

Before You Read

The Minister's Black Veil by Nathaniel Hawthorne

LITERARY FOCUS: SYMBOL

Many public buildings throughout our country proudly display the American flag, which is a symbol of the United States. A **symbol** is a person, a place, a thing, or an event that has meaning in itself but also stands for something beyond itself. Writers use symbols to create layers of meanings in their work. As you read "The Minister's Black Veil," pay attention to that black veil. What could it symbolize?

Recognizing Symbols Universal symbols are symbols that are widely used and recognized. In the left-hand column of the chart below are listed some universal symbols. Write what they stand for in the space provided.

Universal Symbol	Meaning
white flag	
dove	
rainbow	

READING SKILLS: DRAWING INFERENCES

Writers do not come out and directly state what their symbols mean. Instead, they will provide clues that lead you to infer the wider significance of a particular thing, or place, or event in a story or poem. In fact, you will find that some writers say they do not consciously put symbols in their work at all. It is readers who discover the symbols and who make educated guesses about their broader meanings. You will find that different readers might even have different opinions about the meaning of a symbol—all of which makes reading a special pleasure.

Use the Skill As you read the story, underline or highlight the details that help you make inferences about the black veil.



Literary Skills
Understand symbolism.

Reading Skills
Make inferences.



The Minister's BLACK VEIL

A Parable

Nathaniel Hawthorne

WORD STUDY

"The Minister's Black Veil" is subtitled "A Parable." A **parable** is a short story that teaches a moral lesson.

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 11. Who is Mr. Hooper?

IDENTIFY

Underline the lines on this page that give the first hint that something is wrong with Mr. Hooper.

VOCABULARY

semblance (səm'bləns) *n.*: outward appearance.

The sexton¹ stood in the porch of Milford meetinghouse, pulling lustily at the bell rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tripped merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes. Spruce² bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on weekdays. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper's door. The first glimpse of the clergyman's figure was the signal for the bell to cease its summons.

"But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?" cried the sexton in astonishment.

All within hearing immediately turned about, and beheld the **semblance** of Mr. Hooper, pacing slowly his meditative³ way toward the meetinghouse. With one accord they started, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit.

1. **sexton** *n.*: church officer or employee whose duties may include maintenance, ringing the bells, and digging graves.
2. **spruce** *adj.*: neat in appearance.
3. **meditative** *adj.*: deeply thoughtful.

20 “Are you sure it is our parson?” inquired Goodman⁴ Gray of the sexton.

“Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper,” replied the sexton. “He was to have exchanged pulpits with Parson Shute of Westbury; but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday, being to preach a funeral sermon.”

30 The cause of so much amazement may appear sufficiently slight. Mr. Hooper, a gentlemanly person of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed with due clerical neatness, as if a careful wife had starched his band, and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday’s garb. There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. On a nearer view, it seemed to consist of two folds of crape,⁵ which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, farther than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate⁶ things. With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward, at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted⁷ men, yet nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meetinghouse steps. But so wonder-struck were they, that his greeting hardly met with a return.

40

“I can’t really feel as if good Mr. Hooper’s face was behind that piece of crape,” said the sexton.

“I don’t like it,” muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meetinghouse. “He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face.”

“Our parson has gone mad!” cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold.

4. **Goodman**: form of polite address similar to *mister*.

5. **crape** *n.*: kind of black cloth worn as a sign of mourning; from the French word *crêpe*.

6. **inanimate** *adj.*: lifeless.

7. **abstracted** *adj.*: lost in thought.

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 25–32. Circle the words that describe how Mr. Hooper’s appearance has changed.

FLUENCY

Read the boxed passage aloud two times. Punctuation clues indicate when to pause briefly (commas), and when to pause longer (periods). Which sentence would you emphasize in your reading?

INTERPRET

Pause at line 48. What do the congregation’s comments reveal about the veil’s effect?

IDENTIFY

Underline the words and phrases that describe how people react to Mr. Hooper's appearance (lines 49–57).

IDENTIFY

Underline or highlight the words that describe how Mr. Hooper acts when he enters the church (lines 57–62).

VOCABULARY

obscurity (əb·skyoor'ə·tē)
n.: darkness.

Obscurity is more often used to mean “state of being not well-known or famous.”

CLARIFY

Read lines 77–87 carefully. What is the minister's usual style of preaching? Is he using the same style now?

A rumor of some unaccountable phenomenon had pre-
ceded Mr. Hooper into the meetinghouse, and set all the congre-
gation astir. Few could refrain from twisting their heads toward
the door; many stood upright, and turned directly about; while
several little boys clambered upon the seats, and came down
again with a terrible racket. There was a general bustle, a rustling
of the women's gowns and shuffling of the men's feet, greatly at
variance⁸ with that hushed repose which should attend the
entrance of the minister. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice
the perturbation⁹ of his people. He entered with an almost
noiseless step, bent his head mildly to the pews on each side, and
bowed as he passed his oldest parishioner, a white-haired
great-grandsire, who occupied an armchair in the center of the
aisle. It was strange to observe, how slowly this venerable man
became conscious of something singular in the appearance of
his pastor. He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing won-
der, till Mr. Hooper had ascended the stairs, and showed himself
in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation, except for the
black veil. That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn.
It shook with his measured breath as he gave out the psalm; it
threw its **obscurity** between him and the holy page, as he read
the Scriptures; and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his up-
lifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being
whom he was addressing?

Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape, that
more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the
meetinghouse. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was
almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them.

Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not
an energetic one: He strove to win his people heavenward, by
mild persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither, by
the thunders of the Word. The sermon which he now delivered,

8. **at variance**: not in agreement.

9. **perturbation** n.: state of alarm.

was marked by the same characteristics of style and manner, as the general series of his pulpit oratory. But there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient¹⁰ can detect them. A subtle power was breathed into his words. Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded **iniquity** of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their bosoms. There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said; at least, no violence; and yet, with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos¹¹ came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister, that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger's visage¹² would be discovered, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with indecorous¹³ confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits, the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the center; some went homeward alone, wrapped in silent meditation; some talked loudly, and profaned¹⁴ the Sabbath day with **ostentatious** laughter. A few shook their **sagacious** heads,

10. **the Omniscient**: the all-knowing God.

11. **pathos** *n.*: feelings of pity, sympathy, and sorrow.

12. **visage** *n.*: face.

13. **indecorous** *adj.*: improper; lacking good taste.

14. **profaned** *v.*: showed disrespect for.

Notes

IDENTIFY

Underline the subject of Mr. Hooper's sermon (lines 82–90).

WORD STUDY

Fain (fān) in line 89 is an old-fashioned word that means "with eagerness" or "gladly."

