

Directions: This part consists of selections from *The Scarlet Letter* and questions on their content, form, and style. After reading each passage, choose the best answer to each question.

Note: Pay particular attention to the requirement of questions that contain the words NOT, LEAST, or EXCEPT.

Passage 1, Questions 1-7. Read the following passage from Chapter 2, "The Market-Place," carefully before you choose your answers.

- The grass-plot before the jail, in Prison Lane, on a certain summer morning, not less than two centuries ago, was occupied by a pretty large number of the inhabitants of Boston, all with their eyes intently fastened on the iron-clamped oaken door. Amongst any other population, or at a later period in the history of
- (5) New England, the grim rigidity that petrified the bearded physiognomies of these good people would have augured some awful business in hand. It could have betokened nothing short of the anticipated execution of some noted culprit, on whom the sentence of a legal tribunal had but confirmed the verdict of public sentiment. But, in that early severity of the Puritan character, an inference of this
- (10) kind could not so indubitably be drawn. It might be that a sluggish bond-servant, or an undutiful child, whom his parents had given over to the civil authority, was to be corrected at the whipping-post. It might be, that an Antinomian, a Quaker, or other heterodox religionist was to be scourged out of the town, or an idle and vagrant Indian, whom the white man's fire-water had made riotous about the streets, was to
- (15) be driven with stripes into the shadow of the forest. It might be, too, that a witch, like old Mistress Hibbins, the bitter-tempered widow of the magistrate, was to die upon the gallows. In either case, there was very much the same solemnity of demeanor on the part of the spectators; as befitted a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly
- (20) interfused, that the mildest and the severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful. Meagre, indeed, and cold was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for from such by-standers, at the scaffold. On the other hand, a penalty, which, in our days, would infer a degree of mocking infamy and ridicule, might then be invested with almost as stern a dignity as the punishment of
- (25) death itself.
- It was a circumstance to be noted, on the summer morning when our story begins its course, that the women, of whom there were several in the crowd, appeared to take a particular interest in whatever penal infliction might be expected to ensue. The age had not so much refinement, that any sense of impropriety
- (30) restrained the wearers of petticoats and farthingale from stepping forth into the public ways, and wedging their not unsubstantial persons, if occasion were, into the throng nearest to the scaffold at an execution. Morally, as well as materially, there was a coarser fibre in those wives and maidens of old English birth and breeding, than in their fair descendants, separated from them by a series of six or seven
- (35) generations; for, throughout that chain of ancestry, every successive mother has transmitted to her child a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty, and a slighter physical frame, if not a character of less force and solidity, than her own. The women who were now standing about the prison-door stood within less than
- (40) half a century of the period when the man-like Elizabeth had been the not altogether unsuitable representative of the sex. They were her country-women; and the beef and ale of their native land, with a moral diet not a whit more refined, entered largely into their composition. The bright morning sun, therefore, shone on broad shoulders and well-developed busts, and on round and ruddy cheeks, that had ripened in the far-off island, and had hardly yet grown paler or thinner in the
- (45) atmosphere of New England. There was, moreover, a boldness and rotundity of speech among these matrons, as most of them seemed to be, that would startle us at

the present day, whether in respect to its purport or its volume of tone.

(50) “Goodwives,” said a hard-featured dame of fifty, “I’ll tell ye a piece of my mind. It would be greatly for the public behoof, if we women, being of mature age and church-members in good repute, should have the handling of such malefactresses as this Hester Prynne. What think ye, gossips? If the hussy stood up for judgment before us five, that are now here in a knot together, would she come off with such a sentence as the worshipful magistrates have awarded? Marry, I trow not!”

(55) “People say,” said another, “that the Reverend Master Dimmesdale, her godly pastor, takes it very grievously to heart that such a scandal should have come upon his congregation.”

(60) “The magistrates are God-fearing gentlemen, but merciful overmuch—that is a truth,” added a third autumnal matron. “At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne’s forehead. Madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she—the naughty baggage—little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown! Why, look you, she may cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the streets as brave as ever!”

(65) “Ah, but,” interposed, more softly, a young wife, holding a child by the hand, “let her cover the mark as she will, the pang of it will be always in her heart.”

(70) “What do we talk of marks and brands, whether on the bodice of her gown, or the flesh of her forehead?” cried another female, the ugliest as well as the most pitiless of these self-constituted judges. “This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die. Is there not law for it? Truly, there is, both in the Scripture and the statute-book. Then let the magistrates, who have made it of no effect, thank themselves if their own wives and daughters go astray!”

(75) “Mercy on us, goodwife,” exclaimed a man in the crowd, “is there no virtue in woman, save what springs from a wholesome fear of the gallows? That is the hardest word yet! Hush, now, gossips! for the lock is turning in the prison-door, and here comes Mistress Prynne herself.”

