Focus/Summary
This lesson, intended for high school American Literature or United States History students, will help students better see the Puritan society in which Hester Prynne’s sin is committed in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. The lesson will address questions about the intention of Puritan law as well as the enforcement of those laws. It will also compare societal expectations of Puritan times to those of today.

Students will read *The Scarlet Letter* in its entirety, or selected chapters can be read. They will reflect upon the story after also reading documents on Puritan rules, a transcription of a 1694 document titled “An Act against Adultery and Polygamie”, and a list of actual court cases from the 1600s. Optionally, students can also read a sermon from the same time period titled “The Mutual Duties of Husbands and Wives towards Each Other”. These documents can be reviewed by the students to help answer the discussion questions.

Vital Theme and Narrative
How did Puritan laws and views of gender differ from those of today? How has society’s expectations of men and women changed?

Habits of mind
See past events as they were seen during a specific time period.
Read and analyze several historical documents.
Reflect upon selections from a classic novel of an historical time period.
Discuss possible answers to the essential question: How have views of men and women changed since Puritan times?

Objectives
Students will gain a better understanding of the time period of Puritan times after reading *The Scarlet Letter*. Through analysis of Puritan values and synthesis of those values with the novel, students will provide evidence to show adherence to these values throughout the novel. Then, after discussing the essential questions, they can decide justice was served in the novel. In the concluding activity, students can decide if they believe men and women are viewed differently today.

Opening the Lesson—Establishing major plot points and characterization in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Because students have read the novel (or selections from the novel), the following plot and characterization points can be established: main characters, conflict, and character actions.
The full text of *The Scarlet Letter* can be found at [http://www.enotes.com/scarlet-letter-text](http://www.enotes.com/scarlet-letter-text)

NOTE: If teachers want students to complete a more extensive study guide prior to this review and discussion of the novel, it can be found accompanying this lesson plan document. It features 90 questions concerning plot, themes and motifs, and characterization and is titled “Scarlet Letter SG.pdf”.

Questions for this discussion:

- **Q1-What was Hester’s sin and punishment?** She committed adultery and was to wear the letter A on her clothing. She also must stand on the scaffold in the town square for 3 hours each day (ch 2).

- **Q2-How did she handle or cope with this?** She seems to be conditioned to her punishment. She would try to forget where she was momentarily while standing on the scaffold. She would imagine her home of England (ch 2). While living her daily life, however, she continued life as normally as possible. She may have been very proud of her daughter due to Pearl’s showy clothing (ch 5). She also worked by sewing for others and even did charity work (ch 5).
Q3-What about her co-sinner (Dimmesdale)? Because no one knew he was the father, Dimmesdale paid no public penance for his part in the sin (ch 3). He did, however, struggle with the guilt of the sin by continuing his ruse as the holy and pure pastor of the town while secretly punishing himself in various ways.

Q4-How did Dimmesdale cope with his sin? Dimmesdale became physically ill (Ch 8), he felt very shameful (ch 11), he would whip himself as a punishment (ch 11), would walk alone at night (ch 12), and eventually admits his guilt (ch 23).

Q5-How did others view Dimmesdale? They respectfully hold him in the highest regard and consider him pure and Godly (ch 9, 11). They see him as being without sin and many are shocked when they hear of his sin (ch 24).

Q6-How did others view Hester? They believe her punishment is not harsh enough and that she is a shame to all women (ch 2). They believe her child is the devil’s spawn (ch 6) and see her as somewhat conceited about her having to wear the letter A because she has adorned it (ch 2).

Continuing the Lesson—Now that the answers to basic questions have been established, students can read “The Twelve Good Rules” and analyze the behavior of the characters.

Document 1:


The following was said to replace mottos such as “Home Sweet Home” on walls of Puritan homes (page 168):

The Twelve Good Rules

1. Profane no Divine ordinance.
2. Touch no state matters.
3. Urge no healths.
4. Pick no quarrels.
5. Encourage no vice.
6. Repeat no grievances.
7. Reveal no secrets.
8. Maintain no ill opinions.
10. Keep no bad company.
11. Make no long meals.
12. Lay no wagers.

