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Literature Teaching Unit

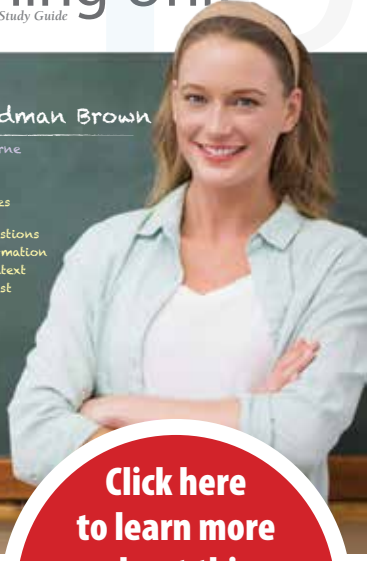
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Young Goodman Brown

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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 **Prestwick House**

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Young Goodman Brown and Other Short Stories

Note to Teacher

This collection includes seven of Nathaniel Hawthorne's most outstanding short stories. Studying these stories helps students to identify and analyze Hawthorne's recurring themes and frequent use of symbols, many of which are included in Hawthorne's novels, such as *The Scarlet Letter*. Students also gain an understanding of Hawthorne's intricate writing style. Due to Hawthorne's complex sentence structure and demanding vocabulary, however, these stories are recommended for capable students at the 11th or 12th grade level.

All references come from the Dover Thrift Edition of *Young Goodman Brown and Other Short Stories*, published 1992.

Young Goodman Brown and Other Short Stories

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define vocabulary words from the stories.
2. point out instances of the following literary devices in the stories: allusion, theme, foreshadowing, and irony.
3. recognize Hawthorne's distinctive writing style, including the following:
 - Hawthorne's careful word choices to enhance characterization and theme
 - long sentences
 - plot structure in which character actions flow logically from character motivation
4. discuss Hawthorne's frequent inclusion of dreams in his stories to develop characterization, foreshadow future events, and contribute to the conflict in Hawthorne's frequent motif of appearance versus reality.
5. identify important symbols in the stories and discuss the possible meaning of these symbols.
6. compare the stories to determine similar themes and discuss the different ways in which Hawthorne presents these themes.
7. cite incidents from the stories to prove the following statement: Hawthorne's writing is often a psychological study of mankind, such as a study of the impact of guilt, obsession, or love on a character's life.
8. discuss the meaning of Biblical references in the stories.
9. point out instances of irony in the stories.
10. relate significant details from the stories.
11. discuss the extent to which the stories are allegorical.

Young Goodman Brown and Other Short Stories

Questions for Essay and Discussion

Answer the following set of questions individually for each of the seven stories. This section of the **Questions for Essay and Discussion** can be done at the conclusion of each story or after all seven stories have been studied.

1. What is the overall theme of this story? Cite three incidents from the story illustrating this theme.
2. Identify and analyze at least one symbol from the story. How does the symbol help to illustrate the theme of the story?
3. To what extent or in what sense can this story be considered one with a loss of innocence?
4. Many of Hawthorne's stories have a strong Biblical connection. What are they in this story? To what extent does he use the Biblical references to help advance the theme?
5. Does the protagonist in the story have a dream? If so, describe the dream and discuss what the dream reveals to the reader concerning the following: character motivation, foreshadowing, theme.
6. Many of Hawthorne's stories have both a symbolic and a literal meaning. They are allegories. What is the deeper, allegorical meaning of this story?
7. Critics often disagree about the outcome of Hawthorne's stories. In what sense are the following incidents ambiguous? How do you interpret these events?
 - *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* : Why does Dr. Heidegger elect not drink the water himself?
 - *The Birthmark* : Why does Georgiana agree to let her husband "experiment" on her? In the end, is her husband successful at removing the birthmark?
 - *Young Goodman Brown* : Does Brown really meet the devil in the woods, or is the whole experience a dream? Why is this question irrelevant? In the end do you think Brown saves either his soul or Faith's?
 - *Rappaccini's Daughter* : How does Beatrice feel about Giovanni at the end of the story? Why does she drink the antidote? Does she know it will kill her?
 - *Roger Malvin's Burial* : Does Reuben deliberately or accidentally kill his son? For what reason is he able to pray only after his son is dead?
 - *The Artist of the Beautiful* : Why does Owen succeed in his goal while scientists in previous stories fail? Why does Owen show his final experiment to Annie and her family?
 - *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* : Why does Robin laugh during the tar-and-feathering of his kinsman? Why does the gentleman want Robin to stay in town?

