

# Examining Worldviews in American Literature

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Dedicated to my children, Grace, Rose, Price, Newman, Joy, and Steadfast, for whom I write.  
May you always share the Christian worldview, trusting Christ for forgiveness through all of  
your trials, unto life eternal.

Dedicated also to all lovers of good literature, whose “surprises by joy,” as C.S. Lewis calls  
them, lead to a longing and excitement for the Greatest Story Ever Told, once revealed, yet still  
to be revealed.

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# Introduction

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*I write this curriculum “that [your] hearts may be encouraged...and [attain] all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ...For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see...the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” Colossians 2:2-8*

## Overview

*Christian Worldviews in American Literature* is an independent learner/homeschool high-school curriculum, spanning the major writers and movements in the typical study of American Literature, from the Puritans to modern times, including novels, non-fiction, drama, short-story, and poetry. This curriculum places special emphasis on analyzing and dissecting the characters and plots in literature from a Christian perspective, but that is not to say that all selections chosen are written from a Christian perspective. In fact, most are not. However, with this curriculum packet as guide, students will be better equipped to think critically and Biblically about situations and motivations in these books typically considered classics. Rights are given for one family unit (not extended family) to use this PDF without limitation, or one classroom teacher to use ideas from this unit. Please inquire at Into Your Hands, LLC ([www.intoyourhandsllc.com/contact](http://www.intoyourhandsllc.com/contact)) for multi-use licenses for co-ops or schools.

## Objectives

This curriculum features many objectives, including those that follow. The student will...

- ...focus on whole books, reading novels commonly assigned as American Literature at the high school level.
- ...analyze themes, characters, motivations, and plots from a Christian worldview, reviewing and growing in faith.
- ...compare and contrast various novels, genres, and authors.
- ...practice the skill of writing organized and coherent papers.

## Features

How is this curriculum different from other American Lit curricula already available? This curriculum features a number of items that set it apart.

- The **Christian worldview** focus of this curriculum allows students to navigate the often muddy-waters of American Literature without being led astray.
- This curriculum features a “**whole books**” approach, encouraging students to read entire novels as the foundation for their study, allowing students to have better context for understanding plot and character, rather than the bits and pieces of books found in an anthology.

- The books chosen for this curriculum are **titles traditionally used** for secular American Literature classes, allowing students to be competitive for college, as well as partially preparing them for CLEP and AP exams.
- A **complete assessment system** is featured in this curriculum, featuring assignments, exams, writing rubrics, and answer keys.
- Resources for further reading encourage **in-depth exploration** of various topics and authors.
- This curriculum offers a **strong core plan** for teachers/parents and students who want to know exactly what to do, but yet also **flexibility** for those who would like more or fewer novels, or more or fewer assignments and activities, based on ability, interest, and learning style.
- This curriculum is meant for **individual student use** without the need for instructor support (except for assessment), allowing students to grow in responsibility and freeing up parent time. Teachers/parents and students are encouraged to discuss the literature selections regularly with their students.

## Organization

This curriculum is organized into seven units, each four weeks long. Some units may take the student an additional week or two; therefore this curriculum would work well spread out over a 30- to 34-week school year. It is expected that the student spend one hour a day, five days a week on this course. If your daily, weekly, or yearly schedule does not allow for this, plan to allot 150 total hours for this course.

Each unit features two whole books, a selection of non-fiction, a selection from either a drama or short-story, and two poets. During the course of each unit, the student will also complete an essay on a chosen topic, take a short unit examination, and optionally, complete an activity. While not all selections are featured in exact chronological order, each unit theme is chronological order of American History, regardless of date of publication.

## Time Commitment and Pacing

The student is expected to read through this study guide and complete the readings and essays as assigned over the course of the unit, about one month each. The instructor should discuss the readings as desired, but be sure that at the end of each unit, the readings have been completed, the exam taken and graded (with the answer keys provided), and the essay turned in and graded with the rubric provided.

For pacing, the student should plan to spend about one week on the first novel, one week on the second novel, one week on the additional readings and exam, and one week crafting, writing, and editing the essay. Occasionally, two longer novels are assigned in a single unit (for instance, the Civil War/Slavery unit), making it difficult to complete in four weeks. The student should feel free to take an extra week or two, as allowed by the instructor and the school calendar. However, in general, if the student cannot complete the tasks above during the one hour of daily class time, the student should plan to have “homework” which can be completed in the evenings.