IDENTIFY CAUSE & EFFECT

Why is the congregation so moved and upset? Re-read lines 91–94, and underline the reasons.

VOCABULARY

iniquity (i · nik'wi · tē) *n.*: wickedness.

ostentatious (äs'tən · tā'shəs) *adj.*: deliberately attracting notice.

sagacious (sə · gā'shəs) *adj.*: wise; keenly perceptive.

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 115–126, and circle the four things that Mr. Hooper does after the sermon. How do the parishioners react to his actions?

INFER

Pause at line 131. Do you think Mr. Hooper knows he has upset the members of his church? Explain.

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 141. What effect does the veil have on the minister's appearance, according to the village physician? Underline his description of the veil's impact.

intimating¹⁵ that they could penetrate the mystery; while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade. After a brief interval, forth came good Mr. Hooper also, in the rear of his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due reverence to the hoary¹⁶ heads, saluted the middle-aged with kind dignity, as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with mingled authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children's heads to bless

120 them. Such was always his custom on the Sabbath day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor's side. Old Squire Saunders, doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory, neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont¹⁷ to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement. He returned, therefore, to the parsonage, and, at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the

130 black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

"How strange," said a lady, "that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!"

"Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper's intellects," observed her husband, the physician of the village. "But the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary,¹⁸ even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole

140 person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?"

15. **intimating** *v.* used as *adj.*: indirectly suggesting.

16. **hoary** *adj.*: white or gray, as with age.

17. **wont** *adj.*: accustomed.

18. **vagary** *n.*: odd, unexpected action.

“Truly do I,” replied the lady; “and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!”

“Men sometimes are so,” said her husband.

The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion, the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house, and the more distant acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased, when their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now an appropriate emblem. The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin, to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. As he stooped, the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eyelids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil? A person, who watched the interview between the dead and living, scrupled¹⁹ not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergyman’s features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud²⁰ and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy.²¹ From the coffin, Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and thence to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so imbued with celestial²² hopes, that the music of a heavenly harp, swept by the fingers of the dead, seemed faintly to be heard among the saddest accents of the minister. The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him, when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he

CLARIFY

Re-read lines 155–164. What did Mr. Hooper do when his veil swung forward while praying with the corpse? What did an observer say happened then?

INTERPRET

According to lines 166–170, what was Mr. Hooper’s prayer like?

19. **scrupled** *v.*: hesitated.

20. **shroud** *n.*: cloth used to wrap a body for burial.

21. **prodigy** *n.*: something extraordinary or inexplicable.

22. **celestial** *adj.*: heavenly.

In lines 177–181, two mourners comment that they imagined Mr. Hooper and the deceased young woman walking hand and hand in spirit. What larger meaning might this image have?

trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces. The bearers went heavily forth, and the mourners followed, saddening all the street, with the dead before them, and Mr. Hooper in his black veil behind.

“Why do you look back?” said one in the procession to his partner.

180 “I had a fancy,” replied she, “that the minister and the maiden’s spirit were walking hand in hand.”

“And so had I, at the same moment,” said the other.

That night, the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in wedlock. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a placid cheerfulness for such occasions, which often excited a sympathetic smile, where livelier merriment would have been thrown away. There was no quality of his disposition which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had gathered over him throughout the day, would now be dispelled. But such was not the result. When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil, which had added deeper gloom to the funeral, and could **portend** nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the guests, that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles. The bridal pair stood up before the minister. But the bride's cold fingers quivered in the tremulous²³ hand of the bridegroom, and her deathlike paleness caused a whisper, that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before, was come from her grave to be married. If ever another wedding were so dismal, it was that famous one, where they tolled the wedding knell.²⁴ After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple, in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheer-

portend (pôr • tend') v.: signify.

Pause at line 200. How does the veil affect people at the wedding? Underline the answer.

23. **tremulous** *adj.*: trembling.

24. If . . . **wedding knell**: reference to Hawthorne's story "The Wedding Knell." A knell is the ringing of a bell.

ful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shuddered—his lips grew white—he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet—and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil.

The next day, the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper's black veil. That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street, and good women gossiping at their open windows. It was the first item of news that the tavern keeper told to his guests. The children babbled of it on their way to school. One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his playmates, that the panic seized himself, and he well nigh lost his wits by his own waggery.²⁵

It was remarkable, that, of all the busybodies and impertinent people in the parish, not one ventured to put the plain question to Mr. Hooper, wherefore he did this thing. Hitherto, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers, nor shown himself averse to be guided by their judgment. If he erred at all, it was by so painful a degree of self-distrust, that even the mildest censure²⁶ would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime. Yet, though so well acquainted with this amiable²⁷ weakness, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly remonstrance.²⁸ There was a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed, which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another, till at length it was found expedient to send a deputation²⁹ of the church, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery, before it should grow into a scandal. Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The

25. **waggery** *n.*: joke.

26. **censure** *n.*: expression of strong disapproval or criticism.

27. **amiable** *adj.*: friendly; likable.

28. **remonstrance** *n.*: protest; complaint.

29. **deputation** *n.*: group of representatives.

IDENTIFY CAUSE & EFFECT

Why does Mr. Hooper flee from the reception (lines 206–210)? Underline the cause.

CLARIFY

What is being **personified** in lines 210–211? What is referred to as “Earth’s black veil”?

WORD STUDY

The word *wherefore* (line 224) is no longer in common use. It means “why.”

INFER

Think back on Mr. Hooper’s behavior so far in this story. Why do you think he begins wearing the veil?

IDENTIFY

What does the congregation do to address the problem of the veil (lines 232–237)?

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 240–246, and circle what the veil has come to **symbolize** to the people of the church.

CLARIFY

Pause at line 253. Was the delegation successful in their mission? Why or why not?

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 263. Who is the next person to speak to Mr. Hooper?

minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent, after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business. The topic, it might be supposed, was obvious enough. There was the black veil, swathed round Mr. Hooper's forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper's eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance. Finally, the deputies returned abashed to their constituents, pronouncing the matter too weighty to be handled, except by a council of the churches, if, indeed, it might not require a general synod.³⁰

But there was one person in the village, unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all beside herself. When the deputies returned without an explanation, or even venturing to demand one, she, with the calm energy of her character, determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper, every moment more darkly than before. As his plighted³¹ wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister's first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject, with a direct simplicity, which made the task easier both for him and her. After he had seated himself, she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude: It was but a double fold of crape, hanging down from his forehead to his mouth, and slightly stirring with his breath.

"No," said she aloud, and smiling, "there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from

30. **synod** (sin'əd) *n.*: governing body of a group of churches.

31. **plighted** *v.* used as *adj.*: promised.

behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: Then tell me why you put it on.”

Mr. Hooper’s smile glimmered faintly.