Students could be divided into groups to initially focus on only one character. They should discuss the answers for one character before sharing with the larger group.

Question: Which of the rules does _____ break? Does the character kept any rules? Has he or she sought penance or is he or she deserving of forgiveness?
Characters: Hester, Chillingworth, Dimmesdale, the townspeople (this could be extended to other characters)

**Continuing the Lesson: Part II** – Additional information will be discovered about Puritan living. Students will read the 1694 law titled “An Act Against Adultery and Polygamie” AND a list of actual court records from the 1600’s. This could be assigned for homework or read in class, depending on time left after completing the first activity. Afterwards, students will be able to analyze and synthesize these documents with the novel.

**Document 2:**


Transcription of “An Act against Adultery and Polygamie” 1694

1694 AN ACT AGAINST ADULTERY AND POLYGAMY.

WHEREAS the violation of the marriage covenant is highly provoking to God, and destructive to families, Sect. 1. Be it therefore enacted by the governor, council and representatives, in general court assembled, and by authority of the same, that if any man be found in bed with another man’s wife, the man and woman so offending, being thereof convicted, shall be severely whipt, not exceeding thirty stripes, unless it appear upon trial, that one party was surprised and did not consent, which shall abate the punishment as to such party. And if any man shall commit adultery, the man and the women shall be convicted of such crime before their majesties‘ justice of assize and general goal delivery shall be set upon the gallows by the space of an hour, with a rope about their neck, and the other end cast over the gallows, and in the way from thence to the common goal shall be severely whipt, not exceeding forty stripes each, also every person or persons so offending shall for ever after wear a capital A of two inches long, and proportionable bigness, cut out in cloth of a contrary colour to their cloaths, and sewed upon their upper garments, on the outside of their arms, or on their back, in open view; and if any persons or persons, having been convicted and sentence for such offence, shall at any time be found without their letter so worn, during their abode in this province, they shall by warrant from a justice of the peace be forthwith apprehended and ordered to be publickly whipt, not exceeding fifteen stripes, and so from time to time, toties quoties.

Sect. 2. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that if any person or persons within this their majesties’ province, being married, or which hereafter shall marry, do at any time after the first of July in the present year, one thousand six hundred ninety-four, presume to marry any person or persons, the former husband or wife being alive, or shall continue to live so married, that then every such offence shall be felony, and the person and persons so offending shall suffer death, as in cases of felony; and the party and parties so offending shall receive such and the like proceeding, trial and execution, in such county where such person or persons shall be apprehended, as if the offence had been committed in such county where such person or persons shall be taken or apprehended. Provided always, that this act, or any thing therein contained, shall not extend to any persons or persons, whose husband or wife shall be continually remaining beyond the seas, by the space of seven years together, or whose husband or wife shall absent him or herself, the one from the other, by the space of seven years together in any part within their majesties’ dominions, or elsewhere, the one of them not knowing the other to be living within that time. Provided also, that this act, or any thing therein contained, shall not extend to any person or persons, whose husband or wife shall be continually remaining beyond the seas, by the space of seven years together, or whose husband or wife shall absent him or herself, the one from the other, by the space of seven years together in any part within their majesties’ dominions, or elsewhere, the one of them not knowing the other to be living within that time. Provided also, that this act, or any thing therein contained, shall not extend to any person or persons, that are or shall be at the time of such marriage divorced by any sentence had, of hereafter to be had, as the law of the province in that case has provided, or to any person or persons where the former marriage has been, or hereafter shall be, by such sentence had, declared to be void and of no effect, nor to any person or persons, for or by any reason of any former marriage had or made, or hereafter to be had or made within the age of consent, that is to say, the man fourteen years of age, the woman twelve.

