

Notes from The Handmaid's Tale Workshop

Ideas for starting

My Dystopia - reflection on what they find undesirable or frightening in society
Other dystopian texts/extracts
Visuals - key words - colour symbolism

Context

Atwood's insistence that the novel is speculative fiction and not Science Fiction - everything has happened in the real world.

Dystopia

Iranian revolution

Cold War

Puritans

Christian fundamentalism

TV Evangelism

Second Wave of Feminism

Ideas for Teaching

Focus on the dedication page

Teaching context - speed dating documents/research and presentations

Critical reception - use quotes from critics to see the evolution of the response to the novel.

Look at the Historical Notes first?

Focus on key passages

Keep a log - section by section

Drama - significant moment

Hotseat characters or interview handmaid's - podcast with an escaped handmaid

Draw the hierarchy in Gilead society

Gileadean glossary

Creative extension

Literary Features

Structure - alternating Night sections

Imagery

Black humour

Active and passive voice

Motifs

Symbolism

Poetic language

Pace - stillness

Themes Brainstorm

Identity

Survival

Language

Power

Storytelling

Fertility

Conflict

Sisterhood

Motherhood

Gender

Religion

Resistance/Subversion

Memory
Isolation
Violence
Control

Secrecy
Fear
Brainwashing
Despair

Hypocrisy
Privilege
Trauma
Scapegoats

Other Resources

Documentary on Vimeo - Atwood explains the origins of the costume

New York Times Interview

Article by Atwood in the NY Times about the relevance of the novel today

Timeline <https://www.slideshare.net/andyfisher/the-handmaids-tale-timeline>

Other Dystopian Texts

Ray Bradbury - Fahrenheit 451/There will come soft rains/The Pedestrian

The Power

1984

Brave New World

The Road