“There is an hour to come,” said he, “when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then.”

“Your words are a mystery too,” returned the young lady. “Take away the veil from them, at least.”

280 “Elizabeth, I will,” said he, “so far as my vow may suffer me. Know, then, this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world: Even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!”

“What grievous affliction hath befallen you,” she earnestly inquired, “that you should thus darken your eyes forever?”

290 “If it be a sign of mourning,” replied Mr. Hooper, “I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil.”

“But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?” urged Elizabeth. “Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers, that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal!”

300 The color rose into her cheeks, as she intimated the nature of the rumors that were already abroad in the village. But Mr. Hooper’s mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again—that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmer of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.

“If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough,” he merely replied; “and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?”

And with this gentle, but unconquerable obstinacy,³² did he resist all her entreaties. At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few

INTERPRET

Underline Mr. Hooper’s response to Elizabeth’s request to take off the veil (lines 275–276). His response has **symbolic** meaning. What do you think it means?

INTERPRET

Lines 280–286 are a key passage in the story. Re-read this passage, and explain what you learn from it.

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 296. What argument does Elizabeth use to try to persuade Mr. Hooper to remove his veil?

32. **obstinacy** *n.*: stubbornness; willfulness.

IDENTIFY

What change has come over Elizabeth in lines 311–315?

CLARIFY

What does Mr. Hooper attempt to get Elizabeth to do (lines 319–325)? Underline his arguments.

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 331. How is the matter between Elizabeth and Mr. Hooper resolved?

moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried, to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease. Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks. But, in an instant, as it were, a new feeling took the place of sorrow: Her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him.

“And do you feel it then at last?” said he mournfully.

She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand, and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm.

“Have patience with me, Elizabeth!” cried he passionately.

“Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil—it is not for eternity! Oh! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!”

“Lift the veil but once, and look me in the face,” said she.

“Never! It cannot be!” replied Mr. Hooper.

“Then, farewell!” said Elizabeth.

She withdrew her arm from his grasp, and slowly departed, pausing at the door, to give one long, shuddering gaze, that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil. But, even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers.

From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper’s black veil, or, by a direct appeal, to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide. By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice, it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingles with the sober actions of men otherwise rational, and tinges them all with its own semblance of

Her eyes were fixed insensibly on
the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in
the air, its terrors fell around her.

insanity. But with the multitude, good Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear.³³ He could not walk the streets with any peace of mind, so conscious was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardihood to throw themselves in his way. The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk, at sunset, to the burial ground; for when he leaned **pensively** over the gate, there would always be faces behind the grave-

350 stones, peeping at his black veil. A fable went the rounds, that the stare of the dead people drove him thence. It grieved him, to the very depth of his kind heart, to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports, while his melancholy figure was yet afar off. Their instinctive dread caused him to feel, more strongly than aught else, that a preternatural³⁴ horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own **antipathy** to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly passed before a mirror, nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should

360 be affrighted by himself. This was what gave **plausibility** to the whispers, that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime, too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him. It was said, that ghost and fiend

33. **bugbear** *n.*: source of irrational fears.

34. **preternatural** *adj.*: abnormal; supernatural.

Notes

INTERPRET

Pause at line 346. How do the villagers treat Mr. Hooper?

VOCABULARY

pensively (pen'siv · lē) *adv.*: in deep thought.

antipathy (an · tip'ə · thē) *n.*: strong dislike.

plausibility (plō'zə · bil'ə · tē) *n.*: believability.

IDENTIFY

Pause at the end of this page. Underline details that might give you a clue about the veil's meaning.

INTERPRET

Pause at line 373. What effect does the veil have on Mr. Hooper's outlook?

INTERPRET

Re-read lines 374–381. Underline the words that describe how the black veil affected Hooper's relationship with the villagers. What do you think the black veil is a **symbol** of at this point in the story?

CLARIFY

Pause at line 389. In what way did the veil make Mr. Hooper a popular minister?

370 consorted with him there. With self-shudderings and outward terrors, he walked continually in its shadow, groping darkly within his own soul, or gazing through a medium that saddened the whole world. Even the lawless wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret, and never blew aside the veil. But still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled, at the pale visages of the worldly throng as he passed by.

380 Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman. By the aid of his mysterious emblem—for there was no other apparent cause—he became a man of awful power, over souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections. Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he appeared; though ever, as he stooped to whisper consolation, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own. Such were the terrors of the black veil, even when Death had bared his visage! Strangers came long distances to attend service at his church, with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure, because it was forbidden them to behold his face. But many
390 were made to quake ere they departed! Once, during Governor Belcher's³⁵ administration, Mr. Hooper was appointed to preach the election sermon. Covered with his black veil, he stood before the chief magistrate, the council, and the representatives, and wrought so deep an impression, that the legislative measures of that year, were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral sway.

In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life, irreproachable³⁶ in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions; kind

35. **Governor Belcher's:** Jonathan Belcher (1681?–1757) was governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony from 1730 to 1741.

36. **irreproachable** *adj.*: blameless.

and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared; a man apart from
 400 men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to
 their aid in mortal anguish. As years wore on, shedding their
 snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the
 New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper.
 Nearly all his parishioners, who were of mature age when he was
 settled, had been borne away by many a funeral: He had one
 congregation in the church, and a more crowded one in the
 churchyard; and having wrought so late into the evening, and
 done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper's turn to
 rest.

410 Several persons were visible by the shaded candlelight, in
 the death chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he
 had none. But there was the decorously grave, though unmoved
 physician, seeking only to mitigate³⁷ the last pangs of the patient
 whom he could not save. There were the deacons, and other
 eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the
 Reverend Mr. Clark, of Westbury, a young and zealous divine,
 who had ridden in haste to pray by the bedside of the expiring
 minister. There was the nurse, no hired handmaiden of death,
 but one whose calm affection had endured thus long, in secrecy,
 420 in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at
 the dying hour. Who, but Elizabeth! And there lay the hoary
 head of good Father Hooper upon the death-pillow, with the
 black veil still swathed about his brow and reaching down over
 his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath
 caused it to stir. All through life that piece of crape had hung
 between him and the world: It had separated him from cheerful
 brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of
 all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to
 deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him
 430 from the sunshine of eternity.

For some time previous, his mind had been confused,
 wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and

INTERPRET

What does the phrase "it was now good Father Hooper's turn to rest" mean in lines 408–409?

CLARIFY

What do you learn about Elizabeth in lines 418–421?

IDENTIFY

Underline details that suggest the meaning of the black veil (lines 421–430).

37. **mitigate** v.: make less painful.

INFER

Pause at line 442. Why do you think Elizabeth would have replaced the veil if it had fallen away?

