



THE HANDMAID'S TALE

BY MARGARET ATWOOD

1. The story is told through Offred's viewpoint - does Offred's habit of talking about the process of storytelling make it easier or more difficult for you to suspend disbelief? e.g. "I made that up.." "Context is all"
2. Offred and the Commander talk about the new regime and what is 'natural'. As the human race, what is our nature?
3. What do you feel about the book's historical notes at the end?
4. In Chapter Sixteen, Offred reflects on the effect The Ceremony has on two of its three main players: Offred and Serena Joy. She asks herself "Which of us is it worse for, her or me?" What do you think?
5. The book was written over thirty years ago, and has never been out of print. It's inspired films, tv series and operas, but also been banned in schools. Atwood herself has said the book is one that has haunted the writer as well as the reader, after 30 years, why do you think it is still so powerful?

6. When women were removed from their jobs and the accounts frozen (and transferred to a male member of the family) Offred's husband reassures her that he would take care of her – she realised there is a certain amount of pleasure for him in this statement. How do you see the role of men in this story?
7. One of the big themes of the book is loss and remembrance. Offred realises how much she has started to forget, clings on to memories, but realises there is pain and danger in doing that. What memories would you cling on to?
8. It's implied Offred had an element of choice in becoming a handmaiden - Given the choice, would you opt for: Wife, Handmaiden, Hooker or Martha? Why?
9. What do you think happens to Offred in the end?

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