## Will This Curriculum Be A Good Fit?

Likely, this curriculum will be a wonderful fit for your student, especially if you like what you have read so far. However, this curriculum might **not** work well for you, if any of the following is true:

- You do not care for a Christian worldview, particularly from a conservative Lutheran perspective.
- You want an all-in-one package, without the need to purchase additional literature. (This curriculum requires the purchase or borrowing of books, in addition to this study guide. However, many of them are available online for free.)
- The student is not a strong reader, or not interested in literature.
- The instructor does not want to be involved in discussion or assessment for the student.
- You want a curriculum which features only Christian books. (This curriculum uses traditional American Literature, which has many non-Christian authors; however, these books are discussed and analyzed from a Christian worldview.)

## Note

Overviews of literature and author biographies are my own compilation of readings, considered public knowledge. Any unique information or quotations are cited in-text.

All vocabulary definitions are taken from Merriam-Webster online, unless noted with an \* which are my own definitions. All Scripture taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

Featured quotations in this guide have been selected for a variety of reasons. The reader should not assume that I am necessarily promoting a worldview that the quotation advocates. Sometimes the quotations are merely highlighted for their literary value.

# Student Prerequisites

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*“Happy is the [person] who finds wisdom,  
And the [one] who gains understanding.” Proverbs 3:13*

There are a number prerequisites that will help a teacher/parent know if this course is academically appropriate for his or her student. These expectations are listed below.

- The student is a fluent reader who does not need support understanding the basic plot of a story. (No summaries are offered in this study guide. Sparknotes or other summaries are available free online or for purchase, or at local bookstores if the student needs support. If the student is not a fluent reader, the teacher/parent might consider accommodations for the student, such as assigning only one of the two novels for each unit to give the student more time.)
- The student does not need comprehension questions in order to summarize a plot or be held accountable for the reading. (No comprehension questions are asked of the student in this guide because comprehension is a grammar-level skill, and students in high school ought to be performing at more of a logic or rhetoric level; instead, students are expected to mark their novel with a pen—or sticky notes in the case of a borrowed book—to show that the text was read and understood. The lack of study questions allows the student more time for reading, which equals more novels read!)
- The student can already write an organized research essay, complete with citations. (The five-paragraph model is an excellent start, though to get to the word counts expected in a high school course like this, the student may need to expand into a thesis with 2 main points and 3 sub-points each, or some variation. [Hake Writing 8](#) is an excellent and simple place to start for help with writing, and could easily be done over the summer. There are also some great tutorials for a five-paragraph essay and citations online.)
- The student should already be familiar with the contents of Luther’s Small Catechism, including the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment, as well as information about sexuality, adultery, and fornication. (These themes come up frequently in American classics, and will be discussed from a Christian worldview; however, it will be helpful if the student already knows the terminology and what these actions mean.) The student should also be prepared to encounter violence in the stories.
- The student should be able to review both information found in the novels as well as this study guide in order to prepare for the end of unit exams. (The cumulative final exam will only incorporate questions already asked in previous unit exams, so if the student reviews all prior exams, he or she should be well-prepared.)

Note that a student who cannot do one or all of the things listed above might still be successful with this curriculum, with or without accommodations and changes. However, the course was written with these prerequisites in mind. If the student is only lacking one one or two of these items, a teacher/parent likely could help the student catch-up in the summer prior to beginning this course in the fall.

## Supplies Needed

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossians 3:16*

The following are supplies that would be helpful for the student completing this course.

- A binder with dividers for for this study guide, projects, and papers
- A dictionary and thesaurus, pencil or pen, and sticky tabs for marking pages
- A computer and word-processing program, a printer, and internet access
- The novels and resources listed below. If not included in the free PDF, and you don’t care to read on a screen online (either public domain or purchased), plan to purchase or borrow the book.