PREDICT

Pause at line 453. Do you think Hooper will reveal why he has worn the black veil for so many years? Explain.

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 456–464. Underline the reasons the minister of Westbury gives for wanting to lift the black veil.

hovering forward, as it were, at intervals, into the indistinctness of the world to come. There had been feverish turns, which tossed him from side to side, and wore away what little strength he had. But in his most convulsive struggles, and in the wildest vagaries of his intellect, when no other thought retained its sober influence, he still showed an awful solicitude lest the black veil should slip aside. Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at his pillow, who, with averted eyes, would have covered that aged face, which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood. At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in the torpor³⁸ of mental and bodily exhaustion, with an imperceptible pulse, and breath that grew fainter and fainter, except when a long, deep, and irregular inspiration³⁹ seemed to prelude the flight of his spirit.

The minister of Westbury approached the bedside.

“Venerable Father Hooper,” said he, “the moment of your release is at hand. Are you ready for the lifting of the veil, that shuts in time from eternity?”

Father Hooper at first replied merely by a feeble motion of his head; then, apprehensive, perhaps, that his meaning might be doubtful, he exerted himself to speak.

“Yea,” said he, in faint accents, “my soul hath a patient weariness until that veil be lifted.”

“And is it fitting,” resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, “that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment may pronounce; is it fitting that a father in the church should leave a shadow on his memory, that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you, my venerable brother, let not this thing be! Suffer us to be gladdened by your triumphant aspect, as you go to your reward. Before the veil of eternity be lifted, let me cast aside this black veil from your face!”

And thus speaking, the Reverend Mr. Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years. But, exerting a sudden

38. **torpor** *n.*: dull or sluggish state.

39. **inspiration** *n.*: inhaling.

energy, that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper
snatched both his hands from beneath the bedclothes, and
pressed them strongly on the black veil, **resolute** to struggle, if
470 the minister of Westbury would contend with a dying man.

“Never!” cried the veiled clergyman. “On earth, never!”

“Dark old man!” exclaimed the affrighted minister, “with
what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the
judgment?”

Father Hooper’s breath heaved; it rattled in his throat; but,
with a mighty effort, grasping forward with his hands, he caught
hold of life, and held it back till he should speak. He even raised
himself in bed; and there he sat, shivering with the arms of
death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful, at that
480 last moment, in the gathered terrors of a lifetime. And yet the
faint, sad smile, so often there, now seemed to glimmer from its
obscurity, and linger on Father Hooper’s lips.

“Why do you tremble at me alone?” cried he, turning his
veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. “Tremble also at
each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity,
and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What,
but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece
of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his
friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly
490 shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up
the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol
beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo!
on every visage a Black Veil!”

While his auditors shrank from one another, in mutual
affright, Father Hooper fell back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse,
with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him
in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The
grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave,
the burial stone is moss-grown, and good Mr. Hooper’s face is
500 dust; but awful is still the thought, that it moldered beneath the
Black Veil!

VOCABULARY

resolute (rez'ə·lōōt') *adj.*:
determined.

CLARIFY

Lines 483–493 contain the
climax of the story. What
does Mr. Hooper say made
the veil so awful?

INFER

This story is a **parable**: It
teaches a moral lesson.
What do you think is the
moral lesson of “The
Minister’s Black Veil”?

The Minister's Black Veil

Reading Skills: Drawing Inferences “The Minister’s Black Veil” contains details that help you make inferences about Mr. Hooper, about the deceased woman, about what the veil symbolizes, and about the moral lesson the story teaches.

The following chart contains passages from “The Minister’s Black Veil.” Write the inferences you make about these passages in the space provided to the right.

Story Details	Inferences About . . .
“‘I had a fancy,’ replied she, ‘that the minister and the maiden’s spirit were walking hand in hand.’” (lines 179–180)	Mr. Hooper:
“All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: It had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman’s love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart. . . .” (lines 425–428)	The veil:
“‘When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster. . . .’” (lines 488–491)	The moral lesson:
“‘. . . Lo! on every visage a Black Veil!’” (lines 492–493)	People everywhere:

Vocabulary Development

The Minister's Black Veil

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIRECTIONS: Write vocabulary words from the Word Box to complete the paragraph below. Not all of the words will be used.

Word Box

semblance
obscurity
iniquity
ostentatious
sagacious
portend
pensively
antipathy
plausibility
resolute

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a great nineteenth-century American novelist and short-story writer. After graduating from college, he lived in quiet (1) _____ as a little-known writer for more than ten years. Early in his career, Hawthorne often wrote about (2) _____ and the effect of wickedness on individuals and their community. Characters in Hawthorne's stories have the (3) _____ of normalcy; however, their outward appearances are often deceiving. Like most storytellers, Hawthorne creates suspense with details that (4) _____ future events. In his stories and novels, Hawthorne reveals his (5) _____ for hypocrisy and moral blindness.

CONTEXT CLUES

You can figure out the meaning of an unknown word by using **context clues**, which are the surrounding words, phrases, and sentences.

DIRECTIONS: In each sentence below, circle the words or phrases that provide clues to the meaning of the boldface vocabulary word. Then, explain the meaning of the boldface word based on its context.

1. Mr. Hooper, though a mild man, was **resolute** in his determination not to remove the veil.

Explanation: _____

2. The lonely minister often walked **pensively** as the villagers greeted each other. He seriously considered how their lives differed from his own.

Explanation: _____

3. The minister didn't want the black veil to be **ostentatious**; however, it still attracted a lot of notice in the village.

Explanation: _____



Vocabulary Skills

Use vocabulary in context. Use context clues to clarify word meanings.

from Letter from Birmingham City Jail

Reading Skills: Analyzing Political Beliefs Persuasive details from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" are listed in the chart below. In the right-hand column, next to each detail, identify the type of detail: example, statistic, definition, or quotation. Then, review the details from the selection, and write a summary of King's political beliefs, based on those details.

Selection Detail	Kind of Persuasive Detail
"I would agree with Saint Augustine that 'An unjust law is no law at all.'" (lines 8–9)	quotation
"A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God." (lines 11–12)	definition
"... there are some counties without a single Negro registered to vote despite the fact that the Negro constitutes a majority of the population." (lines 20–22)	statistic
"For instance, I was arrested Friday on a charge of parading without a permit..." (lines 26–27)	example
King's Political Beliefs	

Sample response: King believed that people must evaluate the laws and determine which ones are unjust. People who choose to disobey unjust laws should do so in a nonviolent way.

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Before You Read

The Minister's Black Veil

LITERARY FOCUS: SYMBOL

Many public buildings throughout our country proudly display the American flag, which is a symbol of the United States. A **symbol** is a person, a place, a thing, or an event that has meaning in itself but also stands for something beyond itself. Writers use symbols to create layers of meanings in their work. As you read “The Minister’s Black Veil,” pay attention to that black veil. What could it symbolize?

