

Sample Student Essay One

The human is a very social being. He desires to surround himself with others, thus making isolation a very severe punishment. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne is subject to this sentence after having a child with a man other than her husband. Immediately following the placement of a scarlet "A" on her chest, Hester becomes estranged from society and must be as self-sufficient as possible so she can survive. What becomes clear is the fact that isolation makes people yearn for company, as Hester does for Arthur Dimmesdale, the father of her child. However, her estrangement eventually destroys the souls of both her child and Dimmesdale, leaving Hester completely desolate.

Hester becomes isolated after a scarlet letter is placed on her chest due to her adultery with another man. Hester is married to Roger Chillingworth, but they part for a few years as he travels and learns, planning to meet when this journey is complete. In this time, however, Hester falls in love with Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale and gives birth to a child soon after. When the public discovers this, she is punished by being forced to stand on a scaffold and drown in her own shame. Hester stands alone, holding her child, Pearl, for the Reverend is unable to confess with her at this time. By forcing her to wear the letter "A" for her crime of adultery, the society makes it obvious to any outsider that she has committed this crime, making the townspeople quick to mock her and ostracize her from society. On one particular occasion, young children find it appropriate to throw mud at the daughter, Pearl, and whisper about her and her mother. While it is Hester's choice to live on the outskirts of town after becoming an outcast, the public has almost rendered this necessary because the torment Hester would be forced to handle by living in town each day would be unbearable.

Hester's life changes drastically when she is estranged for she must use her independence and personal strength to survive even as she is losing everyone she loves. Hester supports herself by selling work she sews to the townspeople, but they by no means accept her because of this. Though this talent is usually respectable, Hester is still looked down upon and excluded even in her efforts to help the poor. This makes Hester desperate for affection, and although she does her best to support herself and raise her child, neither she nor Dimmesdale can live without each other completely. To satisfy this desire, Hester meets secretly with Dimmesdale in the woods at night. She is willing to risk the exposure of her secret to be with the person she loves, showing that no person can happily live alone but must find some way to be with others or fall apart. In Hester's case, however, Dimmesdale and Pearl internally deteriorate, leaving her unable to find affection.

Ironically, Dimmesdale becomes estranged as well despite his inability to admit to his crime. Although society does not know the truth and has yet to force him into isolation, he becomes so depressed that he physically deteriorates and is engrossed in his shame. He and Hester show a desire to reunite and break the isolation by planning an escape, but Dimmesdale has become so lonely from her absence that this becomes impossible. He finally realizes that he must be with her completely and admit his wrongdoing to the public, but by the time he confesses, his health has become so poor that he passes away.

While Hester's isolation is destroying Dimmesdale, it is also taking hold of Pearl with its incredible hands. Pearl is unable to communicate with other children and is therefore missing necessary social skills. Having no one her own age to play with, Pearl creates friends in her mind and focuses the rest of her energy on the one thing that sparks her attention: the scarlet letter on her mother's chest. Pearl begins to absorb its evil and to remind Hester daily that it represents her crime. Because of this, Hester becomes very distant from Pearl and at times thinks of her as maligned. Just like Hester, Pearl simply longs for love but the estrangement does not allow this, so her heart dies along with Hester's.

Explanations for Sample Examination I

With estrangement comes a series of problems, including a longing for love that is not fulfilled. Hester's wrongdoings force her into isolation and make her stronger for a short while, but as estrangement from society negatively affects both Dimmesdale and Pearl, she soon loses the two people that she loves and becomes even more isolated than at the start of the novel. Perhaps the human is so reliant on the warmth of others to save herself when others are absent, which brings a quick demise when others are gone.

The Republic of Salem is turned through a religious change of society values. Salem is changed for religious extremism as a result of a religious revival. The Puritans are a religious group that is very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices.

The Puritans are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices.

The Puritans are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices.

The Puritans are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices. They are a very religious group and they are very strict in their beliefs and practices.

Sample Student Essay Two

Offred, the protagonist of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, goes through a complete estrangement from what is considered proper society when her secular country turns into the strictly Christianized Republic of Gilead. The events surrounding this impetus, its direct effects on her, and the resulting mental damage suffered by Offred illustrate the harm a separation from society can cause, even if it is the society that is at fault for the incident.

The Republic of Gilead is formed through a complete change of societal values. Secularism is exchanged for religious extremism as women are returned to their primeval roles as mothers and housekeepers, and men to their positions of landlords and rulers, as well as strict guardsmen of biblical morality. As a wife to a man in his second marriage, this vault completely confounds Offred's original lifestyle. By no fault of her own beyond her gender and position in life, Offred is separated from her husband and daughter (as second marriages become illegitimized), loses all her political rights, and is forced into the role of a walking uterus, or handmaid, for old and most often sterile married men. No longer allowed to read, write, or even talk without permission, Offred must find a way to meet her new surroundings.

