

# **The Blithedale Romance Study Guide**

## **The Blithedale Romance by Thomas More**

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# Plot Summary

"The Blithedale Romance" by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a novel of intrigue and mystery, set in post-colonial Massachusetts. The story tells of Mr. Miles Coverdale's involvement with the community at Blithedale, especially with the mystery surrounding two of the women there, Zenobia and Priscilla. "The Blithedale Romance" is a very interesting novel that reveals the secrets that exist, even within a very small society.

The night before Coverdale goes to Blithedale, Mr. Moodie stops him in the street for a favor, but he changes his mind and refuses to reveal his purpose. In Blithedale, Coverdale meets Zenobia, and Hollingsworth arrives later that night with Priscilla who clings to Zenobia. When Coverdale gets sick, Hollingsworth cares for him, trying to convert him to his philanthropic purposes, and the two men become friends. The mystery surrounding the individual pasts of Zenobia and Priscilla perplex Coverdale. The community at Blithedale learns how to farm and becomes quite adept at the art of husbandry. Hollingsworth and Zenobia begin to court, often frequenting a sloping hill on the farm where they plan to build their residence, according to neighborhood gossip. Mr. Moodie visits to check on Priscilla and seems very interested and intent on learning the details of the friendship between Priscilla and Zenobia. Westervelt arrives at Blithedale and introduces himself to Zenobia, sharing secrets about Priscilla that leave Zenobia very discomposed. One afternoon, Zenobia tells "The Silvery Veil", a legend about the Veiled Lady, frightening Priscilla by throwing a piece of gossamer over Priscilla's head at the end of the tale. As the relationship between Hollingsworth and Zenobia progresses, Priscilla seems saddened by it, and Coverdale begins to suspect that Priscilla loves Hollingsworth. When Coverdale refuses to join Hollingsworth's philanthropic schemes, Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla begin to treat him differently.

Coverdale leaves Blithedale and boards at a respectable hotel in town where he watches the inhabitants in the boarding-house across the streets. One day, Coverdale sees Zenobia in the boarding-house with Westervelt; he later visits her and Priscilla, but Zenobia is rude to him, and she and Priscilla leave with Westervelt. Curious about Priscilla, Coverdale seeks out Moodie and learns about Moodie's past as Fauntleroy, including that both Zenobia and Priscilla are his daughters. Several weeks later, Coverdale goes to an interview with the Veiled Lady where he encounters Hollingsworth. The Veiled Lady throws back her veil, revealing herself to be Priscilla, and leaves with Hollingsworth as though he is a refuge of safety. Coverdale returns to Blithedale and encounters Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla at Eliot's Pulpit in the midst of an intense conversation. Hollingsworth admits to Zenobia that he loves Priscilla, and then, he and Priscilla leave together. After sobbing inconsolably, Zenobia sends messages to Hollingsworth and Priscilla through Coverdale before bidding him goodbye. Coverdale sleeps, dreams, and wakes with the suspicion that Zenobia committed suicide. He wakes Hollingsworth and Silas Foster, and the three men search the river for Zenobia's body. They find and bury Zenobia's corpse. Years later, Coverdale cannot forgive Hollingsworth for his part in Zenobia's death, so he visits his old friend to find that Hollingsworth is very unhappy and condemns himself as Zenobia's murderer. Embarrassed, Coverdale confesses that he loves Priscilla.



# Section 1- Chapter 1: Old Moodie and Chapter 2: Blithedale

## Section 1- Chapter 1: Old Moodie and Chapter 2: Blithedale Summary

"The Blithedale Romance" by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a novel of intrigue and mystery, set in post-colonial Massachusetts. The story tells of Mr. Miles Coverdale's involvement with the community at Blithedale, especially with the mystery surrounding two of the women there, Zenobia and Priscilla. "The Blithedale Romance" is a very interesting novel that reveals the secrets that exist, even within a very small society.

In "Old Moodie", the first chapter, Mr. Coverdale returns to his apartment on the evening before his departure for Blithedale after attending an exhibition of the Veiled Lady, a phenomenon in the Mesmeric line. On the way, he is accosted by Mr. Moodie who asks for a great favor, but when Mr. Coverdale responds with very little benevolence, Mr. Moodie instead suggests that he had better apply to an older gentleman or lady going to Blithedale if only Mr. Coverdale can make one such known to him. After suggesting Mr. Hollingsworth, Mr. Coverdale further questions Mr. Moodie about his business, intrigued by the hint that a lady's influence may be desirable. When Mr. Moodie asks about the lady called Zenobia, Mr. Coverdale states that he plans to meet her the next day, but still, Mr. Moodie refuses to state his business, though he claims that he may come to Mr. Coverdale's lodgings before his departure the next morning; however, Mr. Moodie never goes, and only through subsequent events does Mr. Coverdale ever reach a plausible conjecture as to what his business may have been.

In the second chapter, "Blithedale", Mr. Coverdale praises the cheery blaze upon the hearth the next day in the parlor of an old farmhouse in Blithedale on that April afternoon, claiming that it is a paradise, despite the cold storm brewing outside. Four men ride together through the storm; Hollingsworth is delayed and plans to set forth alone at a later hour. They ride to Blithedale cheerfully and sit at the brisk fire at the old farmhouse. Mrs. Foster, the wife of Silas Foster who manages the farm on a stipend and is to teach the upperclassmen the art of husbandry, bids them a hearty welcome as her two handmaidens smile hospitably from behind her. These greets are hardly concluded when Zenobia enters the parlor. Though Zenobia is not her real name, she assumes it as a magazine signature and encourages its constant use. Zenobia has as much pride as any queen would know what to do with, despite how humble her new philosophy makes her appear, according to Mr. Coverdale.



## Section 1- Chapter 1: Old Moodie and Chapter 2: Blithedale Analysis

The first chapter of "The Blithedale Romance", entitled "Old Moodie", introduces the main character and protagonist of the novel, Mr. Miles Coverdale. The mention and description of the Veiled Lady acts as the first contribution of the mystical elements that compose the theme of magic within the text. This chapter also foreshadows Coverdale's journey to Blithedale as he mentions that the events of this chapter occur the day before he leaves town to go to Blithedale. The fact that Moodie approaches Coverdale after Coverdale attends an interview with the Veiled Lady foreshadows and hints at Moodie's connection to the Veiled Lady, especially as Moodie knows that Coverdale is going to Blithedale the next day though they are barely acquaintances. Coverdale directs Moodie to Hollingsworth, the first mention of this important character, when Moodie suggests that the favor he needs to request would be better handled by ladies or an older man than Coverdale. Moodie's hint about the desirability of a lady's influence foreshadows Priscilla's arrival at Blithedale while simultaneously intriguing Coverdale with Moodie's mysterious attitude. Moodie questioning Coverdale about Zenobia foreshadows his relationship with Zenobia. "Blithedale" shows Coverdale praising the beauty and warmth surrounding the farmhouse at Blithedale. This chapter also elaborates on the reason for Coverdale going to Blithedale which is to join a group of intellectual upper class people who want to learn the art of husbandry and develop their own Arcadian society. Coverdale's arrival in Blithedale fulfills the foreshadowing from the first chapter concerning his journey. Additionally, Zenobia and Silas Foster are introduced in this chapter, and Coverdale mentions Zenobia's immense pride and also hints at her odd behavior and the mystery surrounding her past.



## **Section 2- Chapter 3: A Knot of Dreamers and Chapter 4: The Supper-Table**

### **Section 2- Chapter 3: A Knot of Dreamers and Chapter 4: The Supper-Table Summary**

In "A Knot of Dreamers", the next chapter, Zenobia welcomes everyone and praises Mr. Coverdale's poetry; since she is the first comer, she will act as hostess tonight, but tomorrow, they will all begin as brethren and sisters. Mr. Coverdale notes that Zenobia's aspect is simple but proud and she wears a beautiful, exotic flower in her hair, causing him to compare her to Eve in the Garden of Eden. As the women, including Zenobia, begin to prepare dinner, Silas Foster enters and greets the men uncouthly, commenting on the dismal weather, but the men refuse to be depressed by the weather, planning to perform their due share of labor and gain profit by mutual aid.

Mr. Coverdale's consideration of standing now in a position of new hostility is driven back as Zenobia announces that dinner is ready. Her flower is wilted, likely due to contact with the kitchen fire, and her act of flinging it to the ground causes Mr. Coverdale to see their heroic enterprise as an illusion. Zenobia is vexed by Hollingsworth's delay, commenting that she never could tolerate a philanthropist and would like him better if the philanthropy were left out as it would be better for him to try to benefit people who are not already past his help. When Mr. Coverdale jokes that they must each commit at least one crime to keep Hollingsworth with them, Zenobia looks at him oddly, but he does not have time to interpret the look because they have entered the kitchen where the supper table is spread.

In the fourth chapter, "The Supper-Table", Mr. Coverdale continues to expound upon the pleasant firelight and the cozy atmosphere which makes the men look youthful and the women appears beautiful. Everyone, including the Fosters and their two handmaidens, sit to dinner; dining with laborers is easier to take for those of superior cultivation and refinement because they do so by choice, but the silence becomes oppressive. A knock sounds at the door, and Zenobia points out that it must be Hollingsworth, so Coverdale opens the door. After complaining about the sluggish hospitality, Hollingsworth reveals a small girl in need of a warm, comfortable bed for the night. When Coverdale asks who she is, Hollingsworth states that he does not know but she belongs here and is expected; Zenobia and the other women can explain.

As Coverdale notes that no one welcomes the simply dressed girl, the girl, after staring at Zenobia for a while, drops to her knees, clasps Zenobia's hand and gazes piteously at Zenobia, but her head falls to her bosom when she meets with no kind reception. After Hollingsworth chides Zenobia for her lack of hospitality, Zenobia asks what she can do for the girl, Priscilla, and Priscilla asks only that Zenobia allow her to always be



near her. Zenobia accepts the request for the present, and Priscilla begins to cry now that she finds herself accepted. Hollingsworth instructs the others to pry no more into Priscilla's secrets but to shelter her as though Providence sent her to them. To Coverdale's questions, Hollingsworth explains that an old man brought her to his lodgings with the request to convey Priscilla to Blithedale. As Silas resumes eating, he tells the others to feed Priscilla so they continue supper with Priscilla joining them.

## **Section 2- Chapter 3: A Knot of Dreamers and Chapter 4: The Supper-Table Analysis**

In "A Knot of Dreamers", Coverdale's occupation as a poet is revealed while Zenobia admits to possessing feminist beliefs by suggesting that some of the women at Blithedale may be better suited to work in the field than the house. Coverdale praises Zenobia's beauty and eccentricity, comparing her to Eve in the Garden of Eden, a clear allusion to the Christian Bible or Jewish Torah. Coverdale also compares and contrasts himself with Silas Foster, the lower class farmer hired to teach the art of husbandry to the community at Blithedale. As Coverdale settles in at Blithedale and gets acquainted with its occupants, he enumerates on their plans to set up an Arcadian lifestyle. Zenobia's interest in Hollingsworth is foreshadowed when she looks at Coverdale oddly during their conversation about Hollingsworth and his philanthropy. In "The Supper-Table", Coverdale compares Zenobia to Pandora, alluding to Vulcan and, therefore, Greek mythology. He also justifies his acceptance of sitting down to dinner with people of a lower class by stating that it does not bother him because he chooses to do so, rather than being forced to do so by necessity.

Hollingsworth finally arrives in this chapter, and his character is officially introduced. He also introduces Priscilla, fulfilling the foreshadowing of her existence and arrival that resulted from Moodie's conversation with Coverdale in the first chapter. The fact that Priscilla immediately attaches herself to Zenobia foreshadows their relationship, though Zenobia treats Priscilla contemptuously at first. Hollingsworth chides Zenobia for the way that she treats Priscilla, and Zenobia is immediately humbled; this foreshadows Zenobia's feelings for Hollingsworth and Hollingsworth's eventual feelings for Priscilla. Hollingsworth relates to Coverdale the story of how he came to escort Priscilla to Blithedale, insinuating a relationship between the girl and Moodie. Coverdale's questions concerning Priscilla indicate his suspicion that she is related to Moodie and her appearance pertains to his conversation with Moodie in the first chapter.



