

Geographic Differences: Teaching *The Scarlet Letter* in Taiwan

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Abstract

Teaching literature to students not working in their native language presents problems different from those of native speakers. Two teachers undertaking this task decided to evaluate how well cultural information details such as landscape and weather are presented to students reading a text. After teaching Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* to graduate and upper level undergraduate students in a private college in Taiwan, the teachers designed a questionnaire to elicit students' responses to some important symbols frequently used in Hawthorne's fiction. Somewhat to our surprise, the results of our small endeavor seem to indicate that repeated symbols in a text somehow are perceived accurately, at least in their total impact, despite a reader's lack of knowledge about the details. Our results may encourage teachers of literature to ESL students.

Keywords: *The Scarlet Letter*, reader's response, concept of place

Background: Landscape, Life and Art

As Lin explains, an environment originates from a natural space, a so-called wildness. After being occupied, named, and inscribed, the natural space transforms into a “place.” The sense of place thus fermented in the dweller’s mind gradually develops personal, racial, and national identities reflected in the lifestyles and cultural values of its inhabitants. A strong sense of interdependence connects the residents of a particular place and creates feelings and emotions directed towards that place. In interpreting the concept of place, Christian Norberg-Schulz uses Jean Piaget’s theory of cognition in his philosophy of space design to conclude that people’s reflection on space strongly affects their interpretation of life.

[A]ll our conditions are in some way related to ‘space’ and . . . we understand that the relationship between existential pattern and existential space is isomorphic. We might say that life interprets itself as space, in taking possession of the environment . . . What happens does not partake in a spatial structure, but is also linked with a system of values and meanings, and thus acquires character and symbolic importance. (31)

Brian Jarvis presents similar arguments pointing out the “inseparability of space/place/landscape and social relations.” Narratives closely interwoven with geographical knowledge create the stories; each place has its own. “[A]ll spaces,” writes Jarvis, “contain stories and must be recognized as the site of an ongoing struggle over meaning and value” (7). Rob Shields defines space as a “site, zone, or place characterized by specific social activities with a culturally given identity (name) and image” (30). Thus Norberg-Schulz, Jarvis, and Shields all acknowledge the symbolic connection of space and some aspects of human life. W. H. New poses questions illuminating the close relations between space and cultural representations and how people are influenced by their own land:

Why is it . . . that people treat the land as protector, or as cloak, or as comforter? Why and in what ways do they consider it theirs?” . . . What words and signs do they use? What assumptions does the “language” make about the “natural” character of the relations between people and environment? What, in short, does land have to do with writing, with representation, and with power? (New 4-5)

Social, psychological and linguistic forces shaping a text come to fruition as the artist interacts with them: artists shape these forces while the forces shape them. Writing is a product not only of what the artist *does*, but of who the artist *is* at the time of writing. Kenneth Burke notes that “the natural tendency of symbolic enterprise is toward integration” and that the artist, made up of diverse “personalities,” seeks “to build the symbolic superstructures that put them together into a comprehensive ‘super-personality’” (184). In this effort everyone, especially the artist, partially succeeds. In other words, while a writer’s conscious personality—the “I”—works at developing characters and action, other elements in the writer’s subconscious work in tandem, creating a symbolic matrix for the expansion of meaning and the unification of affect, nudging concept and action toward the tacit predilections of a class or group, and liberating the generative power of language for elaboration in resonance with certain central concepts and convictions the writer wishes to make part of the text. Whether these inclusions are part of conscious or unconscious processes is not very important. Whatever the varied elements of the artist’s being achieve, everything is shaped as a product of the artist’s temperament, thought, discipline, and labor. Equally as important as character and action in a text, the symbolic representations surround and permeate and enlighten readers about those actions and characters. Attention to the “background” or “landscape” will focus the reader’s attention to the linguistic “facts” of the text. Analysis of the materials of the text, the signs throughout it, will reveal the semiosis underlying the central idea informing a text, the semantic principles shaping it. Thus the aesthetic integrity of the work can be demonstrated and appreciated.

