

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

CLASSIC  
FICTION



Nathaniel  
Hawthorne

# The Scarlet Letter

Read by  
**Katinka Wolf**

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1	The embroidered letter	3:29
2	The recognition	7:15
3	The interview	6:46
4	A new life begins	2:40
5	Pearl	4:50
6	The Governor's Hall	5:12
7	The elf-child and the minister	9:31
8	The doctor and the physician	2:33
9	The leech and his patient	12:37
10	Mr Dimmesdale's torment	4:31
11	The Minister's Vigil	10:55
12	A for Able	6:54
13	Hester and the physician	5:22
14	Hester and Pearl	4:56
15	A forest walk	5:52
16	The pastor and his parishioner	8:12
17	A flood of sunshine	5:15
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19	The minister in a maze	7:14
20	The New England holiday	5:13
21	The procession	11:08
22	The Revelation	5:33
23	The Rev. Dimmesdale speaks	6:20
24	Epilogue	2:34

**Total time: 2:36:24**

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## Nathaniel Hawthorne

# The Scarlet Letter

*The Scarlet Letter*, first published in 1850, traces the effects of one sin on the lives of four people in the town of Boston: the young passionate Hester Prynne who is forced to publish her shame to the community by wearing on her breast the letter A for adultery; her lover, the cowardly Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale; her vengeful, aging husband, Roger Chillingworth and her illegitimate daughter, the quixotic little Pearl.

Nathaniel Hawthorne himself described the novel as a ‘hell-fire story’ of shame and redemption. It displays his lifelong preoccupation with the themes of secrecy and guilt, the conflict between the laws of nature and those of man. As an illustration of the effects of Calvinistic Puritanism on life in mid-seventeenth century New England it has no equal.

The characters are, at the same time, both palpably real and the embodiment of moral traits while the powerful narrative and rich imagery evoke the stark

lifestyle of Boston’s Puritans as well as the surrounding wilderness that played an important part in shaping the American psyche. The strenuous, joyless effort to fashion a Utopian world by eliminating the unorthodox is evident here in a society, full of self-righteousness, where witches and witch-hunting abound.

The novel’s language is rich and lyrical with rolling, biblical cadences while, in contrast to the rhetoric, Hawthorne also gives us simple, vivid descriptions of a community’s everyday life: the festivals, the variety of people, the Indians, the sailors, the ships in the harbour, the deaths of the respected and the concerns of young maidens.

The story itself is extraordinary and shocking. It tells of a spirited woman who becomes ‘fallen’ in the eyes of the strict community to which she belongs. Though the eponymous letter itself is intended as the badge of adultery, it takes on other significances – particularly for Pearl – as

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the novel develops. Melodramatic but never superficial, *The Scarlet Letter* explores one woman's certainty of what is right, of her dignity and finally her triumph over prejudice, hypocrisy and fear. Perhaps above all, it asks what sort of society could ever decree by law that a woman should be branded an outcast and compelled to live outside it.

**Notes by Jan Fielden**

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**The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue**

**DVORAK** SYMPHONIC POEMS

Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Gunzenhauser

8.550598

Cover picture: Mary C. Richardson Bull and her daughter Rebecca. Artist unknown.  
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Folk Art Centre, Williamsburg, Virginia.

# Nathaniel Hawthorne

# The Scarlet Letter

Read by **Katinka Wolf**

*The Scarlet Letter* is one of the great classics of American literature. Set in the harsh Puritan environment of 17th century Boston, it describes the plight of Hester Prynne, an independent-minded woman who stands alone against society. Having given birth to a child after an illicit affair she refuses to name the father and is forced to wear the letter A for Adulteress embroidered on her dress.



**Katinka Wolf** trained at the Drama Studio, London and was part of the Stalhouderij Company, Amsterdam, where she appeared in numerous productions of classical and modern plays. She is a familiar figure in fringe theatre in Britain, has appeared on British TV and is the voice of Anne Frank at the Anne Frank Museum, Amsterdam.

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Total time  
2:36:24