Title	In-Text with with Guide	Free with literary supplement PDF	Public Domain (available online)
<i>The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson</i> (Rowlandson)		X	X
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i> (Hawthorne)			X
<i>A City Upon a Hill</i> (Winthrop)	X		
Excerpt from <i>The Crucible</i> (Miller)	X		
<i>The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i> (Franklin)			X
<i>The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> (Douglass)			X
<i>Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs</i> (Paine)		X	X
Excerpts from <i>Rip Van Winkle</i> (Irving)		X	X
<i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> (Stowe)			X
<i>Gone With the Wind</i> (Mitchell)			X
<i>Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg Address</i> (Lincoln)	X		X
<i>An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge</i> (Bierce)		X	X
<i>Giants in the Earth</i> (Rølvaag)			X
<i>Main Street</i> (Lewis)			X
<i>On Civil Disobedience, Walden’s Pond</i> (Thoreau)		X	X
<i>Our Town</i> (Wilder)			X
<i>The Great Gatsby</i> (Fitzgerald)			X
<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> (Steinbeck)			
Excerpt from <i>Inherit the Wind</i> (Lawrence and Lee)	X		
<i>The Californian’s Tale</i> (Twain)		X	X
<i>The Old Man and the Sea</i> (Hemingway)			
<i>The Chosen</i> (Potok)			
<i>Long Day’s Journey Into Night</i> (O’Neill)			
<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Bradbury)			
<i>A Canticle for Leobowitz</i> (Miller)			
<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (Williams)			

## How-To

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*“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.” James 3:13*

### Weekly Instructions

Each unit is meant to be completed in approximately four full school weeks, which would mean the student could complete this curriculum in a minimum of 28 weeks. Several units with longer novels will benefit from an additional week or two, at the discretion of the teacher and student. For each unit, the following is a rough outline of what the student should accomplish each week.

- Week One: Read and complete the work for the first novel.
- Week Two: Read and complete the work for the second novel.
- Week Three: Read and complete the work for the selection of non-fiction, drama/short-story, and poetry, as well as brain-storm writing ideas. Take the Unit Exam.
- Week Four: Research, write, and edit the essay on the chosen topic.

Optional activities may be assigned as the instructor or student chooses to fill in the minimum time of one hour each day for the four weeks.

### Daily Instructions for Students

- During weeks one, two, and three, read this Unit Study Guide and literature as much as possible working for one hour each day. While reading the literature selections, write comments in the margins (or mark pages with sticky tabs if the book is borrowed). These may be checked to ascertain that they have been read.
- During the last day or two of week three, review your notes and the information in this study guide. Take the Unit Exam as provided by your instructor. You should take the exam without referring to any notes and should not look at it in advance. (All questions on the Final Exam can be found on Unit Exams, so be sure review all Unit Exams prior to taking the Final Exam.)
- If you need additional time to complete the novels, plan to do this in the evenings as homework.
- The final week, spend one to two days researching your chosen writing topic, one to three days writing the essay, and one day rereading, proofreading and editing your essay. Keep in mind the rubric as you write. It may be helpful to have your instructor look over your essay before you print your final copy for grading.
- If your instructor requests, keep a notebook of the time you spend working each day. Alternatively, use the unit checklist in the appendix to mark your progress through the month.



# Assessment and Transcripts

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*“The integrity of the upright will guide them,  
But the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.” Proverbs 11:3*

This course is designed to be completed in approximately thirty weeks, with the student expected to spend a total of at least one hour each day working, approximately 5 days a week. This amounts to 150 hours spread out over an average school year. Additional reading and writing may be necessary as “homework” which is above and beyond these classroom hours. In the state where I live, a course like this is considered one credit on a high school transcript. Check the state requirements for the state in which the student lives. While the suggested optional activities with each unit are not required, the integration with other subjects that these activities provide support a variety of student modes of learning.

## Course Description for Transcript

Below is a description of the course appropriate for inclusion on a high-school transcript. It may be edited at will to be the most transparent description possible. If the student completes optional add-on activities, please include that in the description; alternatively, be sure to delete the papers and exams if the student has an alternative learning plan.

*American Literature (1 Credit): The student will survey American Literature from the time of the Native Americans, through the colonial, romantic, transcendentalist, and modern periods. The course discusses the development of American Literature as a genre using novels, short stories, plays, and poetry. The course places special emphasis on comparing and contrasting the body of several well-known authors, such as Hawthorne and Hemingway, as well as lesser-known yet impactful minority authors, such as Potok and Angelou. The student will complete a research paper and exam for each of seven units, as well as a cumulative final exam. Emphasis is given to the application of Christian discernment when analyzing American Literature.*

## Assessment of Writing

The assessment of writing tends to be somewhat subjective based on the reader. However, a rubric is included in the appendix on page 245 to give clarity to both the student and the grader. This rubric should be available to the student before, during, and after the writing process. It is common for the instructor to preview the student’s draft prior to completing the final rubric and assigning a grade. Students should not consider their paper final until an adult has reviewed it and given feedback. Then, the student should revise and resubmit for the final rubric to be completed and a grade given.

