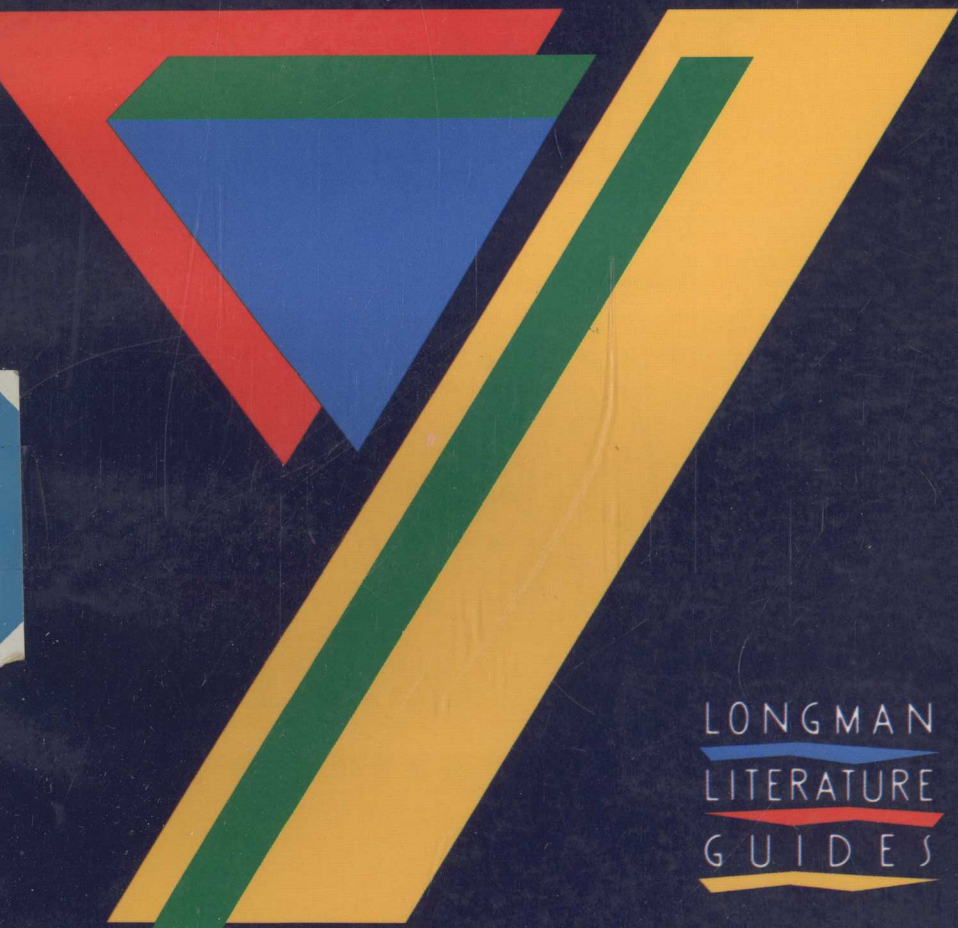


约克文学作品辅导丛书

YORK NOTES ON  
**THE SCARLET  
LETTER**

红字

Nathaniel Hawthorne



LONGMAN  
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GUIDES

# YORK NOTES

*General Editors: Professor A.N. Jeffares (University  
of Stirling) & Professor Suheil Bushrui (American  
University of Beirut)*

Nathaniel Hawthorne

# THE SCARLET LETTER

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## 《约克文学作品辅导丛书》介绍

《约克文学作品辅导丛书》(York Notes)系 Longman 集团有限公司(英国)出版。本丛书覆盖了世界各国历代文学名著,原意是辅导英国中学生准备文学课的高级会考或供英国大学生自学参考。因此,它很适合我国高校英语专业学生研读文学作品时参考。

丛书由 A. N. Jeffares 和 S. Bushrui 两位教授任总编。每册的编写者大都是研究有关作家的专家学者,他们又都有在大学讲授文学的经验,比较了解学生理解上的难点。本丛书自问世以来,始终畅销不衰,被使用者普遍认为是英美出版的同类书中质量较高的一种。

