**The Scarlet Letter Vocabulary**

*This list is to help you with your reading of the novel. You do not need to memorize the words.*

**The Custom House**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decorous</td>
<td>proper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prolix</td>
<td>wordy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bark</td>
<td>boat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edifice</td>
<td>building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truculence</td>
<td>cruelty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>irritating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discern</td>
<td>perceive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venerable</td>
<td>respected; sacred</td>
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<tr>
<td>Besom</td>
<td>broom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laudable</td>
<td>worthy of praise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natal</td>
<td>native</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tempestuous</td>
<td>stormy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenacity</td>
<td>persistence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indolent</td>
<td>lazy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vicissitude</td>
<td>wavering; ups and downs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Torpid</td>
<td>sluggish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagaciously</td>
<td>wisely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtuseness</td>
<td>unclearness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vigilance</td>
<td>watchfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alacrity</td>
<td>readiness; eagerness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eulogium</td>
<td>a statement of praise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paternal – fatherly
Mouldering – rotting
Dotage – old age
Florid – ruddy; rosy
Hale – hearty; healthy
Impalpable – unable to be touched
Gourmandism – deep appreciation of fine food and drink
Vitiating – impaired; made ineffective
Expatriate – to speak at length
Unmalleable – unchangeable
Polemical – controversial
Martial – war-like
Evanescent – tending to vanish
Uncouth – awkward
Stalwart – strong
Dexterity – skill; deftness
Esoteric – limited to a small circle
Impunity – freedom from punishment
Exhorted – urged
Filial – family-related
Traversing – walking
Unobtrusive – out of the way; hardly noticeable
Fathomed – understood; measured
Enervating – draining
Ignominiously – dishonorably; degradingly
Lucubrations – studies
Appellations – names or titles

**Ch. 1**

Utopia – place or state of political or social perfection
Allot – to divide or distribute in shares
Sepulchers – burial vaults
Ponderous – weighty
Congenial – pleasant, friendly
Inauspicious – not prosperous or promising

**Ch. 2**

Physiognomies – facial features held to show qualities of mind or character by their configuration or expression
Augured – foretold
Indubitably – unquestionably
Antinomian – one who rejects a socially established morality
Heterodox – holding unorthodox opinions or doctrine
Scourged – subjected to severe criticism
Infamy – fame for something evil
Farthingale – a support worn beneath a skirt to expand it at the hip line
Rotundity – roundness
Behoof – advantage
Trow – believe
Abashed – embarrassed
Sumptuary – designed to regulate habits on moral or religious grounds
Gentility – the upper class
Evanescent – tending to vanish, like vapor
Ignominy – disgraceful or dishonorable conduct, quality, or action
Brazen – bold
Meridian – midday; noon
Iniquity – wickedness
Visage – face
Mien – appearance; aspect
Countenances – looks; expressions
Preternatural – exceeding what is natural
Remonstrance – objections
Cloister – area within a monastery
Etymologist – one who studies word derivations

Ch. 3
Furrows – wrinkles
Heterogeneous – different in kind
Abate – to put an end to or lessen
Sojourn – a temporary stay
Expound – to explain in detail
Peradventure – perhaps
Halberds – weapons consisting of a battle ax and a pike mounted on a long handle
Sagacity – shrewdness
Obstinacy – stubbornness
Fervor – intensity; passion
Lurid – gruesome; sensational

Ch. 4
Sagamores – subordinate chiefs of the Algonquin Indians
Amenable – willing to yield; agreeable
Preemptory – leaving no opportunity for denial or refusal
Alchemy – power or process of transforming something common into something precious
Paramour – lover

Ch. 5
Vivify – to make likely; to animate
Assimilate – to be absorbed into the dominant cultural tradition
Progenitors – forefathers
Plebian – of the common people
Emoluments – advantages
Contumaciously – stubbornly disobedient; rebellious

