Analysis:

4. In Chapter 5, much is made of Hester's penitent lifestyle: she remains where her sin is known, she keeps the "A" in plain view, she does charity work, etc. By "earthly punishment," "the torture of her daily shame," she seems to be seeking martyrdom. Read Philippians 3:13, 14; Isaiah 43:18, 19; Ephesians 2:8, 9; and Galatians 3:2, 3. What do these verses say about Hester's and her town's attitude about continual shame and penance? Will these things cleanse her?
5. Many of the people Hester deals with treat her with "quiet malice," insults, and repugnance. Why are they doing this and what are they saying about themselves and Hester?

6. Imagery is used by authors to create impressions or associations in our minds between the descriptive word and the character or item described. In Chapter 7, what colors does Hawthorne use to describe Pearl? What impression does this give you?

Dig Deeper:

7. In the last paragraphs of Chapter 5, Hester is horrified and fights against an impression she continually feels. What is this impression? Read 1 John 1:8–10. How does this apply to the feeling that Hester sometimes gets?

Read Matthew 7:1–5 and Romans 2:1–3. In light of these verses, what is the danger of judging the way Hester is being judged?