丛书每一册都按统一格式对一部作品进行介绍和分析。每一册都有下列五个部分。

① 导言。主要介绍:作者生平,作品产生的社会、历史背景,有关的文学传统或文艺思潮等。

② 内容提要。一般分为两部分:a. 全书的内容概述;b. 每章的内容提要及难词、难句注释,如方言、典故、圣经或文学作品的引语、有关社会文化习俗等。注释恰到好处,对于读懂原作很有帮助。

③ 评论。结合作品的特点,对结构、人物塑造、叙述角度、语言风格、主题思想等进行分析和评论。论述深入浅出,分析力求客观,意在挖掘作品内涵和展示其艺术性。

④ 学习提示。提出学习要点、重要引语和思考题(附参考答案或答案要点)。

⑤ 进一步研读指导。介绍该作品的最佳版本;版本中是否有重大改动;列出供进一步研读的参考书目(包括作者传记、研究有关作品的专著和评论文章等)。

总之,丛书既提供必要的背景知识,又注意启发学生思考;既重视在吃透作品的基础上进行分析,又对进一步研究提供具体指导;因此是一套理想的英语文学辅导材料。



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## Part 1

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# Introduction

### Historical background

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64) was born into a New England which was only a few generations away from the American War for Independence (1775–83). He was one of the earliest writers to see himself as contributing to an American tradition in literature, rather than as working in the English tradition. However, the region of America in which he lived had since the seventeenth century been heavily settled by people from the British Isles, and a radical break with English culture would not have reflected his own experience of American life. He made a real effort to understand the history of New England, spending twelve years after his graduation from Bowdoin, a small liberal arts college in Maine, reading historical records and documents as well as books of more general cultural interest. During this time he also energetically applied himself to writing stories set in New England, and attempted his first novel, *Fanshawe* (1828), which was based partly on his life at Bowdoin College. Another early attempt was a group of stories, 'Seven Tales of My Native Land'. However, neither of these satisfied their author. *Fanshawe* was printed anonymously at his own expense in 1828, but shortly thereafter Hawthorne became so unhappy about its deficiencies that he tried to recall it, and destroyed many copies. He also burnt the manuscript of 'Seven Tales of My Native Land', a gesture which he later made the subject of a short piece called 'The Devil in Manuscript' (1851).

These difficulties were partly caused by the nature of the region whose life he wanted to portray. New England comprised six of the thirteen original English colonies along the Eastern seaboard. Between it and Spanish settlements in the south and south-west lay land mostly still wilderness. Northward was the area now called Canada, where French furtrappers and Indians co-existed. Gradually the French had explored and settled the banks of North America's two great central rivers, the Ohio and the Mississippi. The English settlers had fought against them in a seven year conflict called the French and Indian War (1756–63), during the Anglo-French Seven Years War in Europe. The English settlers' friendly relations with Indians had turned to deep conflict as the two cultures came to be so evidently incompatible. They saw themselves as isolated.



Nor did they feel any close relationship to their mother country England. Rather, as this quotation from John Winthrop's (1588–1644) shipboard sermon (1630) to settlers bound for Massachusetts Bay Colony suggests, the early New Englanders saw themselves in a special bond or covenant with God, redeeming the Old World by making a new society which could act as a leaven in a vast social change. Winthrop told them that their bond 'is by a mutuall consent through a specially overruleing providence, and a more than ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seeke out a place of Cohabitation and Consorteshipp under a due forme of Government both civill and ecclesiasticall'. This covenant was to be taken deadly seriously: 'For wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us'.

The society, however, whose earlier generations had seen themselves as fulfilling this religious and social mission, had lapsed into relative apathy over the years. By the third generation Puritan leaders were searching for a way to restore the original fervour. They saw that such fervour was needed to hold their people together during years of hardship. The difficult climate of snowy winters and hot summers, the stony ground, and the rough waters of coastal fishing areas in the Atlantic, made economic survival difficult. Moreover, Europe showed little sign of taking the new society as a moral model. In frustration, the Puritan leaders urged reform and renewal. Religious passion was set alight by blazing rhetoric during the Great Awakening revival sermons preached in New England churches in the early 1740s. Cotton Mather (1663–1728), an eminent Puritan, had recorded real distress at the failure of New England's special mission, in *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), but the Great Awakening movement showed that religious zeal was indeed not dead. So too did the earlier tragic witchcraft trials of 1692, in which Hawthorne's ancestor John Hathorne was one of three judges. Indeed New England remained characterised by a strictly Puritan outlook long into the nineteenth century.

