

Hawthorne

FOR HIGH SCHOOL



“This old town of Salem—my native place, though I have dwelt much away from it, both in boyhood and maturer years—possesses, or did possess, a hold on my affections, the force of which I have never realized during my seasons of actual residence here.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne
The Scarlet Letter (1850)



Turner-Ingersoll Mansion (The House of the Seven Gables, 1668)



Nathaniel Hawthorne Birth House (c. 1750)



115 Derby Street | Salem, MA | 978-744-0991 | 7gables.org

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS
TEACHER GUIDE
THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

These four activities are designed to assist students who are studying American History and Literature. They will give them a basic understanding of Nathaniel Hawthorne, his literature, and the major issues of the times in which he lived.

1. An Annotated Bibliography

The recommended materials are some of the best primary and secondary sources on the life and times of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Megan Marshall's ***The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism*** and Brenda Wineapple's ***Hawthorne, A Life*** are especially good. Both of these have excellent notes and bibliographies and are great resources for term papers and book reports.

2. A Short Chronology of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Life

This chronology includes important milestones in Hawthorne's life and literary accomplishments, encompassing not only his novels, but also short stories and children's stories. It also includes his political affiliations and appointments, also his travels. His relationship with his cousin Susan Ingersoll and The House of the Seven Gables are highlighted.

3. Discussion Questions

These questions are designed to encourage critical thinking. Topics for discussion include architectural comparisons, intellectual, social and political themes and issues from Hawthorne's time period. These focus on his opinions and beliefs. The questions are especially pertinent for students who are arriving at the mid-point in a year long course in American History and are about to study the Civil War or antebellum New England. They can be utilized for class discussion, debate topics, term paper assignments and historical research papers. American Literature classes usually assign ***The Scarlet Letter***, rather than ***The House of the Seven Gables***, however an understanding of the historical background can be of benefit in both cases.

4. "The Village Uncle"

This short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne is recommended because it provides an excellent understanding of the times and a colorful impression of North Shore village life during Hawthorne's time. Having students read and study this story before they visit The House of the Seven Gables, or Salem, or even as a post-visit activity, will significantly enhance their experience.

**AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR STUDENTS
THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES**

Hawthorne, Nathaniel

The House of the Seven Gables

(originally published in 1851)

Dover Thrift Editions

Available in paperback,

Kindle or audible formats

This gothic tale includes avarice, guilt, and fraudulent dealings and also a witch hanging. The story involves a family, a curse and a gloomy haunted mansion.

Hawthorne described his book as “wrongdoing of one generation lives into successive ones.” His friend Henry Wadsworth Longfellow called it “ a weird, wild book, like all he writes.”

Hawthorne, Nathaniel

The Village Uncle

A Short Story

Originally published in ***Twice Told Tales***

Available free from:

readbookonline or everwriterresource

This is one of Hawthorne’s short stories that is considered one of his finest and best crafted. “The Village Uncle” is a vivid description of life on the North Shore of Massachusetts. It features such colorful characters as the high booted fishermen and Uncle Parker who served on many ships, and survived many shipwrecks, and a maiden who conversed with angels. Salem Town, Nahant beach, Marblehead, and Scituate appear to us as they would have during Hawthorne’s lifetime. This story is highly recommended reading before visiting Salem and the House of Seven Gables.

Marshall, Megan

The Peabody Sisters:

Three Women Who Ignited

American Romanticism

Mariner Books

Houghton Mifflin Company

New York, NY 10003

2006

Megan Marshall’s compelling book about the three Peabody sisters, Elizabeth, Mary and Sophia. These three independent women influenced the course of American education and intellectual thought. Elizabeth brought Kindergarten to the United States, Mary married the educational reformer Horace Mann and Sophia married the author Nathaniel Hawthorne. This book is a vivid retelling of their family relationships, accomplishments, and influence on American culture and beliefs.

Seton, Anya

The Winthrop Woman

Chicago Review Press

814 N. Franklin Street

Chicago, Illinois 60610

1958

This excellent best selling novel by Anya Seton that keeps very close to the facts. The story is of Elizabeth Winthrop who married into Governor Winthrop's family. She came to Massachusetts from England in 1631. Through her eyes the reader observes Elizabethan England, immigration to America, witch trials, the Indian wars, and the excitement of the founding of New England. This book is a portrait of a resilient woman who makes her own way in Puritan society.

