

Nathaniel Hawthorne

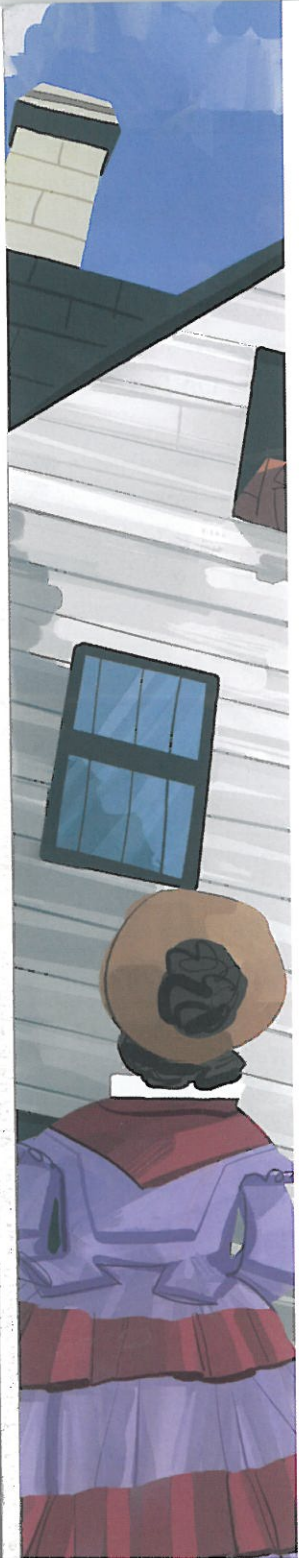
# The House of the Seven Gables

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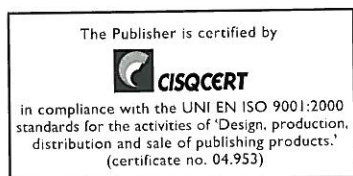
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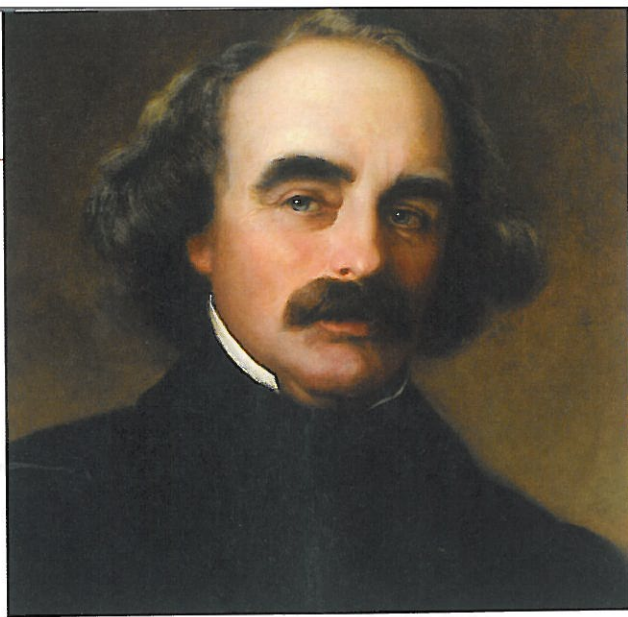
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These symbols indicate the beginning and end of the passages linked to the listening activities.



## Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born on 4 July 1804, in Salem, Massachusetts, to an important New England family.

His Puritan<sup>1</sup> ancestors were involved in the Salem witch-hunts and trials of 1692. A witch who had been condemned to death by one of Hawthorne's ancestors put a curse<sup>2</sup> on his family. Hawthorne was aware of this curse and, as a result, he developed a great interest in the Puritans, their religion and way of life. The subject of curses and witchcraft often comes up in his writing.

He attended Bowdoin College in Maine, where he decided to become a writer. *Twice Told Tales*, published in 1837, was his first collection of short stories. In 1846 he published *Mosses from an Old Manse*, his second successful collection of short stories. His most important work, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), established him as one of America's greatest writers.

1. **Puritan** : member of a Protestant group of Christians who worshipped God in a simple way.
2. **curse** : word or sentence asking God or a spirit to bring harm to someone.



Hawthorne based *The House of the Seven Gables* on this 17th-century house in Salem, Massachusetts.