The opening line of Gregory Shafer’s article distinctively acknowledges “something democratic and creative” in reader response theory, incorporating Louise Rosenblatt’s subject thesis into his arguments (320). Shafer discusses his instruction of a student, Daniella, an evangelical Christian who produced a reader-response analysis of selected Biblical passages pertinent to issues such as gay marriage, submissive wives, and patriachism, regardless of her minister’s fundamentalist interpretation. Shafer wants to enliven Daniella’s religious beliefs and to help her develop a “transactional literary experience,” making her reading “organic and dynamic” (325). Our purpose is the same. English majors in Taiwan may not demonstrate the same sensibilities of western literature as native speakers, but their creative reading validates the information’s semiotic underpinnings. A precise understanding of the artist’s intention in using geographical signification can challenge readers, especially foreign readers. Readers with different backgrounds of gender, race, culture, religion, or age may provide conflicting aspects of their desire. Jacques Leenhardt’s approach to this concept borrows from Stanley Fish’s

“interpretative community” (213). Our investigation of Taiwanese English majors reading the text attempted to evaluate their comprehension (or lack) in their answers to our questionnaire. Barry Lopez’s work on landscape and narrative posits that readers would conjure their “interior landscape” on geographical environments presented by the author, whose description of nature would provide “a kind of projection within a person of a part of the exterior landscape” composed through a “harmonic” synthesis of the two landscapes (65-68). The result responses from students will vary with their different “interior landscapes.” We hope our study demonstrates to teachers of literature in Taiwan or anywhere else that attention to geographical details can develop a broader and more diverse critical analysis. Authors often use landscape details to reinforce textural implications; however, not all student readers understand the values incorporated in those scenes. Careful readers perhaps will, but ordinary readers, particularly those not sharing experience with the particular natural details stored in the author’s sensory experience, might show no interest in or not understand in the same way as the author and readers who do share the same experiences.

Given the authors’ careful representations of landscapes so full of meaning and carefully integrated into plot and action—what did our students see? Did they need physical experience of the site? New analyzes the relationship:

The observer and the observation interact to shape what is seen (in the sense of “understood”); representation gives way to conceptualization. Moreover, while those who represent and those who interpret both draw on the physical reality of the object observed, they also invoke additional filters as they “read the land.” They draw on overt associations (at once personal and political, cultural and historical) that derive from experience and training; they draw directly on the numerous sets of socialized assumptions (about knowledge, about nature) that—simply because they have been so wholly absorbed—are unlikely even to have been consciously examined. (5)

This idea goes as far back as Plato and Aristotle, whose critical arguments include the effect on the reader, or on the observer, in drama. More recent applications include the French structuralists, who stress the role of the reader of a text or perceiver of an action as the maker of reality. In “Psychology and Form” Kenneth Burke defines form in terms of the audience’s appetite. The reader-oriented point of view assumes the reader and only the reader can make meaning from a text, and that meaning will vary with the reader’s cultural and intellectual background. Fish says the “meaning” is not in the text at all but becomes present, or real, only when the reader interprets it using

personal experiences and strategies. In *Is There a Text in This Class?* he says that “[t]hese strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around” (171).

Using reader response theory and methods in teaching literature encourages students to be aware of what they bring to the text as readers and helps them value their own cultural backgrounds and even perhaps work to understand those of others: the author, the characters in the text, and perhaps even other readers in the classroom. Amazingly, students stop asking the teacher “what does it mean.” They stop allowing others to construct their meaning. Instead they learn that no single, unalterable interpretation of a text is valid, and diverse responses will be elicited from diverse readers, resulting in many “meanings,” all of which, one hopes, are closely tied to the text but certainly are equally valid in each reader’s context.

We can see that in Reader Response theory, as the reader brings the text to life by “consuming” it, the reader also constructs the meaning of the text. This meaning originates in the reader’s knowledge and experience. In Taiwan, the students’ excitement bubbled throughout the room as they realized their role in constructing “meaning” made them more important and the text more interesting.

Teachers of literature often feel responsible for supplying some of the background students may not have, particularly when students are from a culture different from that of the writer. Our interest was to see if and how the difference in the foreign reader’s experience will affect understanding of the text’s basic elements, particularly if the landscape figures largely in the signification. To this end, we looked at Taiwanese students’ aesthetic sensibilities and responses when reading *The Scarlet Letter*.