Tunis, Edwin

Colonial Living

Written and illustrated by Edwin Tunis

The World Publishing Company

2231 West 110th Street

Cleveland, Ohio

1957

A well drawn and illustrated guide to life in colonial America up to the 1770's. Excellent sections on Plymouth and Massachusetts, highlighting: house building, furniture, food, wool production, spinning, education and travel. The illustrations add to the appreciation of historic sites, and the people who lived and worked there. This book brings the artifacts alive. Highly recommended!

Wineapple, Brenda

Hawthorne A Life

Random House Trade Paperbacks

New York

2003

"Mercurial and double-edged as his writing, Nathaniel Hawthorne stands before us as a strangely modern figure – darkly handsome, obsessed with family secrets and guilt, self-conscious, charismatic, an individual of endless complexity, and an artist of incomparable genius." A vivid portrait of Hawthorne, Brenda Wineapple's biography blends impressive scholarship and fine literary skills to bring us a new interpretation of the author. Among the awards earned by this book is the Best Book of The Year by the San Francisco Chronicle.

A Brief Chronology of Nathaniel Hawthorne
for Students Visiting The House of the Seven Gables

- 1804 Nathaniel Hawthorne is born in Salem on July 4, the second of three children, to Elizabeth Manning and Capt. Nathaniel Hathorne. He has two sisters, Elizabeth, and Maria Louisa.
- 1808 Father dies of yellow fever at sea and the family move into the Manning home in Salem.
- 1813 Nathaniel injures his leg and is confined to home for two years, where he develops a love of reading.
- 1818 The family moves to Raymond, Maine.
- 1819 He returns to Salem and is tutored for college entrance.
- 1821 Nathaniel enters Bowdoin College in Maine.
Classmates include Franklin Pierce and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
- 1825 Graduates from Bowdoin College, 18th in a class of 35.
Moves back to Salem and begins to visit his cousin Susan Ingersoll at The House of the Seven Gables.
- 1828 First novel *Fanshawe* is published anonymously at his own expense. He later recalls the book and burns copies.
- 1837 Publishes *Twice Told Tales* with financial backing from friend Horatio Gates.
- Meets Sophia Amelia Peabody and her sisters Elizabeth and Mary. Elizabeth later becomes a pioneer in the kindergarten movement and Mary who is also an educator, marries reformer Horace Mann in 1844.
- 1839 Receives first political appointment as a “weigher and gauger” at the Boston Custom House at a salary of \$1,500 per year.
- Publishes special edition of his story “*The Gentle Boy*” with a drawing from and dedication to Sophia Peabody. Published with the help of Elizabeth Peabody.
- On a visit to The House of the Seven Gables, Susan Ingersoll suggested to him the idea for *Grandfather’s Chair*, a series of historical stories for children.
- 1841 Joins Brook Farm utopian community in West Roxbury, leaves a year later.

- 1842 Marries Sophia Peabody on July 9 and moves to the Old Manse in Concord. His neighbors and friends are Emerson, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Bronson Alcott.
- 1844 First child, Una is born.
- 1846 Son Julian is born.
Becomes surveyor at the Salem Customs House for three years.
- 1850 Publishes *The Scarlet Letter* – first public success recognized by the press.
Moves to red house in Lenox, MA.
His neighbor and frequent visitor is Herman Melville.
- 1851 Publishes *The House of the Seven Gables* and *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys*.

Daughter Rose is born in West Newton.
- 1852 Publishes *The Blithedale Romance* drawn from his experiences at Brook Farm and *The Life of Franklin Pierce* – a presidential campaign biography.