1. A prominent stylistic characteristic of the narrator’s discussion of the awaited culprit’s possible identity: “But in that early . . . made venerable and awful” (lines 9-21) is
 - (A) hyperbole
 - (B) parallel construction
 - (C) metaphor
 - (D) syllogistic reasoning
 - (E) allegory
2. In the second paragraph, the speaker provides a contrast to the assembled women by using which descriptive phrase?
 - (A) “wedging their not insubstantial persons” (line 31)
 - (B) “a coarser fibre in those wives and maidens” (line 33)
 - (C) “a more delicate and briefer beauty” (line 36)
 - (D) “with a moral diet not a whit more refined” (line 41)
 - (E) “in respect to its purport or its volume of tone” (line 47)

3. The antecedent of "its" in line 47 is
- (A) "speech" (line 46)
 - (B) "matrons" (line 46)
 - (C) "them" (line 46)
 - (D) "present day" (line 47)
 - (E) "respect" (line 47)
4. As used in line 47, "purport" means
- (A) purpose
 - (B) appearance
 - (C) meaning
 - (D) transport
 - (E) allegation
5. The narrator seems to feel that the women of the era
- (A) are harsher in their judgments than are the ruling men
 - (B) are overly subservient to men
 - (C) are without exception bitter-tempered
 - (D) are more refined than the "man-like" Elizabeth"
 - (E) are concerned about Antinomians
6. What is the primary function of the rhetorical questions used in the conversation in lines 48-71 ("Goodwives. . . Mistress Prynne herself")?
- (A) They call into question the motives of the magistrates.
 - (B) They emphasize the low social status of women in that society.
 - (C) They represent a digression from the serious tone of the description.
 - (D) They express the confusion of the spectators regarding the proceedings.
 - (E) They serve to illustrate dissatisfaction with the punishment.
7. The words of the man in the crowd, "Mercy on us . . . hardest word yet!" (lines 72-74) serve the purpose of
- (A) pointing out the moral deficiencies of the women of the era
 - (B) explaining the magistrates' choice of Hester's sentence
 - (C) exposing the underlying implication of the "goodwife's" words
 - (D) criticizing those who would question authority
 - (E) comparing virtuous women to those who fear the gallows

Passage 2, Questions 8-16. Read the following passage from Chapter 3 of *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Recognition," carefully before you choose your answers.

- (5) From this intense consciousness of being the object of severe and universal observation, the wearer of the scarlet letter was at length relieved, by discerning, on the outskirts of the crowd, a figure which irresistibly took possession of her thoughts. An Indian, in his native garb, was standing there; but the red men were not so infrequent visitors of the English settlements, that one of them would have attracted any notice from Hester Prynne at such a time; much less would he have excluded all other objects and ideas from her mind. By the Indian's side, and evidently sustaining a companionship with him, stood a white man, clad in a strange disarray of civilized and savage costume.
- (10) He was small in stature, with a furrowed visage, which, as yet, could hardly be termed aged. There was a remarkable intelligence in his features, as of a person who had so cultivated his mental part that it could not fail to mould the physical to itself, and become manifest by unmistakable tokens. Although, by a seemingly careless arrangement of his heterogeneous garb, he had endeavored to conceal or
- (15) abate the peculiarity, it was sufficiently evident to Hester Prynne that one of this man's shoulders rose higher than the other. Again, at the first instant of perceiving that thin visage, and the slight deformity of the figure, she pressed her infant to her bosom with so convulsive a force that the poor babe uttered another cry of pain. But the mother did not seem to hear it
- (20) At his arrival in the market-place, and some time before she saw him, the stranger had bent his eyes on Hester Prynne. It was carelessly, at first, like a man chiefly accustomed to look inward, and to whom external matters are of little value and import, unless they bear relation to something within his mind. Very soon, however, his look became keen and penetrative. A writhing horror twisted itself
- (25) across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one little pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight. His face darkened with some powerful emotion, which, nevertheless, he so instantaneously controlled by an effort of his will, that, save at a single moment, its expression might have passed for calmness. After a brief space, the convulsion grew almost imperceptible, and
- (30) finally subsided into the depths of his nature. When he found the eyes of Hester Prynne fastened on his own, and saw that she appeared to recognize him, he slowly and calmly raised his finger, made a gesture with it in the air, and laid it on his lips. Then, touching the shoulder of a towns-man who stood next to him, he addressed him, in a formal and courteous manner.
- (35) "I pray you, good Sir," said he, "who is this woman?—and wherefore is she here set up to public shame?"
- "You must needs be a stranger in this region, friend," answered the townsman, looking curiously at the questioner and his savage companion, "else you would surely have heard of Mistress Hester Prynne, and her evil doings. She hath raised a
- (40) great scandal, I promise you, in godly Master Dimmesdale's church."
- "You say truly," replied the other. "I am a stranger, and have been a wanderer, sorely against my will. I have met with grievous mishaps by sea and land, and have been long held in bonds among the heathen-folk, to the southward; and am now brought hither by this Indian to be redeemed out of my captivity. Will it please you,
- (45) therefore, to tell me of Hester Prynne's—have I her name rightly?—of this woman's offences, and what has brought her to yonder scaffold?"
- "Truly, friend; and methinks it must gladden your heart, after your troubles and sojourn in the wilderness," said the townsman, "to find yourself, at length, in a land where iniquity is searched out, and punished in the sight of rulers and people, as
- (50) here in our godly New England. Yonder woman, Sir, you must know, was the wife of a certain learned man, English by birth, but who had long dwelt in Amsterdam, whence, some good time ago, he was minded to cross over and cast in his lot with