**Document 3:** Actual court records of court cases regarding adultery and suspicious conduct found at the following site (NOTE—It has been edited for appropriateness with sections on sodomy and buggery omitted):


http://www.histarch.uiuc.edu/plymouth/Lauria2.html
Adultery

February 3, 1656 (CA, PCR 3:110-11):

At this Court, the constable of Tauton brought a certaine Scote, a single man, and an Irish woman named Katheren Aimes, whome hee had apprehended upon suspision of committing adultery each with other; but the Court, haueing examined them, could not proceed to punish them for want of clearer evidence; but haueing intelligence that sundry in Tauton could give evidence in the case, whoe were not present, the Court commited the said man and woman to the custidy of the marshals vntill the next Court, and summoned in the witnesses to appeer at the said Court, namely, Alexander Aines, John Muckclay, Daniell Muckeney, Scotsmen, and a certaine Irish woman named Elizabeth; her other name non present doe know.

March 5, 1656 (GC, PCR 3:111):

At this Court, William Paule, Scotchman, for his vnclean and filthy behauiour with the wife of Alexander Aines, is centanced by the Court to bee forthwith Publickly whipt, and to paye the officers the charges of his imprisonment and punishment, which accordingly was performed.

March 5, 1656 (GC, PCR 3:111-12):

At this Cour, Katheren Aines, for her vnclean and laciuiouse behauior with the abouesaid William Paule, and for the blasphemos words that shee hath spoken, is centanced by the Court to bee forthwith publickly whipt heer att Plymouth, and afterwards att Taunton, on a publicke training day, and to were a Roman B cutt out of ridd cloth and sowed to her vper garment on her right arme; and if shee shalbee euer found without it soe worne whil shee is in the gouernment, to bee forthwith publickly whipt.

March 5, 1656 (GC, PCR 3:112):

Alexander Anis, for his leaueing his family, and exposing his wife to such temptations, and being as baud to her therin, is centanced by the Court for the present to sitt in the stockes the time the said Paule and Katheren Ainis are whipt, which was performed; and the said Alexander Anis is to pay the charges of his wifes imprisonment and punishment, which said charge, in regard the said Anis is very poor, is to pay it by twelue pence per weeke vntill it is all payed; and James Walker, of Taunton, is appointed to reciue it in the countreyes behalfe.

December 7, 1641 Bradford, G. (PCR 2:28):

Forasmuch, as Thomas Bray, of Yarmouth, a single person, and Anne, the wyfe of Francis Linceford, have committed the act of adultery and vncleanesse, and haue diuers tymes layne in one bed together in the absence of her husband, which hath beene confessed by both parties in the publike Court, the Court doth censure them as followeth: That they be both severelye whipt immediately at the publik post, [and] that they shall weare (whilst they remayne in the gouernment) two letters, namely, an AD, for Adulterers, daily, vpon the outside of their vppermost garment, in a most emenent place thereof; and if they shalbe found at any tyme in any towne or place within the gouernment without them so worene vpon their vppermost garment as aforesaid, that then the constable of the towne or place shall take them, or wither of them, omitting so to weare the said two letters, and shall forthwith whip them for their negligence, and shall cause them to be immediately put on againe, and so worene by them and either of them; and also that they shalbe both whipt at Yarmouth, publikly, where the offence was committed, in such fitt season as shalbe thought meete by Mr. Edmond Freeman [and] such others as are authorized for the keepeing of the Courts in these partes.

July 4, 1673 (CM, PCR 5:127):

Wheras it doth appeer to this Court by diuers testimonies that Sarah, the wife of John Williams, of Barnstable, hath violated her marriage bond by committing actual adultery with another man, and hath a child by him, this Court therfore sees cause and doe heerby declare, that the said John Williams is legally cleare from his covenant of marriage formerly plighted and made with the said Sarah, his
late wife, and doe heerby free him from those duties relating thervnto, and that the said Sarah hath by her breach of wedlocke cutt off her selfe from any right henceforth to the person or estate of the said John Williams, her late husband, and doe heerby likewise allow him libertie further to dispose of himselfe in marriage if hee shall see cause for the future soe to doe.

