

**Grade level:** 9th-12th Grade

**Subject:** Language Arts

**Rationale:**

Students will examine the use of visual imagery in the Manga Classics adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Students will be asked to consider specific illustrations in the novel and consider how the artist depicts symbols and symbolism with the visual medium of a graphic novel.

**Instructional Duration:** 3-4 hours

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- ✓ Read the graphic novel *Pride and Prejudice* and consider it as a visual adaptation of a classic piece of literature.
- ✓ Use images from the novel to answer specific essential questions.
- ✓ Understand the concept of symbolism as it pertains to a graphic novel adaptation of a classic text

**Front-loaded information / understanding:**

Symbolism – Students should be able to define and identify one or more symbol from the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Theme - Students should be able to define and identify one or more themes from the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Romanticism – Students should be able to define and identify the major elements of the Romantic Movement as they manifest in the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Manga – Many students have not been exposed to this type of reading. Prior to assigning any reading in the Manga Classic Text, instructors should cover the “How to read manga” section at the beginning of the book with their students to ensure understanding.

**Instructional Strategies:**

*NOTE: The lessons contained below assume that students are reading the Manga Classic adaptation after having already been exposed to all or some part of the original text. If you are using the graphic novel adaptation as an alternative to reading the original novel, the lessons can still be utilized with modifications.*

Students should have read the original novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Have them share with the class what they know about the text itself. Specific attention should be paid to how students visualize the symbols in the text including, but not limited to, the scarlet letter, Dimmesdale's heart, Pearl, nature, the supernatural, the scaffold, and Chillingworth.

### Activity #1 – Your Own Scarlet Letter

The goal of this activity is to have students understand the nature of symbolism as it manifested in the novel. Each student should be asked to brainstorm a list of personal vices of which they feel that they are guilty. Once they have explored this list, have them select one that they most wish to overcome. That vice will be the centerpiece of the lesson.

Provide materials with which they can create their own versions of Hester's scarlet letter, only this time, the letter will be that of their own chosen vice. The color should also be reflective of the vice itself. For example, a student who identifies him/herself as greedy might choose a green "G" or a student who identifies him/herself as a procrastinator might choose a black "P." Students should be allowed to decorate their letter however they wish, from ornate and obvious to bland and simple. Specific requirements (size for example) can be determined by the instructor.

Students will then be required to wear their letter for a determined period of time (a week is usually good) and keep a journal of any and all interactions that their letter creates with others. At the end of the activity, students will report on the results to the class considering the following questions:

- ✓ How did wearing the letter make you feel?
- ✓ Explain one of the most uncomfortable interactions you had as a result of wearing the letter.
- ✓ If you had to wear the letter for the rest of the school year, how would you feel?
- ✓ How do you think others saw you when they learned what the letter meant?
- ✓ Is this an effective method of punishment for having a personal vice? Why or why not?

### Activity #2 – Pre-reading Symbol Sketch

Students should be asked to recall their reading *The Scarlet Letter*. Ask students to identify a symbol from the text that, for whatever reason, was one that they felt was particularly interesting. Have them draw that symbol on a piece of sketch paper and decorate it. Allow them (even encourage them to use) artistic license to create something unique. The instructor could refer to page 33 of the Manga Classics adaptation and talk about the use of serpent imagery with Chillingworth. Go over the results of the activity with the class as a whole and hang the symbols around the room for reference.

### Activity #3 – Post-reading Comparison

Once students have had the opportunity to read the text, have them return to their individual symbol sketches and compare how artist SunNeko Lee's depiction of the symbol differs from their own rendition. Use this as an opportunity to talk about the concept of adaptation and how different approaches to a text yield different, but ultimately satisfying results.

### Activity #4 – Visual Symbolism

Together, look at pages 18 of the text and have them look at this depiction of Hester wearing the scarlet letter. Discuss how the artist uses color specifically (and only) on the letter itself to draw attention to it and create an almost elegant look to what is supposed to be a symbol of Hester's wrongdoing.

Next, select specific points in the novel where symbols were featured in a particularly compelling manner. For example:

Page 19 – Pearl and the scarlet letter  
Page 36 – Chillingsworth and the serpent  
Page 45 – Dimmesdale and the clutching of his heart  
Page 78 – Hester’s work as a seamstress  
Page 98-99 – Pearl’s flowers versus the scarlet letter  
Page 113 – The magnification of the letter in armor  
Page 131 – Pearl as an angel  
Page 146 – Chillingsworth as a demon/devil  
Page 166-167 – Shooting stars  
Page 232 – Pearl and nature  
Page 234-235 – Pearl as a fairy / in nature  
Page 271 – Dimmesdale as a redeemed soul / angel  
Page 276 – Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale on the scaffold together

Or any others where you feel the artwork creates a visual representation of symbolism from the novel that you find particularly compelling. Have students answer the following question about the image with a short essay:

Choose a symbolic image from the novel. What elements of the artwork bring a strong understanding of the symbol and what it represents on the page that textual description alone could not?

### **Final Assessment:**

Students should choose a symbol of romanticism from the text and explore the use of artwork as a means of exploring the complexity of that symbol and connect it with the element of nature, the supernatural, or individuality. Students will write a short thesis driven essay where they look at how the graphic novel medium depicts this information and whether it is effective as compared to the original source text. If the instructor chooses, a film or stage production of the story could also be included in this mix.

### **Lesson Developed By:**

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