

Ch. 1 – 2 The Handmaid’s Tale

1. Read the brief prologue to the book. With these quotations in mind, what predictions can you make about the novel?

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2. Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth patrol at night with “electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts.” What does this detail, along with others, reveal about the situation thus far? More important, what does it reveal about the narrator?

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3. Who are the Angels? What is the narrator’s hope regarding them?

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4. What detail(s) reveal the strictness of the prison that the narrator finds herself in?

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5. The narrator remains unnamed for a large portion of the novel. For the purposes of clarity and simplicity in this teaching unit, her name will be revealed now as Offred. Why do you think, though, that the author would choose to keep the narrator unnamed for over half of the novel?

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6. Why has anything to which a rope could be tied been removed?

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7. The reader first begins to notice Offred’s internal fascination with language in Chapter 2. Provide an example and explain why she might be so intent upon the way words work with and play upon each other.

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8. What is evidence of Offred's optimism?

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9. Describe Offred's clothing. What color is it, and how is the color symbolic? What is the significance of the elements of her clothing?

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