However, in Germany and then in England the nineteenth century brought Romanticism, a new set of values quite different from those held by the Puritans. Writers and philosophers of the Romantic Movement emphasised a return to spiritual simplicity and regretted that the new social force of industrialisation was breaking up the older agricultural pattern of village life. They thought of that past as allowing individuals a more natural, more complete mode of expressing their characters in their lives. The Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) wrote stories about people who lived in earlier times in Scotland. These were enormously popular in the British Isles and in cultivated circles in America. Hawthorne read them with great interest. He also read English Gothic romances, which told of decaying castles,

ancestral curses, and lost fortunes, thrilling their wide readership. Hawthorne wanted to be a successful writer of fiction, and more deeply, he was interested in creating for Americans a sense of their past. Thus we can see the New England past was of special interest to Hawthorne for two reasons:

1. He wanted to write distinctively American fiction, not colonial British fiction. Setting his stories in America helped to achieve this aim.
2. As a writer influenced by Romantic thought, he wanted to write about the past. He hoped to adapt some of the techniques of the Gothic romance to the American material.

However, Hawthorne encountered some special difficulties in using historical backgrounds for his romances and short stories:

1. American history was relatively short. He overcame this in different ways in different stories. The events of *The Scarlet Letter* he portrays as being almost unrecorded and almost forgotten in local oral tradition.
2. American colonial history had been dominated by religious quarrelling, which at first glance seemed unpromising material for fiction. Hawthorne tried to turn this weakness to advantage, emphasising the strange, self-enclosing atmosphere of colonial religious traditions.

## Biography

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1804. His ancestors were a mixture of sane and sensible townsfolk and a more fanatical line of Puritan zealots. Hawthorne wrote in 'The Custom House' (1850) that the earliest American ancestor, William Hathorne 'was present to my boyish imagination as far back as I can remember':

[This man] was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor, as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect, which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any record of his better deeds, although these were many.

One such courageous act was William Hathorne's bold refusal to go with the Massachusetts governor to England in order to explain to Charles II the colony's flouting of royal authority. This man's son John was the Salem judge mentioned earlier, who was one of three involved in

condemning witches in 1692. There was a family tradition that one witch had cursed the Hathornes, a belief that appealed to Hawthorne's melancholy imagination. (Nathaniel changed the spelling of the name from Hathorne to Hawthorne after his graduation in 1825.) Hawthorne used this idea of an ancestral curse in his second romance, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851).

Later generations of Hathornes were simple, law-abiding people, and Nathaniel's own father was a sea captain who died four years after Nathaniel was born. Nathaniel's mother came from a family long involved in business, and her brother Robert was able to give her considerable financial help as she reared her two daughters and her son. Despite these early problems, Hawthorne's own life can be said to have taken an even course through rather stormy times. His sisters nurtured his ambition as a writer, and his mother did not demur when he boasted to her as a boy, 'How proud you would feel to see my works praised as equal to the proudest productions of the scribbling sons of John Bull'. Bowdoin (which he attended from 1821 to 1825) gave him a good education in Classical and Biblical literature, English composition and rhetoric, as well as natural sciences and philosophy. Better still, there he met sympathetic and intelligent friends. The closest of these was Horatio Bridge to whom he wrote twenty-five years later 'If anybody is responsible for my being at this day an author, it is yourself'. Indeed Goodrich, Hawthorne's first publisher, only accepted his first collection of short stories *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) after Bridge had guaranteed him two hundred and fifty dollars if it made a loss. Another college friend was Franklin Pierce, later President of the United States, (who was elected in 1852 and served from 1853 to 1857). When President, he arranged for Hawthorne to become U.S. consul in England, freeing him from financial worry and giving him a chance to see the old world of England and Europe. Longfellow (1807-82), later a distinguished poet, was also at Bowdoin with Hawthorne. He gave the commencement address for their year on the topic 'Our Native Writers':

Yes – Palms are to be won by our native writers! – by those that have been nursed and brought up with us in the civil and religious freedom of our country. Already has a voice been lifted up in this land, – already a spirit and a love of literature are springing up in the shadows of our free political institutions . . . Of the many causes which have hitherto retarded the growth of polite literature in our country . . . the greatest which now exists is doubtless the want of that exclusive attention which eminence in any profession so imperiously demands.

