Nathaniel Hawthorne is considered a ROMANTIC writer. We will be reading works by a few other Romantic writers as well this semester (Irving, Poe, Emerson, and Thoreau).

You will need to know the definition of the literary term **ROMANCE** and the characteristics of this type of literature.

**\*Please note that when we are referring to a piece of literature as ROMANTIC, that does not mean that it is a story about love!!!!!**

Definition:

*A* ***ROMANCE*** *is a story that presents remote or imaginative incidents, rather than ordinary, commonplace experiences. The events that occur in these stories tend to be unrealistic. The characters are often very exaggerated and “over the top”.*

In a **ROMANCE**, the author will often include long, detailed descriptions of nature and of the connection between humans and nature. The author also focuses on the emotions of his/her characters.

Another term that relates to ROMANTIC literature is **SUBLIME**. This is *the quality in a literary work that elevates the reader to a higher place; it is something that is intensely beautiful, awe-inspiring, and even terrible, all at the same time*. Many things that occur in nature can be thought of as sublime- a high mountain peak, a tornado, the ocean- all are pretty amazing and awe-inspiring, yet can be quite frightening.

***The Scarlet Letter* is a ROMANCE. As you are reading the novel, look for the following characteristics of this type of literature:**

-Lots of descriptions of nature. Elements of nature are often used as symbols. For example, when Hawthorne mentions the sun, that is a symbol for something else. Same for the forest and animals.

-The characters are certainly exaggerated and may not seem like people you would meet in real life. One character is not just mean, he’s downright evil. Another character is not just experiencing guilt, this guilt is consuming him. A third character is not just a little mischevious, she is often referred to as an “imp”.

-Hawthorne focuses a lot on the emotions that his characters are experiencing. He takes us inside the heads of these characters to see what they are thinking and feeling.

-The plot of the story is not as well developed as the characters. Some of the events that occur will seem highly implausible. Hawthorne was not as concerned with making the story seem believable, his intent was to explore “the truth of the human heart” and to reveal universal truths about human nature.

-Hawthorne was a “Dark Romantic”. He tends to show the dark side of humanity. There is a lot of sadness and suffering that his characters experience in this story.