Purchases the Alcotts' house in Concord and renames it "The Wayside."
- 1853 Publishes a children's book *Tanglewood Tales*.
- 1853 Hawthorne's friend, Franklin Pierce, is elected President and appoints Hawthorne American Consul to England, stationed in Liverpool.
- 1854 Begins travels and journal on England.
- 1857 Tours Italy and lives in Rome and Florence.
- 1860 Publishes *The Marble Faun* – reflecting his Italian travels.
Moves back to "The Wayside" in Concord, MA.
- 1862 Travels to Washington, meets Lincoln, and visits Virginia Civil War battlefields. His report is published in Atlantic Monthly July, 1862.
- 1863 Publishes *Our Old Home* - essays on England and Anglo-American relations.
- 1864 Takes a trip for his health to New Hampshire with President Franklin Pierce and is found dead on May 19. He is buried at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, MA.

Questions For Discussion
For American History Classes
Nathaniel Hawthorne and The House of the Seven Gables

1. Hawthorne was born into the “The Great Age of Sail,” when Salem was the largest shipping center in New England. Why do you think he did not go to sea and become a sailor like his father? Why are so few of his stories concerned with the sea? Have the class read the story “The Village Uncle” found in Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales*. It is considered one of his best short stories and contains vivid descriptions of life on the north shore and the people who make it interesting.
2. Compare and contrast Hawthorne’s birthplace with the House of the Seven Gables. Why is the birthplace considered a “middle class” home? What are the signs of wealth and status that appear in the House of the Seven Gables?
3. What were Hawthorne’s views on slavery? Why was Mary Peabody Mann always pressing Nathaniel and Sophia to take a more “abolitionist” stand? Why were Hawthorne and Franklin Pierce labeled “Copperheads” by their critics? What does that term mean? How did Hawthorne describe Abraham Lincoln? Have the class read “Chiefly About War Matters,” published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1862.
4. Hawthorne worked at the Boston and Salem customs houses. What were his experiences there? How did these experiences influence and contribute to his novels and stories?
5. Nathaniel Hawthorne joked that after he published *The Scarlet Letter* he would be lucky to get out of Salem alive. Why?
6. What was Susannah Ingersoll’s influence on Nathaniel Hawthorne? What were his experiences with her at the House of the Seven Gables? How does Susannah resemble the character of Hepzibah Pyncheon in the novel *The House of the Seven Gables*? Which of the rooms in the house are mentioned in the novel?
7. John Turner III lost a substantial part of his fortune and was forced to sell the House of the Seven Gables. Explain some of the theories about how this happened and their links to movements in American History.
8. What are some of the myths and legends about the House of the Seven Gables? As a debate question defend or attack the proposition: The House of the Seven Gables was never part of the “Underground Railroad.” How do we support or refute theories in American History using archeological, literary, and historical evidence?

THE VILLAGE UNCLE
BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE
AN IMAGINARY RETROSPECTIVE
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Hawthorne is considered a master of the short story. What are the characteristics of an excellent short story? Quote one of Hawthorne's colorful descriptions from "The Village Uncle."
2. What do villagers salvage from shipwrecks?
3. What tricks did unscrupulous residents of the North Shore use to cause shipwrecks?
4. Hawthorne mentions Thanksgiving in his story, but never Christmas. Why were there no Christmas celebrations in New England at the time he was writing?
5. The North Shore is renowned for its psychics, prophetesses and sorceresses. People would come from miles around to have these women validate their decisions, tell their fortunes or to obtain a spell or token to ensure a safe voyage. In this context, what role would someone like the Molly Pitcher of Nahant play?
6. The village uncle and his sweetheart, Susan, installed something on their front gate to bring them good luck. What was it and where did they get it?
7. What happened to the man and the "enormous shark?" Where did the young man's body drift?
8. Why does Hawthorne call the fishermen "amphibious?" Describe how they looked to the author.
9. An allusion is a meaning hidden in a story. In "The Village Uncle," the author writes of "haddock bearing the black marks of Saint Peter's fingers." To what does this description allude?
10. Hawthorne wrote about walking to Nahant beach, and we know that parties from the House of the Seven Gables often went there. He also describes villages like Nahant with their one street of shops as "a collection of dwellings cast up by the sea." How has village life remained the same, and how has it changed since Hawthorne's time?
11. How has the village uncle resigned himself to the prospect of his death? Hawthorne wrote in one of his novels that, "death should take me while I am in the mood." What do you think he meant by this quotation?