Scarlet Letter Essay (Rewrite)

Throughout the Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne writes as a narrator who is almost a character in himself. He expresses his attitude of each of the other characters and each event as well. However, his attitude toward Hester is made most evident, as she is the main character and the central focus of the story. The narrator depicts her as deprived of her womanhood consisting of beauty and tenderness by the trials that she faced. He illustrates his sympathy for her through emotion-laden diction and attention to detail.

The narrator begins by describing the tender nature and appearance of the woman and how it was taken away from her. Once “rich and luxuriant,” Hester is now “withered up” as the result of a “sad transformation.” The words rich and luxuriant exalt Hester and show the narrator’s respect for women, but “withered up” possess the opposite connotation, creating the imagery of a woman turning to dust. The word transformation displays how the speaker feels about what these effects had on Hester: that she “[had] once been a woman, [but] ceased to be so.” She lost the defining attributes of a woman—“Love...Passion...Affection”—and that her “tenderness [had been] crushed out of her” as a result of the “severity” she encountered. The diction in this passage, loaded with pain and emotion, displays the narrator’s compassion for Hester’s condition.
Why would he feel sorry that Hester is no longer, by his definition, a woman other than that he has a deep respect for the “feminine character” that women possess. They have a “Love” for the world, a “majestic...Passion” and a comforting “Affection” much unlike the “bare and harsh outline” that is a man. The narrator is depressed to see such a tender and beautiful human being be stripped down to nothing and left calloused in a bitter world.

The narrator displays his vast veneration of Hester through his specific word-choice in choosing words that hit hard at the reader’s heart creating some sort of devastating image. The detail of these images is what thoroughly demonstrates how he views Hester, but all women: a loving tenderness, so delicate, that it can be snatched away from them, by the hostility of the world.