

“The Minister’s Black Veil” Study Questions

1. In the first paragraph, describe the attitude of the townspeople as they go to church. What does this tell us about their true spiritual priorities?
2. Describe the initial reaction to Rev. Hooper’s veil.
3. What is the subject of Rev. Hooper’s sermon that day? How does the veil affect his topic?
4. What were the two ceremonies that Rev. Hooper directed that same day? How does the veil affect the mood of each?
5. Summarize the scene between Rev. Hooper and Elizabeth. How would you describe how both feel at their parting? Note: She is called his “plighted wife,” which means “intended wife,” or fiancée.
6. What does Rev. Hooper mean when he says, “There is an hour to come when all of us shall cast aside our veils”?
7. As the years pass, what are some of the negative effects of Rev. Hooper’s veil? What were some of the positive?
8. Rev. Hooper is described as “a man apart from men” and that the veil has “kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart.” Explain the meaning.
9. Why is Elizabeth described as a “faithful woman” in the final scene?
10. Go through the story and count all the references to Rev. Hooper’s “smile.” How is his “smile” often described? Why does Hawthorne focus on this detail so much?
11. Besides the veil on Rev. Hooper’s face, what other references to other types of veils are mentioned in the story? What does each mean?
12. What is the attitude of the other ministers toward Rev. Hooper on his deathbed? What does this tell us about them?
13. According to Rev. Hooper, why has he been wearing his black veil?
14. Why is this story called “a parable”?