A timely encouragement to Hawthorne's literary ambitions came from Longfellow's pen: a very favourable review of Hawthorne's first short-

story collection *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) in the respected journal *The North American Review*.

Lucky in his friends, Hawthorne was also lucky in his wife, Sophia Peabody Hawthorne. She combined many accomplishments – she could read Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, studied history, and displayed real ability as an amateur painter and sculptor – with a submissive and gentle nature. She was affectionate, understanding, and helpful to his work. Despite the inevitable difficulties of rearing three children on a modest and uncertain income, Sophia always protected Hawthorne's privacy within the home, giving him a well-furnished study. As a result, Hawthorne could enjoy his growing family without feeling they disturbed his work. Hawthorne had married late; he was thirty-eight when the wedding took place in July 1842. The courtship had been nearly four years long, as Hawthorne had hoped to achieve financial security before marriage, but had finally settled for the small reassurance of a steady income from contributions to periodicals such as *The Democratic Review*, *The New England Magazine*, and *The Token*. He had briefly held a post in the Custom House at Boston (in 1839 to 1840) and more daringly had ventured a thousand dollars of his savings on the Brook Farm utopian community, joining it in April 1841. There he first worked as a farmhand, and, after five months, lived as a boarder. By November he had become disillusioned about Brook Farm as a possible future home, and felt the effort and the capital were wasted. However, the experience he was later to use in writing *The Blithedale Romance*.

The Hawthornes set up house in The Old Manse, Concord, Massachusetts, which they rented from 1842 to 1845. Hawthorne wrote a light-hearted journal entry about finances in March 1843: 'The Magazine people do not pay their debts so that we taste some of the inconveniences of poverty, and the mortification – only temporary, however – of owing money, with empty pockets. It is an annoyance; not a Trouble'. But after the birth of Una, their first child, a year later, his worries about money became more serious.

Again he was fortunate. The political party Hawthorne belonged to, the Democrats, won the Presidential election for their candidate James Polk. Hawthorne's close friend Bridge was now a navy officer, Pierce was a Senator in the upper house of the United States Congress, and he also had O'Sullivan, the editor of *The Democratic Review*, to plead on his behalf for a post. An appointment was offered to him in April 1846 as Surveyor for the District of Salem and Inspector of the Revenue for the Port of Salem. As Salem was not a busy port, this work was not time-consuming, but it paid a real income. Moreover, the boredom of those office mornings Hawthorne turned to good account, when he wrote about them in his piece 'The Custom House' published in 1850 with *The Scarlet Letter*.

Hawthorne had experienced few problems in publishing short stories and essays in periodicals, since his earliest days as a writer. After his first collection *Twice-Told Tales* appeared in book form in 1837 he became widely known, particularly as the pieces had often originally been published anonymously. Other collections followed: *Grandfather's Chair* (1841); a second considerably enlarged edition of *Twice-Told Tales* (1842); *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846). Throughout the 1840s, Hawthorne's reputation had grown. Intellectuals and fellow-writers such as Orestes Brownson (1842–76), E. A. Duyckinck (1816–78) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49) praised his work. Still he had needed to supplement income by editing Bridge's *Journal of an African Cruiser* (1845) and serious reviews of *Mosses from an Old Manse* had not been as favourable as reviews of earlier books. By 1846 Hawthorne himself felt a change of literary direction was needed, but he found himself unable to give much attention to writing while he worked in the Custom House. When the Whig party returned to power in 1848, it ousted many Democrats from posts. Hawthorne was dismissed in June 1849.

