

The Minister's Black Veil – Nathaniel Hawthorne - Short story

[The Minister's Black Veil](#) is a famous short story by the American author [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#). Nathaniel Hawthorne was a famous and well known American author of short stories. He was a prolific short story writer and novelist in the early 18th century and has left behind a rich legacy. The Minister's Black Veil which he wrote and published in the year 1836 is considered one of his best short stories.

Sticking to Nathaniel Hawthorne's gothic writing style, the Minister's Black Veil also follows a dark and gothic writing form. The protagonist, Reverend Mr. Hooper is shown to don a black veil that obscures and covers almost his entire face. The veil is a representation or a symbol of the secret sins that man commits and hides from one another. The representation of the black veil is that these sins come between a person and the rest of the world thus forming a rift or a conflict.

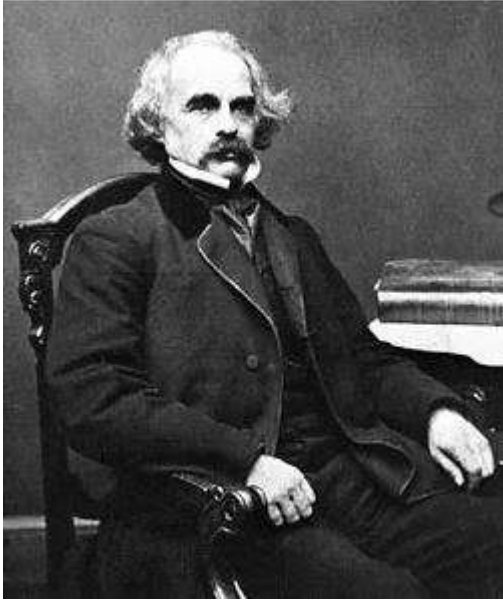
This story is included into the high school curriculum of the USA and is read by hundreds of thousands of children across the world. You can download a free PDF copy of The Minister's Black Veil story right below and also download a worksheet with many questions and answers.

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About the author – Nathaniel Hawthorne

[Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) was a famous and well known American author of short stories. He was a prolific short story writer and novelist in the early 18th century in the Americas. [The birthmark](#) which he wrote and published in the year 1843 is considered one of his best short stories.



Nathaniel Hawthorne

Hawthorne was born in 1804 in Salem, a town in Massachusetts. He published his first work in 1828, the novel called Fanshawe. He also published several short stories in periodicals, which he collected in 1837 as Twice-Told Tales.

This story is included into the high school curriculum of the USA and is read by hundreds of thousands of children across the world. You can download a free PDF copy of the birthmark story right below.

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The good parson Hooper

The sexton stood in the porch of Milford meeting-house pulling lustily at the bell-rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children with bright faces tripped merrily beside their parents or mimicked a graver gait in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes.

Spruce bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on week-days. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper's door. The first glimpse of the clergyman's figure was the signal for the bell to cease its summons.

"But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?" cried the sexton, in astonishment.

All within hearing immediately turned about and beheld the semblance of Mr. Hooper pacing slowly his meditative way toward the meeting-house. With one accord they started, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit.

"Are you sure it is our parson?" inquired Goodman Gray of the sexton.

"Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper," replied the sexton. "He was to have exchanged pulpits with Parson Shute of Westbury, but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday, being to preach a funeral sermon."

The cause of so much amazement may appear sufficiently slight. Mr. Hooper, a gentlemanly person of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed with due clerical neatness, as if a careful wife had starched his band and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday's garb.

There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil.

The Minister's Black Veil

On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things.

With this gloomy shade before him good Mr. Hooper walked onward at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted men, yet nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meeting-house steps. But so wonder-struck were they that his greeting hardly met with a return.

"I can't really feel as if good Mr. Hooper's face was behind that piece of crape," said the sexton.

"I don't like it," muttered an old woman as she hobbled into the meeting-house. "He has changed himself into something awful only by hiding his face."

"Our parson has gone mad!" cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold.

A rumor of some unaccountable phenomenon had preceded Mr. Hooper into the meeting-house and set all the congregation astir. Few could refrain from twisting their heads toward the door; many stood upright and turned directly about; while several little boys clambered upon the seats, and came down again with a terrible racket.

