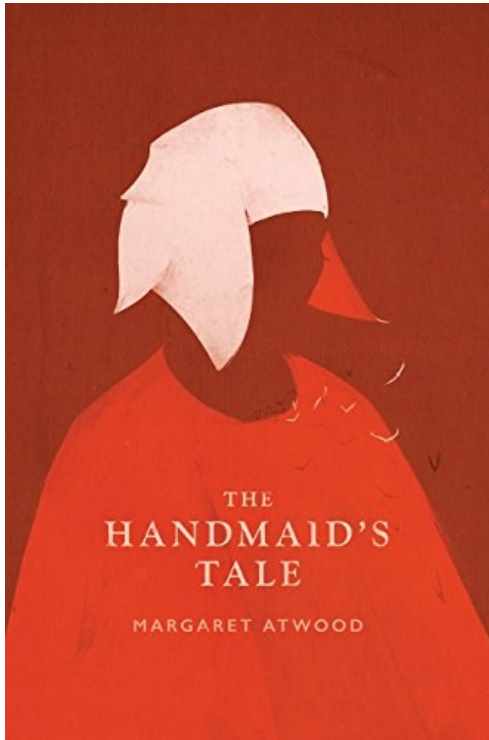


THE HANDMAID'S TALE



Book Summary:

In the near future, America becomes a puritanical theocracy and one woman tells about her only significance being her womb.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains profanity; violence; sexual activities; self-harm including suicide

Adult

By Margaret Atwood

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CONTENT WARNING

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Not For Minors
BookLooks Review Rating

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9	There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, or something without a shape or name.
19	Stillborn, it was. Or, stabbed with a knitting needle, right in the belly.
37	<p>It's like thumbing your nose from behind a fence or teasing a dog with a bone held out of reach, and I'm ashamed of myself for doing it, because none of this is the fault of these men, they're too young.</p> <p>Then I find I'm not ashamed after all. I enjoy the power; power of a dog bone, passive but there. I hope they get hard at the sight of us and have to rub themselves against the painted barriers, surreptitiously. They will suffer, later, at night, in their regimented beds. They have no outlets now except themselves, and that's a sacrilege. There are no more magazines, no more films, no more substitutes; only me and my shadow, walking away from the two men, who stand at attention, stiffly, by a roadblock, watching our retreating shapes.</p>
50	<p>Beside the main gateway there are six more bodies hanging, by the necks, their hands tied in front of them, their heads in white bags tipped sideways onto their shoulders.</p> <p>...We stop together as if on signal, and stand and look at the bodies.</p> <p>...What they are hanging from is hooks. The hooks have been set into the brickwork of the Wall, for this purpose.</p> <p>...But on one bag there's blood, which has seeped through the white cloth, where the mouth must have been. It makes another mouth, a small red one, like the mouths painted with thick brushes by kindergarten children.</p> <p>...The men wear white coats, like those worn by doctors or scientists.</p> <p>...Each has a placard hung around his neck to show why he has been executed: a drawing of a human fetus. They were doctors, then, in the time before, when such things were legal.</p>
55	<p>Lay is always passive. Even men used to say, I'd like to get laid. Though sometimes they said, I'd like to lay her.</p> <p>...Let's go for a beer.</p>
80	Tarts' stuff. Lace crotches, snap garters. Bras that push your tits up.
86	<p>My breasts are fingered in their turn, a search for ripeness, rot.</p> <p>..."I could help you," he says. Whispers.</p> <p>"What?" I say.</p> <p>"Shh," he says. "I could help you. I've helped others."</p> <p>"Help me?" I say, my voice as low as his. "How?" Does he know something, has he seen Luke, has he found, can he bring back?</p> <p>"How do you think?" he says, still barely breathing it. Is that his hand, sliding up my leg? He's taken off the glove. "The door's locked. No one will come in. They'll never know it isn't his."</p> <p>...His hand is between my legs. "Most of those old guys can't make it anymore," he says. "Or they're sterile."</p>
130	Above me, towards the head of the bed, Serena Joy is arranged, outspread. Her legs are apart, I lie between them, my head on her stomach, her pubic bone under the base of my skull, her thighs on either side of me. She too is fully clothed.