Recognizing Symbols Universal symbols are symbols that are widely used and recognized. In the left-hand column of the chart below are listed some universal symbols. Write what they stand for in the space provided.

Universal Symbol	Meaning
white flag	surrender
dove	peace
rainbow	hope

READING SKILLS: DRAWING INFERENCES


Writers do not come out and directly state what their symbols mean. Instead, they will provide clues that lead you to infer the wider significance of a particular thing, or place, or in a story or poem. In fact, you will find that some writers say they do not consciously put symbols in their work at all. It is readers who discover the symbols and who make educated guesses about their broader meanings. You will find that different readers might even have different opinions about the meaning of a symbol—all of which makes reading a special pleasure.

Use the Skill As you read the story, underline or highlight the details that help you make inferences about the black veil.



Literary Skills
Understand symbolism.

Reading Skills
Make inferences.



The Minister's BLACK VEIL

A Parable

Nathaniel Hawthorne

The sexton¹ stood in the porch of Milford meetinghouse, pulling lustily at the bell rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tripped merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes. Spruce² bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on weekdays. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper's door. The first glimpse of the clergyman's figure was the signal for the bell to cease its summons.

"But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?" cried the sexton in astonishment.

All within hearing immediately turned about, and beheld the **semblance** of Mr. Hooper, pacing slowly his meditative way toward the meetinghouse. With one accord they started, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit.

WORD STUDY

"The Minister's Black Veil" is subtitled "A Parable." A **parable** is a short story that teaches a moral lesson.

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 11. Who is Mr. Hooper?

the Minister of Milford meetinghouse

IDENTIFY

Underline the lines on this page that give the first hint that something is wrong with Mr. Hooper.

VOCABULARY

semblance (sam'blans) *n.*: outward appearance.

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 25–32. Circle the words that describe how Mr. Hooper's appearance has changed.

FLUENCY

Read the boxed passage aloud two times. Punctuation clues indicate when to pause briefly (commas), and when to pause longer (periods). Which sentence would you emphasize in your reading?

Responses will vary.

INTERPRET

Pause at line 48. What do the congregation's comments reveal about the veil's effect?

The veil makes the minister seem "awful" or "mad."

"Are you sure it is our parson?" inquired Goodman⁴ Gray of the sexton.

"Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper," replied the sexton. "He was to have exchanged pulpits with Parson Shute of Westbury; but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday, being to preach a funeral sermon."

The cause of so much amazement may appear sufficiently slight. Mr. Hooper, a gentlemanly person of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed with due clerical neatness, as if a careful wife had starched his band, and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday's garb. There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance: **swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil.** On a nearer view, it seemed to consist of two folds of crape,⁵ which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, farther than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things. With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward, at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted⁷ men, yet nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meetinghouse steps. But so wonder-struck were they, that his greeting hardly met with a return.

"I can't really feel as if good Mr. Hooper's face was behind that piece of crape," said the sexton.

"I don't like it," muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meetinghouse. "He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face."

"Our parson has gone mad!" cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold.

4. Goodman: form of polite address similar to *mister*.

5. crape n.: kind of black cloth worn as a sign of mourning; from the French word *crêpe*.

6. inanimate adj.: lifeless.

7. abstracted adj.: lost in thought.

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 25–32. Circle the words that describe how Mr. Hooper's appearance has changed.

FLUENCY

Read the boxed passage aloud two times. Punctuation clues indicate when to pause briefly (commas), and when to pause longer (periods). Which sentence would you emphasize in your reading?

Responses will vary.

INTERPRET

Pause at line 48. What do the congregation's comments reveal about the veil's effect?

The veil makes the minister seem "awful" or "mad."

50 A rumor of some unaccountable phenomenon had preceded Mr. Hooper into the meetinghouse, and set all the congregation astir. Few could refrain from twisting their heads toward the door; many stood upright, and turned directly about; while several little boys clambered upon the seats, and came down again with a terrible racket. There was a general bustle, a rustling of the women's gowns and shuffling of the men's feet, greatly at variance⁸ with that hushed repose which should attend the entrance of the minister. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice the perturbation⁹ of his people. He entered with an almost noiseless step, bent his head mildly to the pews on each side, and bowed as he passed his oldest parishioner, a white-haired great-grandfather, who occupied an armchair in the center of the aisle. It was strange to observe, how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor. He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder, till Mr. Hooper had ascended the stairs, and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation, except for the black veil. That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath as he gave out the psalm; it threw its **obscurity** between him and the holy page, as he read the Scriptures; and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?

Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meetinghouse. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them. Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: He strove to win his people heavenward, by mild persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither by the thunders of the Word. The sermon which he now delivered,

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90 was marked by the same characteristics of style and manner, as the general series of his pulpit oratory. But there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient¹⁰ can detect them. A subtle power was breathed into his words. Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their boarded **iniquity** of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their bosoms. There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said; at least, no violence; and yet, with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos¹¹ came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister, that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger's visage¹² would be discovered, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with indecorous¹³ confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits, the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the center; some went homeward alone, wrapped in silent meditation; some talked loudly, and profaned¹⁴ the Sabbath day with **ostentatious** laughter. A few shook their **sagacious** heads,

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IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 115–126, and circle the four things that Mr. Hooper does after the sermon. How do the parishioners react to his actions?
He is left alone.

INFER

Pause at line 131. Do you think Mr. Hooper knows he has upset the members of his church? Explain.
Most students will say that Hooper knows, because he seems sad and resigned as he returns to the parsonage.

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 141. What effect does the veil have on the minister's appearance, according to the village physician? Underline his description of the veil's impact.

intimating¹⁵ that they could penetrate the mystery, while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade. After a brief interval, forth came good Mr. Hooper also, in the rear of his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due reverence to the hoary¹⁶ heads, saluted the middle-aged with kind dignity as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with mingled authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children's heads to bless them. Such was always his custom on the Sabbath day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor's side. Old Squire Saunders, doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory, neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont¹⁷ to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement. He returned, therefore, to the parsonage, and, at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

"How strange," said a lady, "that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!"

"Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper's intellects," observed her husband, the physician of the village. "But the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary,¹⁸ even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?"

15. intimidating v. used as adj.: indirectly suggesting.
16. hoary adj.: white or gray, as with age.
17. wont adj.: accustomed.
18. vagary n.: odd, unexpected action.

102 Part 1 Collection 2: American Romanticism

CLARIFY

Re-read lines 155–164. What did Mr. Hooper do when his veil swung forward while praying with the corpse? What did an observer say happened then?
Hooper quickly put the veil back in place. The observer said that the corpse shuddered when she "saw" the minister's face under the veil.