Nature in *The Scarlet Letter*

Leo Marx thinks that the landscape as a “metaphor” in Hawthorne’s works improves “inseparable from policy and action and meaning” (viii-ix). Leo Levy further gives special prominence to the landscape with which Hawthorne fabricates the structure and meaning of his romances. The most conspicuous examples observed by Levy are the sunlight in the forest episode, the wildness in Mistress Hibbins as pagan, the mossy trunk, the meteor light, and the rose-bush. Hyatt Howe Waggoner employs the plants to echo the four major characters’ dispositions: the rose, the weeds, the burdock, the pigweed. Waggoner notes: “As Chillingworth is associated with weeds, Pearl with flowers, and Dimmesdale with no natural growing thing at all, so Hester walks her ambiguous way between burdock and rose, neither of which is alone sufficient to define her nature and her position” (141). With a

close-reading strategy, intent readers might perceive the delicate natural representations embroidered in the novel to enliven the setting, plot, characters, and themes. This study employs some of Hawthorne's natural metaphors to investigate our students' perception of them: the burrs as a surrogate for Pearl's nature (recognized by Waggoner), the moss as the irretrievable past (recognized by Marx), and the "obscure night of early May" when Dimmesdale cries out standing on the scaffold at midnight.

Burrs as a natural symbol for Pearl or auxiliary indication of Hester's ambiguous destiny in a sense have a strong tie not only to both characters but also to Hawthorne's establishment of symbolic representations. Waggoner finds "the most striking instance" (140) that Pearl stops by the graveyard to pick "burrs" and then "arranged them along the lines of the scarlet letter that decorated the maternal bosom, to which the burrs, as their nature was, tenaciously adhered. Hester did not pluck them off" (98-99). In a playful way Pearl subsequently throws "one of the prickly burrs" at Dimmesdale.

Upon reading these lines the image and features of burrs would immediately come to an American reader's mind. But for Taiwanese students, their first problem might be "what are burrs?" Will they understand that burrs, troublesome because they stick into one's clothing or animals' fur, might even pierce the skin, and are difficult to remove? If they do not understand this, can they fully understand the novel, or Hawthorne's aesthetic achievement?

In the episode of the forest walk Hawthorne depicts the moss and uses it repeatedly. First, as Hester and Pearl talk, they sit on "a luxuriant heap of moss; which, at some epoch of the preceding century, had been a gigantic pine, with its roots and trunk in the darksome shade, and its head aloft in the upper atmosphere" (134). Later Dimmesdale comes along, and after recognizing Hester and Pearl he joins them "down on the heap of moss" where they had been sitting (137). In a desperate confession to each other, Hester and Dimmesdale "sat down again . . . on the mossy trunk of the fallen tree. Life had never brought them a gloomier hour; it was the point whither their pathway had so long been tending, and darkening ever . . ." (140). As a matter of fact, they both have been sitting together "on the mossy tree-trunk" for quite a long time until Pearl comes near them (148). Now look ahead at the confessional scene and Hester's staring at Dimmesdale in the holiday procession. She at that moment thinks back to the forest and "the mossy tree-trunk, where sitting hand in hand, they had mingled their sad and passionate talk with the melancholy murmur of the brook" (170). Hawthorne's use of the moss implies Dimmesdale and Hester at the same time the way Wagner uses musical themes. In this case the moss reference evokes Puritan entanglements and a slippery future: a

mossy bank might be rather slippery; moss grows on the north (cooler) side of a tree or in minimal sunlight. Absence of light for their relationship connotes its illicit nature and implies a complicated and cheerless outcome as moss also indicates decay and death. The students' response to this significant symbol will be examined.

When Dimmesdale stands on the scaffolding and cries out at midnight, Hawthorne specifically writes, "It was an obscure night of early May. An unvaried pall of cloud muffled the whole expanse of sky from zenith to horizon" (107). Hawthorne titles this chapter "The Minister's Vigil," showing Dimmesdale suffering pains in body and mind and lacking skill and courage to manage his life. The bleak setting—the antiquated scaffold, the obscure night, the pall of cloud, and the desperate outcry—all darken our perception of Dimmesdale's dreadful predicament. The coldness—chill and damp—of New England's early May also delineates the same bleakness in Dimmesdale's situation. However, living in a tropical climate, Taiwanese students only have a dim conception of the climate in New England. Thus they cannot appreciate Hawthorne's use of the natural environment to imply desolation. Never having been in New England in May, they may not understand the cold of a May midnight in New England. Hawthorne clearly states "the dank and chill night-air would creep into his frame, and stiffen his joints with rheumatism" and later "[h]e felt his limbs growing stiff with the unaccustomed chilliness of the night, and doubted whether he should be able to descend the steps of the scaffold" (108; 110). Midnight in Taiwan in May is hot; our students may ignore this important symbolic passage or the geographical differences.

The Students' Perspective in the Questionnaire

Devised to evaluate students' discernment of the three natural symbolic applications, eighty questionnaires were distributed to the students and 54 were returned. The questions are included in Appendix A (14).