## **Section 3- Chapter 5: Until Bedtime and Chapter 6: Coverdale's Sick Chamber**

### **Section 3- Chapter 5: Until Bedtime and Chapter 6: Coverdale's Sick Chamber Summary**

In "Until Bedtime", after dinner, Silas cobbles an old pair of boots by the kitchen fire while the rest of the party adjourns to the sitting room. Priscilla places herself timidly and trustingly into Zenobia's protections, occasionally looking up to admire Zenobia's beauty. Coverdale suspects that Priscilla idolizes Zenobia, as younger women often idolize older, brilliant women, and has come to be Zenobia's slave. When he suggests this to Zenobia, Zenobia claims that Priscilla is likely a seamstress who will do her miscellaneous sewing as she can tell "by tokens that escape the obtuseness of masculine perceptions" (page 19). Coverdale suspects that Priscilla overheard Zenobia's disdainful comments when he notices her gazing at them sorrowfully; Zenobia claims that she is not positively ill-natured and intends to be kind toward Priscilla henceforth, especially as Coverdale and Hollingsworth seem so interested in the girl.

The evening is spent rather incommunicatively and ends when Silas suggests everyone retire shortly since he will sound the horn at daybreak. As Coverdale retires, he shivers with the conviction that he has caught a tremendous cold. During the feverish night, he believes that if he had recorded his dreams, they would have anticipated several of the chief incidents of this narrative, including the catastrophe. Coverdale wakes to see the storm past and snow on the ground.

In the sixth chapter, "Coverdale's Sick-Chamber", everyone starts from their slumber and dresses in haste when Silas sounds the horn at daybreak. Only Hollingsworth begins his day with prayer which Coverdale can hear since their rooms are thinly partitioned and which affects him with a deep reverence for Hollingsworth; however, Coverdale curses the day bitterly as he lies in bed, lamenting the lack of comfort at Blithedale. When Hollingsworth knocks on Coverdale's door and asks if he means to get out of bed, Coverdale explains that he is ill and asks to be sent back to town, but Hollingsworth insists that their small society will nurse Coverdale. Hollingsworth attends Coverdale in his illness, and Coverdale, comforted by the brotherly attendance, suggests that Hollingsworth should be a priest because his tenderness "seems to me the reflection of God's own love" (page 25). Hollingsworth objects that the most marked trait in his character is an inflexible severity of purpose; though Coverdale does not believe it at the time, he later recalls Hollingsworth's words. During his illness, Coverdale admires Zenobia's magnificence and, noticing that she always has a fresh flower in her hair, suggests to Hollingsworth that Zenobia is an enchantress and sister of the Veiled Lady; he believes that the flower is a talisman without which Zenobia would be transformed into something else.





When Hollingsworth tells Zenobia of Coverdale's fantastical notion, Zenobia states the idea is worthy of a feverish poet and gives the flower to Hollingsworth though she cannot promise that she will not have another tomorrow since it is a relic of her happier days. Coverdale often perplexes himself by wondering about Zenobia's past, and one day, Zenobia asks what he seeks to discover, causing him to confess that he is searching for the mystery of her life though he knows that she will never tell him. As she bends her head toward him in challenge, Coverdale only sees "a sprite laughing at me from the bottom of a deep well" (page 28). He suspects that Zenobia has given herself away which makes him nervous and nearly causes him to wish that she would leave him alone completely.

## **Section 3- Chapter 5: Until Bedtime and Chapter 6: Coverdale's Sick Chamber Analysis**

In "Until Bedtime", although Priscilla seems to idolize Zenobia, Zenobia is somewhat rude and dismissive of Priscilla. Zenobia justifies her behavior by claiming that women are more perceptible than man, admitting that women are also more judgmental than men. Zenobia rejects Coverdale's about Priscilla's spiritual nature by pointing out unromantic factors that must be the cause of Priscilla's pallid complexion. Priscilla is very responsive to Zenobia's smallest gestures of kindness, demonstrating her idolatry of the slightly older lady. During dinner, Hollingsworth is very uncommunicative which greatly offends Coverdale. The group debates renaming Blithedale as either The Oasis or Sahara, but they decide to wait a year before choosing a name, foreshadowing the failure of their attempt to exist as an Arcadian community. Coverdale's foreboding that he has caught a cold foreshadows his illness. In "Coverdale's Sick Chamber", Coverdale's illness fulfills the foreshadowing from the preceding chapter. Coverdale reveres and admires Hollingsworth when he hears him praying in the morning.

When Hollingsworth cares for Coverdale during his illness with a brotherly devotion and affection, Coverdale sees it as a reflection of God's own love. This is ironic and seemingly contradictory as, in the previous chapter, Coverdale states that young women tend to idolize older women but men do not do this. It is also ironic that Coverdale, in the delirium caused by his illness, suggests that Zenobia is a sister to the Veiled Lady and that the exotic flower she always wears in her hair is a magical talisman; this is ironic since it is partially true, and it foreshadows Zenobia's relationship to the Veiled Lady, as well as the revelation of the Veiled Lady's alternate identity. Hollingsworth and Zenobia are dismissive of Coverdale's feverish ramblings. Zenobia makes Coverdale nervous because he suspects that she has compromised her virtue due to her lack of constraint in conversation. This shows the thoughts about women during this time period, as un-feminine behavior raised negative speculations about ladies.



## Section 4- Chapter 7: The Convalescent and Chapter 8: A Modern Arcadia

### Section 4- Chapter 7: The Convalescent and Chapter 8: A Modern Arcadia Summary

In "The Convalescent", the seventh chapter, Coverdale questions Hollingsworth about Priscilla as soon as he feels a bit better, learning that she has recently escaped peril or may still be liable to danger. They shelter Priscilla in order to deserve the reputation of a benevolent community, but a mist of uncertainty surrounds the girl who continues her mysterious attract for Zenobia. One forenoon, Priscilla visits Coverdale in his room, bringing him a nightcap and a sealed letter from Miss Margaret Fuller. Priscilla is discomposed when Coverdale suggests that she looks like Miss Fuller and leaves the room, irritated. Coverdale often reads alone during his recovery, later discussing the works with Hollingsworth who is disgusted with Fourier. Despite the fact that Hollingsworth joins the Blithedale society because he is at odds with the worlds, Coverdale believes him to be benevolent due to his care for Coverdale when sick and his tender treatment of Priscilla.

When Coverdale tells Hollingsworth once that he does not know if he will ever be a philanthropist and asks if Hollingsworth can bear with him if such proves to be the case, Hollingsworth does not know if they can be lifelong friends if Coverdale does not strive with him toward the great object of his life, causing Coverdale to suspect that Hollingsworth watches by his bedside with the ulterior motive of converting him to his views.

In Chapter Eight, "A Modern Arcadia", the Blithedale community declares May Day a movable holiday which is postponed for better weather. On the substituted day, Coverdale proceeds to the barn where he finds Zenobia and Priscilla laughing and celebrating the holiday together; Priscilla looks charming, and Coverdale agrees that Priscilla's beauty deserves some verses now though from a far better poet than himself. Coverdale and Zenobia argue about women being happy in life as Zenobia claims that no grown woman is truly happy due to the lack of variety in her life. While they talk, Priscilla walks toward Hollingsworth but suddenly stops and looks around as though someone is calling her name. Priscilla's animation deserts her as she sits on a rock, waiting for Hollingsworth to join her. As Coverdale's health returns and he begins to feel lively, he is pleasantly surprised to see the effects of their society's labor. Though the neighbors slander their farming abilities, the rumors are only a result of their envy and malice. The peril of their new life is not failing to become agriculturists but ceasing to remain anything else as the yeoman and scholar cannot be combined into one substance.

Zenobia teases Coverdale about this one day, and Hollingsworth notes that Coverdale has given up making verses now. When Zenobia notes that Hollingsworth has not



ceased to live a life of thought and feeling, he claims that it is because he has always been in earnest while Coverdale is not in earnest either as a poet or a laborer. Zenobia doubts that Coverdale can be around Hollingsworth's strong and noble nature without being strengthened and ennobled by his influence. Coverdale is convinced that Hollingsworth will gain Zenobia and Priscilla as proselytes and spends a great deal of time uselessly trying to conjecture what he means to do with them and they with him.

## **Section 4- Chapter 7: The Convalescent and Chapter 8: A Modern Arcadia Analysis**

"The Convalescent" contains many allusions, including references to Milton and Burns. One passage in this chapter also personifies nature. Coverdale questions Hollingsworth about Priscilla, receiving in response hints that Priscilla has recently escaped from peril or may still be liable to danger. This foreshadows the discoveries concerning Priscilla's past that are explained much later in the novel. Coverdale's admiration of Priscilla's needlework is repetitious and foreshadows the discovery of her past work as a seamstress. Priscilla's mysterious attraction to Zenobia repetitiously foreshadows their familial relationship. In this chapter, Coverdale notes that Priscilla's physical appearance has improved and that she is healthier and happier. Priscilla shows her thoughtfulness by making a nightcap for Coverdale in his invalid state. Priscilla reminds Coverdale of Miss Margaret Fuller, but this allusion is never explained. Hollingsworth shows a lack of tolerance for others' ideas by his disgust when Coverdale discusses the work of Fourier. Despite Hollingsworth's objections, Coverdale maintains faith in Hollingsworth's benevolence. When Coverdale says that he does not know if he is made of stern enough stuff to be a philanthropist, Hollingsworth claims that a lifelong friendship between the two of them will be impossible if Coverdale does not share his goals, foreshadowing the dissolution of their friendship when Coverdale rejects Hollingsworth's schemes. In "A Modern Arcadia", the Arcadian lifestyle and the celebration of May-day are alluded to. Coverdale finds peace in this Arcadian lifestyle. Zenobia again expresses her feminist ideologies while Priscilla's strange behavior, acting as though a distant voice calls her name, foreshadows the discovery of her alternate identity as the Veiled Lady. The Blithedale community does well in their goals to learn the agriculture lifestyle, and Coverdale justifies this claim by citing the neighbors' jealousy. Zenobia compares Hollingsworth and Coverdale, claiming that Hollingsworth's strong, noble nature must influence Coverdale's nature. Hollingsworth insists that Coverdale is not in earnest as either a poet or a laborer, showing disdain for Coverdale's consistency. Coverdale realizes that Hollingsworth has managed to convert Zenobia and Priscilla to his cause and wonders what Hollingsworth will do with his followers. This foreshadows Zenobia and Priscilla both falling in love with Hollingsworth.



## **Section 5- Chapter 9: Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla and Chapter 10: A Visitor From Town**

### **Section 5- Chapter 9: Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla and Chapter 10: A Visitor From Town Summary**

In Chapter Nine, "Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla", Coverdale realizes that it is not mentally healthy to study individuals too closely. He does Hollingsworth a great wrong by prying into his character, but he cannot help it because he loves Hollingsworth so much. In regards to Hollingsworth, Coverdale feels that it is his duty to protect Priscilla, who has grown into a pretty girl, from the worship that her sex tends to lavish on saints and heroes. One day, Coverdale tells Priscilla she should not always be so very happy, but when he says that she is fortunate that she has nothing dismal to remember, she seems to be listening to a distant voice again. When he imparts the wisdom that those one most loves may not love one in return, Priscilla runs, falling through the grass, and Hollingsworth chides her as she perches contentedly at his feet. From the doorway, Zenobia watches Priscilla singularly and tells her that she needs a duenna, a role which Zenobia intends to fulfill.

