**Puritan Punishment**

**Stocks and Pillory**

Stocks were the most common form of punishment. They were made of two heavy wooden planks with holes cut out to hold the ankles and wrists. The pillory was designed to hold the criminal while standing, and had holes for the head and hands. The stocks were designed for the lower class, and the pillory was designed for the elite in the community. To add insult to injury, the community would hurl insults and leftovers at the captive.

**Letter-Wearing**

As made infamous by Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter," letters were often sewn onto a criminal's clothes. The letters would represent specific crimes. For example, a "T" would stand for "thief" and a "D" would stand for "drunk in public." The symbolism behind the "A," worn by the woman in "The Scarlet Letter," is discussed frequently in literary circles. Some believe it represented "adultery."

**The Ducking Stool**

The ducking stool was reserved for wives who were deemed disrespectful and women known for gossip. The tool of judgment was a plank of wood balanced at the central location, much like a see-saw. A stool was strapped to the end of the plank, where the woman would be tied, and placed over water. A judge would assign a number of dunks based on the level of offense, and the criminal would face the judicial system wet and humiliated.

**Whipping and Brutal Punishments**

In occasions of grave offense, whipping would be inflicted. Most criminals would receive 20-40 lashes. The highest number of lashes on record was 117.

A crime considered especially heinous was speaking against the religion. This is a controversial topic in a country said to be founded on freedom of religion. If anyone spoke against Puritanism, the culprit would have a hot awl gouged through his tongue.

In some cases, instead of stitching a letter into clothing, the criminal would have a letter branded on the flesh. Typically, this flesh was the forehead, but other body parts have also have been documented for branding.

Some records show that alleged criminals were punished by having their ears cut off.

**Execution**

Puritans also executed their most serious offenders. The crimes worthy of death included adultery, even when only one witness would speak against the defendant, according to Celebrate Boston. The most common form of execution was hanging, but some people were burned at the stake. Records show that one particularly offensive Puritan was dismembered, or "drawn and quartered."