

Abstract

In its first part, this thesis attempts to explore Nathaniel Hawthorne's influences and sources of writing with an emphasis on his interest in the Puritan past and the historical basis of many of his stories. This part also provides basic information about the origin and characteristic features of Puritanism, focusing on those historical events which influenced Hawthorne's short stories. In its second part this thesis will attempt to analyse selected short stories with the focus on Hawthorne's presentation of Puritanism. Partly, it also focuses on Hawthorne's perception of sin in his stories. As a conclusion, the thesis tries to show the connection between Puritanism and sin and uses this connection to demonstrate why Hawthorne's judgement of the Puritans was not impartial, and it attempts to define what he saw as the biggest mistake of his (and generally Puritan) ancestors.