Coverdale suspects that Zenobia's countenance appears as though she is deviously plotting, and he worries about Hollingsworth's reckless tenderness toward Priscilla. Meanwhile, the neighbors gossip that Zenobia and Hollingsworth are lovers who plan to erect their dwelling on a sloping hill where they frequently walk; when Coverdale teases Hollingsworth about this rumor, Hollingsworth's response is ambiguous and unsatisfactory.

In "A Visitor From Town", Hollingsworth and Coverdale hoe potatoes while the rest of the fraternity is situated in a distant corner of the farm. As they eat lunch, a stranger approaches along the edge of the field, and Coverdale recognizes Mr. Moodie. Hollingsworth asks if Coverdale knows about the forlorn man's history, but Coverdale does not though he suspects that there is something curious in it. Coverdale asks about the silk purses that Moodie sells and learns that Priscilla makes them. Moodie is very happy to learn that Priscilla is content in Blithedale, but he does not want her to see him for fear that it will remind her of very sad times that they have spent together in the past.

Hollingsworth insists that Priscilla would be glad to see Moodie, and when Moodie asks if Priscilla is always together like a gentlewoman and her maidservant, Hollingsworth claims that they act more like sisters, leading Moodie away to see Priscilla. On Coverdale's way home for dinner, he sees Priscilla and Zenobia acting playfully as Moodie watches, and he suspects that Priscilla purposefully arranged for Moodie to see this sight; however, Zenobia pulls away and looks at Priscilla haughtily, causing Moodie



to walk away from the farmhouse, shaking his head. At the last point where the farmhouse is visible, Moodie turns and shakes his uplifted staff.

## **Section 5- Chapter 9: Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla and Chapter 10: A Visitor From Town Analysis**

In "Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla", Coverdale claims that it is unhealthy to study individuals too closely and that he did Hollingsworth a great wrong by doing so, but he justifies his intense observation by stating that his study results from his great love for Hollingsworth. He states that Hollingsworth is not altogether human, seeming to deify him at first but then comparing him to a dragon that is dangerous to maidens. Ironically, Coverdale feels that it is his duty to protect Priscilla from worshipping Hollingsworth as a saint or hero, foreshadowing Priscilla's love for Hollingsworth and Coverdale's love for Priscilla. Priscilla rejects Coverdale's wise suggestion that those most loved may not return that love. When she perches at Hollingsworth's feet, Zenobia summons Priscilla, claiming that the girl needs a duenna and offering to fill the position. Priscilla's fear of Zenobia's anger and Coverdale's observation that Zenobia seems to be deviously plotting foreshadows Priscilla's fate at Zenobia's hands and indicates that Zenobia is jealous of the relationship between Hollingsworth and Priscilla.

Coverdale ironically worries about Hollingsworth hurting Priscilla, foreshadowing the revelation that Coverdale loves Priscilla. The community gossip proclaims a romance between Hollingsworth and Zenobia, and the hill where they supposedly plan to erect their dwelling becomes a symbol of their relationship. In "A Visitor from Town", an elderly stranger visits Blithedale, and Coverdale recognizes Moodie. Moodie's forlorn attitude foreshadows the discovery of his sordid past while his joy upon learning of Priscilla's happiness at Blithedale indicates his love for his daughter. The sisterly relationship between Zenobia and Priscilla is foreshadowed by Moodie's singular questioning about the two ladies' interactions, and this is further demonstrated by his anger upon witnessing Zenobia's haughtiness toward Priscilla.



## **Section 6- Chapter 11: The Wood-Path and Chapter 12: Coverdale's Hermitage**

### **Section 6- Chapter 11: The Wood-Path and Chapter 12: Coverdale's Hermitage Summary**

In "The Wood-Path", the eleventh chapter, Coverdale takes a holiday shortly after Moodie's visit with the intent of spending the day secluded in the woods. His reflections are interrupted by an impertinent voice hailing him to ask a question. Irritated with the stranger's tone, Coverdale directs him to the path leading to the farmhouse when the man asks for Zenobia, but the man asks Coverdale to arrange a private interview so Coverdale directs him to Zenobia's favorite resort at this time of day where she will likely be alone. After amusing himself with an odd character sketch of Hollingsworth, the stranger, who identifies himself as Professor Westervelt, asks about Priscilla, causing Coverdale to decline any further connection with his affairs as Priscilla has closer friends through whom Westervelt may gain access to the young lady. After Westervelt walks away, Coverdale regrets peremptorily ending the conversation from curiosity about what the man might know about Priscilla. Coverdale stays in the vicinity of Zenobia's customary walk so that he can assist her quickly if necessity dictates it to be so.

In "Coverdale's Hermitage", Coverdale often spends time alone in a leafy cave in the woods adjacent to the farm, making verses and meditating essays. On this day, he watches Hollingsworth beckoning the others and thinks that Hollingsworth sees all of mankind as another yoke of oxen. As he watches Priscilla making purses through a window of the farmhouse, he realizes that Zenobia will not be her friend for long, Hollingsworth's heart is on fire only with his own purpose, and if any mortal cares for Priscilla, it is himself. While thus musing, Coverdale hears Westervelt's laugh in the woods. Voices approach, and Westervelt appears with Zenobia.

Coverdale imagines that Zenobia had fallen into misfortune at an earlier period in life which is the cause for her eccentricity and defiance. Thinking to hear all of her secrets, Coverdale listens to Zenobia's conversation with Westervelt. When Westervelt asks why she does not fling the girl off, Zenobia claims that she will not fail Priscilla because the girl has clung to her from the first. Coverdale cannot hear Westervelt's whispered reply, but it causes Zenobia to shriek about the kind of being to which she is linked. Coverdale cannot hear the rest of their mysterious words, but he decides to never disclose to another mortal what he had overheard.



## Section 6- Chapter 11: The Wood-Path and Chapter 12: Coverdale's Hermitage Analysis

In "The Wood-Path", shortly after Moodie's visit, Coverdale feels the need for a holiday which he plans to spend in reflection, likely about his friends at Blithedale. During his meditative walk, he is accosted by an insolent stranger who asks for his assistance in obtaining a private interview with Zenobia. This stranger is introduced as Westervelt and plays a significant, though minor, role in the remainder of the novel. Though Coverdale directs Westervelt toward Zenobia's favorite walk where she will likely be alone, he refuses to answer any of Westervelt's questions about Priscilla; this distinction foreshadows Coverdale loving Priscilla. After directing Westervelt to Zenobia, Coverdale becomes somewhat concerned for Zenobia's safety and stays in the vicinity of her usual walk. His curiosity about what Westervelt may know about Priscilla indicates that Coverdale loves Priscilla.

In "Coverdale's Hermitage", it is very stereotypical for Coverdale, as a poet, to isolate himself in a leafy hermitage in order to write verses and meditate on essays. When he sees Westervelt talking to Zenobia about Priscilla, Coverdale eavesdrops, hoping to hear Priscilla or Zenobia's secrets. At first, Zenobia resists Westervelt's insinuations, claiming that she will not fail Priscilla, but she reacts strongly and violently to Westervelt's whispered words that Coverdale is unable to overhear. She exclaims against the kind of being to which she is linked, obviously insinuating that Westervelt has revealed something very negative about Priscilla. Coverdale's decision to never disclose what he hears to any mortal suggests his concern for Priscilla's reputation while again foreshadowing the fact that he loves her.





## Section 7- Chapter 13: Zenobia's Legend and Chapter 14: Eliot's Pulpit

### Section 7- Chapter 13: Zenobia's Legend and Chapter 14: Eliot's Pulpit Summary

In "Zenobia's Legend", Zenobia offers to invent a wild legend one day, and everyone eagerly proclaims their approbation. Zenobia asks Priscilla to stand in front of her so that she can be inspired by her eyes which are very deep and dreamy tonight. Zenobia tells a story about the Veiled Lady, entitled "The Silver Veil". In the story, a young man named Theodore sneaks into the private chambers of the Veiled Lady with the intention of unveiling her to discover her true identity. The Veiled Lady tells him that he can go away and never think of her again or kiss her before lifting the veil, thus pledging himself to her from which instant she is doomed to be his evil fate. Theodore hesitatingly decides to lift the veil before bestowing the obligatory kiss, but the Veiled Lady disappears, leaving him with only the veil in her hand. At the same moment that the Veiled Lady disappears, a lovely maiden arises in the midst of a group of visionary people who never question from whence she came. The maiden attaches herself to one lady in particular, but this lady encounters a magician one morning while wandering in the woods; he warns her of peril from this maiden who is her deadliest enemy and tells her that the only way to thwart the maiden's plans is to throw the veil, which is a binding spell, over the maiden's head and summon the magician who will rise from the earth to seize the maiden, leaving the lady safe for evermore. The lady returns to the maiden and follows the instructions of the magician who appears and captures the maiden. As Zenobia concludes her tale, she flings a piece of gauze over Priscilla, nearly causing the girl to faint. The rest of the group thinks Zenobia very bright to bring her legend to such an effective conclusion.

In "Eliot's Pulpit", Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla and Coverdale often spend their Sundays at a rock named Eliot's Pulpit which Hollingsworth often ascends to talk to them. On the first Sunday after Zenobia's tale, she rages against the injustice the world does to women, and Coverdale concurs with her estimation. Baffled, Priscilla questions Hollingsworth about the truth of this conversation, but he claims that a woman's place is at a man's side. To Coverdale's surprise, Zenobia submissively yields to Hollingsworth's opinion, causing Coverdale to smile bitterly as he realizes that these two women care so little for him who freely concedes to their views while Hollingsworth seems to bring both to their feet by some injustice. As the group leaves Eliot's Pulpit, Zenobia takes both of Hollingsworth's hands to her bosom; this gesture convinces Coverdale that Zenobia loves Hollingsworth. Though she could not have seen the gesture, Priscilla droops perceptibly and grows irritated when Coverdale attempts to talk to her, finally dismissing him with a slight gesture. As Coverdale walks home, he wonders how Hollingsworth intends to dispose of these two hearts that he has engrossed in his own huge egotism, but the speculation is fruitless. As he nears the





farmhouse, he looks back to see Hollingsworth and Zenobia standing on their hill while Priscilla, alone and forgotten, lingers in the shadow of the wood.

## **Section 7- Chapter 13: Zenobia's Legend and Chapter 14: Eliot's Pulpit Analysis**

In "Zenobia's Legend", Coverdale recounts an afternoon of repast when Zenobia invents a story, "The Silvery Veil", about the Veiled Lady. Zenobia's use of Priscilla as her inspiration, the act of flinging a piece of gossamer over Priscilla's head at the conclusion of the story, and the inclusion of a young girl appearing among a group of visionaries, obviously meant to insinuate the community at Blithedale, within the story foreshadows the discovery that Priscilla is the Veiled Lady. Priscilla's discomposed reaction also foreshadows this revelation. In "Eliot's Pulpit", the fact that the Blithedale community rests on Sundays without rigidly observing the Christian Sabbath indicates a lack of religion at Blithedale which is ironic as it concerns Hollingsworth, given Coverdale's initial opinion of the man's dedication to God. This chapter is set at Eliot's Pulpit, a large rock located in the woods near Blithedale. Coverdale describes the harmony and unity between his three friends and himself as he indicates their weekly ritual of conversing at this location.

When Zenobia rages against the inequalities between men and women, again demonstrating her feminist notions, Hollingsworth objects that a woman's place is at a man's side. Priscilla contentedly accepts Hollingsworth's opinion, and more surprisingly, Zenobia also yields to his claim, demonstrating that both women are in love with Hollingsworth. Coverdale resents Zenobia and Priscilla's submission to Hollingsworth which emphasizes their apparent indifference toward him even though he agrees with any of their ideas. While Priscilla praises Zenobia's beauty, she seems grieved by the obvious affection between Zenobia and Hollingsworth, and she grows irritable when Coverdale hints at this connection. Coverdale's continued concern for Priscilla and his growing irritation at her affection for Hollingsworth indicates and foreshadows Coverdale's love for Priscilla.