**Suspicious Conduct**

October 7, 1651 (PCR 2:172):

Wheras, at the Generall Court holden the 8th of June last past, John Shaw and James Shaw, Samuell Cutbert, and Beniamine Eaton, Goodwife Gannett, Martha Haward, and William Snow were presented for vaine, light, and lacivious carriage at an vnseasonable time of the night, the Court, not finding them alike faulty, have fined James Shaw and Goodwife Gannett thirty shillings apeece, to be payed by the next Court of Assistants, [and] themselues then personally to appeere, or otherwise to receaue corporall punishment by whiping. . . . And Samuell Cutbert, William Snow, Beniamine Eaton, and Martha Haward are released, with admonishion to take heed of such euell carriages for the future. . . . And as for John Shaw, hee is lyable to punishment when oppertunitie serueth.

October 7, 1651 (Presentments by the Grand Enquest PCR 2:174):

Wee further present Goodwife Ramsden for lacivius goeing in the companie of young men. Sence cleared with admonition. (Referred to conference and further admonished to labore to walk inoffensiuely.)

June 6, 1655 (GC Presentments by Grand Enquest, PCR 3:82):

Item, wee present Hugh Cole, and Mary Foxwell, his now wife, in keeping company each with other in an vndecent manner, att an vnseasonable time and place, before marriage. [Owning the presentment as it lyeth, hee is fined 20s.]

March 5, 1655 (GC Presentments by the Grand Enquest, PCR 3:97):

Wee present John Gorum for vnseamly carriage towards Blanch Hull att vnseasonable time, being in the night. [Fined 40s.]

March 5, 1655 (GC Presentments by the Grand Enquest, PCR 3:97):

Wee present Blanch Hull for not crying out when shee was assaulted by John Corum in vnseemly carriage towards her upon her owne relation. [Fined fifty shillings.]

March 1, 1658/1659 (GC, PCR 3:159):

William Nelson being presented for vncciuell carrages towards seuerall weomen att seuerall times, it being cleared to the Court that hee was guilty by seuerall testimonies, hee was centanted by the Court to sitt in the stockes during the pleasure of the Court (which accordingly was performed) and likewise to find surties for his good behauior. [The said William Nelson acknowledgeth to owe vnto his highnes, the Lord Protector, the summe of 40:00:00.]

May 7, 1661 (CA, PCR 3:212):

Att this Court, Ann, the wife of Thomas Sauory, was presented forefoe the Court to answare for being att home on the Lords day with Thomas Lucas att vnseasonable time, namely, in the time of publicke exercise in the worship of God, and for being found drunke att the same time vnder an hedge, in vncciuell and beastly manor, was sentanced by the Court as followeth, namely: for her accompanying of the said Lucas att an vnseasonable time as aforsaid, she was sentanced to sitt in the stockes during the pleasure of the Court, which accordingly was performed and executed;
After reading the second and third documents, students can analyze them by thinking about and discussing the following questions:

Q1-What were the rules for men and women as they were written? Did they differ for men and women?
Q2-Are these rules upheld in The Scarlet Letter?
Q3-Looking at the court records, were the laws upheld during the time period in which they were written?

*OPTIONAL DOCUMENT for additional information on Puritan values

If time and interest permits, there is a sermon from Richard Baxter (1615-1691) that could be included in order to explore Puritan values. The sermon, titled “The Mutual Duties of Husbands and Wives Towards Each Other,” focuses on Biblical laws and cites several Bible verses throughout. The document would establish the values of Puritan society and provide Biblical knowledge for those who are unversed in this area. Analysis of the document may provide additional information for the students to use in determining whether justice was served in the novel.


Developing the Lesson –
Next, synthesis can occur by reflecting upon the novel and on the students’ own discoveries.

