas, events, and themes of the novel.
7. Identify the role that each primary character plays in representing the themes of the novel.
8. Discuss the role and function of the omniscient narrator in the novel.
9. Understand and evaluate the novel as a statement on the nature of man and his role in society.
10. Discuss the religious overtones of the novel as they relate to the Puritan beliefs of the time.
11. Evaluate how the author uses humor to frame the story.
12. Examine how setting is used to highlight the themes of the novel, e.g., the parlor, the Garden, the shop, the street, the train.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Phoebe is often described as angelic and full of light. Describe the effect her presence has on the house and its occupants. Why is it important that she is a Pyncheon?
2. Holgrave, the daguerreotypist, does not reveal his family name until the end of the novel. How does his choice of occupation reflect on his role in the story? What clues do we have to explain his presence in the House of the Seven Gables?
3. How do Anti-Transcendentalist beliefs of Hawthorne's era affect the outcome of this novel. How?
4. Often the wisest person in the story is considered the most foolish. Describe how Uncle Venner plays this role and how the story would be different without this character.
5. Many characters in this romance are presented in contrast to one another and are used to explore major themes in the story. Select a pair of characters and a theme below to explore.

| <u>Characters</u> | <u>Theme</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Hepzibah and Jaffrey | appearance vs. reality |
| Clifford and Holgrave | democracy vs. aristocracy |
| Phoebe and Holgrave | redemption |
6. Explain how Hawthorne uses the narrator to draw the reader into the story.
7. Some critics say that Holgrave's conversion to conservatism at the end of the novel is hypocritical and weakens the plot. How would you support or refute this criticism?
8. Many of Hawthorne's characters live solitary and isolated lives. How does this contribute to the underlying theme of sin being passed down through the generations?
9. The narrator pauses much of the plot of the story by placing a character on the physical threshold of the next space. Discuss these scenes and how they impact the plot of the story.
10. Discuss the implications this story has for modern times. Are the themes relevant to readers today?
11. There are several humorous scenes in the novel. Discuss two and how they contribute to the story.
12. If, as some critics suggest, Phoebe represents the heart and Holgrave the head, how does the love between them add to the conclusion of the novel?

The House of the Seven Gables

Chapter One - The Old Pyncheon Family

VOCABULARY

acrimony - bitterness
amplitude - breadth
annals - records
antagonists - adversaries
apoplexy - a stroke
appellation - name
aspect - look
aver - claim
choleric - easy to anger
consummated - completed
copious - abundant
countenance - face
credence - truth
duodecimos - numerous volumes
edifice - building
effusion - giving out
enmity - hatred
epoch - time
erudite - educated
expediency - a purpose
extant - existing
fain - willingly
felicities - joyful accomplishments
hewn - carved
immitigable - severe
impalpable - intangible
impelled - pushed
impenetrable - unmovable
inauspicious - unfavorable
inherent - given; part of
invidious - with intentional evil
laud - praise
magistrate - judge
martyrs - ones who are sacrificed
mien - demeanor
necromancies - black magic
obviate - prevent
pendent - overhanging

Chapter 5 - May and November

VOCABULARY

aperture - small opening
approbation - approval
eulogium - speech of praise
inscrutable - mysterious
nectarous - delicious
obstreperous - unruly; interfering
patrimony - inheritance, as in what one is born with
piquant - interesting; not ordinary
prodigiously - intensely
reckoned - counted; figured
requisite - required
thrummed - played idly
unctuous - excessively rich
unmalleable - inflexible

1. What does the title of this chapter convey?

2 Describe Phoebe. How is she unlike the other Pyncheons?

4. What reason does Holgrave give for questioning Phoebe so deeply about Clifford's state?

5. Why does Holgrave speak so freely with Phoebe in the garden?

6. Holgrave's earnestness alarms Phoebe. What new ideas does he impress upon her?

Chapter 17 - The Flight of Two Owls

VOCABULARY

cumbrous - burdening
dearth - lack of
dilatory - delayed
lurid - gruesome
ostentatiously - with obvious show; pretentious
palpable - able to be felt
phlegmatically - as a matter of course
poignant - sadly notable; touching
quidnuncs - busybodies

1. To what destination does Clifford steer Hepzibah in his delirium?

2. In what ways is the relationship between Clifford and Hepzibah changed on this journey?