## Section 8- Chapter 15: A Crisis and Chapter 16: Leave-Takings

### Section 8- Chapter 15: A Crisis and Chapter 16: Leave-Takings Summary

In the fifteenth chapter, "A Crisis", as the summer passes, Coverdale and Hollingsworth discuss the community's plans to erect a Phalanstery, but it is evident that Hollingsworth speaks with little fervor. Shortly after the scene at Eliot's Pulpit, Coverdale mentions how their toils will seem romantic to young people in the future and also suggests choosing a spot for a cemetery before they have need of it. Hollingsworth, having no faith in Coverdale's dream, mentions his own scheme for the reformation of criminals. When he claims that he can have the necessary capital within a month, Coverdale decides that Hollingsworth must be appropriating Zenobia's funds so lavishly. Hollingsworth has no regrets in overthrowing the fair system of their new life because it does not suit him; refusing to argue the point, he only wants to know if Coverdale will cooperate in his great scheme, but Coverdale chides Hollingsworth for his willingness to throw off a friend for seeing matters through his own eyes.

When Hollingsworth says Coverdale must be with him or against him, Coverdale doubts the wisdom of the scheme and refuses to join Hollingsworth, though it is a great effort. Hollingsworth says nothing more, and after a few minutes, the two men resume their reparation of the stone fence. In "Leave-Takings", a few days after his disagreement with Hollingsworth, Coverdale appears at the dinner table in a coat and announces that he is leaving for a week or two due to his health. In actuality, an intolerable discontent has come over him due to standing on different terms with Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla which causes him to long for a temporary novelty. After taking his leave of his brethren and sisters with cordial kindness, Coverdale tells asks Priscilla if she is a prophetess because he has a strange foreboding that matters at Blithedale are about to greatly change, but Priscilla disclaims any knowledge of such a misfortune. He bids her good-bye and takes leave of the swine, lamenting Silas Foster's intent to kill them when they alone are happy.

### Section 8- Chapter 15: A Crisis and Chapter 16: Leave-Takings Analysis

In "A Crisis", Coverdale enjoys the Arcadian lifestyle at Blithedale as the community begins making more permanent plans. He considers how their trials will make a romantic story for young people in the future, but Hollingsworth mocks his vision. His suggestion to decide on a location for a cemetery before they need one foreshadows the death of one of the Blithedale inhabitants. Although Hollingsworth lacks faith in Coverdale's dreams, he asks Coverdale to join him in his scheme to reform the wicked.



Coverdale assumes that Hollingsworth plans to use Zenobia's money to promote his experiment. Hollingsworth does not mind overthrowing the system at Blithedale because it does not suit him, indicating his selfishness. Although Hollingsworth admits that Zenobia is to take part in his enterprise, he refuses to discuss Priscilla's potential involvement. His demand to know whether Coverdale will join his scheme fulfills the foreshadowing that occurred during Coverdale's illness.

Paralleling Hollingsworth's earlier claim about Coverdale's dreams, Coverdale puts no faith in Hollingsworth's scheme, and his refusal to join said scheme ends the friendship between the two men, also fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing. In "Leave-Takings", Coverdale decides to leave Blithedale a few days after his disagreement with Hollingsworth because the atmosphere between him, Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla now makes him uncomfortable. After bidding everyone goodbye, Coverdale is overwhelmed with a sense of foreboding that things at Blithedale will change greatly during his absence, no matter how soon he returns. As he leaves Blithedale, he laments the fact that the swine's fate is to die when they alone are happy.



## **Section 9- Chapter 17: The Hotel and Chapter 18: The Boarding-House**

### **Section 9- Chapter 17: The Hotel and Chapter 18: The Boarding-House Summary**

In "The Hotel", Coverdale obtains a room in a respectable hotel in town to avoid his former companions. He feels stifled by the muddy tide of human activity at first, but while watching a cat creeping along the office rooftops, he is bewitched by the nooks and crannies where nature "hides her head among the long-established haunts of men" (page 92). He observes a boarding-house from his hotel window and blesses God when he observes a loving couple with their two children as he has not seen a prettier bit of nature during his entire summer in the country. He notes that a drawing-room on the first floor is empty, but the industry of two housemaids suggests that the house will not suffer long from the absence of these profitable guests.

In "The Boarding-House", Coverdale is tormented during the night by dreams of his Blithedale friends, and the sadness lingers after he awakes. To escape his meditations, he resumes his observation of the boarding-house, watching a girl's figure working on needlepoint in the window of a small boudoir. Becoming sensible of a figure at the window of the drawing-room, Coverdale beholds Zenobia and realizes the girl in the boudoir must be Priscilla. As he watches, Zenobia reappears at the window with Westervelt, but the two seem to repel one another. Despairing to meet Zenobia and Priscilla in town after his efforts to escape, Coverdale longs for a catastrophe. After Westervelt notices Coverdale looking at them, he beckons to Zenobia who looks at Coverdale scornfully before lowering the curtain. Priscilla has disappeared from the window of the boudoir.

### **Section 9- Chapter 17: The Hotel and Chapter 18: The Boarding-House Analysis**

In "The Hotel", Coverdale returns to town but rents a room in a respectable hotel in order to avoid his former companions. He compares the metropolis to the rural setting at Blithedale, noting that there is much more human activity in the city. Looking from the window of his hotel room, Coverdale is amused by the nooks and crannies where nature "hides her head among the long-established haunts of men" (page 92). Learning that his window faces a boarding-house, he observes its inhabitants, praising a happy and loving family as a prettier bit of nature than anything he saw during his entire summer in the country. Although there are no signs of occupancy in the first floor suite, the housemaids are industriously at work, foreshadowing that these rooms will soon be occupied. In "The Boarding-House", Coverdale dreams about Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla, demonstrating his continued obsession with the love triangle at Blithedale.



Watching the boarding-house again, Coverdale notices a girl working on needlepoint through the window of the boudoir; this foreshadows Priscilla's appearance in the boarding-house, especially when Zenobia appears in another window. Coverdale is concerned to see Westervelt with Zenobia because he distrusts Westervelt and sees his smile as the mark of the devil. When Zenobia notices Coverdale gazing in the window of her parlor, she glares at him scornfully before lowering the curtain, foreshadowing some ill intent on Zenobia's part.



## **Section 10- Chapter 19: Zenobia's Drawing-Room and Chapter 20: They Vanish**

### **Section 10- Chapter 19: Zenobia's Drawing-Room and Chapter 20: They Vanish Summary**

In "Zenobia's Drawing-Room", Coverdale meditates on these events for the remainder of the day, offended that Zenobia chose Westervelt to learn her secrets. He realizes that it is absurd to torment himself with conjectures since his familiar relationship allows him to call on Zenobia. Accordingly, Coverdale goes to the boarding-house where Zenobia's cold manner saddens him. He is irritated by her condescending attitude, and she rages against his claim that Hollingsworth is ridiculous. Zenobia's fidelity gives Coverdale a new sense of Hollingsworth's native power. Coverdale asks if Priscilla is here, mentioning that he worries that it is not safe for Priscilla to be around Hollingsworth's tenderness so frequently due to her being so susceptible. Zenobia summons Priscilla to see Coverdale.

In "They Vanish", Priscilla appears immediately, and Coverdale realizes that there is no peril of her communicating to him any of Zenobia's designs since she does not influence any events. After greeting Priscilla, Coverdale notices that the girl is beautiful. He follows Zenobia across the room, praising Priscilla. After Zenobia and Coverdale argue, he asks Priscilla when she will return to Blithedale, and she responds whenever they take her because she never has had any free will. Coverdale washes his hands of it all, stating that the consequences lay on Hollingsworth's head. As he bids Priscilla farewell, a carriage arrives conveying Westervelt who enters as Zenobia tells Coverdale that they have an engagement, refusing to answer his questions pertaining to said engagement. Worried about Priscilla, Coverdale asks if it is her choice to go, offering to protect her, but Westervelt interjects that Priscilla sees in him an older friend than either Coverdale or Hollingsworth. Priscilla takes Westervelt's arms, and the pair, joined by Zenobia, descend the stairs; by the time that Coverdale reaches the street, the carriage is already rolling away.

### **Section 10- Chapter 19: Zenobia's Drawing-Room and Chapter 20: They Vanish Analysis**

In "Zenobia's Drawing-Room", Coverdale is jealous that Zenobia and Hollingsworth chose to share their secrets with Westervelt rather than him. When Coverdale realizes that his familiar relationship with Zenobia allows him to visit her instead of tormenting himself with conjectures, he takes advantage of their relationship and visits Zenobia at the boarding-house, though Zenobia's light touch forces him to acknowledge that they



are not on terms of confidentiality. During his visit, Zenobia treats Coverdale coldly making it obvious that she is not pleased by his visit and apparent interest in her affairs. This foreshadows Zenobia's evil intentions against Priscilla. Zenobia demonstrates her love and loyalty for Hollingsworth by her outrage at Coverdale's claim that Hollingsworth is ridiculous. Coverdale's questions and concern for Priscilla foreshadows his confession that he loves her. Zenobia defends herself against Coverdale's suspicions by summoning Priscilla.

In "They Vanish", Coverdale realizes that Zenobia sees no danger in allowing him an interview with Priscilla because Priscilla is not in control and has no knowledge of Zenobia's plans. Zenobia grows irritable when Coverdale continually mentions Hollingsworth, indicating her jealousy of Priscilla in relation to Hollingsworth. Westervelt's arrival foreshadows his involvement with Zenobia's plots against Priscilla. It is also evident that he has some sort of relationship with Priscilla by his claim that she sees him as an older friend than either Coverdale or Hollingsworth. When Priscilla resigns herself to her appointment with Zenobia and Westervelt, Coverdale worries about her, foreshadowing his love.



# **Section 11- Chapter 21: An Old Acquaintance and Chapter 22: Fauntleroy**

## **Section 11- Chapter 21: An Old Acquaintance and Chapter 22: Fauntleroy Summary**

In Chapter Twenty-One, "An Old Acquaintance", it occurs to Coverdale to seek an interview with Moodie so the next day, he goes to a saloon that Moodie frequents. Just as he begins to despair of meeting Moodie, Coverdale notices him behind a screen and invites him to lunch and wine. As Moodie drinks wine, he recalls his youth, and Coverdale asks him to share his past. Though Moodie objects at first, the wine causes him to reveal his past to Coverdale whose subsequent research acquaints him with the main facts of Moodie's narrative.

In "Fauntleroy", Fauntleroy dwelt in the Middle States twenty-five years earlier. He has a palatial home, a lovely wife and a beautiful daughter but is only interested in wealth. When he is in danger of losing his wealth, he commits a crime and flees to the New England metropolis where he assumes a different name and abode, but he is not pursued. He marries a meek seamstress who births another daughter before dying, leaving him to rear the pale, nervous child on his own. Fauntleroy, now known as Moodie, tells Priscilla about her beautiful sister who was raised by her bachelor uncle. Priscilla follows her sister to Blithedale where she is enthralled in a terrible bondage from which she must free herself or perish. One evening, Moodie sits alone as Zenobia enters, having received a strange summons from the old man, but he claims that he only desired to look at her because he heard that she was beautiful. He advises her to be no less kind to Priscilla than sisters are. After Zenobia leaves, Moodie ruminates on his forgotten ignominy. Fauntleroy lives again in the beautiful Zenobia, the child of his prosperity, and he hopes that the world admires her; yet, he laments the injustice of surrendering all to Zenobia though he loves Priscilla best, only with shame not pride. The very evening that Moodie thus meditates, Priscilla is either snatched from Zenobia's hand or willfully flung away.

