



by NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

## THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL Reading Comprehension and Discussion

1- When Mr. Hooper first appears with the veil over his face, how do the villagers react? In what ways does his strange behavior affect his life in the community? How does the veil lessen or increase his effectiveness as a preacher? Cite incidents of the story as evidence.

2- Each time Mr. Hooper is asked to remove the veil, how does he react and why does he refuse? What does he lose by insisting upon wearing it? Does he behave strangely in other ways? Why kind of person is he?

3- In your opinion, why is the reader never told the exact nature of the “secret sin” for which Mr. Hooper was atoning? Would the story be more effective if that information had been provided? Would the story have the same meaning? Explain.

4- How important is the supernatural in revealing the character of the minister and the beliefs and attitudes of the townspeople? What does it contribute to the over-all mood of the story? Discuss the incidents in which Hawthorne uses it and tell why they – and the entire action of the story – would, or would not, be as dramatic without the supernatural.

5- At the end of the story, Mr. Hooper says, “I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!” Is he simply having a deathbed hallucination? If not, what does he mean by this statement?

6- The veil – the symbol that governs the entire story – has several levels of meaning. Note the various uses of the word *VEIL*. In each use, what does the word stand for or symbolize?