INTERPRET

According to lines 166–170, what was Mr. Hooper's prayer like?
It was moving and beautiful.

"Truly do I," replied the lady; "and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!"

"Men sometimes are so," said her husband.

The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion, the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house, and the more distant acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased, when their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now an appropriate emblem. The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin, to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. As he stooped, the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eyelids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil? A person, who watched the interview between the dead and living, scrupled¹⁹ not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud²⁰ and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy.²¹ From the coffin, Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and thence to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so imbued with celestial²² hopes, that the music of a heavenly harp, swept by the fingers of the dead, seemed faintly to be heard among the saddest accents of the minister. The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him, when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he

19. scrupled v.: hesitated
20. shroud n.: cloth used to wrap a body for burial.
21. prodigy n.: something extraordinary or inexplicable.
22. celestial adj.: heavenly.

The Minister's Black Veil 103

177–181, two mourners comment that they imagined Mr. Hooper and the deceased young woman walking hand and hand in spirit. What larger meaning might this image have?

INTERPRET

Perhaps the minister is wearing the veil

because he wronged the woman in some way. The dead young lady has forgiven him.

180

“I had a fancy,” replied she, “that the minister and the maiden’s spirit were walking hand in hand.”

“And so had I, at the same moment,” said the other.

That night, the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in wedlock. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a placid cheerfulness for such occasions, which often excited a sympathetic smile, where livelier merriment would have been thrown away. There was no quality of his disposition which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had gathered over him throughout the day, would now be dispelled. But such was not the result. When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil, which had added deeper gloom to the funeral, and could **portend** nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the guests, that a cloud seemed to have rolled dusily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles. The bridal pair stood up before the minister. But the bride’s cold fingers quivered in the tremulous²³ hand of the bridegroom, and her deathlike paleness caused a whisper, that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before, was come from her grave to be married. If ever another wedding were so dismal, it was that famous one, where they tolled the wedding knell.²⁴ After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple, in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheer-

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VOCABULARY

portend (pôr-tend') v.: signify.

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 200: How does the veil affect people at the wedding? Underline the answer.

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ful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shuddered—his lips grew white—he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet—and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil.

210

The next day, the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper’s black veil. That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street, and good women gossiping at their open windows. It was the first item of news that the tavern keeper told to his guests. The children babbled of it on their way to school. One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his playmates, that the panic seized himself, and he well nigh lost his wits by his own wagging.²⁵

220

It was remarkable, that, of all the busybodies and impertinent people in the parish, not one ventured to put the plain question to Mr. Hooper, wherefore he did this thing. Hitherto, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers, nor shown himself averse to be guided by their judgment. If he erred at all, it was by so painful a degree of self-distrust, that even the mildest censure²⁶ would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime. Yet, though so well acquainted with this amiable²⁷ weakness, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly remonstrance.²⁸ There was a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed, which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another, till at length it was found expedient to send a deputation²⁹ of the church, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery, before it should grow into a scandal. Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The

23. **tremulous** adj.: trembling.

24. **... wedding knell**: reference to Hawthorne’s story “The Wedding Knell.” A knell is the ringing of a bell.

25. **wagging** n.: joke.

26. **censure** n.: expression of strong disapproval or criticism.

27. **amiable** adj.: friendly; likable.

28. **remonstrance** n.: protest; complaint.

29. **deputation** n.: group of representatives.

194

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104 Part 1 Collection 2: American Romanticism

210

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IDENTIFY

CAUSE & EFFECT

Why does Mr. Hooper flee from the reception (lines 206–210)? Underline the cause.

CLARIFY

What is being **personified** in lines 210–211? What is referred to as “Earth’s black veil”?

The earth is personified; darkness is referred to as “Earth’s black veil.”

WORD STUDY

The word *wherefore* (line 224) is no longer in common use. It means “why.”

INFER

Think back on Mr. Hooper’s behavior so far in this story. Why do you think he begins wearing the veil?

Responses will vary.

IDENTIFY

What does the congregation do to address the problem of the veil (lines 232–237)?

They send a small group of people to confront the minister about it.

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105 The Minister’s Black Veil

minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent, after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business. The topic, it might be supposed, was obvious enough. There was the black veil, swathed round Mr. Hooper's forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, (the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them.) Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper's eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance. Finally, the deputies returned abashed to their constituents, pronouncing the matter too weighty to be handled, except by a council of the churches, if, indeed, it might not require a general synod.³⁰

But there was one person in the village, unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all beside herself. When the deputies returned without an explanation, or even venturing to demand one, she, with the calm energy of her character, determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper, every moment more darkly than before. As his plighted³¹ wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister's first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject, with a direct simplicity, which made the task easier both for him and her. After he had seated himself, she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude: It was but a double fold of crape, hanging down from his forehead to his mouth, and slightly stirring with his breath.

"No," said she aloud, and smiling, "there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from

240

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 240–246, and circle what the veil has come to symbolize to the people of the church.

CLARIFY

Pause at line 253. Was the delegation successful in their mission? Why or why not?

No; they could not bring up the topic.

250

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 263. Who is the next person to speak to Mr. Hooper?

His fiancée is the next person to speak to him.

260

270

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behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: Then tell me why you put it on."

Mr. Hooper's smile glimmered faintly.

"There is an hour to come," said he, "when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then."

"Your words are a mystery too," returned the young lady. "Take away the veil from them, at least."

"Elizabeth, I will," said he, "so far as my vow may suffer me. Know, then, this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world: Even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!"

"What grievous affliction hath befallen you," she earnestly inquired, "that you should thus darken your eyes forever?"

"If it be a sign of mourning," replied Mr. Hooper, "I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil."

"But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?" urged Elizabeth. "Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers, that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal!"

The color rose into her cheeks, as she intimated the nature of the rumors that were already abroad in the village. But Mr. Hooper's mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again—that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.

"If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough," he merely replied; "and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?"

And with this gentle, but unconquerable obstinacy,³² did he resist all her entreaties. At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few

280

INTERPRET

Underline Mr. Hooper's response to Elizabeth's request to take off the veil (lines 275–276). His response has symbolic meaning. What do you think it means?

Suggested response:

When we die, we will not be able to conceal truths.

290

INTERPRET

Lines 280–286 are a key passage in the story. Re-read this passage, and explain what you learn from it.

The minister took a vow to wear the veil; he plans to wear it forever, and no one alive is permitted to look behind it.

300

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 296. What argument does Elizabeth use to try to persuade Mr. Hooper to remove his veil?

She says that because he is wearing the veil, some people think he has secret sins.