Ch. 6
Efficacy – effectiveness
Mutability – changeableness
Caprice – whim
Infantile – characteristic infants; babyish
Dearth – scarcity; lack
Gesticulation – expression through gestures
Enmity – established hatred
Ch. 7
Eminence – prominence; superiority
Pristine – uncorrupted; pure
Intrinsic – originating or situated within
Imperious – commanding; dominant
Wan – pale or sickly
Pallid – pale; dull
Extant – not destroyed or lost
Cabalistic – of an esoteric doctrine or mysterious art
Tome – volume forming part of a larger work
Relinquish – to leave behind; to give up
Subsistence – existence

Ch. 8
Behest – earnest request
Albeit – although or even if
Indefeasible – not to be annulled or made void
Mountebank – charlatan; quack
Adduced – brought forward as evidence
Vehemence – forcefulness

Ch. 9
Erudition – knowledge acquired chiefly from books
Commodiousness – spaciousness; roominess
Incantations – chants; verbal charms
Guise – manner or fashion
Sanctity – godliness or sacredness
Emissary – messenger

Ch. 10
Propagate – publicize
Abasement – a lowering in rank, office, or esteem
Sooth – truth; reality
Somniferous – hypnotic
Vestment – a robe or ceremony or office
Piety – religious faithfulness

Ch. 11
Malice – ill will
Latent – present but not visible or active; dormant
Odious – deserving of hatred
Machination – a scheming or crafty action

Ch. 12
Somnambulism – sleepwalking
Dank – cold and damp
Expiation – atonement
Defunct – dead or inactive
Scurrilous – grossly and offensively abusive
Firmament – vault of the sky; heavens
Ch. 13
Gibe – to tease with taunting words
Foliage – leaves, flowers, and branches
Imbibed – received; took in
Obviated – anticipated and made unnecessary
Ethereal – celestial; heavenly
Chasm – a marked division, separation, or difference
Acquiescing – accepting or complying passively

Ch. 14
Propinquity – nearness in place or time
Usurp – to seize by force

Ch. 15
Sere – withered
Verdure – condition of health and vigor
Sedulous – diligent; careful and busy
Petulant – insolent or rude
Precocity – the quality of exhibiting mature qualities at an unusually early age
Acrid – bitter
Enigma – something hard to understand or explain; mystery
Propensity – intense inclination
Asperity – harshness
Upbraided – criticized; scolded
Ch. 16
Scintillating – brilliant; shining
Scrofula – a form of tuberculosis
Loquacity – talkativeness
Cadence – rhythmic sequence or pattern

Ch. 17
Contiguity – the quality or state of being next or near to
Misanthropy – hatred or distrust of humankind
Consecration – the act of making or declaring sacred
Satiating – satisfying fully

Ch. 18
Colloquy - conversation
Choleric – bad tempered

Ch. 19
Accosting – attacking
Prattle – to babble meaninglessly
Inured – accustomed to accept something undesirable
Mollified - soothed

Ch. 20
Vicissitude – changing circumstances
Introspection – the examination of one’s own mental and emotional state
Irrefragable – not to be disputed or contested
Comport – to conduct or behave
Obedience – a bodily gesture, such as a bow, that expresses respect
Grandma – old woman; grandmother
Potentate – one who wields controlling power
Stupefied – astonished
Gratuitous – without apparent reason or justification

Ch. 21
Quaff – drink deeply
Wormwood – something bitter and grievous; bitterness
Lees – dregs
Effervesce – to bubble; to show liveliness
Buckler – a shield worn on the left arm
Probity – moral uprightness
Animadversion – adverse and typically ill-natured or unfair criticism

Ch. 22
Clarion – trumpet-like horn
Morbid – gloomy
Necromancy – magic, sorcery
Pathos – sympathetic, pity
Indefatigable – incapable of being fatigued
Requital – something given in return or retaliation
Smite – to attack or afflict suddenly and injuriously
Surmise – to imagine or infer on slight grounds

**Ch. 23**

Apotheosis – elevation to divine status

Intimations – hints

Nether – situated down or below; lower

**Ch. 24**

Portent – something that foreshadows a coming event; omen

Nugatory – having no force; inoperative

Recluse – one who has withdrawn from society

Penitence – regret for sin or wrongdoing

Escutcheon – a protective or ornamental shield