

Think Like a Puritan

You are the members of the town council of a small Puritan community in Massachusetts during the late 1600's. You are gathered because a problem has been discovered. A woman whose husband has been in England for the past two years has recently given birth to a baby girl. Obviously, adultery is not tolerated in this community and the woman must be punished.

Unfortunately, this is the least of your problems. The adulteress does not appear to be the least bit remorseful about committing her heinous crime. In fact, she proudly walks with her illegitimate child around the town holding her head up without shame. When asked why she is behaving this way, she replies, "I am not ashamed of what I have done." In addition, the adulteress steadfastly refuses to identify the father of her child. Since this is a very isolated community, the father must be one of the townspeople. Finally, the council has noticed that the child, now almost five years old, has been exhibiting some unsavory characteristics lately — she sings, dances and skips around town (this behavior, of course, is considered sinful in our community). Her mother appears unconcerned with this behavior and lets the child continue with these behaviors.

During this meeting, you must formulate a plan to accomplish the following goals:

1. Determine what punishment should be given to the adulteress and how you can discourage this behavior in the other members of the community.
2. Determine what steps you will take to force the adulteress to divulge the name of the father of the child.
3. Determine what steps you will take to encourage the father of the child to come forward on his own.
4. Determine what punishment you will administer to the father once he is determined.
5. Determine what is to be done with the child. Is this adulteress a fit mother to raise this child?
6. How can the soul of the sinner be saved?

When you have finished your meeting, you will address the community (the class) and outline your plan to them.