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Theme of Single Parenting as a Blessing in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter

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Abstract

Being a single parent is not only a life full of struggles but also a caravan of courage. There is nobody stronger than a single parent. It takes a strong person to be single to take on two roles. Single parent is amazing in the eyes of child Being a single parent is twice the work, twice the stress, twice the tears but also twice the hugs, twice the love and twice the pride. Single parent thoughts are always flowing in the stream of her or his child. It is definitely a tough task taken by the toughest. Single parents give their 200% to their children. Some single parents choose to be single. They don't bring different men and women around their child. In literature, when we sketch single parenting, *The Scarlet Letter* comes to mind very spontaneously. A single mother has a backbone made of steel and a heart of gold. Any woman can be mother, but it really matters for mother to be a father too. She has to have four arms, four legs, two hearts and double the love. There is nothing single about a single mother. This current research paper mirrors the theme of single parenting with special reference to Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* and showcases the triumph of Hester Prynne as single mother. Hester Prynne is one of the compelling characters of English Literature. Her life is an exemplary journey of a single parent. Hester has proved herself to be very strong single mother.

Keywords. *Single parenting, Motherly devotion, Embodiment of strength*

A child with a single parent can be raised responsibly and appropriately. A single parent has the capability to nurture and love a son or a daughter just as two parents can. Hester Prynne the protagonist of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* is undoubtedly a remarkable single mother that represents strength.[1,2] She is strong inertly. How she defies the rigid conventions of Puritan world reveals Hester to be heroic from the rest of the women in her times. Therefore she becomes the first and most important female protagonists in American Literature. She displays a sense of great strength. Her first appearance in the novel throws light on her "natural dignity and force of character". Her demeanor is described as "haughty". She displays a dignity and grace that reveals a deep trust in her. In chapter 5, we witness how she supports herself and Pearl, her daughter. Her strength of spirit is all that helps her to sustain in life. Finally the attitude of the community also changes. Earlier considered adulterous, now they acknowledge that A is for able so strong was Herter Prynne, with a woman's strength.

Her strength lies in the fact that she chooses not to reveal her child's father' name to anyone. For this she has to wear a scarlet letter A on her bodice for the whole of her life. Hester thwarts the attempts of community officials to take Pearl away from her. In chapter 8, there

arises a debate whether Pearl should be given to her mother. As a sinner, she might not be a qualified mother for the child. At this point in the novel, Hester remarks that she finds Pearl as God's blessing. She claims that God gave Pearl to her to raise. Hester states:

Pearl keeps me alive! ….. You will not take her! I will die first! (Hawthorne.130)

Thus she takes up all the responsibility of bringing up child on her own shoulders against the circumstances and odds in which she is put. Mrs. March in Little Women by Louisa May Alcott is another very fine example of single mother. When Hester Prynne rears only Pearl, Mrs. March has four daughters – Meg, Jo, Amy and Beth – to take care of. She devotes all her time to charitable causes just as Hester becomes Sister of Mercy. Mrs. March becomes a role model in Literature when it comes to single parenting. In fact it needs a great courage to defy Puritan society of 17 century Boston.[3] Hester finds a way to support her daughter in a time when women were just supposed to support their husbands. Pearl's existence gives her mother reason to live, bolstering her spirits when she is tempted to give up. She uses her inner strength to transform the meaning of her punishment.

Hester is honest as a single mother in dealing with all the characters in her life including Pearl. She is a foil to her lover Arthur Dimmesdale. As the latter keeps an evil secret to him, on the contrary Hester boldly acknowledges her relationship. Hester does not tell the story behind the letter 'A' to Pearl not because she wants to hide but because she thinks that Pearl is too small to understand the meaning of letter A. Hester guides her daughter not to be ashamed of anything at all. She says:

'This badge hath taught me-it daily teaches me- it is teaching me at this moment-whereof my child may be wiser and the better."

Hester really teaches her daughter about pride rather than shame Hester dresses her daughter different from the other children in the town. All of Pearl's clothing are scarlet. She says That Pearl is the tutor of her future steps.

Hester is highly positive as a single mother. She is full of compassion. Her positive behavior is not only towards all but she is more positive to her child. She showers all her love, care and affection on Pearl. Very ably she performs the role of both- the mother and the father for Pearl. Though Hester is treated very shabbily by the people of Boston, she is full of milk of kindness and love for them. She cares for the poor and brings them food and clothing And the same kindness and love she gives to her child Pearl. When Chillingworth is a chilling character; Dimmesdale is a dim and weak character; Hester Prynne is a bright positive and strong character in the novel. She certainly stands out as a very positive single mother character vis-à-vis her lover and her husband.

Pearl has no one in her life since her birth to her adulthood except her mother. Pearl is sunshine to her mother but at the same time Hester is everything to her child. It is noteworthy that Pearl has no friend or a teacher in her life. She is treated as an outcast just as her mother is. In the course of the novel sometimes, Pearl appears tobe a problem child. Many in Boston call her 'Demon offspring'. Others believe that she is

wiser for her age and Hester plays a very significant role in Pearl's life. So that she has normal bearing in her life. In the later part of the novel, it is given out how Pearl grows into a mature, sensible, loving and beautiful young girl. The credit of Pearl's being so accomplished certainly goes to her mother. Therein lies Hester's success as a single parent. Ultimately Pearl is married in an aristocratic family and leads a happy married life. There is a hint in the novel that Pearl is going to bear a child. So the happiness and accomplishments of Pearl are there because of her mother Hester.

Throughout *The Scarlet Letter* Hester is portrayed as an intelligent and extraordinary woman. Despite her punishment, she does not break. She remains exactly who she is: strong, kind, proud but also humble. Thus Hester being a bold and strong mother proves out to be a most capable, responsible, qualified single mother and above all a blessing to her child.

References

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