There was a general bustle, a rustling of the women's gowns and shuffling of the men's feet, greatly at variance with that hushed repose which should attend the entrance of the minister. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice the perturbation of his people.

He entered with an almost noiseless step, bent his head mildly to the pews on each side and bowed as he passed his oldest parishioner, a white-haired great-grandsire, who occupied an arm-chair in the centre of the aisle.

It was strange to observe how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor. He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder till Mr. Hooper had ascended the stairs and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation except for the black veil.

That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath as he gave out the psalm, it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page as he read the Scriptures, and while he prayed the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dread being whom he was addressing?

Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister as his black veil to them.

Who was Mr. Hooper

Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: he strove to win his people heavenward by mild, persuasive influences rather than to drive them thither by the thunders of the word.

The sermon which he now delivered was marked by the same characteristics of style and manner as the general series of his pulpit oratory, but there was something either in the sentiment of the discourse itself or in the imagination of the auditors which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips.

It was tinged rather more darkly than usual with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. A subtle power was breathed into his words.

Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them behind his awful veil and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their bosoms.

There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said—at least, no violence; and yet with every tremor of his melancholy voice the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger's visage would be discovered, though the form, gesture and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services the people hurried out with indecorous confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits the moment they lost sight of the black veil.

Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the centre; some went homeward alone, wrapped in silent meditation; some talked loudly and profaned the Sabbath-day with ostentatious laughter. A few shook their sagacious heads, intimating that they could penetrate the mystery, while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp as to require a shade.

A terrible thing

After a brief interval forth came good Mr. Hooper also, in the rear of his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due reverence to the hoary heads, saluted the middle-aged with kind dignity as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with mingled authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children's heads to bless them.

Such was always his custom on the Sabbath-day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor's side. Old Squire Saunders—doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory—neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont to bless the food almost every Sunday since his settlement.

He returned, therefore, to the parsonage, and at the moment of closing the door was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

"How strange," said a lady, "that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!"

"Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper's intellects," observed her husband, the physician of the village. "But the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person and makes him ghost-like from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?"

"Truly do I," replied the lady; "and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself."

"Men sometimes are so," said her husband.

The funeral

The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house and the more distant acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased.

Their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now an appropriate emblem. The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner.

As he stooped the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eye-lids had not been closed for ever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil?

A person who watched the interview between the dead and living scrupled not to affirm that at the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy.

From the coffin Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and thence to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so imbued with celestial hopes that the music of a heavenly harp swept by the fingers of the dead seemed faintly to be heard among the saddest accents of the minister.

The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him, when he prayed that they and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces.

The bearers went heavily forth and the mourners followed, saddening all the street, with the dead before them and Mr. Hooper in his black veil behind.

The wedding

"Why do you look back?" said one in the procession to his partner.

"I had a fancy," replied she, "that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand."

"And so had I at the same moment," said the other.

That night the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in wedlock. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a placid cheerfulness for such occasions which often excited a sympathetic smile where livelier merriment would have been thrown away.

There was no quality of his disposition which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe which had gathered over him throughout the day would now be dispelled. But such was not the result.

When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil which had added deeper gloom to the funeral and could portend nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the guests that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape and dimmed the light of the candles.

The bridal pair stood up before the minister, but the bride's cold fingers quivered in the tremulous hand of the bridegroom, and her death-like paleness caused a whisper that the maiden who had

been buried a few hours before was come from her grave to be married. If ever another wedding were so dismal, it was that famous one where they tolled the wedding-knell.

After performing the ceremony Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests like a cheerful gleam from the hearth.

At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet and rushed forth into the darkness, for the Earth too had on her black veil.

A failed confrontation

The next day the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper's black veil. That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street and good women gossiping at their open windows.

It was the first item of news that the tavern keeper told to his guests. The children babbled of it on their way to school. One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his playmates that the panic seized himself and he wellnigh lost his wits by his own waggery.

It was remarkable that, of all the busybodies and impertinent people in the parish, not one ventured to put the plain question to Mr. Hooper wherefore he did this thing. Hitherto, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers nor shown himself averse to be guided by their judgment.

If he erred at all, it was by so painful a degree of self-distrust that even the mildest censure would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime. Yet, though so well acquainted with this amiable weakness, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly remonstrance.