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moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried, to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease. Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks. But, in an instant, as it were, a new feeling took the place of sorrow: Her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him.

310

IDENTIFY

What change has come over Elizabeth in lines 311–315?
She has suddenly become afraid.

“And do you feel it then at last?” said he mournfully. She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand, and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm.

“Have patience with me, Elizabeth!” cried he passionately. “Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil—it is not for eternity! Oh! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!”

320

CLARIFY

What does Mr. Hooper attempt to get Elizabeth to do (lines 319–325)? Underline his arguments.

“Lift the veil but once, and look me in the face,” said she. “Never! It cannot be!” replied Mr. Hooper.

“Then, farewell!” said Elizabeth.

She withdrew her arm from his grasp, and slowly departed, pausing at the door, to give one long, shuddering gaze, that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil. But, even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers.

330

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 331: How is the matter between Elizabeth and Mr. Hooper resolved?
Elizabeth leaves him because he refuses to let her see his face one last time.

From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper's black veil, or, by a direct appeal, to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide. By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice, it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingles with the sober actions of men otherwise rational, and tinges them all with its own semblance of

340

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Her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her.

350

INTERPRET

Pause at line 346: How do the villagers treat Mr. Hooper?
They either avoid him or put themselves deliberately in his way to show him they are not scared.

insanity. But with the multitude, good Mr. Hooper was irrep- rably a bugbear.³³ He could not walk the streets with any peace of mind, so conscious was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardness to throw themselves in his way. The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk, at sunset, to the burial ground; for when he leaned **pensively** over the gate, there would always be faces behind the grave- stones, peeping at his black veil. A fable went the rounds, that the stare of the dead people drove him thence. It grieved him, to the very depth of his kind heart, to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports, while his melancholy figure was yet afar off. Their instinctive dread caused him to feel, more strongly than aught else, that a preter- natural³⁴ horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own **antipathy** to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly passed before a mirror; nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself. This was what gave **plausibility** to the whispers, that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime, too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sym- pathy could never reach him. It was said, that ghost and fiend

360

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VOCABULARY

pensively (pen'siv-ly) *adv.*: in deep thought.
antipathy (an-tip'i-a-the) *n.*: strong dislike.
plausibility (plo'za-bil'i-te) *n.*: believability.

IDENTIFY

Pause at the end of this page. Underline details that might give you a clue about the veil's meaning.

33. bugbear *n.*: source of irrational fears.
34. preternatural *adj.*: abnormal; supernatural.

370 consorted with him there. With self-shudderings and outward
terrors, he walked continually in its shadow, groping darkly
within his own soul, or gazing through a medium that saddened
the whole world. Even the lawless wind, it was believed, re-
spect his dreadful secret, and never blew aside the veil. But
still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled, at the pale visages of the
worldly throng as he passed by.

Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one
desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman.
By the aid of his mysterious emblem—for there was no other
apparent cause—he became a man of awful power, over souls
that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him
with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but fig-
uratively, that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had
been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled
him to sympathize with all dark affections. Dying sinners cried
aloud for Mr. Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he
appeared; though ever, as he stooped to whisper consolation,
they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own. Such were
the terrors of the black veil, even when Death had bared his vis-
age! Strangers came long distances to attend service at his
church, with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure,
because it was forbidden them to behold his face. But many
were made to quake ere they departed! Once, during Governor
Belcher's³⁵ administration, Mr. Hooper was appointed to preach
the election sermon. Covered with his black veil, he stood before
the chief magistrate, the council, and the representatives, and
wrought so deep an impression, that the legislative measures of
that year, were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our
earliest ancestral sway.

In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life, irreproach-
able³⁶ in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions; kind

370 What effect does the veil have on Mr. Hooper's outlook?
He is sadder and gloomier; no love or sympathy reaches through the veil to him.

380 Re-read lines 374–381.
Underline the words that describe how the black veil affected Hooper's relation-ship with the villagers. What do you think the black veil is a symbol of at this point in the story?
It is a symbol of guilt that is felt by all people who have committed a sin.

390 Pause at line 389. In what way did the veil make Mr. Hooper a popular minister?
Curious people came from far away just to see his veiled face.

INTERPRET

What does the phrase “it was now good Father Hooper’s turn to rest” mean in lines 408–409?
It means it is Father Hooper’s turn to die.

CLARIFY

What do you learn about Elizabeth in lines 418–421?
She still loves Mr. Hooper after all these years.

IDENTIFY

Underline details that suggest the meaning of the black veil (lines 421–430).

37. mitigate v.: make less painful.

35. Governor Belcher’s: Jonathan Belcher (1681?–1757) was governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony from 1730 to 1741.

36. irreproachable adj.: blameless.

110 Part 1 Collection 2: American Romanticism

400 and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared; a man apart from
men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to
their aid in mortal anguish. As years wore on, shedding their
snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the
New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper.
Nearly all his parishioners, who were of mature age when he was
settled, had been borne away by many a funeral: He had one
congregation in the church, and a more crowded one in the
churchyard; and having wrought so late into the evening, and
done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper’s turn to
rest.

410 Several persons were visible by the shaded candlelight, in
the death chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he
had none. But there was the decorously grave, though unmoved
physician, seeking only to mitigate³⁷ the last pangs of the patient
whom he could not save. There were the deacons, and other
eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the
Reverend Mr. Clark, of Westbury, a young and zealous divine,
who had ridden in haste to pray by the bedside of the expiring
minister. There was the nurse, no hired handmaiden of death,
but one whose calm affection had endured thus long, in secrecy,
in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at
the dying hour. Who, but Elizabeth! And there lay the hoary
head of good Father Hooper upon the death-pillow, with the
black veil still swathed about his brow and reaching down over
his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath
caused it to stir. All through life that piece of crape had hung
between him and the world: It had separated him from cheerful
brotherhood and woman’s love, and kept him in that saddest of
all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to
deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him
from the sunshine of eternity.

430 For some time previous, his mind had been confused,
wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and

400 men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their aid in mortal anguish. As years wore on, shedding their snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper. Nearly all his parishioners, who were of mature age when he was settled, had been borne away by many a funeral: He had one congregation in the church, and a more crowded one in the churchyard; and having wrought so late into the evening, and done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper’s turn to rest.

410 Several persons were visible by the shaded candlelight, in the death chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he had none. But there was the decorously grave, though unmoved physician, seeking only to mitigate³⁷ the last pangs of the patient whom he could not save. There were the deacons, and other eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the Reverend Mr. Clark, of Westbury, a young and zealous divine, who had ridden in haste to pray by the bedside of the expiring minister. There was the nurse, no hired handmaiden of death, but one whose calm affection had endured thus long, in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at the dying hour. Who, but Elizabeth! And there lay the hoary head of good Father Hooper upon the death-pillow, with the black veil still swathed about his brow and reaching down over his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath caused it to stir. All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: It had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman’s love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.

