Analysis:

5. At one point early in their discussion in the forest, Hester tells Dimmesdale, "You wrong yourself in this... You have deeply and sorely repented... Is there no reality in the penitence thus sealed and witnessed by good works?" Dimmesdale responds, "Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence there has been none!" What distinction is Dimmesdale drawing? Give some examples of his penance.
6. Sunlight, as a character, plays a large part in these chapters. In what way does Nature, through sunlight, exercise moral judgment in these chapters? On what, according to Hawthorne, does Nature base its favor?

7. Personification is a literary device by which an object, animal, or idea is given human attributes to more clearly communicate mood or emotion or give a clearer picture of an image. For instance, “The sun smiled,” gives the sun the human ability to smile and communicates warmth and benevolence. Give several examples of personification from the last two paragraphs of Chapter 18.

8. Look at the descriptions and words of Arthur Dimmesdale in Chapters 8 and 17. Note how Dimmesdale is portrayed in the two chapters. Use examples from the text to compare (show similarities) or contrast (show differences between) the two characterizations.

Dig Deeper:

9. When Hester and Dimmesdale first meet in the woods, they discuss whether they have found peace. When Dimmesdale speaks of his misery, Hester reproves him:

“You wrong yourself in this,” said Hester, gently. “You have deeply and sorely repented. Your sin is left behind you, in the days long past. Your present life is not less holy, in very truth, than it seems in people’s eyes. Is there no reality in the penitence thus sealed and witnessed by good works? And wherefore should it not bring you peace?”
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Dimmesdale replies:

“No, Hester, no! . . . There is no substance in it! It is cold and dead, and can do nothing for me! Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence there has been none! Else, I should long ago have thrown off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as they will see me at the judgment-seat.”

Reviewing what you know of Dimmesdale’s situation, which of these two do you feel is most correct? Support your answers from the text and the Bible, if possible.

10. When Dimmesdale is told who Roger Chillingworth really is, he declares, “We are not, Hester, the worst sinners in the world. . . . That old man’s revenge has been worse than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!” What does Dimmesdale mean by this? Is he correct?

11. What does Pearl ask about Arthur Dimmesdale at the end of Chapter 19? What does she demand of her mother? Looking back over previous chapters, what has Pearl consistently asked her mother and Dimmesdale? What does this imply?