There was a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed, which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another, till at length it was found expedient to send a deputation of the church, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery before it should grow into a scandal.

Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business.

The topic, it might be supposed, was obvious enough. There was the black veil swathed round Mr. Hooper's forehead and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them.

Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper's eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance.

Finally, the deputies returned abashed to their constituents, pronouncing the matter too weighty to be handled except by a council of the churches, if, indeed, it might not require a General Synod.

The black veil

But there was one person in the village unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all besides herself. When the deputies returned without an explanation, or even venturing to demand one, she with the calm energy of her character determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper every moment more darkly than before.

As his plighted wife it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister's first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject with a direct simplicity which made the task easier both for him and her.

After he had seated himself she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude; it was but a double fold of crape hanging down from his forehead to his mouth and slightly stirring with his breath.

"No," said she, aloud, and smiling, "there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir; let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil, then tell me why you put it on."

Mr. Hooper's smile glimmered faintly.

"There is an hour to come," said he, "when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then."

"Your words are a mystery too," returned the young lady. "Take away the veil from them, at least."

"Elizabeth, I will," said he, "so far as my vow may suffer me. Know, then, this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world; even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it."

"What grievous affliction hath befallen you," she earnestly inquired, "that you should thus darken your eyes forever?"

"If it be a sign of mourning," replied Mr. Hooper, "I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil."

"But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?" urged Elizabeth.

"Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office do away this scandal."

The darkness cast by the veil

The color rose into her cheeks as she intimated the nature of the rumors that were already abroad in the village. But Mr. Hooper's mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again—that same sad smile which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.

"If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough," he merely replied; "and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?" And with this gentle but unconquerable obstinacy did he resist all her entreaties.

At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease.

Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks. But in an instant, as it were, a new feeling took the place of sorrow: her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when like a sudden twilight in the air its terrors fell around her. She arose and stood trembling before him.

"And do you feel it, then, at last?" said he, mournfully.

She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm.

"Have patience with me, Elizabeth!" cried he, passionately. "Do not desert me though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls. It is but a mortal veil; it is not for eternity. Oh, you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened to be alone behind my black veil! Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity for ever."

"Lift the veil but once and look me in the face," said she.

"Never! It cannot be!" replied Mr. Hooper.

"Then farewell!" said Elizabeth.

She withdrew her arm from his grasp and slowly departed, pausing at the door to give one long, shuddering gaze that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil.

But even amid his grief Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors which it shadowed forth must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers.

Love and fear

From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper's black veil or by a direct appeal to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide. By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingles with the sober actions of men otherwise rational and tinges them all with its own semblance of insanity.

But with the multitude good Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear. He could not walk the street with any peace of mind, so conscious was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardihood to throw themselves in his way.

The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk at sunset to the burial-ground; for when he leaned pensively over the gate, there would always be faces behind the gravestones peeping at his black veil.

A fable went the rounds that the stare of the dead people drove him thence. It grieved him to the very depth of his kind heart to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports while his melancholy figure was yet afar off.

Their instinctive dread caused him to feel more strongly than aught else that a preternatural horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great that he never willingly passed before a mirror nor stooped to drink at a still fountain lest in its peaceful bosom he should be affrighted by himself.

This was what gave plausibility to the whispers that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime too horrible to be entirely concealed or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus from beneath the black veil there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him. It was said that ghost and fiend consorted with him there.

With self-shudderings and outward terrors he walked continually in its shadow, groping darkly within his own soul or gazing through a medium that saddened the whole world. Even the lawless wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret and never blew aside the veil. But still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled at the pale visages of the worldly throng as he passed by.

Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman. By the aid of his mysterious emblem—for there was no other apparent cause—he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin.

His converts always regarded him with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that before he brought them to celestial light they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections.

Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper and would not yield their breath till he appeared, though ever, as he stooped to whisper consolation, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own. Such were the terrors of the black veil even when Death had bared his visage.

Strangers came long distances to attend service at his church with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure because it was forbidden them to behold his face. But many were made to quake ere they departed.

