

0. THE PILLORY in AMERICA - Story Preface

1. THE GREAT MIGRATION

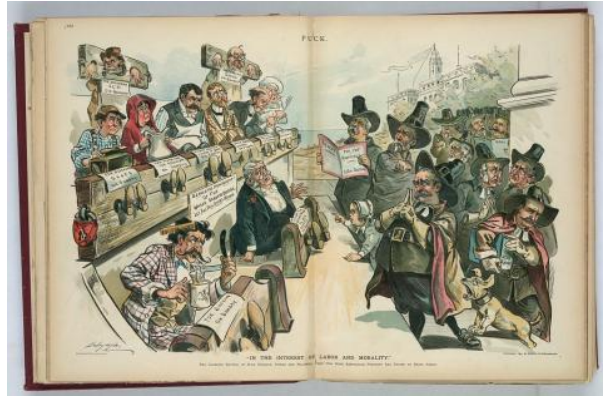
2. WHO WERE THE PURITANS?

3. HISTORY of the PILLORY

4. THE PILLORY in AMERICA

5. HAWTHORNE and THE SCARLET LETTER

6. PURITANS and RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE



Louis Dalrymple created this illustration in which Puritanical ways—like the use of pillories and stocks—are imposed on people for perceived wrongdoing, even in 1895 (when this drawing was published in *Puck's* October 16th issue). Entitled "In the Interest of Labor and Morality," it is online via the Library of Congress. Click on the image for a full-page view.

Writing 230 years after [John Winthrop](#) and his fellow Puritans left England aboard the *Arbella*—roughly the equivalent of time between the beginning of the American Revolutionary War and the presidential election of 2004—[Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) published [The Scarlet Letter](#).

In a famous passage, he describes the purpose of the pillory in Puritan times:

This scaffold constituted a portion of a penal machine which now, for two or three generations past, has been merely historical or traditionary among us, but was held in the old time to be as effectual in the promotion of good citizenship as ever was the guillotine among the terrorists of France.

It was, in short, the platform of the pillory; and above it rose the framework of that instrument of discipline, so fashioned as to confine the human head in its tight grasp, and thus hold it up to the public gaze. The very ideal of ignominy was embodied and made manifest in this contrivance of wood and iron.

There can be no outrage, methinks -- against our common nature -- whatever be the delinquencies of the individual -- no outrage more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame.

The pillory, intended to prevent "the culprit" from looking away, was part of a punishing humiliation process. Anyone "doing time" on that scaffold would have had little, if any, sympathy from a crowd of Puritan on-lookers. These were, after all, the years of a colonial [theocracy](#) wherein civic life and religious mores were intertwined. These were early American days when:

- Thieves could be punished with brands on their hands;
- Women (who had committed adultery) could be branded with an "A" on their foreheads (escaping, thereby, the normal penalty for that offense which was [death](#));
- People (like Hugh Bewitt) could be banished (as he was on the 9th of December, 1640) for declaring that he was free of original sin.

And ... these were [the days](#) when a disapproving public could make a person's life utterly [miserable](#) over the least-possible infraction.

The pillory, according to the Puritans, was a fitting punishment for anyone having the audacity to disregard societal, or religious, rules. Its use continued until an act of Congress abolished it on February 27, 1839.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-PILLORY-in-AMERICA-Puritans-and-The-Scarlet-Letter>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

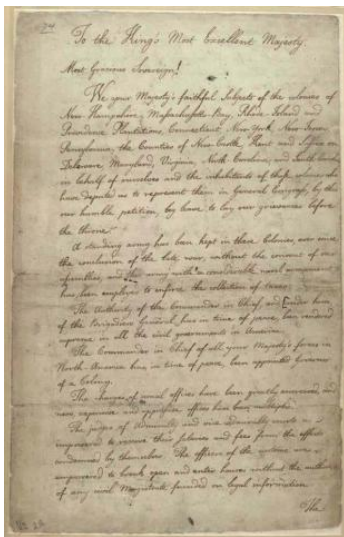
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Winthrop, John - Portrait

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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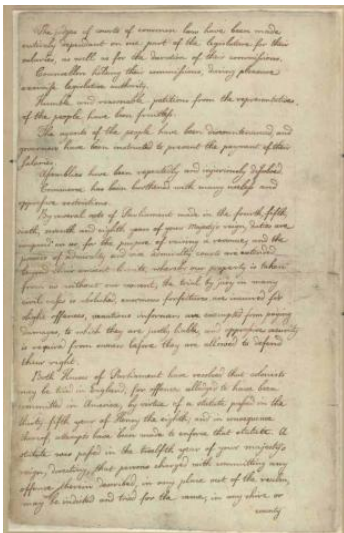


America - Colonial Grievances, Letter to King George III

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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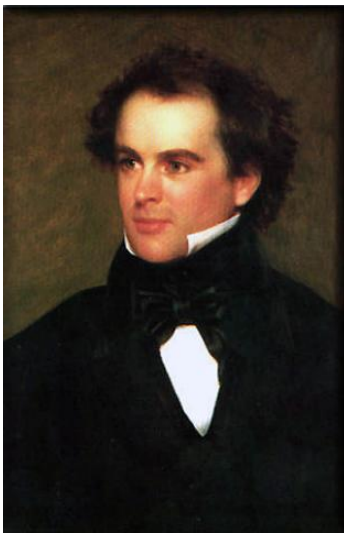


America - Grievances Letter to King George III, Page 2

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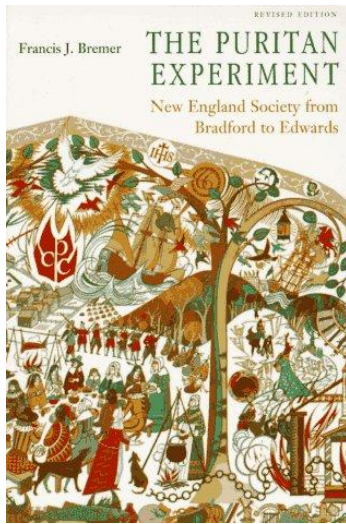
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Nathaniel Hawthorne - Portrait

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

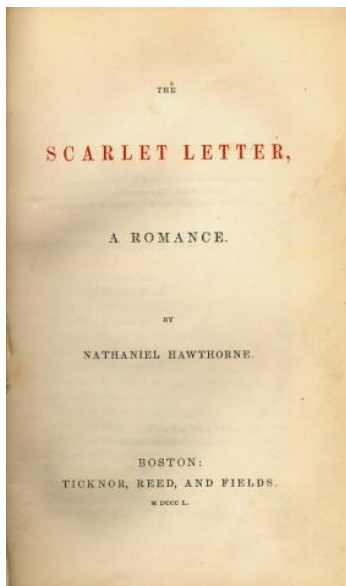
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Puritan Experiment, The

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Scarlet Letter, The - Early Edition

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