## **Section 11- Chapter 21: An Old Acquaintance and Chapter 22: Fauntleroy Analysis**

In "An Old Acquaintance", Coverdale seeks out Moodie to learn about Priscilla, showing his intense interest and foreshadowing the fact that he loves Priscilla. Moodie's hesitation to tell Coverdale about his youth foreshadows the revelations concerning Moodie's scandalous past. In "Fauntleroy", Moodie's story about his past as Fauntleroy fulfills the foreshadowing about the scandals in his youth as well as the familial





relationship between Zenobia and Priscilla. His tale also somewhat explains Zenobia's eccentricities while further foreshadowing the mystical elements surrounding Priscilla. His desire and enforcement of that desire to see Zenobia foreshadows Zenobia discovering that Priscilla is her sister. Moodie's pride is still evident by his pride in Zenobia; though he only loves Priscilla, he loves her with shame rather than pride.



## **Section 12- Chapter 23: A Village Hall and Chapter 24: The Masqueraders**

### **Section 12- Chapter 23: A Village Hall and Chapter 24: The Masqueraders Summary**

In "A Village Hall", Coverdale wanders about restlessly for several weeks, avoiding Hollingsworth, Priscilla and Zenobia. He attends an interview with the Veiled Lady in a lyceum hall and sees Hollingsworth several rows in front of him. A man appears onstage in Oriental robes, and Coverdale, recognizing Westervelt, asks Hollingsworth what he has done with Priscilla but receives only a glare in response. After Westervelt's discourse, the Veiled Lady comes pliantly to stage as Westervelt explains that she is communicating with the spirit world and no inducement can persuade her to lift the veil or rise from her chair, save his own behest. To Westervelt's discomposure, she rises as a mysterious tremor shakes her veil. Hollingsworth mounts the platform, telling her that she is safe. Priscilla throws off the veil, shrinking to see the multitude of people staring at her and flees to Hollingsworth like one escaping from her deadliest enemy and who is now safe forever.

In "The Masqueraders", Coverdale sets out for Blithedale two days later. At first his steps are joyful, but as he nears Blithedale, a nameless foreboding weighs upon him. Yielding to the ominous impression, he spies on the community from the woods before entering. Hearing laughter from the woods, Coverdale views a multitude of strange creatures dancing together and cannot refrain from laughing aloud. The group hears him and threatens the intruder, but the fiddler says it is Miles Coverdale who is brought by his music because he is always ready to dance to the Devil's tune. They search for Coverdale, but he manages to escape. He strays on in a reverie until he looks up to find himself near Eliot's Pulpit where Hollingsworth sits at the base with Priscilla at his feet and Zenobia standing before them.

### **Section 12- Chapter 23: A Village Hall and Chapter 24: The Masqueraders Analysis**

In "A Village Hall", it is ironic that Coverdale tries to avoid Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla only to encounter Hollingsworth at a village hall during an interview with the Veiled Lady. Westervelt's appearance onstage foreshadows the imminent discovery that Priscilla is the Veiled Lady. The fact that Hollingsworth glares when Coverdale asks what he has done with Priscilla foreshadows Priscilla's appearance as the Veiled Lady, and it also indicates Hollingsworth's knowledge and possible involvement in Priscilla's betrayal. Ironically, Priscilla disproves Westervelt's words about not lifting her veil unless he orders her to do so; when she relinquishes her veil, the frequent foreshadowing that she is the Veiled Lady is fulfilled. Her shrinking reaction to the crowd staring at her



indicates her continued timidity. She foreshadows and indicates her love for Hollingsworth by fleeing to him as though to certain safety. Coverdale's concern for Priscilla being betrayed indicates that he is smitten with the girl.

In "The Masqueraders", Coverdale first feels joyful upon his return journey to Blithedale as though Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla eagerly await him. This is ironic since he has been trying to avoid them. His nervousness as he nears Blithedale is more indicative of the actual standing between Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla and himself. In the woods, Coverdale sees strange creatures that indicate the magical and mysterious elements that recur throughout "The Blithedale Romance". Allusions concerning these strange creatures include an Indian chieftain, the goddess Diana, a Bavarian broom girl, foresters from the Middle Ages, a Kentucky woodsman, a shaker elder, shepherds of Arcadia, allegorical figures from Spenser's "The Faerie Queene", puritans, Cavaliers, Revolutionary officers, a gypsy reading palms, and Moll Pitcher, the renowned old witch of Lynn. Silas Foster's presence among these creatures baffles Coverdale more than their appearance because it seems more unnatural. In his attempt to escape from the strange beings, Coverdale finds himself at Eliot's Pulpit where Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla are gathered, indicating that the creatures' appearance somehow pertains to these three.



## **Section 13- Chapter 25: The Three Together and Chapter 26: Zenobia and Coverdale**

### **Section 13- Chapter 25: The Three Together and Chapter 26: Zenobia and Coverdale Summary**

In "The Three Together", Chapter Twenty-Five, Coverdale feels that he has intruded on the acme of their passions and explains that he has just arrived in Blithedale, offering to leave them. They tell him to stay as Zenobia laughingly claims that she is on trial for her life and suggests that he act as judge. Hollingsworth objects that he does not pretend to pass a sentence upon her as she has forced this upon him. Coverdale is impressed with idea that crisis has come and gone, but Zenobia seems discontent with matter in posture it has assumed. When Hollingsworth attempts to retire, she prevents it by requesting to ask a few questions. She asks if he supposed her to be wealthy, explaining that she only learned of the matter threatening to make her poor three days ago. Zenobia asks Hollingsworth if he loves Priscilla, and he admits that he does. Zenobia appeals to God to judge which of them has most mortally offended him and bids Hollingsworth farewell. When Hollingsworth bids Priscilla to come to him, Zenobia and Coverdale smile, wanting her to fail Hollingsworth, but Priscilla rises, walks toward Zenobia and sinks at her feet as she did when they first met.

Zenobia notes that much has changed since they first met, telling Priscilla to say what she wishes and leave her. She agrees with Priscilla's statement that they are sisters. Though she learned of their relationship recently, she never wished Priscilla any harm; she simply wanted a clear path to her desires, and Priscilla stood in her way. After asking for Priscilla's forgiveness, Zenobia asks what Priscilla will do when the fire she has kindled in Hollingsworth's heart goes out and there is no spark to be found among the ashes, and Priscilla answers that she will die. Zenobia bids Priscilla to go with Hollingsworth and live before turning her face to the rock. Coverdale watches Priscilla, wondering how she would pass judgment between Zenobia and Hollingsworth, but Priscilla's engrossing love finds no fault in Hollingsworth. Hollingsworth draws Priscilla's arm through his, and they soon disappear among the trees. Although she does not glance at them, Zenobia knows when they are gone and sinks down, sobbing.

In "Zenobia and Coverdale", Zenobia forgets Coverdale as she gives herself over to her immense grief. Finally recalling Coverdale, she sharply laughs that is a genuine tragedy. Maybe he thinks that she has had a hard measure, but it is a woman's doom. She tells him to write her story as a ballad; the moral is that the stroke that falls only on man's steel headpiece is sure to light over a woman's heart. Zenobia notes that Hollingsworth will not find the sympathy in Priscilla that he would have found in her. When Coverdale claims that Hollingsworth is a wretch with a heart of ice, Zenobia blames herself. She is



silent for a long time before telling Coverdale that she plans to leave Blithedale and never see Hollingsworth again. She asks Coverdale to take a message to Hollingsworth that he has murdered her and she will haunt him.

Zenobia also sends the flower from her hair to Priscilla, asking her sister to wear it for her sake. Zenobia does not know where she will go, but she is weary of this place. She gives Coverdale her hand which is cold as death, and after Coverdale kisses her hand, she says that no man will ever touch her hand or see her face again because she intends to become catholic and go into a nunnery. Zenobia withdraws her hand, leaving a lingering pressure, and leaves. Coverdale flings himself into the leaves, sleeps, and in his dreams, all of the circumstances converge into a tragic catastrophe. Coverdale wakes, trembling.

## **Section 13- Chapter 25: The Three Together and Chapter 26: Zenobia and Coverdale Analysis**

In "The Three Together", Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla are not very welcoming to Coverdale, yet they accept his addition to their party. Zenobia's words make her feminist notions apparent. It is ironic that Coverdale sees Zenobia as a sorceress and Priscilla as a victim when the actuality indicates the reverse. This also foreshadows Coverdale's love for Priscilla as he now knows that she is the Veiled Lady. As Zenobia argues with Hollingsworth, her love for him is obvious. The fact that Zenobia now knows that Priscilla is her sister fulfills the foreshadowing that occurred when she visited Moodie. Priscilla is still partially submissive to Zenobia, and the sisters apologize to one another. Fulfilling earlier foreshadowing, Hollingsworth admits that he loves Priscilla, and the pair leave together which foreshadows their future marriage.

Zenobia sobs once they are out of sight indicates her grief at losing Hollingsworth to Priscilla and also her pride since she does not allow them to see her sorrow. In "Zenobia and Coverdale", Zenobia is very grieved, but while Coverdale feels sorry for her, he realizes that he is unable to help her. Zenobia compares her circumstances to a tragedy and gives it a moral. She states her intention to leave Blithedale and never see Hollingsworth again, leaving Coverdale with messages to convey to Hollingsworth and Priscilla. This, along with the fact that her hand is cold like death and her claim that no man will ever again touch her or see her face, foreshadows her intention to commit suicide. Falling to sleep after Zenobia leaves him, Coverdale awakes in a tremble with an odd foreboding.



## Section 14- Chapter 27: Midnight

### Section 14- Chapter 27: Midnight Summary

In "Midnight", the twenty-seventh chapter, not long before midnight, Coverdale passes beneath Hollingsworth's open window and flings a tuft of grass into his room, summoning Hollingsworth because he is anxious to speak with him. Startled by the strangeness of Coverdale's voice, Hollingsworth hastens below where Coverdale asks if he has seen Zenobia. Hollingsworth answers that he has not, but he did not expect to see her again. When Silas Foster hushes them from his window, Coverdale summons Foster, and when Foster joins them, Hollingsworth explains Coverdale's suspicions that Zenobia has committed suicide. Foster asks if they think she has drowned herself, wondering why she would do something like that. He agrees to help though he does not believe she would kill herself.

As they search, they find Zenobia's handkerchief and shoe. They row out into the river to search for Zenobia's corpse, and Foster comments about how she will laugh at them the next morning. When Hollingsworth's pole strikes an object on the bottom of the river, he brings Zenobia's body to the surface, and Coverdale and Foster lament her death which turns her corpse into a horrible spectacle. As Foster examines the corpse, he notes that Hollingsworth has wounded Zenobia's breast, close by her heart, when he brought her body to surface. Coverdale notes that this is so both before and after her death. The three men form a bier from boards and bear Zenobia's corpse homeward.

Zenobia was beautiful six hours before, but she is such a horror at midnight though she is not quite simple in death. She dies as many village maidens had before her, seeking peace in a familiar stream after being wronged by a first love, but in Zenobia's case, there is some tint of the Arcadian affectation that had been visible in the lives of those at Blithedale for a few months past. The men lay her corpse on the floor of the farmhouse, and the women whisper in counsel of what is to be done; the men leave Zenobia with those tiresome women.

### Section 14- Chapter 27: Midnight Analysis

In "Midnight", Coverdale summons Hollingsworth and Silas Foster in the middle of the night as a result of his strange foreboding; he fears that Zenobia has committed suicide. The three men search for Zenobia's body, foreshadowing their discovery of her corpse which is shortly fulfilled when they uncover her body in the river. It is ironic that Hollingsworth finds Zenobia's body, more so because he wounds the breast of her corpse, right about her heart, in death as he did during her life by breaking her heart. Coverdale compares and contrasts Zenobia's horrific corpse with her beauty in life only a few hours before. Zenobia seeks her death at the hands of a familiar stream paralleling the many village maidens who have also done so after being wronged by

their first love. The men leave her corpse for the women to deal with. Hollingsworth's strange reaction to Zenobia's death foreshadows him blaming himself for her suicide.