## Accommodations

This course can easily be revised for struggling students or supplemented for gifted students. Be sure to edit the transcript description above in order to accurately reflect how the student completes the course.

For any student struggling, consider substituting one of the optional activities for one of the novels. Word counts for the essays can be decreased. Considering allowing the student to take unit exams with notes.

For gifted students, encourage the completion of an optional activity in addition to the unit readings. An additional novel could be assigned, as well. Word counts for the essays may be increased. This course may be considered Advanced Placement if the student is spending more than the allotted 150 hours in order to complete additional projects and novels. Note that this course can be used as preparation for a CLEP exam, but it is not sufficient in itself. See the resources on page 242 the end of this study guide for a CLEP preparation guide.

## Exams—What to Expect

Unit exams will include matching and short answer questions taken directly from this guide about themes, authors, characters, plot, vocabulary, and more from this study guide, as well as basic questions which ascertain that the novels have been read. In addition, short answer questions ask students to apply what they learned in the novel to their own life.

Students will not need to directly memorize and recall years from the timeline; however, students should be able to match years to events or place events in the proper chronological order. They should also know the definition of the vocabulary words given in the study guide, as well as additional works written by the featured authors, listed in “For Further Reading.”

The Instructor may grade each unit exam by subtracting 4 percentage points out of 100 for each incorrect answer. For the final exam, the instructor may subtract 2 percentage points out of 100 for each incorrect answer.

## Common Grading Scale

Below is a common grading scale used in many schools.

A+/A/A-	96.7-100%/93.4-96.6%/90.0-93.3%
B+/B/B-	86.7-89.9%/83.4-86.6%/80.0-83.3%
C+/C/C-	76.7-79.9%/73.4-76.6%/70.0-73.3%
D+/D/D-	66.7-69.9%/63.4-66.6%/60.0-63.3%
F	59.9% and below

## Overall Course Grading

This chart can be used for grading this course. Feel free to use or adapt it as desired.

	Column A	Column B	Column C
	Percentage Earned	Percentage of Total Grade	Actual Grade (AxB as a decimal=C)
Readings Completed (evidenced by book notes)	Pass (100%) or Fail (0%)	20%	
Unit Exams (7) 0%-100%	1.	5% each	
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		
	7.		
Literary Papers (7) 0%-100%	1.	5% each	
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		
	7.		
Final Exam (1) 0%-100%		10%	
Overall Course Percentage for Transcript (Add numbers together from column C):			

## A Note About My Beliefs

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*“May [God] give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Ephesians 1:17-18*

I write not only as a Christian, but specifically as a Lutheran, and I pray that those doctrines are thoroughly embedded in this study guide. For those who are not familiar with Confessional Lutheranism, four things set it apart from other denominations:

1) *Law and Gospel*. Our churches teach a distinction between Law and Gospel as found in the Bible. The Law is found in Scripture when believers are told what they must do, or what they haven't done correctly. It shows us that we cannot save ourselves and are lost in our own sin. The Law also gives the forgiven Christian directions on how to serve God and our neighbors. The Gospel is found in Scripture when we are told of our Savior, Jesus, and how He takes away our sins and makes us right with God because of His death and resurrection. Both the teachings of Law and Gospel are found in the Bible and both must be taught, but the Gospel should always predominate because only Christ, and never our works, can save.

2) *The Means of Grace*. Lutherans believe in the Means of Grace, in Word and Sacrament. God works faith in people through His Word, the Bible, but also through the actions that Jesus instituted for His Church. The Holy Spirit brings faith when we hear the Word of God, and also by baptism and the Lord's Supper. He actually strengthens His Church through these means, rather than providing them simply as symbols. Lutherans focus on the Means of Grace as the main ways through which God works in the hearts of believers.

3) *Luther's Small Catechism*. Our main doctrines can be found in the six chief parts of the Small Catechism, a summary of the teachings of the Bible compiled by Martin Luther. These six parts give a concise language for Lutherans, which we memorize prior to being admitted to the Lord's Supper.

4) *The Doctrine of Vocation*. The Doctrine of Vocation is the teaching from the Bible that God channels His blessing through the service of individuals. Vocation is *not* what line of work you choose, but rather, what you are already doing. It means if God has made you a student, then He means to bless you and others through this vocation. It means you don't have to sell your possessions and become a missionary in order to do God's work. You don't need to go searching for God's calling. His work is being done through you, all around you, as you serve those in your midst.