Q4-What did you notice about the court cases that surprised you?
Q5-Do you feel the laws were justly upheld in The Scarlet Letter?
Q6-Were men and women treated equally in the Scarlet Letter? How does the treatment of Hester and others in the novel differ from or adhere to the way the laws were written?

Assessing Student Learning –

**Essential question:**

**Was justice served in the novel?**
You may focus on Hester, Dimmesdale, or both characters. Write a 1-2 page essay using any of the sources we used today for support.

Don’t forget:
- Write a clear thesis statement.
- Develop your essay with at least 3 and as many as 5 main points.
- Cite specific examples from the articles, documents, or the novel.

**Concluding Activity** –
This activity will help students to connect their own lives to the novel. It will also ask them to reflect upon the way men and women are viewed in today’s society as compared to the society of Hester Prynne. After reading two articles from Time Magazine, the key questions can conclude the lesson.
There are some mothers and some uncles among the 150 people in the ballroom of the Broadmoor hotel, but the night belongs to fathers and daughters. The girls generally range in age from college down to the tiny 4-year-old dressed all in purple who has climbed up into her father's arms to be carried. Some are in their first high heels—you can tell by the way they walk, like uncertain baby giraffes. Randy Wilson, co-inventor of the Father-Daughter Purity Ball, offers a blessing: he calls on the men to be good and loving listeners, tender, gracious and truthful. And he prays that the girls might "step into the world with strength and passion, to lead this generation."

Kylie Miraldi has come from California to celebrate her 18th birthday tonight. She'll be going to San Jose State on a volleyball scholarship next year. Her father, who looks a little like Superman, is on the dance floor with one of her sisters; he turns out to be Dean Miraldi, a former offensive lineman with the Philadelphia Eagles. When Kylie was 13, her parents took her on a hike in Lake Tahoe, Calif. "We discussed what it means to be a teenager in today's world," she says. They gave her a charm for her bracelet—a lock in the shape of a heart. Her father has the key. "On my wedding day, he'll give it to my husband," she explains. "It's a symbol of my father giving up the covering of my heart, protecting me, since it means my husband is now the protector. He becomes like the shield to my heart, to love me as I'm supposed to be loved."

Kylie talks with an unblinking confidence about a promise that she says is spiritual, mental and physical. "It's something I'm very proud of. I plan to keep pure until marriage. It's a promise I made to myself—not pressure from my parents," she says. She speaks plainly about what she wants in her life, what she thinks she has the power to control and what she doesn't. "I'm very much at peace about this," she says, and looks out across the twirling room. "I don't feel like I need to seek a man. I will be found."

Family Ministry

Randy and his wife Lisa Wilson believe in celebrating God's design and life's little growth spurts. But the origin of the purity-ball movement was not so much about their five daughters; it was about the fathers Randy saw who, he says, didn't know what their place was in the lives of their daughters. "The idea was to
model what the relationship can be as a daughter grows from a child to an adult," Randy says. "You come in closer, become available to answer whatever questions she has."

So he and Lisa came up with a ceremony; they wrote a vow for fathers to recite, a promise "before God to cover my daughter as her authority and protection in the areas of purity," to practice fidelity, shun pornography and walk with honor through a "culture of chaos" and by so doing guide their daughters as well. That was in 1998, the year the President was charged with lying about his sex life, Viagra became the fastest-selling new drug in history, and movies, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, reflected "a surge in the worldwide relaxation of sexual taboos."