Our department has three learning tracks for students: literature, linguistics, and TESL. This set of questionnaires was only circulated among the literature majors, the seniors and the first-year graduate students who take a special interest in literary studies. For this reason 66.67% of the responders (the "very much" and "much" groups) show their fondness for Hawthorne's works. The "easy" group reaches 87.5%. In the first question, no students think Hawthorne's works are very easy, but 30% think they are easy. More impressive is that among the 70 % of the responders who think Hawthorne's works are difficult, only 3.7 % of them think they are very difficult. Therefore, our analysis examines the different responses in these two

groups—the “easy group” (cited as EG) and the “difficult group” (DG); research data appears in Appendix B.

In the EG, 87.5 % are Hawthorne fanciers, 30% more than the DG. Those of the EG and DG who love Hawthorne because of their personal fondness for literature are 50%; 33 % for Hawthorne’s literary skills; 17% because of his works’ relevance to their life experience. However in the group of dislikes, 11% think Hawthorne’s style is too difficult; 4% think his content irrelevant to their life experience. The most striking is 85% of the dislike group won’t accept Hawthorne’s works because of the difficulty of understanding the cultural and historical backgrounds. (No students choose “The teacher does not present the subject well” because they knew their instructors issued this questionnaire. Taiwanese/Chinese students always show respect for their teachers.)

Those of the EG who think *The Scarlet Letter* is full of imaginative natural images are 37.5 % for “quite a lot,” 25 % for “moderate,” and 37.5 % for “very little.” In the DG are 52.63 % for “quite a lot,” 31.58 % for “moderate,” and 15.79% for “very little.” In a few words, in both groups about 78 % discern the importance of Hawthorne’s employment of nature in the novel. Accordingly, we reason that 88 % of the responders acknowledge the significance of the burrs even though 44 % find it uninteresting.

Because most of our students use English-Chinese dictionaries, I ask what they know after learning the burr from the Chinese “刺蒺藜” pronounced as [c-ji-li] in pin-yin. C-ji-li, a foreign in our everyday language, does not seem to some worth consulting dictionaries. In the EG 50 % make sense of the c-ji-lii, because in Taiwan we have a similar plant which sticks to clothes and is nicknamed “ghost needle” (*Bidens loipinnata*, Latin for Spanish needles). Only 21 % of the DG agree, but 70 % of the two groups are willing to have further consultation with anyone who has an idea about it, or refer to an encyclopedia. Interestingly, no one chooses to “just let it go” or “ignore it”; it might be because we are their teachers and they are afraid we will be unfavorably impressed. When asked why they do not pay adequate attention to the burr, most of the responders (more than 70 % of the ED and GD) think their hazy understanding results from the fact that the burr might be an American native plant.

Statistics alone may seem rather limited in the study of literature. Therefore, some short answer questions helped us more clearly understand our students’ reading behaviors. Typical examples of their reactions to this “early May” scene include:

1. I have no idea about that.
2. It is the end of spring and the beginning of summer.

3. It is an unstable month and easily makes people sad and bewildering. It is a parallel between the gloomy image (not yet warm and light) and the psychological state of the protagonists. It indicates the softness, reconciliation and the maternal quality of the spring.
4. It symbolizes a secret love, which will be soon uncovered, because it will be getting “hotter and hotter.”
5. It represents the fresh day of the Minister. Early May hints rebirth and new life. It shows that spring is coming and everything will turn new. It may also indicate that something will happen to Dimmesdale in the future. Dimmesdale will lead a new life from then on.
6. It is a crucial moment for Dimmesdale because he does not know how to decide whether he will confess his sin in front of his audience [his church congregation], until early May. It symbolizes the awakening in Dimmesdale because it is turning from cool days to sunny. After a long hibernation in the winter and the spring, there will be abundant sunlight in the summer and everything—be it beautiful or ugly—will be exposed to the world and the truth will be known. Finally, the sin can be purged away.

In these responses, the bleak atmosphere of early May is replaced by a more confident stance in which the students assure themselves that Dimmesdale is going to have a sharp swerve from his dubious life because the warm summer is coming.