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	<p>My arms are raised; she holds my hands, each of mine in each of hers. This is supposed to signify that we are one flesh, one being. What it really means is that she is in control, of the process and thus of the product. If any. The rings of her left hand cut into my fingers. It may or may not be revenge.</p> <p>My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the Commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love, because this is not what he's doing.</p> <p>...I wish it were true; then I could get better and this would go away.</p> <p>Serena Joy grips my hands as if it is she, not I, who's being fucked, as if she finds it either pleasurable or painful, and the Commander fucks, with a regular two-four marching stroke, on and on like a tap dripping. He is preoccupied, like a man humming to himself in the shower without knowing he's humming; like a man who has other things on his mind. It's as if he's somewhere else, waiting for himself to come, drumming his fingers on the table while he waits. There's an impatience in his rhythm now. But isn't this everyone's wet dream, two women at once? They used to say that. Exciting, they used to say.</p> <p>...It has nothing to do with sexual desire, at least for me, and certainly not for Serena. Arousal and orgasm are no longer thought necessary; they would be a symptom of frivolity merely, like jazz garters or beauty spots: superfluous distractions for the light-minded. Outdated.</p>
133	I untangle myself from her body, stand up; the juice of the Commander runs down my legs.
142	But this is wrong, nobody dies from lack of sex.
159	Caresses her swollen breasts.
163	Sometimes the movie she showed would be an old porno film, from the seventies or eighties. Women kneeling, sucking penises or guns, women tied up or chained or with dog collars around their necks, women hanging from trees, or upside-down, naked, with their legs apart, women being raped, beaten up, killed. Once we had to watch a woman being slowly cut into pieces, her fingers and breasts snipped off with garden shears, her stomach slit open and her intestines pulled out.
173	<p>Someone has spiked the grape juice.</p> <p>Someone has pinched a bottle, from downstairs. It won't be the first time at such a gathering; but they'll turn a blind eye. We too need our orgies.</p>
189	On these days the Wives hang around for hours, helping to open the presents, gossiping, getting drunk.
198	Men are sex machines, said Aunt Lydia, and not much more.
218	The sexual act, although he performed it in a perfunctory way, must have been largely unconscious, for him like scratching himself.
239	The Pornomarts are shut, though, and there were no longer any Feels on Wheels vans and Bun-Dle Buggies circling the Square.
248	They'd been in a march that day; it was during the time of the porn riots, or was it the abortion riots, they were close together.

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277	She'd like me pregnant though, over and done with and out of the way, no more humiliating sweaty tangles, no more flesh triangles under her starry canopy of silver flowers.
284	Last night he had a drink, Scotch and water. He's taken to drinking in my presence, to unwind after the day, he says.
286	What about all the Pornycorners, it was all over the place, they even had it motorized. ...That was part of it, the sex was too easy. Anyone could just buy it. There was nothing to work for, nothing to fight for.
288	From the center was the chandelier, and from the chandelier a twisted strip of sheet was hanging down. That's where she was swinging, just lightly, like a pendulum; the way you could swing as a child, hanging by your hands from a tree branch.
304	"What does he want? Kinky sex?"
308	Or you'd remember stories you'd read, in the newspapers, about women who had been found- often women but sometimes they would be men, or children, that was the worst- in ditches or forests or refrigerators in abandoned rented rooms, with their clothes on or off, sexually abused or not; at any rate killed.
333	"...What'd you do wrong? Laugh at his dick?"
343	"...The food's not bad and there's drink and drugs, if you want it, and we only work nights."
355	Separate entrance, it would say in the ads, and that meant you could have sex, unobserved.
356	He's undoing my dress, a man made of darkness, I can't see his face, and I can hardly breathe, hardly stand, and I'm not standing. His mouth is on me, his hands, I can't wait and he's moving, already, love, it's been so long, I'm alive in my own skin, again, arms around him, falling and water softly everywhere, never-ending. ...No preliminaries, he knows why I'm here. To get knocked up, to get in trouble, up the pole, those were all names for it once.
357	Let's be practical. "I don't have much time," I say. This is awkward and clumsy, it isn't what I mean. "I could just squirt it into a bottle and you could pour it in," he says. He doesn't smile. ...Still, it's amazing how easily it comes back to mind, this corny and falsely gay sexual banter. ...He begins to unbutton, then to stroke, kisses beside my ear. "No romance," he says. "Okay?" That would have meant something else, once. Once it would have meant: no strings. ...There wasn't any thunder though, I added that in. To cover up the sounds, which I am ashamed of making.
359	Thinking: cheap. They'll spread their legs for anyone. All you need to give them is a cigarette.
348	"This man," says Aunt Lydia, "has been convicted of rape."

Profanity	Count
Bitch	4
Dick	1
Fuck	7
Piss	1
Shit	10