430 For some time previous, his mind had been confused, wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and

INTERPRET

What does the phrase “it was now good Father Hooper’s turn to rest” mean in lines 408–409?
It means it is Father Hooper’s turn to die.

CLARIFY

What do you learn about Elizabeth in lines 418–421?
She still loves Mr. Hooper after all these years.

IDENTIFY

Underline details that suggest the meaning of the black veil (lines 421–430).

37. mitigate v.: make less painful.

37. mitigate v.: make less painful.

The Minister’s Black Veil 111

hovering forward, as it were, at intervals, into the indistinctness of the world to come. There had been feverish turns, which tossed him from side to side, and wore away what little strength he had. But in his most convulsive struggles, and in the wildest vagaries of his intellect, when no other thought retained its sober influence, he still showed an awful solicitude lest the black veil should slip aside. Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at his pillow, who, with averted eyes, would have covered that aged face, which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood. At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in the torpor³⁸ of mental and bodily exhaustion, with an imperceptible pulse, and breath that grew fainter and fainter, except when a long, deep, and irregular inspiration³⁹ seemed to prelude the flight of his spirit.

The minister of Westbury approached the bedside.

"Venerable Father Hooper," said he, "the moment of your release is at hand. Are you ready for the lifting of the veil, that shuts in time from eternity?"

Father Hooper at first replied merely by a feeble motion of his head; then, apprehensive, perhaps, that his meaning might be doubtful, he exerted himself to speak.

"Yea," said he, in faint accents, "my soul hath a patient weariness until that veil be lifted."

"And is it fitting," resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, "that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment may pronounce; is it fitting that a father in the church should leave a shadow on his memory, that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you, my venerable brother, let not this thing be! Suffer us to be gladdened by your triumphant aspect, as you go to your reward. Before the veil of eternity be lifted, let me cast aside this black veil from your face!"

And thus speaking, the Reverend Mr. Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years. But, exerting a sudden

38. **torpor** *n.*: dull or sluggish state.
39. **inspiration** *n.*: inhaling.

INFER

Pause at line 442. Why do you think Elizabeth would have replaced the veil if it had fallen away?

She respects Mr. Hooper's wishes.

PREDICT

Pause at line 453. Do you think Hooper will reveal why he has worn the black veil for so many years? Explain.

Predictions and explanations will vary.

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 456–464. Underline the reasons the minister of Westbury gives for wanting to lift the black veil.

112 Part 1 Collection 2: American Romanticism

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energy, that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper snatched both his hands from beneath the bedclothes, and pressed them strongly on the black veil. **resolute** to struggle, if the minister of Westbury would contend with a dying man.

"Never!" cried the veiled clergyman. "On earth, never!"

"Dark old man!" exclaimed the affrighted minister, "with what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the judgment?"

Father Hooper's breath heaved; it rattled in his throat; but, with a mighty effort, grasping forward with his hands, he caught hold of life, and held it back till he should speak. He even raised himself in bed; and there he sat, shivering with the arms of death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful, at that last moment, in the gathered terrors of a lifetime. And yet the faint, sad smile, so often there, now seemed to glimmer from its obscurity, and linger on Father Hooper's lips.

"Why do you tremble at me alone?" cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. "Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What, but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!"

While his auditors shrank from one another, in mutual affright, Father Hooper fell back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse, with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial stone is moss-grown, and good Mr. Hooper's face is dust; but awful is still the thought, that it moldered beneath the Black Veil!

VOCABULARY

resolute (rez'ə-lōōt') *adj.*: determined.

CLARIFY

Lines 483–493 contain the climax of the story. What does Mr. Hooper say made the veil so awful?

Besides being shunned and inspiring horror in children, wearing the veil made it seem as if everyone else in the world were wearing one too.

INFER

This story is a **parable**: it teaches a moral lesson. What do you think is the moral lesson of "The Minister's Black Veil"?

Possible responses:

Everyone is a sinner.

We should not be quick to judge others.

113 The Minister's Black Veil

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Vocabulary Development

The Minister's Black Veil

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIRECTIONS: Write vocabulary words from the Word Box to complete the paragraph below. Not all of the words will be used.

Word Box

semblance
obscurity
iniquity
ostentatious
sagacious
portend
pensively
antipathy
plausibility
resolute

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a great nineteenth-century American novelist and short-story writer. After graduating from college, he lived in quiet (1) **obscurity** as a little-known writer for more than ten years. Early in his career, Hawthorne often wrote about (2) **iniquity** and the effect of wickedness on individuals and their community. Characters in Hawthorne's stories have the (3) **semblance** of normalcy; however, their outward appearances are often deceiving. Like most storytellers, Hawthorne creates suspense with details that (4) **portend** future events. In his stories and novel, Hawthorne reveals his (5) **antipathy** for hypocrisy and moral blindness.

CONTEXT CLUES

You can figure out the meaning of an unknown word by using **context clues**, which are the surrounding words, phrases, and sentences.

DIRECTIONS: In each sentence below, circle the words or phrases that provide clues to the meaning of the boldface vocabulary word. Then, explain the meaning of the boldface word based on its context.

1. Mr. Hooper, though a mild man, was **resolute** in his **determination** not to remove the veil.
Explanation: **determined**
2. The lonely minister often walked **pensively** as the villagers greeted each other. He **seriously considered** how their lives differed from his own.
Explanation: **in deep thought**
3. The minister didn't want the black veil to be **ostentatious**; however, it still **attracted a lot of notice** in the village.
Explanation: **showy**



Vocabulary Skills
Use vocabulary in context. Use context clues to clarify word meanings.

The Minister's Black Veil 115

SKILLS PRACTICE

The Minister's Black Veil

Reading Skills: Drawing Inferences "The Minister's Black Veil" contains details that help you make inferences about Mr. Hooper, about the deceased woman, about what the veil symbolizes, and about the moral lesson the story teaches.

The following chart contains passages from "The Minister's Black Veil." Write the inferences you make about these passages in the space provided to the right.

Story Details	Inferences About . . .
"I had a fancy," replied she, "that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand." (lines 179–180)	Mr. Hooper: Mr. Hooper may have been in love with the woman who died.
"All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart. . . ." (lines 425–428)	The veil: It might symbolize the effects of sin. It isolates Mr. Hooper from his community.
"When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster. . . ." (lines 488–491)	The moral lesson: Let those without secret sins be the first to cast stones.
" . . . Lo! on every visage a Black Veil!" (lines 492–493)	People everywhere: We all wear symbolic "veils" to disguise our sins and our failings.

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114 Part 1 Collection 2: American Romanticism