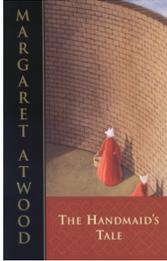


Books by the Stack



***The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood**

A work of speculative fiction set in a near-future New England where a totalitarian theocracy which has overthrown the United States government. The dystopian novel explores themes of women in subjugation and the various means by which they gain agency.

Why you'll like it: Character-driven. Absorbing. World-building. Thought-provoking.

About the Author: Margaret Atwood is a Canadian poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist, and environmental activist. She is a winner of the Arthur C. Clarke Award and Prince of Asturias Award for Literature, has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize five times, winning once, and has been a finalist for the Governor General's Award several times, winning twice. In 2001, she was inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame. She is also a founder of the Writers' Trust of Canada, a non-profit literary organization that seeks to encourage Canada's writing community. Among innumerable contributions to Canadian literature, she was a founding trustee of the Griffin Poetry Prize.

Questions for Discussion

1. After reading the Historical Notes on the Handmaid's Tale, did learning that the work was transcribed and pieced together by men, from recorded tapes, change the way you viewed the book? Or change the way you thought of Offred? How important is context in understanding a document? Did the author include the Historical Notes to change the way you thought or to give you a glimpse of what happened to Offred?
2. Do you see Offred as a challenging rebel or a powerless victim?
3. The Education facility, or the Red Center, where Offred is first indoctrinated, brings up the concept of Freedom. "There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of Anarchy, there was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from." They argue that it is a different kind of freedom, but freedom nonetheless. What do you think?
4. Many critics of the novel see it as being about power relationships. Besides the obvious one of male power over women, do you see any other power relationships? What is power?
5. The underground theme of the book is one of doubles. Can you think of any examples where this might be true?

6. At one point, Offred mentions that she is “ravenous for news...even if it’s false news” (20). What does she mean by “false news”? How does this relate to our current society and the concept of “fake news”?



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