While many Christians agree with the preceding points, Lutherans give them distinctive emphasis. However, whether you are Lutheran or not, you still have much to gain as a Christian from this study guide. You'll find that Lutherans and your denomination have a lot in common—conservative Lutherans truly believe Scripture is the inspired Word of God and hold it in high regard.

In Christ, Marie S.D.G.

# Unit One: The Scarlet Letter and Other Puritan Writings— Overview

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## Novels:

*The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, Mary Rowlandson  
and  
*The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne

## Non-Fiction:

*A City Upon a Hill* by John Winthrop

## Drama:

*The Crucible*, a play by Arthur Miller

## Poets:

Anne Bradstreet and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

## Writing Assignment Choices:

1. Compare and contrast the virtues and vices of Rowlandson and Hester Prynne.
2. Compare and contrast the faith that Rowlandson and Hester Prynne express.
3. How does isolation affect attitude? Show this through these women's stories.

## Optional Activities:

1. *Memorization*: Memorize some or all of the five Scriptures at the beginning of unit heading.
2. *Geography*: Create a map of Rowlandson's Removes or of early Massachusetts settlements.
3. *Technology*: Create a slideshow of depictions of Pilgrims and Puritans throughout the centuries.
4. *Art*: Sew or paint a version of the scarlet letter as you see it in your imagination.

## Timeline of Unit One

- 1612—The birth of Anne Bradstreet in England
- 1620—Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock (now in the state of Massachusetts)
- 1630—Winthrop's *City on a Hill*; the founding of Boston (now in the state of Massachusetts)
- 1642 to 1649—The time period in which *The Scarlet Letter* is set
- 1676—Mary Rowlandson's Captivity
- 1682—Publication of Mary Rowland's Captivity Narrative
- 1692 to 1693—The Salem Witch Trials take place in Salem, Massachusetts (the setting of *The Crucible*)

- 1807—The birth of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in Maine
- 1850—Publication of *The Scarlet Letter*
- 1953—Publication of *The Crucible*

## Overview

The America that we know today began as small settlements on the coasts in the very late 1500s and early 1600s. While Catholic conquistadors were exploring and conquering throughout present day Mexico and California, Protestant Pilgrims and Puritans were making the voyage across the Atlantic to settle on the East Coast, primarily in present day Virginia and Massachusetts. The literature selections chosen for this unit will familiarize you especially with the Pilgrims and Puritans.

The selections in this unit span a vast amount of time. While the settings of the literature are in the mid-to-late 1600s, not all were written at this time. *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Crucible* were written later, reflecting back to the Puritans. While Rowlandson's story is non-fiction, and Hester Prynne, the main character of *The Scarlet Letter* is fictional, both stories overlap in that these women are fighting for their lives and dignity in different ways against abrasive cultures in the harsh wilderness of the New World.

# ***The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson***

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*“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9*

## **Overview**

Filled with allusions to Biblical accounts and passages, as dreadful as this narrative is, it is a beautiful place to start the study of American literature. Mary Rowlandson demonstrates a Christian worldview as she travails through the challenge of being kidnapped, yet trusts in God through it all. Even so, she was not perfect; she had many doubts, she displayed selfishness, and she failed to share her faith verbally with the unbelievers around her. What a blessing to know that Christ went to the cross to forgive her for these failures, as He also forgives you for yours.

Rowlandson writes during the late 1600s (the 17<sup>th</sup> century), from the east coast of what is now the United States. At this time, there was a war between Native Americans, led by Metacom (or “King Philip”), and the British settlers, who arrived in the generations after the Pilgrims. They were fighting over land, but also over the violation of treaties and perceived injustices between both groups. In Rowlandson’s case, some Natives raided her camp, killed many settlers, and took others hostage to redeem with the British in the future for money and goods. She was held captive 11 weeks and 5 days.

Because this narrative is over 300 years old, Rowlandson uses language in ways that the reader might not expect. Pay special attention to the vocabulary words, and if a phrase seems complicated or confusing, read it over another time, even out loud. As you read, keep in mind that this narrative is considered one of the earliest pieces of American literature, and one of the best known of its genre: *captivity narratives*, even a “best-seller” for its time.