## **Section 15: Chapter 28: Blithedale Pasture and Chapter 29: Miles Coverdale's Confession**

### **Section 15: Chapter 28: Blithedale Pasture and Chapter 29: Miles Coverdale's Confession Summary**

In the penultimate chapter, "Blithedale Pasture", since a burial ground has never before been needed at Blithedale, the community consults on where to bury Zenobia. Coverdale suggests they lay her at the base of Eliot's Pulpit, but Hollingsworth requests that she be buried on the hillside where they had planned to build their cottage, so this is where the Blithedale community buries Zenobia. She is buried in the old fashion as people have been buried for hundreds of years. Westervelt, a stranger to most present, flings earth into the grave first after the coffin descends. Westervelt expresses impatience with Zenobia, claiming her action was foolish since she was the last woman on earth to whom death could have been necessary; her mind was active, her beauty would not have waned, and she had every prize worth a woman having. Yet, it no longer matters since she is now beyond his reach.

Coverdale believes that Zenobia caught whatever worldly stain she had from Westervelt, though he admits that there is a share of truth in Westervelt's reflections. As they stand around the grave, Coverdale looks at Priscilla who is grieved but retains her equilibrium as long as she retains Hollingsworth's affections. Coverdale is vexed that Hollingsworth suffers no retribution for his part in Zenobia's death. Some years later, Coverdale journeys to catch a last glimpse of Hollingsworth to learn if he is a happy man. He meets Hollingsworth and Priscilla in a secluded lane, and he notices Hollingsworth shows a self-distrustful weakness while Priscilla is watchful and protective of him. She recognizes Coverdale as they draw near and smiles but makes a gesture entreating him not to make himself known to Hollingsworth; however, an impulse compels Coverdale to ask Hollingsworth if his grand edifice for the reformation of criminals is finished yet. Hollingsworth says he has not yet begun as Priscilla glances at Coverdale.

Coverdale speaks again, bitterly and vengefully, asking how many criminals Hollingsworth has reformed, but Hollingsworth claims that he has been busy with a single murderer since they last parted. Coverdale cries and forgives him as he recalls Zenobia's last message to Hollingsworth, realizing that she haunts his side opposite from Priscilla. Back when Zenobia dies, the Blithedale community stands by her grave which Coverdale has never beheld since. Nature was proud of Zenobia while she lived but does not shed a tear when she perishes because the spirit is inestimable while the lifeless body is little valued.





In "Miles Coverdale's Confession", the twenty-ninth and last chapter, Coverdale addresses the reader, stating that only a few words remain to be said about himself though he has nothing to tell. Coverdale leaves Blithedale within a week of Zenobia's death and never returns. The farm seems to be only sodden earth over her grave, but as the years darken around him, he remembers their beautiful scheme. Coverdale's subsequent life passes tolerably enough, and he is now a middle-aged bachelor. He travels to Europe twice but gives up poetry. As Hollingsworth once told him, Coverdale lacks a purpose. Coverdale exaggerates his own defects, telling the reader not to believe him altogether changed from the young man who hoped strenuously. Life has come to a rather idle pass for him, and he only has one secret, though it is rather absurd for an old bachelor like himself. Coverdale's brief confession which causes him to blush is this: "I— I myself— was in love— with— Priscilla!" (Page 152).

## **Section 15: Chapter 28: Blithedale Pasture and Chapter 29: Miles Coverdale's Confession Analysis**

In "Blithedale Pasture", the need to bury Zenobia ironically fulfills the earlier foreshadowing of the necessity for a cemetery at Blithedale. Coverdale's suggestion to bury Zenobia at Eliot's Pulpit, the scene of her greatest sorrow, seems cruel due to the unhappiness of her final encounter with Hollingsworth there. Alternately, Hollingsworth's request that Zenobia be buried on the sloping hill where they planned to erect their residence after marrying is somewhat kinder and also shows that Hollingsworth recognizes his fault in Zenobia's suicide. This also foreshadows him blaming himself. The community at Blithedale buries Zenobia in the old-fashioned style despite their progressive ideas, showing the fact that they are relinquishing their Arcadian ideas somewhat. Westervelt appears at Zenobia's funeral and expresses his agitation at Zenobia for committing suicide, suggesting that he is interested in Zenobia.

Coverdale blames Westervelt for Zenobia's faults though he admits that there is some truth in the professor's reflections. Although Priscilla laments her sister's suicide, her happiness with Hollingsworth prevents her from losing her equilibrium. Coverdale blames Hollingsworth and seeks him out at a future date, but he forgives Hollingsworth when he realizes that he blames himself for Zenobia's death; this also fulfills the earlier foreshadowing. Priscilla tries to protect Hollingsworth from seeing Coverdale, demonstrating the depth of her love for Hollingsworth. In "Miles Coverdale's Confession", Coverdale's verbosity shows his embarrassment as he admits his heavily foreshadowed secret: he loves Priscilla.



# Characters

## Mr. Miles Coverdale

Mr. Miles Coverdale is the main character and narrator of "The Blithedale Romance" which is told from his viewpoint. The evening before his departure to Blithedale, he is confronted by Mr. Moodie who requests a favor but then changes his mind. Coverdale goes to Blithedale where he meets Zenobia, Hollingsworth and Priscilla. When he grows ill, Hollingsworth cares for him with brotherly devotion, causing Coverdale to believe that Hollingsworth's tenderness "seems to me the reflection of God's own love" (page 25). When Coverdale tells Hollingsworth once that he does not know if he will ever be a philanthropist and asks if Hollingsworth can bear with him if such proves to be the case, Hollingsworth does not know if they can be lifelong friends if Coverdale does not strive with him toward the great object of his life, causing Coverdale to suspect that Hollingsworth watches by his bedside with the ulterior motive of converting him to his views.

Coverdale constantly observes his friends and speculates on their pasts as well as their thoughts and feelings. Coverdale becomes increasingly more irritated as he observes Hollingsworth's tenderness toward Priscilla and begins to suspect that both Priscilla and Zenobia love Hollingsworth. After a disagreement where Coverdale refuses to join Hollingsworth's scheme for the reformation of criminals, Coverdale leaves Blithedale and returns to town. In town, Coverdale encounters Zenobia and Priscilla and worries that Zenobia is plotting against Priscilla. After attending an interview with the Veiled Lady where Priscilla is revealed to be the Veiled Lady, Coverdale returns to Blithedale where he intrudes upon a conversation between Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla. Coverdale attempts to comfort Zenobia after Hollingsworth confesses to loving Priscilla, and he falls asleep after Zenobia leaves. He wakes with the foreboding that Zenobia has committed suicide and summons Hollingsworth and Silas Foster who help find Zenobia's corpse. Coverdale is disgusted with the lack of retribution against Hollingsworth and seeks him out years later; he forgives his old friend when he realizes that Hollingsworth is miserable because he condemns himself as a murderer. In the last chapter, Coverdale confesses that he loves Priscilla.

## Zenobia

Zenobia is one of the members of the Blithedale community. She is an educated woman who is renowned for writing in magazines. Zenobia is beautiful and proud but also eccentric and unconventional. She constantly wears an exotic flower in her hair. When Priscilla arrives at Blithedale, Zenobia treats her scornfully at first but more kindly after realizing that Hollingsworth and Coverdale pity the girl. During her time at Blithedale, Zenobia frequently praises Hollingsworth, making her admiration apparent, as well as her jealousy of Priscilla due to how tenderly Hollingsworth treats the girl. Rumors



indicate that Zenobia and Hollingsworth are courting and plan to erect a home on a sloping hill on the Blithedale property.

After learning at least some of Priscilla's secrets from Professor Westervelt, Zenobia takes Priscilla to town where she disposes of her by yielding her to Westervelt who forces Priscilla to perform as the Veiled Lady. This is done despite Zenobia learning that Priscilla is her sister and that she is the daughter of Mr. Moodie from his first marriage. When Hollingsworth returns to Blithedale with Priscilla and confesses that he loves the girl, Zenobia commits suicide. Her corpse is found around midnight by Coverdale, Hollingsworth and Silas Foster, and she is buried on the sloping hill where she and Hollingsworth had planned to build their dwelling.

## Mr. Hollingsworth

Mr. Hollingsworth is a member of the Blithedale community who arrives late at Blithedale after being petitioned by Mr. Moodie to escort Priscilla to the farm. He is a philanthropist, intent upon the reformation of criminals, and he cares for Coverdale during Coverdale's illness, attempting to convert the poet to his mode of thinking. Hollingsworth treats Priscilla very tenderly, though he courts Zenobia. When Coverdale rejects his ideologies, he angrily rejects Coverdale's friendship. Later, in town, Hollingsworth rescues Priscilla from the stage of a Village Hall during an interview with the Veiled Lady. Back in Blithedale, he tells Zenobia that he loves Priscilla. After the heart-broken Zenobia commits suicide, Hollingsworth discovers her body in the river, wounding her breast in death as he did in life. His request that Zenobia be buried on the sloping hill, which rumors claimed was the spot where they planned to erect their dwelling, is honored. Although he marries Priscilla, the woman that he loves, Hollingsworth is discontent with his life because he condemns himself as a murderer.

## Priscilla

Priscilla is the daughter of Mr. Moodie, formerly known as Fauntleroy. She is a seamstress and is also known as the Veiled Lady. Priscilla travels to Blithedale with Mr. Hollingsworth in an attempt to acquaint herself with Zenobia, her sister from her father's first marriage. She quietly clings to Zenobia and becomes healthier and happier in the natural setting at Blithedale. Occasionally, Priscilla appears to be listening to voices that no one else can hear. Although she marries Hollingsworth after Zenobia's suicide, Coverdale admits in the final chapter that he loves Priscilla.

## Mr. Moodie

Mr. Moodie, formerly known as Fauntleroy, fathers Zenobia with his first wife while he is wealthy and living in the Middle States. After committing a crime, he flees to the Massachusetts metropolis where he fathers Priscilla with his second wife. He tells Coverdale the story of his sordid past while drinking wine.



## Fauntleroy

Fauntleroy, now known as Mr. Moodie, fathers Zenobia with his first wife while he is wealthy and living in the Middle States. After committing a crime, he flees to the Massachusetts metropolis where he fathers Priscilla with his second wife. He tells Coverdale the story of his sordid past while drinking wine.

## The Veiled Lady

The Veiled Lady is rumored to be a witch or fortuneteller, and she is the main character of "The Silvery Veil", the legend that Zenobia tells. Before going to Blithedale, Coverdale attends an interview with the Veiled Lady, and when he returns to town, he sees her again when she is revealed to be Priscilla.

## Theodore

Theodore is the hero in Zenobia's "The Silvery Veil". He pulls back the Veiled Lady's veil, causing her to disappear and a maiden, supposedly Priscilla, to appear at Blithedale at the same time.

## Professor Westervelt

Professor Westervelt appears at Blithedale in oriental robes and asks Coverdale for Zenobia. He whispers secrets about Priscilla to Zenobia and later reappears at the boarding-house in town. Coverdale again sees Professor Westervelt during an interview with the Veiled Lady in a village hall in town. Professor Westervelt attends Zenobia's funeral where he expresses his anger at Zenobia for committing suicide.

## Silas Foster

Silas Foster manages the Blithedale farm on a stipend and teaches the community of intellectuals the art of husbandry. Near the end of the novel, he also helps Coverdale and Hollingsworth search for Zenobia's body.



# Objects/Places

## Massachusetts

"The Blithedale Romance" is set in colonial Massachusetts.

## Town

Mr. Coverdale and the others leave their lives of luxury in town to begin their Community at Blithedale. Occasionally, they return to town which is where Mr. Coverdale learns about Mr. Moodie's past and Priscilla's secret identity as the Veiled Lady.