Word of the event spread fast: soon the camera crews came, and so did Tyra Banks and Dr. Phil. The Abstinence Clearinghouse estimates there were more than 4,000 purity events across the country last year, with programs aimed at boys now growing even faster. And inevitably the criticism arrived as well, dressed up in social science and scholarly glee at the semiotics of girls kneeling beneath raised swords to affirm their purity. The events have been called odd, creepy, oppressive of a girl's "sexual self-agency," as one USA Today columnist put it. Father-daughter bonding is great, the critics agree--but wouldn't a cooking class or a soccer game be emotionally healthier than a ceremony freighted with rings and roses and vows? Some academic skeptics make a practical objection: The majority of kids who make a virginity pledge, they argue, will still have sex before marriage but are less likely than other kids to use contraception, since that would involve planning ahead for something they have promised not to do. This puts them at risk for sexually transmitted diseases. To which defenders say: Teen pledgers typically do postpone having sex, have fewer partners, get pregnant less often and if they make it through high school as virgins, are twice as likely to graduate from college--so where's the downside?

The purity balls have thus become a proxy in the wider war over means and ends. It is being fought in Congress, where lawmakers debate whether to keep funding abstinence-only education in the face of studies showing it doesn't work; in the culture, as Lindsay and Britney and Miley march in single file off a cliff; at school-board meetings, where members argue over the signal sent by including condoms in the prom bag; at the dinner table, where parents try to transmit values to children, knowing full well that swarms of other messages are landing by text and Twitter. "The culture is everywhere," says Randy's daughter Khrystian, 20. "You can't get away from it." But maybe, the new Puritans suggest, there's a way to boost girls' immunity.

Rules of Engagement

It was an elbow in the ribs from his wife that drove Ken Lane to his first purity ball with their daughter Hannah, now 11. Tonight is their fourth, and they are sitting in the gold-and-white Broadmoor ballroom,
picking at the chicken Florentine and trying to explain what they're doing here. "My kids are on loan to me for a season; it's important how I use that time," Ken is saying as a string quartet plays softly. "There's a lot for us to talk through--the decisions she'll have to make are more complex. I want to be close enough to her that she can come talk to me. That's what my wife understood. I didn't understand the role dads can play to set her up for success."

In the face of the hook-up culture of casual sexual experimentation, he explains, with its potential physical and emotional risks, he wants to model an alternative. Even with older teenagers, many of these families don't believe in random dating but rather intentional dating, which typically begins with a young man's asking a father for permission to get to know his daughter. Lane was so stymied by how exactly that conversation would go that he even asked Randy Wilson if he could sit at a nearby table and listen in one day when Wilson met one of Khrystian's potential suitors at a local Starbucks. "We're trying to be realistic," Lane says. "I'm not ready to be like India--have arranged marriages. But there is some wisdom there, in that at least the parents are involved."

This, of course, is the kind of conversation that makes critics howl. What about a young woman's right to date whomever she pleases, make her own mistakes, learn from the experience, find out who she is and what matters to her? To which the Wilsons and their allies reply: If you still think this is just about sex, you are missing the whole point. The message, they say, is about integrity, being whole people, heart and soul and body. Wilson himself has said virginity pledges have a downside: "It heaps guilt upon them. If they fail, you've made it worse for them," he said. "Who is perfect in this world? One mistake doesn't mean it's all over." Everyone here has a story, and very few are in black and white. One man is dancing with his younger daughter, wishing his older girl had come as well. She used to wear a purity ring, he says, until a boy she knew assaulted her; she took it off--felt too dirty. Her parents gave her a new one, a bigger one; it took many months and much therapy, her father goes on, before she was able to put a ring on again. "That was part of a healing process," he says, "with the message that you're valuable no matter what someone did to you."

Symbols and Substance

After dinner comes the ballet performance, when seven tiny ballerinas in white tulle float in; then seven older dancers carry in a large, heavy wooden cross, which they drape in white, with a crown of thorns. Four of the five Wilson daughters are among the dancers, and they offer a special dance to their father, to the music of Natalie Grant: Your faith, your love And all that you believe Have come to be the strongest part of me And I will always be your baby ...
Then Randy and his friend Kevin Moore stand in front of the cross, holding up two large swords, points crossed. Fathers and daughters process beneath the swords to kneel; the girls place a white rose at the base of the cross while the fathers offer a quiet blessing. Splayed on the floor all around them are half a dozen photographers looking for the right angle and a camera crew from the BBC, in a syncopation of private praise and clicking shutters.