Once, during Governor Belcher's administration, Mr. Hooper was appointed to preach the election sermon. Covered with his black veil, he stood before the chief magistrate, the council and the representatives, and wrought so deep an impression that the legislative measures of that year were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral sway.

Everyone gets their turn to rest

In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life, irreproachable in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions; kind and loving, though unloved and dimly feared; a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their aid in mortal anguish.

As years wore on, shedding their snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper. Nearly all his parishioners who were of mature age when he was settled had been borne away by many a funeral: he had one congregation in the church and a more crowded one in the churchyard; and, having wrought so late into the evening and done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper's turn to rest.

Several persons were visible by the shaded candlelight in the death-chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he had none. But there was the decorously grave though unmoved physician, seeking only to mitigate the last pangs of the patient whom he could not save.

There were the deacons and other eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the Reverend Mr. Clark of Westbury, a young and zealous divine who had ridden in haste to pray by the bedside of the expiring minister. There was the nurse—no hired handmaiden of Death, but one whose calm affection had endured thus long in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish even at the dying-hour.

Who but Elizabeth! And there lay the hoary head of good Father Hooper upon the death-pillow with the black veil still swathed about his brow and reaching down over his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath caused it to stir.

All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world; it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love and kept him in that saddest of all prisons his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.

For some time previous his mind had been confused, wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and hovering forward, as it were, at intervals, into the indistinctness of the world to come. There had been feverish turns which tossed him from side to side and wore away what little strength he had.

But in his most convulsive struggles and in the wildest vagaries of his intellect, when no other thought retained its sober influence, he still showed an awful solicitude lest the black veil should slip aside.

Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at his pillow who with averted eyes would have covered that aged face which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood.

At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in the torpor of mental and bodily exhaustion, with an imperceptible pulse and breath that grew fainter and fainter except when a long, deep and irregular inspiration seemed to prelude the flight of his spirit.

The minister of Westbury approached the bedside.

"Venerable Father Hooper," said he, "the moment of your release is at hand. Are you ready for the lifting of the veil that shuts in time from eternity?"

Father Hooper at first replied merely by a feeble motion of his head; then—apprehensive, perhaps, that his meaning might be doubtful—he exerted himself to speak.

"Yea," said he, in faint accents; "my soul hath a patient weariness until that veil be lifted."

The black veil conclusion

"And is it fitting," resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, "that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment may pronounce,—is it fitting that a father in the Church should leave a shadow on his memory that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you, my venerable brother, let not this thing be! Suffer us to be gladdened by your triumphant aspect as you go to your reward. Before the veil of eternity be lifted let me cast aside this black veil from your face;" and, thus speaking, the Reverend Mr. Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years.

But, exerting a sudden energy that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper snatched both his hands from beneath the bedclothes and pressed them strongly on the black veil, resolute to struggle if the minister of Westbury would contend with a dying man.

"Never!" cried the veiled clergyman. "On earth, never!"

"Dark old man," exclaimed the affrighted minister, "with what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the judgment?"

Father Hooper's breath heaved: it rattled in his throat; but, with a mighty effort grasping forward with his hands, he caught hold of life and held it back till he should speak. He even raised himself in bed, and there he sat shivering with the arms of Death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful at that last moment in the gathered terrors of a lifetime.

And yet the faint, sad smile so often there now seemed to glimmer from its obscurity and linger on Father Hooper's lips.

"Why do you tremble at me alone?" cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. "Tremble also at each other. Have men avoided me and women shown no pity and children screamed and fled only for my black veil? What but the mystery which it obscurely typifies

has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend, the lover to his best-beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin,—then deem me a monster for the symbol beneath which I have lived and die. I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a black veil!"

While his auditors shrank from one another in mutual affright, Father Hooper fell back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave.

The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial-stone is moss-grown, and good Mr. Hooper's face is dust; but awful is still the thought that it mouldered beneath the black veil.

Moral of the story

The moral of "The Minister's Black Veil" is that we are all sinners. Some have sinned openly while others have sinned in secret. For those who secretly sin and display that they did so, it creates a divide from those around them as they are yet to acknowledge their secret sins. In the story, Minister Hooper begins to wear a dark veil that covers his face. The veil represents secret sin and causes people to avoid him.