## Blithedale

Blithedale is a farm in Massachusetts where a group of intellectuals, including Mr. Coverdale, Mr. Hollingsworth and Zenobia, develop a Community with the intent to improve society through an Arcadian lifestyle. This is the main setting of the novel and is where Coverdale meets Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla.

## Zenobia's Exotic Flower

Zenobia always wears an exotic flower in her hair, despite cold weather. In his delirium caused by a fever, Coverdale suggests that the flower is a magical talisman which its absence would transform Zenobia into something else entirely. Zenobia wears the flower as a token of her happier days, and she asks Coverdale to give it to Priscilla to wear in her remembrance before committing suicide.

## Coverdale's Hermitage

Coverdale's hermitage is a leafy grove in the woods near Blithedale where Coverdale writes poetry. He is hidden here when he overhears part of the conversation between Zenobia and Professor Westervelt.

## The Silvery Veil

Zenobia tells "The Silvery Veil", a story about the Veiled Lady, after meeting Westervelt. Zenobia disorients Priscilla by throwing a gossamer linen over her head at the end of the story. The veil is supposed to be a spell that enslaves the Veiled Lady to the magician in the tale.



## **Eliot's Pulpit**

Eliot's Pulpit is a rock in the woods that neighbor Blithedale. On Sundays, Coverdale, Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla gather here. Eliot's Pulpit is also the setting of Zenobia's last encounter with Hollingsworth when he chooses Priscilla over Zenobia.

## **The Hotel**

After Coverdale rejects Hollingsworth's objectives, Coverdale leaves Blithedale and obtains a room in a hotel in town in order to avoid his former acquaintances. It is from his hotel window that Coverdale observes Zenobia and Westervelt in the boarding-house across the street.

## **The Boarding-House**

Coverdale observes the inhabitants of the boarding house from the window of his hotel room which is across the street. Coverdale visits Zenobia and Priscilla at the boarding-house after seeing Zenobia with Westervelt.

## **The Sloping Hill**

The sloping hill is a favorite haunt of Zenobia and Hollingsworth. Rumors suggest that they plan to build a cottage on top of the hill after they are married. After Zenobia commits suicide, she is buried on the hill at Hollingsworth's request.



# Themes

## Secrets

One of the recurring themes in "The Blithedale Romance" is that of secrets. When Mr. Moodie first approaches Coverdale for a favor, he hesitates in asking, but his mention of Zenobia indicates a connection upon which he does not elaborate. Hollingsworth reveals Priscilla when he arrives at Blithedale, but he does not reveal anything about the girl's past. Coverdale often perplexes himself by wondering about Zenobia and Priscilla's pasts. The neighbors surrounding Blithedale gossip about a possible romance between Hollingsworth and Zenobia. Moodie's questions about the relationship between Zenobia and Priscilla indicate a secret to their relationship, and Westervelt's visit to Blithedale only heightens the mystery surrounding Priscilla.

When Zenobia tells "The Silvery Veil", it indicates a connection between Priscilla and the Veiled Lady. Zenobia's casual gesture toward Hollingsworth upon leaving Eliot's Pulpit reveals that she is in love with him. The secrecy surrounding Zenobia and Priscilla is amplified when Coverdale sees them at a boarding-house in town, especially when Zenobia refuses to tell him where they are going. Many of the novel's secrets are revealed in "Fauntleroy" where the relationship between Moodie, Zenobia and Priscilla is unveiled, and Priscilla is literally unveiled in "A Village Hall" as the Veiled Lady. In "The Three Together", Zenobia admits her love for Hollingsworth who in return states that he loves Priscilla. The final secret is uncovered in the last chapter when Coverdale confesses that he loves Priscilla.

## Magic

One of the most important themes in "The Blithedale Romance" is magic and the mystical elements surrounding the characters, specifically Priscilla. This theme is first introduced in the first chapter when Coverdale returns from an interview with the Veiled Lady. Later, when he is ill at Blithedale, he suggests that Zenobia is an enchantress and sister of the Veiled Lady, viewing the exotic flower that she wears in her hair as a talisman. Another mystical element in this novel that is repetitious is Priscilla's habit of seeming to listen to a voice that no one else hears.

In Zenobia's "The Silvery Veil", the Veiled Lady is again mentioned, this time with more mystical elements such as disappearing when her veil is removed. Additionally, Zenobia uses her tale to associate Priscilla with the Veiled Lady which becomes significant in "A Village Hall" when Priscilla is revealed to be the Veiled Lady. When Moodie tells Coverdale about his past, he mentions that his neighbors whisper strange things about Priscilla and her peculiarities, and they also claim that Moodie is a wizard. Coverdale returns to Blithedale after attending the interview with the Veiled Lady, and in the surrounding woods, he sees and hears strange creatures, including some that exist only in mythology and legends.



## Love and Friendship

In this novel, the concepts of love and friendship are a repetitively recurring theme. At Blithedale, Coverdale becomes friends with Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla. He observes his friends constantly and begins to suspect that both women love Hollingsworth. Coverdale longs to be taken into Zenobia's confidence and learn her secrets because he finds her intriguing. When Priscilla first meets Zenobia, she attaches herself to the older lady immediately. When Coverdale becomes ill, Hollingsworth cares for him with a brotherly devotion, but he tells Coverdale at one point that he does not know if they can be lifelong friends if Coverdale does not strive toward his philanthropic goals with him.

As the love triangle between Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla grows more intense, Coverdale worries that Priscilla will get hurt as the neighbors gossip about the connection between Hollingsworth and Zenobia. After Coverdale rejects Hollingsworth's schemes, their friendship ends, and Coverdale leaves Blithedale for a while though he continues to think about his three friends there. Coverdale returns to Blithedale in time to witness Zenobia confront Hollingsworth who admits that he loves Priscilla. Due to her heartbreak at Hollingsworth's betrayal, Zenobia commits suicide, but Priscilla cannot lose her equilibrium at her sister's death because her happiness is complete as long as she is at Hollingsworth's side. In the final chapter, Coverdale confesses that he also loves Priscilla.





# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person. This point of view is limited and somewhat reliable, proven by the fact that the narrator, Mr. Miles Coverdale, is only able to report on the actions of the events, what he personally thinks or feels and what other characters tell him, though he manages to learn a lot about the other characters in "The Blithedale Romance". His reliability is questionable due to the excessive amount of conjectures that he makes throughout the text concerning the pasts, futures and feelings of his friends in the Blithedale community. This point of view is important because it allows the story to retain suspense and mystery until the revelations near the end.

The story is told using approximately two-thirds exposition with the remainder of the text being dialogue, scattered throughout the novel. This method is likely used in order to keep the reader focused on Coverdale's discoveries and conjectures. Much of the text is concerned with Coverdale's observations, opinions and speculations about Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla. The action of the novel occurs in around a year for the characters which makes Coverdale's summaries of their situation at Blithedale necessary to prevent the text from reaching exorbitant lengths. The viewpoint of "The Blithedale Romance" is that of Mr. Miles Coverdale who narrates the events within the novel.

## Setting

"The Blithedale Romance" is set in the real world in post-colonial Massachusetts in the country that is now known as the United States of America. It is a place made of many small villages and a metropolis, presumably Boston. The characters in the novel consist of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds who are joining together to exercise an experiment of the Arcadian lifestyle at Blithedale. The concept of their experiment involves teaching upper class people, such as Zenobia, Coverdale and Hollingsworth, to work on a farm. Contrasting the social class of these three characters, Silas Foster is a farmer who teaches these upper class characters how to be successful in an agriculture occupation. Additionally, Priscilla is a seamstress which is also considered a lower class citizen, though it is eventually revealed that she and Zenobia share the same father.

The novel opens in town the day before Coverdale journeys to Blithedale. The vast majority of the novel is set in Blithedale where Coverdale settles into the Arcadian lifestyle and befriends Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla. In Blithedale, Coverdale often occupies a leafy hermitage in the neighboring woods where he enjoys writing verse and meditating essays. On Sundays, a small group consisting of Coverdale, Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla gather at Eliot's Pulpit, a large rock in the woods



near Blithedale to discuss different subjects. The sloping hill on the Blithedale property is a favorite haunt of Hollingsworth and Zenobia while they are courting, and rumors indicate that this is where they plan to erect their dwelling once they are married; this hill becomes a symbol of their relationship. After Coverdale disagrees with Hollingsworth about his philanthropic schemes, he leaves Blithedale, returns to town and obtains a room in a respectable hotel in order to avoid his former companions. From his hotel room, he can observe a boarding-house across the street where he sees Zenobia and Priscilla with Westervelt. Before returning to Blithedale, Coverdale attends an interview with the Veiled Lady at a village hall where he learns that Priscilla is the Veiled Lady.

## Language and Meaning

The language of "The Blithedale Romance" tends to be somewhat stiff and formal. The sentences are constructed properly according to the style common during the era of Nathaniel Hawthorne's writing. Though more formal than modern readers may be accustomed to, the language does not hinder comprehension of the novel; instead, the language used throughout the text actually allows the reader to become more immersed in the culture portrayed in the novel.

The language of the novel characterizes the different characters within the text, especially in terms of their social class and educational level. This serves to compare and contrast characters, such as Silas Foster and Hollingsworth. Mostly, the language seems to characterize Mr. Miles Coverdale since he is the narrator, and the novel is written from his viewpoint. Occasionally, Coverdale's conjectures about the other characters are verbose and misleading. The language of the novel aids the writing style by dating the work and also by demonstrating the Arcadian ideologies of community which this group of characters decides to practice as a means of experimentation. Overall, the novel is easy to read and understand, despite the fact that Hawthorne's lengthy descriptions of the most mundane objects frequently become monotonous and tedious.

## Structure

"The Blithedale Romance" is comprised of twenty-nine chapters, averaging around ten pages in length each. There are one hundred, fifty-two pages in the complete novel. Each chapter is titled to refer to the action or focus of that specific chapter. Although the chapters are fairly short, they are also very detailed, especially the descriptions of the rural scenery which is common in Nathaniel Hawthorne's work. A short amount of time generally passes in each chapter, but it is not uncommon for Coverdale to summarize the interceding events in the very beginning or end of a chapter to account for a long period of time that passes in between chapters.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple though it is interspersed with intrigues and secrets. Coverdale goes to Blithedale to join an experimental Arcadian community, and it is there that he meets and befriends Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla. During his time at



Blithedale, he notices the romantic triangle between his three friends. After a disagreement with Hollingsworth, Coverdale returns to town where he later encounters Zenobia and Priscilla. After learning that Moodie is the father of both Zenobia and Priscilla and discovering that Priscilla is the Veiled Lady, Coverdale returns to Blithedale where he intrudes upon a personal conversation between Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla. When Hollingsworth confesses to Zenobia that he loves Priscilla, Zenobia commits suicide because her heart is broken. Coverdale forgives Hollingsworth several years afterward when he discovers that Hollingsworth is guilt-ridden and condemns himself as Zenobia's murderer. Now, Coverdale is a middle-aged bachelor, and he confesses his secret to the reader: he loves Priscilla.

The pace of the novel tends to be quite slow due to Hawthorne's verbose descriptions of the setting as well as Coverdale's lengthy conjectures about the other characters and certain situations. The novel is easy to read, despite being tedious at times. The entirety of the narrative is presented as a middle-aged Coverdale's flashback to a period in his youth with the last chapter updating of the reader of Coverdale's current circumstances.



