

## 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

Decorous – proper

Prolix – wordy

Bark – boat

Edifice – building

Truculence – cruelty

Ranking – irritating

Discern – perceive

Venerable – respected; sacred

Besom – broom

Laudable – worthy of praise

Natal – native

Tempestuous – stormy

Tenacity – persistence

Indolent – lazy

Vicissitude – wavering; ups and downs

Torpid – sluggish

Sagaciously – wisely

Obtuseness – unclearness

Vigilance – watchfulness

Alacrity – readiness; eagerness

Eulogium – a statement of praise

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

Vitiated – 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

Evanescence – 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 lively; 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

Obeisance – 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

