

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



Each pack contains:

- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

Rappaccini's Daughter

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3, 5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3, 5, 6, 9



Note to Teacher:

An *Instant Short Story Pack* on Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is also available. You might find it helpful to teach these two stories—by contemporaneous authors with similar thematic interests—together.

Reading Literature Standard 11-12.9 specifies *Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.* Question #4 in this unit is the same as Question #6 in the unit for Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener." Students will have to have read both stories in order to answer this one question.

Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding where and when a story is set (RL.9-10.3; 11-12.3),
- analyze how an author's choice of where and how to begin or end a story contributes to its overall meaning (RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5),
- analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (RL.11-12.6), and
- demonstrate knowledge of how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics (RL.11-12.9).

Time:

3-5 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (3 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (31 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (7 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
 - Allow students to read the short biography of Hawthorne (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Hawthorne's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
 - Assign the story to be read for homework (might require 2 nights' reading) OR
 - Allow students to read the story in class (might take 2 class periods) and perform the two **As you read**...activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Rappaccini's Daughter

“Rappaccini’s Daughter” is another puzzling story that has no precise, definitive meaning. There have been dozens of supportable interpretations put forward, as well as an equal number of unlikely interpretations.

It first appeared in the December 1844 issue of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. In 1846, Hawthorne included it in his collection *Mosses from an Old Manse*.

The *Visha Kanya*, or “poison girl,” is a popular figure in Indian legend. These girls, brought up on poisons from infancy, were said to have been used to assassinate a ruler’s powerful enemies. Whether Beatrice, whose name means “the Blessed One,” represents this type of *femme fatale* is still a matter of debate.

Giovanni and Beatrice—in the garden created by her mad-scientist father—have been compared to Adam and Eve and to Romeo and Juliet. Some critics equate Beatrice with the woman (also named Beatrice) who led the poet Dante through the levels of Heaven in *The Divine Comedy*. Of course, most of these interpretations point out that Rappaccini’s garden is a *corruption* of the Garden of Eden and that Rappaccini’s Beatrice is more an *anti-Blessed One* who offers death instead of salvation.

Is Rappaccini—who created the toxic garden—God? Is he Satan, who corrupted the woman and, through her, destroyed the man?

Is Baglioni an angel or a demon? A savior or a destroyer? What is a reader to make of the comment with which he closes the story?

Is Beatrice truly innocent? A victim of her father’s mad curiosity? Or is she—like the ancient Indian *Visha Kanya*—a temptress and destroyer in her own right?

And what are we to make of Giovanni?

When studying a puzzling story like “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” you do not have to embrace one interpretation and dismiss all the others. Neither do you have to come to any firm conclusion right now. The scholars themselves are still debating what the story means. Whatever conclusion you do come to, however, you will have to support with evidence from the text and from an accurate understanding of Hawthorne, his life, and the school(s) of thought he tended to explore in his writings.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Rappaccini's Daughter

Lexile Measure: 1220L

[From the Writings of Aubépine.]

WE DO NOT remember to have seen any translated specimens of the productions of M. de l'Aubépine—a fact the less to be wondered at, as his very name is unknown to many of his own countrymen as well as to the student of foreign literature. As a writer, he seems to occupy an unfortunate position between the Transcendentalists (who, under one name or another, have their share in all the current literature of the world) and the great body of pen-and-ink men who address the intellect and sympathies of the multitude. If not too refined, at all events too remote, too shadowy, and unsubstantial in his modes of development to suit the taste of the latter class, and yet too popular to satisfy the spiritual or metaphysical requisitions of the former, he must necessarily find himself without an audience, except here and there an individual or possibly an isolated clique. His writings, to do them justice, are not altogether destitute of fancy and originality; they might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory, which is apt to invest his plots and characters with the aspect of scenery and people in the clouds, and to steal away the human warmth out of his conceptions. His fictions are sometimes historical, sometimes of the present day, and sometimes, so far as can be discovered, have little or no reference either to time or space. In any case, he generally contents himself with a very slight embroidery of outward manners,—the faintest possible counterfeit of real life,—and endeavors to create an interest by some less obvious peculiarity of the subject. Occasionally a breath of Nature, a raindrop of pathos and tenderness, or a

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Rappaccini's Daughter

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) What purposes does Hawthorne achieve by prefacing his story with the introduction about M. de l'Aubépine? How does this preface affect the tone and meaning of the story?
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6) On the surface, this story seems to portray typical character types and relationships—Giovanni and Beatrice as the naïve, innocent youths; Rappaccini as the villain; and Baglioni as the trusted mentor. What evidence does Hawthorne provide to suggest that this is *not* the arrangement on which the story is operating? What is Hawthorne's true evaluation of his characters?
3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5; 11-12.5) How does the final sentence alter the story's overall meaning and tone?
4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.9) Examine how fellow anti-transcendentalists Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville ("Bartleby, the Scrivener") treat some of the most essential tenets of transcendentalism (e.g., the need for isolation, the perfectibility of humankind, the veneration of Nature, the role of intuition in gaining knowledge, etc.). How can both stories be said to illustrate their authors' objections to transcendental philosophy?
5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3; 11-12.3) In his commentary on the literature of his fictional French alter-ego, M. de l'Aubépine, Hawthorne observes "His writings...might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory...His fictions are sometimes historical, sometimes of the present day, and sometimes, so far as can be discovered, have little or no reference either to time or space." Examine the setting of "Rappaccini's Daughter" and explain what it contributes to the overall impact of the story.

ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Rappaccini's Daughter*

Question 1: What purposes does Hawthorne achieve by prefacing his story with the introduction about M. de l'Aubépine? How does this preface affect the tone and meaning of the story?

The answer to this question requires a bit of either background knowledge or some research. As you work through the steps, you will probably find the chart that follows helpful in recording and organizing your findings.

STEP 1: Consult a good-quality print dictionary or your preferred Internet search engine for a definition of *aubepine*.

STEP 2: Consult several phrase-translation websites and translate each of the French titles Hawthorne attributes to Aubépine. (Based on your definition of *aubepine*, you may already suspect how these titles will translate.)

STEP 3: If you do not recognize the translated titles, use your preferred Internet search engine to check the significance of each.

STEP 4: What is Hawthorne really saying when he talks about Aubépine and says that Aubépine wrote this story? What is the significance of Hawthorne's criticism of Aubépine's work?

STEP 5: You now have enough information and insight to answer the questions.

Define *Aubepine*:

Titles of Aubépine's Stories	Translation into English	Significance of Title
<i>Contes deux fois racontés</i>		
<i>Le Voyage Céleste à Chemin de Fer</i>		
<i>Le nouveau Père Adam et la nouvelle Mère Eve</i>		
<i>Roderic; ou le Serpent à l'estomac</i>		
<i>Le Culte du Feu</i>		
<i>La Soirée du Chateau en Espagne</i>		
<i>L'Artiste du Beau; ou le Papillon Mécanique</i>		
<i>Beatrice; ou la Belle Empoisonneuse</i>		
<i>La Revue Anti-Aristocratique</i>		