*The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) is a brilliant psychological study of a family destined to live under a wizard's curse. Hawthorne was probably inspired by the curse that Sarah Good, one of the first people to be accused of witchcraft, put on Reverend Noyes the day she was hanged in 1692. She told him he would drink blood if she was hanged. Tradition says that 25 years later, Reverend Noyes died of a throat hemorrhage.<sup>3</sup>

In 1853 Hawthorne was appointed U.S. Consul in Liverpool and Manchester. During this time he traveled to Italy and France. His last novel, *The Marble Faun*, was written in Italy and published in 1860 upon his return to the United States.

Hawthorne died on 19 May 1864, leaving several unfinished works. The psychological analysis of his characters and the mysterious and often supernatural plots of his stories make his works unforgettable.

3. **hemorrhage** : large loss of blood.

**1 Comprehension check**

Read the sentences and fill in the missing dates. Then put the sentences into chronological order.

- A  *The House of the Seven Gables* was published in .....
- B  Hawthorne's last novel was published in .....
- C  Hawthorne became U.S. Consul in .....
- D  Reverend Noyes died in .....
- E  Hawthorne died in .....
- F  Hawthorne's ancestors took part in the Salem witch-hunts and trials in .....
- G  Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in .....
- H  *The Scarlet Letter* was published in .....
- I  *Twice Told Tales* was published in .....

**2 Answer the following questions.**

- 1 Where was Hawthorne born?  
.....
- 2 Which event had taken place in the town of his birth over a hundred years earlier?  
.....
- 3 What had happened to the family of Hawthorne's ancestors?  
.....
- 4 What was Hawthorne interested in?  
.....
- 5 What inspired Hawthorne to write *The House of the Seven Gables*?  
.....

**INTERNET PROJECT**

Connect to the Internet and go to [www.blackcat-cideb.com](http://www.blackcat-cideb.com) or [www.cideb.it](http://www.cideb.it). Insert the title or part of the title of the book into our search engine. Open the page for *The House of the Seven Gables*. Click on the Internet project link. Go down the page until you find the title of this book and click on the relevant link for this project.

**Divide the class into three groups.**

**Group 1:** Find out about Nathaniel Hawthorne's birthplace.

- ▶ When was it built?
- ▶ In which style was it built?
- ▶ Where was the house originally located?
- ▶ When was it moved to its present location?

**Group 2:** Find out about the real-life House of the Seven Gables.

- ▶ Where is it located?
- ▶ What is its present use?
- ▶ What happens when visitors arrive there?
- ▶ Name the different things you can see there.
- ▶ Which came first: Hawthorne's novel or the real-life house?

**Group 3:** Find out about entertainment provided at the "House of the Seven Gables".

- ▶ How many shows are on? Name them.
- ▶ When are they on?
- ▶ How long are they?
- ▶ How much do the tickets cost?
- ▶ Is it necessary to book in advance?



# The Characters



Top left to right: Hepzibah Pyncheon, Mr Holgrave  
Front left to right: Clifford Pyncheon, Phoebe Pyncheon, Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon

## The British Colonies in America

The first permanent British colony in North America was Jamestown in Virginia, settled by Captain John Smith and his one hundred men in 1607. The settlement was named Jamestown in honor of King James I, who financed the expedition. Captain Smith and his men were helped by Pocahontas, the brave Indian princess.

King James I hoped to find gold, riches and food in the New World. The settlers discovered the tobacco plant which no one had ever seen before. The American Indians smoked the tobacco leaves and used

them as a medicine. The discovery of the tobacco plant had a very important influence on the economy of the colony. Soon there were tobacco plantations along the James River and tobacco was sold to Great Britain and Europe, where it became a very profitable business.



Captain John Smith, the founder of Jamestown, the first British colony.

In 1634 Maryland became another southern colony where tobacco was grown. During the late 1600s and early 1700s there were huge tobacco, sugar and cotton plantations in the southern colonies of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. These products brought great wealth to many southern families. Slave labor was used on the plantations, and this caused serious problems later on.

The northern British colonies had a different history. The first settlers were the Puritans who suffered religious persecution in Great Britain. These people decided to go to the New World, where they could practice their religion freely. They became known as the Pilgrims.



A tobacco plantation.



*A View of Eighteenth-century Boston* by Frank Xaver Habermann (1721-96).

In 1620 a group of one hundred Pilgrims left Great Britain on the sailing ship *Mayflower*, and after a dangerous voyage landed on the northeast coast of North America at a place they called New Plymouth.