Summary of the Minister's Black Veil

The Minister's Black Veil is a dark gothic story. In a small village, Reverend Mr. Hooper wears a black veil made of crape, a fabric used for mourning. The veil completely obscures and covers the upper part of his face. Only his mouth and chin are left uncovered. This unsettles everyone as they are not sure as to why the reverend whom they all love is wearing this veil.

Mr. Hooper wears the veil as he conducts his sermon, and though people are uncomfortable, the veil makes his speech very powerful. After the sermon, the town's people talk about the Reverend's mysterious veil and wonder why he is wearing it.

When the reverend came out, he behaves normally as he did before. He greets the townspeople; he places his hand on children to bless them. However he is shunned by his parishioners.

In the afternoon, there is a funeral and the church holds a funeral service for the deceased. There is a wedding that night as well. The reverend, Mr. Hooper continues to wear the veil, and does not care about the reactions made by the people in the congregation.

The deputies of the Church discuss among themselves and go to discuss the matter with him. However Mr. Hooper's appearance is so scary and forlorn that they are unable to complete the task. His fiancée Elizabeth however cannot stand the sight of the veil and confronts him.

She asks him why he is wearing it, and he does not reply clearly. He provides a vague reference to sorrow and the secret sin. She asks him to remove the veil, but the Reverend refuses. Elizabeth is

furiously turns to leave. The Reverend begs her to stay, saying that he is lonely but she refuses and leaves thus breaking their engagement.

For the rest of his life, the Reverend Mr. Hooper refuses to take off the veil. Even on his deathbed, when he is asked by a fellow clergyman to remove the barrier, Mr. Hooper refuses. He holds the veil tight to his face, crying out to his onlookers, asking them why everyone is so scared of him. Everyone has secret sins they are hiding and that everyone is wearing a black veil.

Analysis of the Minister's Black Veil

The Minister's Black Veil is considered by Nathaniel Hawthorne as one of his finest pieces of literature. Many literature experts also agree to this because of the utter simplicity of the story but bringing deep meaning in each of its intricately woven layers. Although it can be said to be containing gothic elements, there are no gruesome aspects such as death or murder or even violence.

Analysis 1: The Reverend has sinned

- Symbolically, the black veil represents secret sin and the terrible nature of a human. This black veil or sin could potentially represent the secret sin that all people carry in their hearts. Alternatively it could also be a representation of a specific sin which Mr. Hooper, the Reverend and the protagonist of the story, has committed,
- Some readers think that the sin is adultery. The author speculates in the story that the Minister Mr. Hooper may have committed adultery with the lady who died at the beginning of the story. The reason for this analysis is because the day the woman dies is the first day the reverend wears the veil
- The Reverend Minister Hooper also is unable to or chooses not to tell his fiancée and the one he loves as to why he wears the veil. This is assumed that he wishes to keep a promise he has made and thus is not willing to show his face to the lady even in death.
- A reference is made of their relationship when the author says that two funeral attendees see a vision of the Reverend waking hand in hand with the dead girl's spirit.

Analysis 2: The Puritan view

- A second possible analysis which has been discussed by many literature experts is that the black veil could represent the Puritan obsession with sin. Puritans have a belief that only a few who are hand chosen by God will be saved during the judgement day.
- Thus from this point of view, the minister wears a veil as an act of fear.

Analysis 3: The hidden sins of man

- A third possible analysis is that the Reverend Mr. Hooper wears the veil to cover his face as a symbol of the secret sins that one makes, hiding one's true nature from others. It also symbolizes the evil of man and how man lacks awareness of one's own consciousness.
- Man is cruel and chooses to wear external "face" which is a veil to cover man wears to comply with the world's expectations from them. The moment the minister wore the veil, he broke the expectations of the townsfolk and his neighbours and society.
- The irony is that though the reverend never wavered in his convictions and refused to remove it even on his dying bed, the parishioners and the townsfolk only singled him out as a monster but refused to look at their own true sins.
- The veil thus represents both evil and redemption at the same time.