## Quotes

"If you pleased, Mr. Coverdale,' said [Mr. Moodie], 'you might do me a very great favor.' 'A very great one?' repeated I, in a tone that must have expressed but little alacrity of beneficence, although I was ready to do the old man any amount of kindness involving no special trouble to myself. 'A very great favor, do you say? My time is brief, Mr. Moodie, and I have a good many preparations to make. But be good enough to tell me what you wish.'" Chapter 1: Old Moodie, page 3

"I have long wished to know you, Mr. Coverdale, and to thank you for your beautiful poetry, some of which I have learned by heart; or rather it has stolen into my memory, without my exercising any choice or volition about the matter. Of course—permit me to say you do not think of relinquishing an occupation in which you have done yourself so much credit. I would almost rather give you up as an associate, than that the world should lose one of its true poets!" Zenobia, Chapter 3: A Knot of Dreamers, page 7

"No wonder if the poor child's tongue is frozen in her mouth, the very heart will be frozen in her bosom, unless you women can warm it, among you, with the warmth that ought to be in your own!" Mr. Hollingsworth, Chapter 4: The Supper-Table, page 16

"A brilliant woman is often an object of the devoted admiration—it might almost be termed worship, or idolatry—of some young girl, who perhaps beholds the cynosure only at an awful distance, and has as little hope of personal intercourse as of climbing among the stars of heaven. We men are too gross to comprehend it. Even a woman, of mature age, despises or laughs at such a passion. There occurred to me no mode of accounting for Priscilla's behavior, except by supposing that she had read some of Zenobia's stories (as such literature goes everywhere), or her tracts in defence of the sex, and had come hither with the one purpose of being her slave. There is nothing parallel to this, I believe,—nothing so foolishly disinterested, and hardly anything so beautiful,—in the masculine nature, at whatever epoch of life; or, if there be, a fine and rare development of character might reasonably be looked for from the youth who should prove himself capable of such self-forgetful affection." Chapter 5: Until Bedtime, page 18

"There is no pleasure in tormenting a person of one's own sex, even if she do favor one with a little more love than one can conveniently dispose of; and that, let me say, Mr. Coverdale, is the most troublesome offence you can offer to a woman." Zenobia, Chapter 5: Until Bedtime, page 19

"Yes; she deserves some verses now, and from a better poet than myself. She is the very picture of the New England spring; subdued in tint and rather cool, but with a capacity of sunshine, and bringing us a few Alpine blossoms, as earnest of something richer, though hardly more beautiful, hereafter. The best type of her is one of those anemones." Mr. Coverdale, Chapter 8: A Modern Arcadia, page 35



"Intellectual activity is incompatible with any large amount of bodily exercise. The yeoman and the scholar—the yeoman and the man of finest moral culture, though not the man of sturdiest sense and integrity—are two distinct individuals, and can never be melted or welded into one substance." Chapter 8: A Modern Arcadia, page 39

"I loved Hollingsworth, as has already been enough expressed. But it impressed me, more and more, that there was a stern and dreadful peculiarity in this man, such as could not prove otherwise than pernicious to the happiness of those who should be drawn into too intimate a connection with him. He was not altogether human. There was something else in Hollingsworth besides flesh and blood, and sympathies and affections and celestial spirit." Chapter 9: Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla, page 42

"Ah! It would gladden my old heart to witness that. If one thing would make me happier than another, Mr. Hollingsworth, it would be to see that beautiful lady holding my little girl by the hand." Mr. Moodie, Chapter 10: A Visitor From Town, page 53

"I regret that my mode of addressing you was a little unfortunate. I intended no offence, and shall certainly comport myself with due ceremony hereafter. I merely wish to make a few inquiries respecting a lady, formerly of my acquaintance, who is now resident in your Community, and, I believe, largely concerned in your social enterprise. You call her, I think, Zenobia." Professor Westervelt, Chapter 10: The Wood-Path, page 56

"Tell her, that her fragile thread of life has inextricably knotted itself with other and tougher threads, and most likely it will be broken. Tell her that Zenobia will not be long her friend. Say that Hollingsworth's heart is on fire with his own purpose, but icy for all human affection; and that, if she has given him her love, it is like casting a flower into a sepulchre. And say that if any mortal really cares for her, it is myself; and not even I for her realities,—poor little seamstress, as Zenobia rightly called her!—but for the fancy-work with which I have idly decked her out!" Mr. Coverdale, Chapter 11: Coverdale's Hermitage, page 61

"Dost thou hesitate, to pledge thyself to me, by meeting these lips of mine, while the veil yet hides my face? Has not thy heart recognized me? Dost thou come hither, not in holy faith, nor with a pure and generous purpose, but in scornful scepticism and idle curiosity? Still, thou mayest lift the veil! But, from that instant, Theodore, I am doomed to be thy evil fate; nor wilt thou ever taste another breath of happiness!" The Veiled Lady, Chapter 13: Zenobia's Legend, page 69

"It is my belief—yes, and my prophecy, should I die before it happens—that, when my sex shall achieve its rights, there will be ten eloquent women where there is now one eloquent man. Thus far, no woman in the world has ever once spoken out her whole heart and her whole mind. The mistrust and disapproval of the vast bulk of society throttles us, as with two gigantic hands at our throats! We mumble a few weak words, and leave a thousand better ones unsaid. You let us write a little, it is true, on a limited range of subjects. But the pen is not for woman. Her power is too natural and



immediate. It is with the living voice alone that she can compel the world to recognize the light of her intellect and the depth of her heart!" Zenobia, Chapter 14: Eliot's Pulpit, page 74

"Zenobia and Hollingsworth went next, in close contiguity, but not with arm in arm. Now, just when they had passed the impending bough of a birch-tree, I plainly saw Zenobia take the hand of Hollingsworth in both her own, press it to her bosom, and let it fall again! The gesture was sudden, and full of passion; the impulse had evidently taken her by surprise; it expressed all! Had Zenobia knelt before him, or flung herself upon his breast, and gasped out, "I love you, Hollingsworth!" I could not have been more certain of what it meant." Chapter 14: Eliot's Pulpit, page 77

"In Heaven's name, Hollingsworth, cannot you conceive that a man may wish well to the world, and struggle for its good, on some other plan than precisely that which you have laid down? And will you cast off a friend for no unworthiness, but merely because he stands upon his right as an individual being, and looks at matters through his own optics, instead of yours?" Mr. Coverdale, Chapter 15: A Crisis, page 83

"Women possess no rights, or, at all events, only little girls and grandmothers would have the force to exercise them." Zenobia, Chapter 16: Leave-Taking, page 87

"Yes, you would be only too wise, too honest. Honesty and wisdom are such a delightful pastime, at another person's expense!" Zenobia, Chapter 16: Leave-Taking, page 88

"Bewitching to my fancy are all those nooks and crannies where Nature, like a stray partridge, hides her head among the long-established haunts of men!" Chapter 17: The Hotel, page 92

"I bless God for these good folks! I have not seen a prettier bit of nature, in all my summer in the country, than they have shown me here, in a rather stylish boarding-house. I will pay them a little more attention by and by." Mr. Coverdale, Chapter 17: The Hotel, page 93

"It is really impossible to hide anything in this world, to say nothing of the next. All that we ought to ask, therefore, is, that the witnesses of our conduct, and the speculators on our motives, should be capable of taking the highest view which the circumstances of the case may admit. So much being secured, I, for one, would be most happy in feeling myself followed everywhere by an indefatigable human sympathy." Mr. Coverdale, Chapter 19: Zenobia's Drawing-Room, page 100

"She is a wonderful creature. Ever since she came among us, I have been dimly sensible of just this charm which you have brought out. But it was never absolutely visible till now. She is as lovely as a flower!" Mr. Coverdale, Chapter 20: They Vanish, page 104



"Well, as Zenobia so kindly intimates, I have no more business here. I wash my hands of it all. On Hollingsworth's head be the consequences! Priscilla, I know not that ever we may meet again. Farewell!" Mr. Coverdale, Chapter 20: They Vanish, page 106

"Ah, they might interest you more than you suppose. But I had better be silent, Mr. Coverdale. If this good wine,—though claret, I suppose, is not apt to play such a trick,—but if it should make my tongue run too freely, I could never look you in the face again." Mr. Moodie, Chapter 21: An Old Acquaintance, page 111

"I am unchanged,—the same man as of yore! True, my brother's wealth—he dying intestate—is legally my own. I know it; yet of my own choice, I live a beggar, and go meanly clad, and hide myself behind a forgotten ignominy. Looks this like ostentation? Ah! but in Zenobia I live again! Beholding her, so beautiful,—so fit to be adorned with all imaginable splendor of outward state,—the cursed vanity, which, half a lifetime since, dropt off like tatters of once gaudy apparel from my debased and ruined person, is all renewed for her sake. Were I to reappear, my shame would go with me from darkness into daylight. Zenobia has the splendor, and not the shame. Let the world admire her, and be dazzled by her, the brilliant child of my prosperity! It is Fauntleroy that still shines through her! My poor Priscilla! And am I just to her, in surrendering all to this beautiful Zenobia? Priscilla! I love her best,—I love her only!—but with shame, not pride. So dim, so pallid, so shrinking,—the daughter of my long calamity! Wealth were but a mockery in Priscilla's hands. What is its use, except to fling a golden radiance around those who grasp it? Yet let Zenobia take heed! Priscilla shall have no wrong!" Mr. Moodie ie. Fauntleroy, Chapter 22: Fauntleroy, page 118

"These efforts are wholly without avail. The roar of a battery of cannon would be inaudible to the Veiled Lady. And yet, were I to will it, sitting in this very hall, she could hear the desert wind sweeping over the sands as far off as Arabia; the icebergs grinding one against the other in the polar seas; the rustle of a leaf in an East Indian forest; the lowest whispered breath of the bashfullest maiden in the world, uttering the first confession of her love. Nor does there exist the moral inducement, apart from my own behest, that could persuade her to lift the silvery veil, or arise out of that chair." Professor Westervelt, Chapter 23: A Village Hall, page 124

"The voice was Miles Coverdale's. My music has brought him hither. He is always ready to dance to the Devil's tune!" Fiendish Fiddler, Chapter 24: The Masqueraders

"What strange beings you men are, Mr. Coverdale!—is it not so? It is the simplest thing in the world with you to bring a woman before your secret tribunals, and judge and condemn her unheard, and then tell her to go free without a sentence. The misfortune is, that this same secret tribunal chances to be the only judgment-seat that a true woman stands in awe of, and that any verdict short of acquittal is equivalent to a death sentence!" Zenobia, Chapter 25: The Three Together, page 131

"True, we are sisters! We had one father! You knew it from the first; I, but a little while,—else some things that have chanced might have been spared you. But I never wished you harm. You stood between me and an end which I desired. I wanted a clear path. No





matter what I meant. It is over now. Do you forgive me?" Zenobia, Chapter 25: The Three Together, page 135

"There are no new truths, much as we have prided ourselves on finding some. A moral? Why, this: That, in the battlefield of life, the downright stroke, that would fall only on a man's steel headpiece, is sure to light on a woman's heart, over which she wears no breastplate, and whose wisdom it is, therefore, to keep out of the conflict. Or, this: That the whole universe, her own sex and yours, and Providence, or Destiny, to boot, make common cause against the woman who swerves one hair's-breadth out of the beaten track. Yes; and add (for I may as well own it, now) that, with that one hair's-breadth, she goes all astray, and never sees the world in its true aspect afterwards." Zenobia, Chapter 26: Zenobia and Coverdale, page 137

"You have wounded the poor thing's breast, close by her heart, too!" Silas Foster, Chapter 27: Midnight, page 145

"I—I myself—was in love—with—Priscilla!" Chapter 29: Miles Coverdale's Confession, page 152



## Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast Zenobia and Priscilla, including their pasts.

Many allusions are made throughout this text concerning other literary works. Explain the use of one of these allusions.

Why is the presence of the Veiled Lady important?

Who do you think Professor Westervelt is in association with Zenobia and Priscilla?

Why does Hollingsworth condemn himself as a murderer, and is this justifiable?

Who is your favorite character, and why?

What is Miles Coverdale's role in "The Blithedale Romance"?