Mary Rowlandson was born as Mary White in England. Her family traveled to the New World when she was a child, and settled in Salem. She later married John Rowlandson, a Puritan minister. After her captivity, she was reunited with her husband and two surviving children. After John passed away, she married Captain Samuel Talcott, who had fought in King Philip’s War. She likely died in 1710 or 1711.

While I recommend reading a paper book, this text is public domain, and available for free at a variety of sites online, including here:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/851/851-h/851-h.htm>

## **Themes**

*Note these themes and others as you find them in the text as you read.*

<b>Life, Death, and a Yearning for Heaven</b>
---

Rowlandson demonstrates a trust in God, whether He would allow her to live or die. However, that trust does not come easy. She goes back to God's Word again and again as a source of strength and comfort, especially when God allows her to live, even though she thinks it might be better to die. Why would God allow her live, when life brought such pain? Only God can know, and His ways are higher than our own (Isaiah 55:8-9). Through her trials, Rowlandson yearns for the Land where she will finally have rest and peace, Heaven.

This theme is especially powerful in light of novels later in this curriculum. Without spoiling any story lines, often in literature, suicide is portrayed with glory. However, no earthly circumstance is beyond God's power and redemption. Had Rowlandson ended her life, as she felt tempted to do, she would have missed out on witnessing God's power over the situation, the reunion with her husband and children, and the opportunity to write her *Narrative* which brought so much glory to God.

### **God's Goodness, Power, and Timing**

A Biblical Worldview asserts that God is good, regardless of the circumstances we humans are experiencing in our lives. "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Rowlandson, while continually hoping for earthly redemption, places her ultimate hope in God's timing for her deliverance, whether it is a physical restoration of her freedom and family, or whether it is an eternal restoration to her Heavenly home through earthly death.

### **Singularity of Thought**

The author is rightly vexed by her abduction as an innocent woman who did not deserve punishment according to earthly standards. However, Rowlandson offers no nuance to her projection of evil on the Natives. They had been provoked through difficult interactions with the British, and felt their homeland invaded. Rowlandson sees God on the side of the British, and does not express in her *Narrative* that her captivity might have been an opportunity for her to share her hope in Christ and the good news of Jesus with her captors. Rather, she perceived her captivity only to be tolerated until God saw fit to rescue her.

## **Quotations**

*"The Lord renewed my strength still, and carried me along, that I might see more of His power; yea, so much that I could never have thought of, had I not experienced it." (2<sup>nd</sup> Remove)*

*"Oh I may see the wonderful power of God, that my Spirit did not utterly sink under my affliction: still the Lord upheld me with His gracious and merciful spirit." (2<sup>nd</sup> Remove)*

*"I have thought since of the wonderful goodness of God to me in preserving me in the use of my reason and sense in that distressed time, that I did not use wicked and violent means to end my own miserable life." (3<sup>rd</sup> Remove)*

*"Now I see the Lord had His time to scourge and chasten me. ...When God calls a person to anything, and through never so many difficulties, yet He is fully able to carry them through and make them see, and say they have been gainers thereby." (20<sup>th</sup> Remove)*



## Introduction through the Sixth Remove—Before Reading:

Vocabulary: Highlight these words in the text as you read. Learn what they mean; some will be on the exam.

*sovereignty*—supreme power, freedom from external control

*“knocked on the head”*—informal British phrase, meaning to kill someone from a clubbing to the head\*

*sucking child*—a child who is still breastfeeding, possibly several years old\*

*garrison*—a military post, or the troops at a military post

*remove*—a term of separation between episodes in this narrative\*

*praying Indian*—a member of an indigenous North American people converted to Christianity by English colonial settlers (and in some cases, in name only, without true repentance and conversion\*)

*furniture*—equipment having to do with riding a horse\*

*King Philip*—nickname for Indian Metacomb, leader of the Wampanoag tribe, likely born in Rhode Island around 1639\*

*bier*—a stand on which a corpse or coffin is placed

*miscarriage*—corrupt or incompetent management

### Commentary:

**1. Murder and Self-Defense.** Note the initial attack on Rowlandson’s garrison. Under normal circumstances, killing is a sin against God’s commandments (Exodus 20:13). However, there are also some Biblical exceptions to this, including the vocation of the government to punish evildoers (Romans 13:4) or the vocation of soldiers to fight in defense of their country (Luke 3:14). From these passages, one may extrapolate that self-defense to protect oneself and loved-ones, such as the families aiming to defend their home in the *Narrative*, can be God-pleasing. However, this understanding should be balanced with the grave weight that killing an unbeliever will be the means of that individual going to hell, and if self-defense without murder is possible, it is to be preferred. A proper doctrine of self-defense has too many facets to delve into here, but [www.biblicalselfdefense.com/](http://www.biblicalselfdefense.com/) offers a launching point with Scripture. Talk to your parents, trusted Christian mentors, and your pastor about this topic.