The year 1849 was one of crisis for Hawthorne; that summer as he struggled with anger and anxiety over his dismissal, he watched his mother die. Autumn brought renewal; he began a more serious undertaking than he had as yet attempted, his first romance, *The Scarlet Letter*. He worked with total concentration, writing for as much as nine hours a day. Within six months the manuscript was ready for publication. It came out in March 1850, in an edition of two thousand copies, and a second edition ten days later of three thousand copies. With it the publishers Ticknor, Reed, and Fields printed the short autobiographical essay, 'The Custom House'. Hawthorne's original idea had been a collection including *The Scarlet Letter*, 'The Custom House', and other tales, which he thought might be called 'Old Time Legends; together with Sketches, Experimental and Ideal'. He wrote to Fields:

Is it safe, then, to stake the fate of the book entirely on this one chance? A hunter loads his gun with a bullet and several buckshot; and, following his sagacious example, it was my purpose to conjoin the one long story with half a dozen shorter ones, so that, failing to kill the public outright with my biggest and heaviest lump of lead, I might have other chances with the smaller bits, individually and in the aggregate. However, I am willing to leave these considerations to your judgment, and should not be sorry to have you decide for the separate publication.

Despite Hawthorne's anxiety the book was an immediate success, both with the critics and the reading public. Even the second printing sold well for some months. Critical praise was generous, in both America and England. Hawthorne himself agreed with the objection often made to

the story, that it was unrelievedly gloomy. The shadowy atmosphere of his own work often distressed him throughout his life.

A few critics attacked the story as 'immoral' in its sympathy for an unfaithful wife, and a fallen minister. Orestes Brownson, who had liked Hawthorne's earlier work, led the attack in *Brownson's Review*. Hawthorne scorned such remarks, and perhaps noted with some amusement that they only increased sales. Two London publishers brought out pirated editions in the summer of 1850 in which they reprinted the text without permission from either the author or the original publisher. While neither Hawthorne nor his American publisher would receive payment from them, they were both pleased at the popular demand for *The Scarlet Letter* in England.

'The Custom House' caused a local disturbance among Salem people who thought they recognised themselves or their neighbours in Hawthorne's rather comic caricatures. Perhaps it was as well that the loss of political office caused the Hawthornes to move house again, this time to Lenox, Massachusetts, in the Berkshire mountains. The new home was small and simple. It made a retreat for them for a winter and two summers, where Hawthorne found time to delight in his children and in old and new friends. The most lively new friendship was that with Herman Melville (1819-91), whom he met in August 1850. The two writers stimulated each other, speaking, as Hawthorne recorded of one happy occasion, of 'time and eternity, things of this world and of the next, and books, and publishers, and all possible and impossible matters'. Both were hard at work in the winter 1850 to 1851, Melville on *Moby Dick* (1851), Hawthorne on *The House of the Seven Gables*. Each admired the other's work. Melville wrote to Hawthorne of *The House of the Seven Gables*: 'it has robbed us of a day, and made us a present of a whole year of thoughtfulness; it has bred great exhilaration and exultation'. The book came out in April 1851 and was even more successful financially and critically than *The Scarlet Letter*, reaching sales of five thousand within its first year. In the months after its publication Hawthorne wrote a children's book re-telling Classical myths. It was called *The Wonder Book*, and came out in 1852. A satiric piece 'Feathertop' for the *International Magazine* and two prefaces to collections of tales comprised the rest of Hawthorne's output during his stay in the Berkshires.

'Feathertop' was Hawthorne's last short work of fiction, and when *The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales* came out in the 1851-2 winter, it was Hawthorne's last new collection of tales. It contained four pieces written since 1846, when he had published *Mosses from an Old Manse*, along with eleven others of earlier date. Hawthorne's subsequent fiction was more ambitious. After moving again within Massachusetts - this time to West Newton - Hawthorne went to work on *The Blithedale*

*Romance*. He wrote rapidly, and Ticknor and Fields were printing the book in May 1852.

This was another of Hawthorne's own species of story, the allegorical romance, in which the tale hovers between the world of action and the world of meaning, seeming half in the twilight stillness of a thinking mind. Hawthorne was conscious of writing a new kind of book, and tried to explain his work to his readers. In 'The Custom House' he wrote that he was entering 'a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other'.