us of the Massachusetts. To this purpose, he sent his wife before him, remaining himself to look after some necessary affairs. Marry, good Sir, in some two years, or
(55) less, that the woman has been a dweller here in Boston, no tidings have come of this learned gentleman, Master Prynne; and his young wife, look you, being left to her own misguidance"—

"Ah! aha!—I conceive you," said the stranger with a bitter smile. "So learned a man as you speak of should have learned this too in his books. And who, by your
(60) favor, Sir, may be the father of yonder babe—it is some three or four months old, I should judge—which Mistress Prynne is holding in her arms?"

"Of a truth, friend, that matter remaineth a riddle; and the Daniel who shall expound it is yet a-wanting," answered the townsman. "Madam Hester absolutely refuseth to speak, and the magistrates have laid their heads together in vain.
(65) Peradventure the guilty one stands looking on at this sad spectacle, unknown of man, and forgetting that God sees him."

"The learned man," observed the stranger, with another smile, "should come himself, to look into the mystery."

"It behooves him well, if he be still in life," responded the townsman. "Now,
(70) good Sir, our Massachusetts magistracy, bethinking themselves that this woman is youthful and fair, and doubtless was strongly tempted to her fall—and that, moreover, as is most likely, her husband may be at the bottom of the sea—they have not been bold to put in force the extremity of our righteous law against her. The penalty thereof is death. But in their great mercy and tenderness of heart, they have
(75) doomed Mistress Prynne to stand only a space of three hours on the platform of the pillory, and then and thereafter, for the remainder of her natural life, to wear a mark of shame upon her bosom."

"A wise sentence!" remarked the stranger, gravely bowing his head. "Thus she will be a living sermon against sin, until the ignominious letter be engraved upon
(80) her tombstone. It irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side. But he will be known!—he will be known!—he will be known!"

8. The word "careless" as used in line 14 most nearly means

- (A) reckless
- (B) unstudied
- (C) selfish
- (D) thoughtless
- (E) irrational

9. The primary function of the simile in lines 24-26 ("like a snake gliding swiftly over them") is to

- (A) provide a contrast between the stranger's appearance and his civilized conversation
- (B) extend the description of the man's "savage costume"
- (C) create a foreboding impression of the stranger
- (D) reinforce the "remarkable intelligence" of the man's "thin visage"
- (E) exaggerate the repulsiveness of the man's deformity

10. The antecedent of "its" (line 28) is
- (A) "snake" (line 25)
 - (B) "face" (line 26)
 - (C) "emotion" (line 27)
 - (D) "will" (line 28)
 - (E) "moment" (line 28)
11. The stranger most likely lays his finger on his lips (line 32) to
- (A) keep himself from speaking involuntarily
 - (B) express sympathy for Hester Prynne
 - (C) communicate his wishes to his Indian companion
 - (D) signal to Hester that she should not acknowledge him
 - (E) express his amazement at the scene before him
12. The phrase "the convulsion" (line 29) most nearly refers to
- (A) "the peculiarity" (line 15)
 - (B) "slight deformity" (line 17)
 - (C) "the poor babe" (line 18)
 - (D) "powerful emotion" (line 27)
 - (E) "depths of his nature" (line 30)
13. The tone of the first three paragraphs is best described as
- (A) foreboding
 - (B) ironic
 - (C) agitated
 - (D) elegiac
 - (E) despairing
14. In the conversation with the stranger, the townsman discusses all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) his unwavering support of the magistrates
 - (B) speculation as to the cause of Hester's sin
 - (C) speculation as to the fate of Master Prynne
 - (D) the community's response to Hester's sin
 - (E) assurance that the identity of the baby's father will be revealed