The moss, however, gives them an accurate understanding of the situation as they have personally experienced some peculiarities of moss. Five examples may help to present the students’ thinking:

1. It is merely a part of the setting.
2. Moss usually grows in damp environment. It also grows in dark forest. That Hester and Dimmesdale sit on it reveals their love unlike common people’s cannot be open in public. Generally speaking, the symbol of love is passion, sunshine, and a hot place. However, they must conceal and share secretly their feelings of love. It is impossible for the outsiders to understand their love.
3. Heaps of moss are not uncommon in forests; that is, moss is merely part of forest. It is not surprising that Hester and Dimmesdale would sit on it because it is the only thing like a cushion soft enough for people to sit on. It gives them peace, a break at the moment, and even a smooth future.

4. Because of its overgrowth, moss indicates a perpetual and sturdy life. Sitting on the moss, Hester and Dimmesdale gradually develop sort of strength to cope with their difficult conditions, not very optimistically but hopefully.
5. The moss is damp, wild, passionate, showing burning fire of love between Hester and Dimmesdale.

The apparent choices of the symbolic moss have been established by concentrating on individual sensory experience of the plant in the students' interpretations. The students understand moss because Taiwan has a humid, tropical climate and moss grows well here. They have seen and experienced moss, touched it and even sat on it. The burr and early May, however, are quite alien to the students. The one plant similar to a burr is not abundant in Taiwan and their chances of having experienced it with its concomitant aggravations are remote. As for experiencing cold, they do not understand this at all. Students bundle up like Eskimos for weather that is 21 degrees Celsius (70 degrees Farenheit). Winter in Taiwan is not a season, it is a brief interlude which one may easily miss by taking a weekend out of the country, or even in its southern parts. Taiwanese people do not understand, experience, or tolerate cold. Cold is not in their ken. So the idea of a cold night in May is as unfamiliar to them as to an inhabitant of hell. (The climates are rather similar.)

Obviously, geographical differences cause them to create different meanings, some of which are not inappropriate. One student answers the three questions in the questionnaire using Freud. He unites the questions and points out that "early May" for him is a young virgin, the forest "desire," the moss "damp, like the kisses and the evidence detected after intimacy." Of course, some interpretations are not so acceptable: six students refer early May to the ship named *Mayflower*, perhaps trying to imply Hester and Dimmesdale's planned escape back to the Old World is similar to the Pilgrim's immigration to the New World. In any case, they have great difficulty with the cold night in May.

Cultural Confrontation or Compatibility?

Between the perceiver and the perceived interstices allow parties to make contact. In contacts, because of distance, sensory experience, cultural background, or ways of perception, one perceiver would not necessarily obtain the so-called "reality" understood by another. As New has explained, the particular land and its geographical formations the artist identifies with and uses in the text bring meaning to it. The

natural representations chosen—such as the landscape, the plants, the clouds, the meteor, the season, the brooks—are as many facts in the text as the names of the characters or what they do. The symbolic references amplify the actions and characters portrayed. If literary representations “give way to conceptualization,” text receivers would also absorb some semiotic information as perceivers do from the chosen natural characters. Based upon their “socialized assumptions,” receivers’ responses are susceptible to various interpretations. As Wolfgang Iser notes, “the meaning of the literary work remains related to what the printed text says, but it requires the creative imagination of the reader to put it together” (142). Thus readers’ responses not only reflect different receptions among a number of literary communities on a particular text, but also develop from their own imaginative and re-creative activities.

We work to have students read widely in areas new to them, even though they may not discern all the cultural information. Even native readers cannot grasp the significance in every word and every image. For example, when Thoreau describes Walden as a newly minted coin mirroring the sky, our students questioned it and thought of it as foolish hyperbole, because they hadn’t personally experienced a crystal clear body of water in Taiwan. Similarly, if Taiwanese students have not personally experienced snowfall in May, they will be shocked because in May Taiwanese are already sweating. Therefore we asked our students to watch CNN news in May, and they found the news reporters in Washington D.C. wore heavy coats to produce live news programs.

Our students cannot fully appreciate all the casual but significant natural representations in a text. Analysis of the questionnaire responses indicates that cultural and historical backgrounds provide difficulty for them. The instructor during the class lecture can specifically explain some of the images, and the students will connect this information and perhaps revise or polish their first response. Their reading activities may be more dynamic. Without this the diminished connection between the author’s artistic skills, the representational landscapes, and the reader’s reception or interpretation of the portrayed natural objects may deprive the text of some of its depth.

