

THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL

GROUP EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

Group 1: Performers

This story, like many of Hawthorne's works, contains some very dramatic moments. Your job is to perform the final scene from Hawthorne's "Minister's Black Veil." You will need at least three characters (Reverend Mr. Hooper, Reverend Mr. Clark, narrator). Remember, this is to be a *performance*, not just a reading, which means you'll have to block out movement and make choices with the dialogue (volume, tempo, pauses, etc.). In a one-page essay write down at least three *choices* that you make with the text – things that are the result of your group's interpretation, and not necessarily visible in the story itself. Explain these three choices your group made, why you felt they were necessary, and how they relate to the Hawthorne's choices about how to develop the character of Mr. Hooper.

Group 2: Artists

A marketing firm has hired your group to conceptualize and create two posters for an upcoming movie version of "The Minister's Black Veil." The first poster is to appeal to very traditional "literary" audiences, while the second is intended to appeal to younger, mainstream audiences. Carefully consider the power of Hawthorne's symbols, and how you might utilize them, particularly the veil – is it symbolic of a specific sin of Hooper? Or of a more general sin of mankind? How do the themes of the story appeal to both types of audiences? How can you portray these themes visually in a way that will appeal to both types? Write a one-page essay in which you discuss the symbols from the story and how they appear on your posters. Cite text evidence to support your ideas.

Group 3: Psychologists

Professional psychologists often refer to the five stages of grief (also called the "Kübler-Ross model"): Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Briefly explain what these stages are, then find and cite an example of each of these stages as people in the story try to understand the behavior of Mr. Hooper. What, exactly, are the townspeople grieving? In a one-page essay, discuss the stages, examples from the text, and your conclusion.

Group 4: Poe and the Literary Critics

Edgar Allan Poe said that the meaning of Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" is that Mr. Hooper has committed a "crime of dark dye" against the woman whose funeral he conducts. Other critics contend that the story exhibits one of Hawthorne's favorite themes, that of the "fortunate fall" ("felix culpa" in Latin), which is the idea that a series of miserable events will lead to a better or happier outcome for others. Find and cite evidence for both points of view, then take a stance in this debate of the dead critics, clearly supporting one side. Explain why you think the evidence better supports your point of view.

Group 5: Moralists

At the beginning, Hawthorne labels the story "A Parable." What is a parable? Write and provide a source for the definition. Compile and cite evidence from the text that both supports and opposes the idea that this story is a parable - including Hawthorne's assertion that the story is taken from a true incident with a Joseph Moody. As a group, come to a conclusion about whether Hawthorne's story is in fact a parable, and if so, what lesson (or lessons) is it teaching? Write an essay to support your conclusion and explain the lesson(s) it is teaching. Cite evidence from the text.