The Pilgrims' first winter was very cold and difficult, because they did not have enough food or shelter. Fortunately, the Wampanoag Indians were friendly and generous and helped the colonists survive.

In 1629 another group of people called the Puritans decided to leave Great Britain and travel to the New World. Their leader, John Winthrop, led seven hundred Puritans on board seven ships to Massachusetts Bay. Salem was their first settlement and shortly after Governor Winthrop founded the seaport of Boston.

The Pilgrims and Puritans were hard-working, industrious people who set up successful business enterprises. Fishing, agriculture and



*Betsy Ross and the First Stars and Stripes* by John Ward Dunsmore (1920).

mercantile trade flourished. These people accumulated a great amount of wealth which they later invested in industry. The growing industries of the northeast colonies contributed greatly to America's growth and wealth.

By the 1700s there were thirteen thriving British colonies on the Atlantic coast. The colonies wanted their independence from Great Britain. They were tired of paying taxes to the King. The colonists, led by George Washington, organized an army and decided to fight for their independence. In April 1775 the American Revolution started in Massachusetts.

On 4 July 1776, a group of American patriots wrote the Declaration of Independence which proclaimed freedom and democracy for all Americans. With this declaration, the thirteen colonies created their

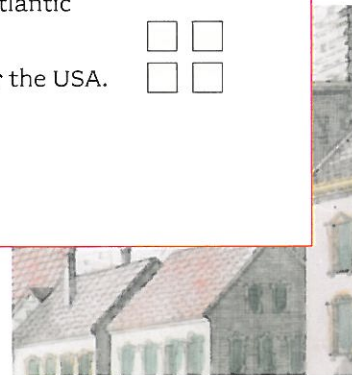
own nation, the United States of America. Betsy Ross, a friend of George Washington's, made the first American flag with thirteen white stars on a blue background, and thirteen red stripes. Even today the flag is called "the Stars and Stripes".

The American and British armies continued fighting until 1781, when the American Army defeated the British in Yorktown, Virginia. The final peace treaty was signed in Paris in 1783.

**1 Comprehension check**

Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false ones.

- |   | T                        | F                        |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 The first British colony in America was settled by King James I.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 King James I wanted to find treasure in the New World.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 An early use of tobacco leaves was as a medicine.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 The discovery of tobacco led to an unsuccessful business.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Sugar and cotton made many people rich in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 The Pilgrims first settled in the southern colonies.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 The native Indians didn't help the Pilgrims during their first cold winter.       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 America grew rich thanks to the hard work of the Pilgrims.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 There were fifteen British colonies on the Atlantic coast in the 18th century.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 "The Stars and Stripes" is another name for the USA.                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

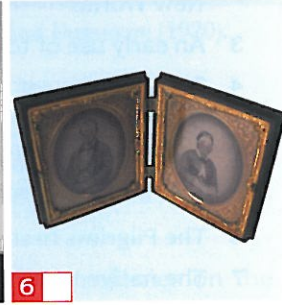


## Before you read

### 1 Vocabulary

Match the words to the pictures. Use a dictionary to help you.

- |            |          |             |
|------------|----------|-------------|
| A gables   | D wizard | G drawer    |
| B elm tree | E study  | H miniature |
| C hut      | F collar | I portrait  |



### 2 Adjectives

A Match these adjectives from the story to their definitions. Then check in your dictionary.

- 1  determined
- 2  greedy
- 3  powerful
- 4  wealthy
- 5  distinguished
- 6  dignified

- A very rich  
 B wanting more money, power, food, etc. than is necessary  
 C very successful and well-known in a particular job  
 D calmly impressive and respectable  
 E having made a firm decision to do something  
 F able to control or influence events or other people's behavior

B Now use the words in the following sentences.

- 1 My uncle is very ..... . He has lots of money and owns two enormous houses in New England and a wonderful apartment in the Caribbean.
- 2 My friend's mother has a very ..... position working for the government.
- 3 She's a very ..... young lady: once she has made up her mind, nothing will make her change it.
- 4 Those famous buildings were planned by the most ..... architect in the country.
- 5 What a ..... man! He has already eaten two plates of pasta, had a large plate of meat and vegetables and now he's ordering an enormous slice of cake!
- 6 My father's lawyer works in a very ..... manner. All her clients respect her.