**2. Glory to God.** Amidst her horrifying experience, Rowlandson keeps God’s goodness in perspective: “Yet, the Lord by His almighty power preserved a number of us from death.” She does not blame God for the death of her loved ones; rather, she can attribute that to the reign of sin in this evil world. Instead, again and again, she gives God glory and praises His holy name.

**3. Slavery and Race.** Notice that slavery is practiced among the Natives. While slavery is a horrible injustice especially with the African slave trade into America, and thought it was abolished by Lincoln’s *Emancipation Proclamation* in the United States, it was and is practiced throughout the world in many cultures. In America, and elsewhere, a modern-day form of slavery continues with *human trafficking*, which is humans held in captivity and used for sexual exploitation. While racial slavery

does not exist as an institution today, there are often still individual prejudices against minorities and people of color. This should not be. All the races of the world are really one brotherhood, the offspring of Adam and Eve, and later, of Noah and his wife. God takes glory in the diversity of races and cultures He has created, and will gather His believers from every nation to praise Him around His throne (Revelation 7:9-10). Read more at <https://answersingenesis.org/racism/>

**4. Signs and Wonders.** Rowlandson asks for a sign from God of His goodness, and finds it answered through a visit of her son. Certainly, God has given signs to individuals as recorded in Scripture, such as Abraham, Moses, and Gideon. He has the power to do so. However, Christians should not demand a sign from God, putting him to the test (Matthew 4:7). We should also never ask whether or not it is God's will that we sin. If any sign you think you are receiving points to a sin, you can know that is definitely *not* a sign from God, but rather from Satan. Ultimately, God's Word is the most sure sign we have of God's love. If you are unsure of a decision in life, Proverbs advises asking for counsel from Godly and wise people, like your parents, pastors, and mentors (15:22). Read more at <https://whataboutjesus.com/message-from-god/>

**5. Context of Scripture.** Rowlandson is blessed to be given a Bible and reads it regularly. This is a wonderful thing. It is a great habit to read Scripture every single day. However, one should read with the proper context in mind. Not everything recorded in Scripture should be understood as a command or promise for you today. Some is historical. Some is the narrative of another person. Some is poetry. Some is prophecy. Rowlandson interprets Deuteronomy 27 as if it is a particular curse for her. Then, she finds comfort in a promise in Deuteronomy 30 that earthly life will go well for her if only she behave in a pious way. We know from the New Testament that God's grace is not dependent on our works (Ephesians 2:8-10). In the Deuteronomy passages, God is speaking directly to the Israelites as He establishes a covenant with them. While the words of comfort there may be applied to the life of a Christian, a Christian should not misread the curses or blessings, meant for a certain people at a certain time, to somehow magically apply to their own life circumstances. Rowlandson could have done everything "right" according to these verses, and it still may have been God's will to allow her to remain captive for reasons she might never understand.

**6. The Importance of Prayer.** Rowlandson can be found praying during her captivity. Prayer is, simply, a Christian talking to God. There are many appropriate ways to do this; in fact, the Holy Spirit can interpret the groanings of a believer who cannot put his thoughts into words (Romans 8:26). God invites His children to pray, and promises to hear us, even if He doesn't answer in the way we would like. Keep in mind, though, that the Scriptures never promise that believers will hear the Lord speaking back to them in the way that they speak to God. While there are certainly examples of believers hearing the voice of God in the Bible, the Christians should beware, since Satan also can masquerade as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). God's children should "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1) and reject anything that is not in line with the Scriptures, even if an angel from Heaven came to give a different Gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). The Bible is your safest and surest way to know God's message: a message that of yourself, you could never be good enough for God, but because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Heaven is yours!

## Seventh Remove through the Sixteenth Remove—Before Reading:

### Vocabulary:

*papoose*—a young child of American Indian parents (now often offensive)

### Commentary:

**1. Addiction.** Note that the author speaks of her former addiction to tobacco and how God helped her overcome this addiction. She finds it most prudent to avoid all tobacco altogether in order to avoid the temptation.