Young Goodman Brown

Dr. Heidegger's Experiment

Vocabulary

behoove – benefit
bemoan – to deplore, lament
besought – asked earnestly, entreated, implored
complaisant – willing to please; affable agreeable; obliging
coquetry – the act of flirting
deferential – very respectful
duodecimos – a book with five-by seven-inch pages
effervescent – giving off gas bubbles; bubbling up; foaming
festooned – adorned with or hung with decorations
frolicsomeness – gaiety or high spirits; playfulness
lavished – generously or liberally given or spent
mendicant – beggar
palsied – paralysis of any voluntary muscle as a result of some disorder in the nervous system
quartos – books in which the pages consist of sheets folded twice to form four leaves
rejuvenescent – renewal of youthfulness
suffusion – blush, glow
thitherward – toward that place
veracious – habitually truthful; honest

1. Describe Dr. Heidegger's study. What does the description of the study reveal about Dr. Heidegger's character?

2. Although Hawthorne's sentences are lengthy, he carefully selects his words to convey a tone and establish characterization. Read the descriptions of Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, Mr. Gascoigne, and Widow Wycherly in the first paragraph. What characteristics do these people have in common? What is the general tone of the first paragraph?

3. Why does Aylmer marry Georgiana? Why does Aylmer decide that he must remove the birthmark?

4. Find an example of allusion in this story.

5. Hawthorne writes that Aminadab and Aylmer represent the physical and spiritual sides of man. This conflict is a variation of Hawthorne's theme of nature (the physical) versus science (the spiritual). Find two more elements of the story (objects or characters) that represent the physical or the spiritual sides of man. Explain your choices.

6. Read the following description of the flower Aylmer grows in his laboratory. What does the flower symbolize in this story?

"Aylmer bade her cast her eyes upon a vessel containing a quantity of earth. She did so, with little interest at first; but was soon startled to perceive the germ of a plant shooting upward from the soil. Then came the slender stalk; the leaves gradually unfolded themselves; and amid them was a perfect and lovely flower.

"It is magical!" cried Georgiana. "I dare not touch it."

"Nay, pluck it," answered Aylmer,— "pluck it, and inhale its brief perfume while you may. The flower will wither in a few moments and leave nothing save its brown seed-vessels; but thence may be perpetuated a race as ephemeral as itself."

But Georgiana had no sooner touched the flower than the whole plant suffered a blight, its leaves turning coal-black as if by the agency of fire.

7. Another recurring theme in Hawthorne's work is the idea that man must not try to improve or perfect nature. Compare *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* with *The Birthmark* and cite instances from each story that illustrate this theme.

19. Giovanni accuses Beatrice of trying to make him as “hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself.” What evidence is there that Beatrice is innocent of this crime? Cite a passage from the story describing Beatrice’s purity of character.

20. Many of Hawthorne’s stories involve a sacrifice of some sort. In *The Birthmark*, Georgiana sacrifices herself by permitting her husband to scientifically remove her birthmark. What is the sacrifice in *Rappaccini’s Daughter*?

21. Some critics believe that Beatrice represents idealistic faith. She is destroyed by the three men in the story who are ironically trying to do what they think is best for her. Describe the way Giovanni, Rappaccini, and Baglioni all try to do what they think is best for Beatrice and why their efforts fail.

22. What might the fountain symbolize in the story?
