American Literature
Mr. Myers

***The Scarlet Letter—*Notes**

Chapter 7

* Why did Hester want to talk to Gov. Bellingham?
* What two lines of reasoning did the people use as support for the attempt to take Pearl away from Hester?
* The distorted reflection of Hester's scarlet letter in the armor—What’s the meaning?

Chapter 8

* Who were the four people at the mansion?
* Why did Dimmesdale need a physician?
* How old was Pearl at this point?
* Read paragraph on the bottom of 125
* Look at Dimmesdale's arguments for Pearl staying with Hester
* What does he mean about the two of them bringing about each other's salvation?
* Why do you think that Pearl responds the way she does to Dimmesdale?

Chapter 9

* Meaning of “leech”?
* Why did not Chillingworth acknowledge Hester as his wife?
* Consider how drastically his life changed that day; he basically died to his old life and began a new life
* Appreciation and respect for Dimmesdale: Why do you think the people almost worshipped him?
* What were the perceived reasons for his failing health?
* Do you think he had heart trouble?
* From the description of the relationship between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, would you say that they were friends?
* Do you think that many physical illnesses come begin in the spirit, mind, or heart?
* Note the discussion about a physician’s ability to intimately know their patient
* Why did Dimmesdale reject the idea of marriage?
* What was the scene on the tapestries in Dimmesdale’s room?
* The notion that God was allowing Dimmesdale to be tempted and tried through Chillingworth, a servant of the devil

Chapter 10

* Confessing sins in this life vs. having them revealed at judgment
* Dimmesdale asks the question why anyone would keep a sin hidden in this life?  It's going to come out sometime anyway, so why would not a person come clear now and experience the freedom from it?
* Then he offers a couple of possible reasons that a person would keep a secret sin
* What does Chillingworth tell Dimmesdale that he thinks his problem really is?
* What makes Dimmesdale rush out of the room when Chillingworth tells him this?
* What does Chillingworth do at the very end of the chapter?  Why do you think he responds with such wonder and exultation?

Go back and discuss the question of why some people might carry their sin to the grave

Chapter 11

* What is the meaning of “malice”?
* The terrible way that Chillingworth stalked Dimmesdale’s soul
* Why couldn’t Dimmesdale recognize what was happening?
* Was Dimmesdale a good man or not?
* This chapter says he abhorred the reverence that people poured on him; that he absolutely hated the lie—why doesn’t he repent?
* What did he long to tell the people?
* He loathed himself
* What were some of the things that he did to himself in guilt and shame?

Chapter 12

* What was the point of Dimmesdale’s vigil on the scaffold?
* Who all did Dimmesdale see while on the scaffold?
* What event had brought most of these people out in the middle of the night?
* At several points, Dimmesdale thought that the people of the town would be sure to all come and find him on the scaffold and know that he was Hester’s fellow criminal. Do you think that people would have necessarily connected him to that event though? (it had been seven years since Hester had stood there)
* What happened in the sky while Dimmesdale stood on the scaffold with Hester and Pearl?
* Read the exchange on 178 about Chillingworth
* Look at literary terms in the box at end of chapter—note how this scaffold scene marks exactly the midpoint of the story