Questions and Answers - The Minister's Black Veil – Set 1

1. Who are the main characters in The Minister's Black Veil?
 - The main character in the story is the Reverend and Minister Mr. Hooper. The remaining characters of the story are only side characters.
2. Who is the protagonist of the story The Minister's Black Veil?
 - The protagonist of the story is the Reverend and Minister Mr. Hooper.
3. Who is the antagonist of the story The Minister's Black Veil?
 - There is no true antagonist in the story.
4. Is The Minister's Black Veil a true story?
 - The Minister's Black Veil is not a true story and is a work of fiction. The settings are written to draw inspiration from the political scenario of France back in the early 19th century.
5. What happens in the end of The Minister's Black Veil?
 - The story ends with Auguste Dupin tricking minister Mr. D— and stealing the letter. He explains in detail as to how he successfully steals the letter without rousing any suspicion.

Questions and Answers - The Minister's Black Veil – Set 2

6. What is the main idea or theme behind The Minister's Black Veil?
 - The main theme that is being discussed in the minister's lack veil is the secret sins that are made by man.

7. What happened in the start of story The Minister's Black Veil?
- In the start of the story, Reverend Mr. Hooper begins to wear a black veil to almost completely obscure his face. This unsettles everyone as they are not sure as to why the reverend whom they all love is wearing this veil.
8. What is the moral of The Minister's Black Veil?
- The moral of "The Minister's Black Veil" is that we are all sinners. Some have sinned openly while others have sinned in secret. For those who secretly sin and display that they did so, it creates a divide from those around them as they are yet to acknowledge their secret sins. In the story, Minister Hooper begins to wear a dark veil that covers his face. The veil represents secret sin and causes people to avoid him.
9. What genre of story is the Minister's Black Veil?
- Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" is a Gothic short story.
10. Explain a short summary of the short story?
- The Reverend Mr. Hooper wears a black veil that obscures and covers most of his face. Only his mouth and chin visible. The veil is a symbol of secret sin. The story is about the people's reaction to the veil.

Questions and Answers - The Minister's Black Veil – Set 3

11. What is the main message of the minister's black veil?
- The main message or the primary theme that is being conveyed is the existence and cover up of the secret sins made by man. This is symbolized by the veil that Mr. Hooper wears and hides behind.
12. What does the author mean by the secret sin made by man in the Minister's Black Veil?
- A secret sin is one which man makes in order to hide his or her truths which he chooses not to reveal. For example, one might secretly be angry at someone but put up a happy face and act pretentious. This type of sin has the ability to eat someone from the inside.
13. Does Mr Hooper remove the veil?
- No. Reverend Mr. Hooper does not take off his veil even when he was on his death bed. The reverend wanted people to know about their own secret sins and this was his way of saying that he has sinned.
14. Who is the narrator in the short story the minister's black veil?
- The narrative is primarily third-person limited.
15. What happens to the reverend's fiancée in The Minister's black veil?

- His fiancée breaks off the engagement and leaves Reverend Mr. Hooper after he starts to wear the veil.

Questions and Answers - The Minister's Black Veil – Set 4

16. What is the irony in the Minister's black veil?

- The irony is that though the reverend never wavered in his convictions and refused to remove it even on his dying bed, the parishioners and the townsfolk only singled him out as a monster but refused to look at their own true sins.

17. What is the main conflict of the Minister's Black Veil?

- The main conflict being discussed in "The Minister's Black Veil" is about the nature of secret sin and the judgment that is being passed on those who have openly sinned.

18. What is the climax or conclusion at the end of the story the black veil?

- Reverend Hooper is on his deathbed surrounded by members of his congregation. As he slips closer to death, Hooper's congregants and another young minister attempt to remove Hooper's veil which he does not allow. He ends up being buried with it. The reverend warns everyone not to pass judgement on him for wearing a veil but to consider their secret sins.

The Minister's Black Veil - Short story – Worksheet PDF

You can download a free PDF copy of The Minister's Black Veil worksheet right below. This has a lot of questions and answers on The Minister's Black Veil.

The Minister's Black Veil - Short story – PDF

[Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) was a famous and well known American author of short stories. He was a prolific short story writer and novelist in the early 18th century in the Americas. [The birthmark](#) which he wrote and published in the year 1836 is considered his best work while [The Minister's Black Veil](#) is among his most famous works. This story is included into the high school curriculum of the USA and is read by hundreds of thousands of children across the world. You can download a free PDF copy of the birthmark story right below.