So what, exactly, does all this ceremony achieve? Leave aside for a moment the critics who recoil at the symbols, the patriarchy, the very use of the term purity, with its shadow of stains and stigma. Whatever guests came looking for, they are likely to come away with something unexpected. The goal seems less about making judgments than about making memories.

Out on the terrace under an almost moon, the black swans have vanished into the lake. David Diefenderfer has slipped outside for a cigarette; he’s a leathery South Dakotan in a big black cowboy hat, and he hands over his card. HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL: BREEDER SERVICE, it says, with a picture of a syringe. He’s in the cattle-reproduction business. He’s also the father of nine children by seven women.

Three of his daughters are with him tonight, including 10-year-old Taylor. I asked what purity means to her. “I don’t really know,” she says, and she’s shy about talking about all this. “But it means you make a promise to your dad to be a virgin until you are married and not have a lot of boyfriends.”

That’s what her oldest half sister Juliet was taught as well; she remembers hearing how her mother got pregnant the very first time she had sex. Juliet is now 37 and has come from Reno, Nev., where she works for Microsoft Licensing. She has watched the evening unfold with some skepticism. “I think I’m finding I’m more of a feminist than I thought,” she says with a sly smile. “I had a hard time there hearing about ‘rescuing’ our girls. I was brought up to be a strong woman. Why would I need rescuing?” It’s the boys who she thinks need help these days. “It’s great for girls to have a Cinderella night with Dad, but families still need a good strong father role model,” she says. The role-model question is tender for her. “I didn’t have that—no offense, Dad,” she says, and then she looks hard at him. “But my siblings do. He really stepped up to the plate. He’s a great dad now. I say that with a tinge of jealousy. I’m not afraid to admit it.”

Her father hopes his kids will learn from his mistakes. “I never planned to have nine children by seven women,” he says. “I believe it’s necessary to instill a set of values, give them tools to make good decisions.” But he won’t be there to help. Juliet explains when he goes back inside the ballroom to catch up to the younger girls: “We’re sort of here on borrowed time,” she says. David Diefenderfer has Stage 4 inoperable lung cancer; they figure tonight is something of a gift. “He won’t be at their wedding,” Juliet says, looking into the glowing room, “but they can look back and remember the dance they had tonight.”
A Delicate Dance

If you listen long enough, you wonder whether there is really such a profound disagreement about what parents want for their children. Culture war by its nature pours salt in wounds, finds division where there could be common purpose. Purity is certainly a loaded word—but is there anyone who thinks it's a good idea for 12-year-olds to have sex? Or a bad idea for fathers to be engaged in the lives of their daughters and promise to practice what they preach? Parents won't necessarily say this out loud, but isn't it better to set the bar high and miss than not even try?

Maybe mixed messages aren't just inevitable; they're valuable. On the one hand, for all the conservative outcry, there is no evidence that giving kids complete and accurate information about sex and contraception encourages promiscuity. On the other, a purity pledge basically says sex is serious. That it's not to be entered into recklessly. To deny kids information, whether about contraception or chastity, is irresponsible; to mock or dismiss as unrealistic the goal of personal responsibility in all its forms may suit the culture, but it gives kids too little power, too little control over their decisions, as though they're incapable of making good ones. The research suggests they may be more capable of high standards than parents are. "It's always tempting as a parent to say, Do as I say, not as I do," says a father who's here for the first time. "But it's more valuable to make the commitment yourself. Children can spot hypocrisy very quickly."

The dancing goes on past midnight, when Randy Wilson finally has to shoo people out. Many of the girls are still light-footed, merry; it's their dads who are fading, and you wonder who will be leaning on whom as they head out into the cool mountain night.

