

**“The Minister’s Black Veil”** by Nathaniel Hawthorne

**Build Vocabulary**

**Spelling Strategy** The prefix *in-* meaning “not” (*iniquity, indecorous*) changes to *im-* before many words beginning with *p*: *impersonal, impertinent* or *m*: *immature, immoderate*.

**Using the Root -equi-**

**A. DIRECTIONS:** The word root *-equi-* means “equal.” Keep that in mind as you answer the following questions on the lines provided.

1. What would you guess about the sides of an *equilateral* triangle?  
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2. Why might the imaginary line around the middle of the earth be called the *equator*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. To what do you think *equity* in the legal system might refer?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What would you guess about the length of day and night on the spring or autumn day called the *equinox*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What circus performer do you think might be called an *equilibrist*? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Using the Word Bank**

venerable	sagacious	waggery	iniquity	vagary
impertinent	indecorous	tremulous	obstinacy	ostentatious

**B. DIRECTIONS:** On the line before each word in the left column, write the letter of its definition in the right column.

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|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| ___ 1. venerable    | a. characterized by trembling  |
| ___ 2. iniquity     | b. not showing proper respect  |
| ___ 3. indecorous   | c. wise                        |
| ___ 4. ostentatious | d. mischievous humor           |
| ___ 5. sagacious    | e. commanding respect          |
| ___ 6. vagary       | f. improper                    |
| ___ 7. tremulous    | g. intended to attract notice  |
| ___ 8. waggery      | h. stubbornness                |
| ___ 9. impertinent  | i. an unpredictable occurrence |
| ___ 10. obstinacy   | j. sin                         |

Unit 3: A Growing Nation  
(1800–1870)

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## Grammar and Style: Varying Sentence Openers

To make writing lively and interesting, it helps to vary sentence openings. Notice how Hawthorne varies his sentence openers in the following passage.

**1** The cause of so much amazement may appear sufficiently slight. **2** Mr. Hooper, a gentlemanly person, 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. **3** There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. **4** 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. **5** On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin.

Sentences 1 and 2 both open in the most common way, with their subjects (preceded in sentence 1 by the article *The*). Sentence 3, on the other hand, uses inverted order, placing the subject (*thing*) after the verb (*was*). Sentence 4 adds more variety by opening with a participial phrase (*Swathed about his forehead*). Sentence 5 opens in yet another way, with a prepositional phrase (*On a nearer view*).

**A. Practice:** On the lines provided, explain how Hawthorne varies his sentence openers in this passage.

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.

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**B. Writing Application:** On the lines provided, rewrite the following paragraph so that the sentence openers are more varied.

The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid. He bent over the coffin to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. His veil hung straight down from his forehead as he stooped. The dead maiden’s eyes were closed forever, otherwise she might have seen his face. Mr. Hooper nevertheless seemed fearful of her glance, for he hastily caught back the black veil.

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**Reading Strategy: Drawing Inferences About Meaning**

When you **draw an inference** in reading a story, you use the surrounding details to make a reasonable guess about what parts of the story mean. To draw thoughtful inferences, look carefully at the writer’s description of events and characters and use of literary devices. For example, note Hawthorne’s detail as he describes Mr. Hooper’s black veil on the Sunday he appears in church.

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. On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape . . . With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward, at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat, and looking on the ground . . .

Based on Hawthorne’s description, you might infer that something bad has happened to someone close to Hooper.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the details from “The Minister’s Black Veil” in the following chart. Write down what you know from the story and from your own life. Write what you think the author means.

<b>Details</b>	<b>What I Know</b>	<b>Inference</b>
1. That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath . . . it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page . . . and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily upon his uplifted countenance.		
2. 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 . . . Hitherto whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers . . .		
3. “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, loathsome-ly 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.”		

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**Literary Analysis: Parable**

A **parable** teaches a moral lesson through a simple story about humans. Often a parable leaves out specific details about characters or about the location of the story. This technique makes the story more applicable to all readers. For example, in “The Minister’s Black Veil,” Hawthorne does not reveal the reason Parson Hooper is wearing the veil because the people’s reaction to the veil is the critical part of the parable.

Hawthorne calls “The Minister’s Black Veil” a parable because he feels strongly about the moral lesson of the story.

**DIRECTIONS:** Look at each of the following excerpts. Then, in the space provided, write how you think the language reinforces the message of the parable for all readers.

<b>Excerpt</b>	<b>How the Language Conveys the Parable</b>
<p>1. 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 weekdays.</p>	
<p>2. 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 . . .</p>	
<p>3. 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.</p>	
<p>4. 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.</p>	