*The Blithedale Romance* was not as successful as Hawthorne's earlier works, even though Fields had secured its publication in London by the firm of Chapman and Hall. In the spring of 1852 Hawthorne was buying his final Massachusetts home, the Wayside in Concord, so his financial commitments were heavy. His friend Franklin Pierce was running for President, and in June Hawthorne offered to write the campaign biography, feeling not just friendship but a need to involve himself in political life. Pierce won the election the following November. Hawthorne was rewarded with the well-paid post of American consul in England in March 1853. He was delighted, both with the prospect of a good income, and with the chance to see England and perhaps parts of Europe. He was completing a second book of re-told myths for children, *Tanglewood Tales*, which came out that summer. After that, he left himself free to prepare for the voyage to Liverpool. The post lasted the four years of Pierce's presidency and a bit more; Hawthorne found the work very time-consuming and demanding. It involved many public speeches, as well as interviews with Americans in distress, and the entertainment of important visitors. Such a flow of talk left Hawthorne relatively little energy for his own writing. He kept notebooks, however, into which he crowded many impressions of English life. Some of these found their way into his essay collection *Our Old Home* (1863). He attempted to write a romance set in England, to be called 'The Ancestral Footstep', but he had great difficulty with the story, and little spare time to work on it.

After his years of service as consul, Hawthorne took his family to Italy. Sophia had always longed to go there, and found it even more stimulating than she had imagined. The family lived a year there, much of it spent in Rome. If Hawthorne's last major romance, *The Marble Faun* (1860) reflects his own impressions, he found the long Italian past a bit heady and cloying, like a rich meal for one used to frugal fare. The story is really dual; one strand deals with events in the lives of two Italians of distinguished birth, and the other with lives more like those of Hawthorne and his wife, two American artists, who come to love and respect each other. For the Americans in the story, the charm of Italy's

heritage of art is marred by her more guilty heritage of abused religion and of demeaning relations between men and women. Their innocence is contrasted with European experience.

The final draft of the story was written in England, as the Hawthornes made their slow progress home. In June 1860 they returned to the Wayside, where Hawthorne was to enjoy the last four years of his life. *The Marble Faun* was selling well on both sides of the Atlantic (in England, under the title *Transformation*). Hawthorne worked on two manuscripts left without final revisions after his death, *Septimus Felton* (1872) and *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret* (1882). He also began 'The Dolliver Romance', and struggled with 'The Ancestral Footstep', but his mind was troubled by the tragic American Civil War (1861-5), especially as his friend Franklin Pierce was widely criticised in the North for having compromised too many principles in trying to prevent it. Hawthorne dedicated his publication *Our Old Home* to Pierce, reaffirming their old friendship and establishing his own moderate political position. He believed that the war should have been prevented, but that since the Northerners had finally undertaken to prevent the Southern States from seceding from the Union and to abolish slavery by force of arms, they must press on for a quick military victory. The victory he saw as acceptable was one that would reclaim only the border States. This was not a popular view.

This stress, and financial and family worries (particularly about the health of his daughter Una) brought Hawthorne to a poor state of health by 1863. He died after a short illness in May 1864. His life with his wife and children left them vivid, happy memories of him. Sophia edited his American, English, and French and Italian notebooks for publication (1868, 1870, 1871), and Rose published *Memories of Hawthorne* in 1897. Una, aided by the noted English poet Robert Browning (1812-89), transcribed *Septimus Felton*, published in 1872, and Hawthorne's son Julian made many contributions to the study of his father's works including an edition of *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret* in 1882, and a two-volume biography, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife* (1884) and *Hawthorne and His Circle* (1903). In 1876 his publishers brought out a collected edition of Hawthorne's works, and ten other collected editions appeared before 1900, including the standard 1883 twelve-volume edition edited by George Lathrop and published by Houghton Mifflin and Co., Boston.

## A note on the text

*The Scarlet Letter* was first published by Ticknor, Reed and Fields, Boston, 1850. There have been many subsequent reprintings, among them those of the *Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 22 vols., The



Riverside Press, Boston, 1900. This is the autograph edition, in which Volume 6 contains *The Scarlet Letter*.

The Centenary Edition of the *Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne* is being published by the Ohio State University Press, Columbus, Ohio. The first volume was published in 1963; this contains *The Scarlet Letter*. In all, thirteen volumes of this new standard edition have so far been published.

The text used in the preparation of these Notes is that of *The Scarlet Letter* edited with an introduction by Willard Thorpe, Collier Books, New York, 1962, although where there are significant variants, reference is also made to the Everyman Library edition with an introduction by R. W. Butterfield, J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1906, and last reprinted 1977.