When her life started Offred was a responsible, fun-loving woman. She worked, took care of her husband and daughter, and relaxed with her friends. She worried over little things, but was for the most part fairly content with her position in life. After the political upheaval and her acclimation to her new roles, Offred herself does not change. She has all of the same memories and potential. However, in reaction to her surroundings, aspects of her personality become more pointed. Her love of companionship turns into an intense loneliness as she craves the company she now lacks. Without friends or family Offred becomes more introspective and learns to focus on the happy past as opposed to the dismal present and even worse future. And as a result of this lack of camaraderie and bleak future, Offred becomes incredibly desperate for anything that will spice up her life. She takes risks, ranging from sexual encounters to forbidden conversations to underground parties, all for the sake of something to do and some vent for her pent-up emotions.

Unfortunately, such actions can be very dangerous in an authoritarian society. Any misstep holds grave potentials for Offred to be caught by immorality squadrons and sent off for torture or forced labor among nuclear waste, both of which result in an almost guaranteed death. And, of course, there is that misstep. A smudge of lipstick indicating her presence in a place she should not have visited leads to a van to take her away. Due to underground connections Offred is actually not immediately placed in captivity and may have actually escaped altogether, but nothing can change the effects of her experiences on herself. The intense boredom and longing for freedom can be heard in every paragraph of her narrative, as well as the yearning for the child and husband she had to leave behind. Whether Offred made it to freedom or not, her inability to fit into her new society caused her intense pain and grievances. Offred, of *A Handmaid's Tale*, did not choose her society. It chose her to endure dictates which she could not believe in. And because of this separation from society, because Offred could not adapt to the ways of the Republic of Gilead, she suffered mental harm that no time could take away. She may have even been killed.

Sample Student Essay Three

The 1920s were a time of prosperity and of generally good humor; it was the age of flappers and jazz, in which almost everyone was partying. The "Lost Generation," disliking the actions of those around them, was a group of writers and poets, many of whom have written works of great caliber. One of the members of the small society was Ernest Hemingway, whose book *The Sun Also Rises* actually depicts the life of a member of society who does not fit in. Jake Barnes was a soldier in World War I who is now searching for his place in life, but despite his efforts, remains quite detached from the society around him. Jake Barnes is excluded from the fun-loving society around him by his inescapable past and experiences. The efforts of World War I have maimed him not only physically, but have mentally separated him from the people around him. He feels that there is so much more to life now (aside from the silly chatter that people entertain themselves with) due to the things he has seen. Being in the war gave him the opportunity to see many horrific things that have changed his views of life significantly. Incapable of finding a place for himself in the United States when the war ended, the story begins with Jake living in Paris with several shallow friends and a former nurse with whom he was romantically involved during the War. Though he has friends now, he has a vast aperture to fill in his life due to what he has seen, and attempts to use alcohol to buffer the pain. Ironically, this only makes it worse for himself, and it is very often that Jake ends a day by crying himself to sleep. There doesn't seem to be anyone in the world that he can relate to, even the people who have been through it with him, because just as he tries to keep his sorrow hidden, so do those around him. There seems to be no escaping this consuming truth, that the war has permanently separated him from the rest of the world. All around him the world has remained the same jovial place, but within him a greater truth has been found about the nature of life and death. This knowledge has permanently separated Jake Barnes from the average society of the 1920s.

Due to physical injuries, Jake has also been separated not only from the society around him, but even from his intimate circle of friends. One of these friends was Lady Brett Ashley, who served as a nurse during the war. Her and Jake live a close life, and are often romantically involved with each other. However, Jake's infertility, caused by the war, will always keep her just out of reach. This is because she desires men in a more sexual than emotional way, because she feels that she cannot fill her life any other way. She uses sex and alcohol to take the edge off of life, hoping that eventually she can fill the emptiness that she herself feels. However, all of her affairs and second marriages cannot help her forget the fact that she loves Jake, and that he loves her to extreme ends. The two endlessly tell each other this truth, but will never truly be together because, though they share similar wounds, they are incurable by contact with their own kind. However, due to them, they are incapable of normal social interaction. Therefore, it would seem that they are stuck in a proverbial trench within themselves, battling to discover who out there is hiding truth with superficial prattle, and who truly has no knowledge to hide.

Jake continues to yearn for Brett throughout the novel, but receives no real confirmation of a relationship. Due to his injuries, they cannot have sex, something which is very important to Brett. And due to her fleeting personality, and her knack for travel, there is no possibility of a true romance. Kissing is as far as the couple can truly go—unsatisfying and passionate kissing that makes Jake mourn. The problem is that Jake has been separated from his world in more than just a mental way. He has been separated because of his wounds, and because of how they have impacted his romantic life.

Summarily, Jake Barnes is a desperate character in American literature. The horrors of war have forever detached him from the society that he wishes to be accepted in. There is no way for him to enjoy the "Roaring '20s," because he knows exactly what led to the gaiety of those around him: the death of many he cared for, and the injury of his very psyche. War has permanently corrupted his view of the world around him, and Jake is tied inexorably to the world in which he lives.