



*Nathaniel Hawthorne*

THE  
BIRTHMARK

*Retold by Sara Simpson*

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“Georgiana,” Aylmer said, “have you ever thought about having your birthmark removed?”

How does Georgiana feel about her birthmark?

“No,” Georgiana said, smiling. “In fact, so many people have told me it’s a good luck charm that I wouldn’t want to remove it.”

“On different woman, the birthmark would be fine,” Aylmer said, “but you are such a beautiful woman. Your birthmark is the only thing about you that isn’t perfect.”

“Not perfect?” cried Georgiana. He hurt her feelings badly. Her face turned red with anger, then she started to cry. “Why did you marry me, then, if you hate the way I look so much? How can you love me if you hate the way I look?”

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Aylmer and Georgiana were newlyweds, and it should have been the happiest time of their lives. But it wasn’t. Every day, Aylmer stared at her birthmark. It was all he could think about. Maybe if she hadn’t been so pretty, it wouldn’t have bothered him so much. He started to think of her birthmark as bad, and that thought was stronger than his love for her.

Whatever they were doing, whatever they were talking about, the topic always came back to Georgiana’s birthmark. Georgiana was never the one to bring up the topic; it was always Aylmer. Day and night, he stared at her birthmark with disgust in his eyes. Georgiana started to feel ashamed every time he looked at her. When Aylmer looked at her, all the color would drain out of her face, making the birthmark stand out even more.

One evening, Georgiana was the one to start a talk about her birthmark. The night before, Aylmer had a bad dream. He was talking in his sleep about her birthmark.

How does Aylmer’s reaction to Georgiana’s birthmark affect her self esteem? Explain why it affects her this way.



















Most of all, he watched the hand-shaped birthmark on her cheek. It still disgusted him, but he suddenly stopped writing, leaned over, and kissed it. Even in her sleep, Georgiana pulled away, ashamed to have him touch her birthmark. As he watched, he saw the birthmark get lighter. It was less red than it was before. For hours, he watched the birthmark fade and come back again.

Finally, it was almost gone. He could barely see it.

“I did it!” Aylmer cried. “But she looks so pale.”

For the first time in weeks, Aylmer opened the curtains to let in the sun. He could barely see the birthmark. It was almost totally gone.

Georgiana woke up. She opened her eyes slowly and looked into the mirror Aylmer held in front of her. She smiled, then looked at her husband with sad eyes.

“My poor Aylmer,” she said.

“Poor? No! I’m the happiest man alive!” Aylmer said. “You are perfect now!”

“My poor Aylmer,” she said again. “You tried so hard. You did your best to fix what Nature ruined. But Aylmer...I’m dying.”

It was true. As the very last trace of the birthmark faded from Georgiana’s cheek, she took her last breath. In that moment, Aylmer realized what he had done. By trying to take something perfect and make it even better, he had destroyed it.

*This story is a parable (a story meant to teach readers a lesson or moral that they can apply to their own lives).*

*What is the lesson or moral of this story?*