However, one can see clearly from the responses that many of the students understood what Hawthorne implied symbolically in his landscape descriptions, and understood it clearly, without experience with or knowledge of all the references. This information encourages us and seems to suggest that the effect of a semiotic system well executed will convey meaning beyond and even despite a lack of literal understanding. A continual network of symbolic references grounding and permeating the text can cumulatively achieve, perhaps, what an isolated one

cannot. The semiotic evidence from the “facts” of the words in the text communicates with the reader on some level, whether conscious or unconscious, to provide a satisfactory and even at times transcendent reading experience. So some of the students had this experience and some had another. The others understood something that only the light from their backgrounds and strategies can illumine as reality. In all cases, though, the reader was enriched by having read and imagined.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. What do you think about Hawthorne's works?

- A] Very easy
- B] Easy
- C] Difficult
- D] Very difficult

2. How do you rate your fondness for Hawthorne's writing?

- A] Very much. (Please continue to answer question 3.)
- B] Much. (Ditto.)
- C] Little. (Please skip to answer question 4.)
- D] Very little. (Ditto.)
- E] Not at all. (Ditto.)

3. I like Hawthorne's works mainly because:

- A] I like literature in general.
- B] I like his language and literary skills.
- C] The content of his works is relevant to my life experience.

4. I dislike Hawthorne's writing mainly because:

- A] The language used in literary work is too difficult.
- B] The content of his works is irrelevant to my life experience.
- C] I have a hard time understanding the cultural and historical background.
- D] The teacher does not present the subject well.

*5. How much do you think Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is full of natural imagination?*

- A] Quite a lot
- B] Moderate
- C] Very little
- D] None

6. What do you think about "the burrs" that Pearl picks from the graveyard and arranges them "along the lines of the scarlet letter that decorated the maternal bosom, to which the burrs, as their nature was, tenaciously adhered?"

- A] Very significant and interesting.

B] Significant but not interesting.

C] Interesting but not significant.

D] Nothing particular.

7. When you learn “burrs” from the English-Chinese dictionary and are told “刺蒺藜” [c-ji-li], what is your response to it?

A] It makes sense to me.

B] It doesn’t make any sense to me.

C] I’ll continue to check in an encyclopedia of plants and try to find a picture of it.

D] I’ll ask someone who has some idea of it.

E] I do not care what it is and ignore it.

8. I do not pay attention to the “burrs” because

A] I can guess what it is.

B] I don’t think it is worth notice.

C] It might be an American native plant and beyond my understanding.

D] I don’t think it has anything to do with the theme of the novel.

9. In chapter XII, “The Minister’s Vigil,” Hawthorne indicates it is “**an obscure night of early May**” that Dimmesdale steps up the scaffold and later screams aloud. What do you think about this “**early May**”?

10. In the chapters of the forest episode (chaps 16-19) Hester and Dimmesdale sit together on a heap of moss. Did you have a strong feeling about the moss, and why or why not?

Appendix B: Data

	Easy	Difficult	Total
1. What do you think about Hawthorne's work?	N=16 (29.63%)	N=38 (70/37%; Includes very difficult 3.7%)	N=54 (100%)
2. How do you rate your fondness for his work?			
A. Very much	25%	10.53%	14.81%
B. Somewhat	62.5%	47.37%	51.85%
C. Little	12.5%	42.1%	33.34%
3. I like Hawthorne because?	87.5%	57.89%	66.67%
Like literature in general	50%		
Like H's language and skills	33.33%		
H's content relevant to my life experience	16.67%		
4. I dislike H's writing because?	12.5%	57.89%	66.67%
Lit lang too difficult	11.11%		
H's content irrelevant to my life	0		
Cannot understand cultural/ historical background	88.89%		
5. How much natural imagination is in H's <i>Scarlet Letter</i> ?			
Quite a lot	37.5%	52.63%	48.15%
Moderate	25%	31.58%	29.63%
Very little	37.5%	15.79%	22.22%
6. What do you think about the "burrs"?			
Very significant, interesting	50%	52.64%	51.86%
Significant, not	50%	31.58%	37.04%

interesting			
Interesting, not significant	0	5.26%	3.7%
Nothing in particular	0	5.26%	3.7%
7. You learn that burrs are c-ji-li. Your response?			
Makes sense	50%	21.05%	29.63%
Doesn't make sense	12.5%	31.58%	25.93%
Check reference book	25%	10.53%	14.81%
Ask expert	12.5%	36.84%	29.63%
Ignore	0	0	0
8. I ignored the burrs because			
I guess what it is.	25%	15.79%	18.51%
Not worth noticing.	0	10.53%	7.4%
Might be an American native plant; I won't understand it	75%	68.42%	70.37%
Nothing to do with theme of novel.	0	5.26%	11.1%

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