To see more of Marvi Lacar's photos, go to time.com/purity

Article 2:

Tuesday, Jun. 21, 2005

Teenage Fathers: The Missing-Father Myth
By Richard Stengel

They are the forgotten partners. It is obvious but often overlooked: for every teenage mother there is a father, usually a teenager who finds himself treated as an outsider, receiving none of the solicitous attention that occasionally attends the mother and child. These fathers are usually depicted as churlish
scamps, irresponsible hit-and-run artists out to prove their sexual prowess without a thought for the consequences. Until recently, no one even seemed to factor the father into the situation. But with the surge of concern about teenage mothers, several groups and studies have taken a closer look at teenage fathers. Their findings have challenged many prevailing myths.

A recent study partially funded by the Ford Foundation revealed that many young fathers are not only willing but eager to help their partner and offspring. The project, coordinated by New York City's Bank Street College of Education, offered vocational services, counseling, and prenatal and parenting classes to nearly 400 teenage fathers and prospective fathers in eight U.S. cities. At the end of the two-year program, 82% reported having daily contact with their children; 74% said they contributed to the child's financial support. Almost 90% maintained a relationship with the mother, whom they had known for an average of two years. "We are learning that many teen fathers are anxious to participate in the parenting of their children," says Prudence Brown of the Ford Foundation, but, she points out, "they need a lot of help and support to help them assume a responsible father role."

Teenage fathers usually have lower incomes, less education and more children than do men who wait until at least the age of 20 to have children. One reason for this is that a teenager who has got his girlfriend pregnant often compounds his first mistake with a second one: dropping out of school. "When they leave school, they head right for a low-paying job," says Amy Williams, the executive director of the Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Project in San Francisco. "Their own internal drummer says to them, 'If you are going to be a good father, you have to get a job.'" Few are able to perceive the trap they are falling into. Says a counselor: "Five years down the line, they won't have skills to qualify for much more than work in a fast-food restaurant."

Teenage fathers are usually bewildered by the news of the impending arrival. Their own fathers, statistics show, were often phantom parents, and the young men have very little idea of what a father is supposed to do. Notes Debra Klinman, project director of the Bank Street College study of teenage parents: "A lot of fathers want to love their babies and do the right thing for them, but they don't see how to do what is right."

For many of the young men there is also a conflict between the desire to provide for their children and doubts about their own abilities as providers. Says Tommy Milladge, a counselor at the Youth and Family Center in Lawndale, Calif.: "The paradox felt by teen fathers is that while they want the young lady to receive services, they are ambivalent because they can't provide for them the way they should. It defeats their masculinity." Until recently it was thought that this same sense of masculine pride would prevent young fathers from participating in programs designed to help them. The Bank Street College study
showed that the opposite was true: teen fathers lunged at the opportunity, particularly where job training was offered. At the end of the two-year program, 61% of the previously unemployed young men had found jobs. Perhaps more important, 46% of those who had dropped out of school had resumed their education.

Programs designed to assist teenage fathers are still relatively few, but their growing number offers hope in arresting the cycle of children producing children. Terry, who is now 21, has a 17-month-old child and is himself the child of teenage parents. After being helped by the Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Project in San Francisco, he is now a counselor there. "My father was a parent when he was a teenager," Terry says firmly. "My mother and grandmother were. It didn't stop with me or with my brothers. I know it will stop with my son." --By Richard Stengel. Reported by Melissa Ludtke/Los Angeles and Jeanne McDowell/New York

Key questions:
1. How has society changed since the Puritan period?
2. The “Twelve Good Rules” served as a kind of “moral compass” for Puritan society. Does our society have a sufficient “moral compass” with which to guide our actions today?
3. How is a woman’s responsibility different from a man’s responsibility in regards to pregnancy today? How would this differ if the mother was a teenager? Is it any different from Hester and Dimmesdale’s responsibility?
4. In light of the teen purity ball for young girls, should there also be a ritual for teen boys?
5. What negative effects of fatherhood do teen fathers face? Are they viewed fairly by our society?
6. Are teen mothers and teen fathers treated equally in today’s society?