I. The Faust Legend

a. Historical figure Dr. Georg Faustus 1480-1540: traveled around Germany claiming to be an alchemist, astrologer magician and physician. He supposedly could perform strange acts with the Devil’s help.

b. The Faust Book: anonymously written in 1587: contained many tales of magicians and wizards all by the name of Faust. Part of this work is dedicated to the original story of Faust.

c. Other translations and variations: *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe (16th century) and “Faust” a poetic drama by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
Basic Faustian legend:

Despite his scholarly eminence, Faust is bored and disappointed. He decides to call on the Devil for further knowledge and magic powers with which to indulge all the pleasure and knowledge of the world. In response, the Devil’s representative, Mephistopheles, appears. He makes a bargain with Faust: Mephistopheles will serve Faust with his magic powers for a term of years, but at the end of the term, the devil will claim Faust’s soul and Faust will be eternally damned. The term usually stipulated in the early tales is 24 years.
During the term of the bargain, Faust makes use of Mephistopheles in various ways. In many versions of the story, particularly Goethe's drama, Mephistopheles helps him to seduce a beautiful and innocent girl, usually named Gretchen, whose life is ultimately destroyed. However, Gretchen's innocence saves her in the end, and she enters Heaven. In Goethe's rendition, Faust is saved by God's grace via his constant striving — in combination with Gretchen's pleadings with God in the form of the Eternal Feminine. However, in the early tales, Faust is irrevocably corrupted and believes his sins cannot be forgiven; when the term ends, the devil carries him off to Hell.
I. The Scarlet Letter vs. The Faust Legend

a. Dr. Faust vs. Dr. Roger Chillingworth
   1. Roger is a physician, alchemist and magician. He has lived in Germany and he yearns for knowledge.

b. Gretchen (Margarete) vs. Hester Prynne
   1. Hester is betrayed by her husband’s lack of attention long before their physical separation.

   2. Betrayal is balanced by Hester and Dimmesdale’s redemption.

c. Devil (Mephistopheles) vs. Arthur Dimmesdale
   1. God is the town. The devil is against God. Who is against the town?
2. How is Dimmesdale the Devil in this triangle? --consider his deception and appearance

3. The Bible Story: God, Lucifer and Lucifer’s angels. The Scarlet Letter: God, Dimmedale and townspeople (angels)

4. Roger Chillingworth: Roger is referred to as the Devil more than any other character in the novel.
III. Faust and his/her Devils

a. Hester: her actions are reminiscent (not necessarily literal) of the Faust tale

1. Hester commits the sin of adultery; therefore, giving her soul to the Devil. In return she receives comfort, passion affection and love through Pearl.

2. Hester’s mark is the letter “A”

b. Dimmesdale’s actions are also reminiscent of the Faust tale.