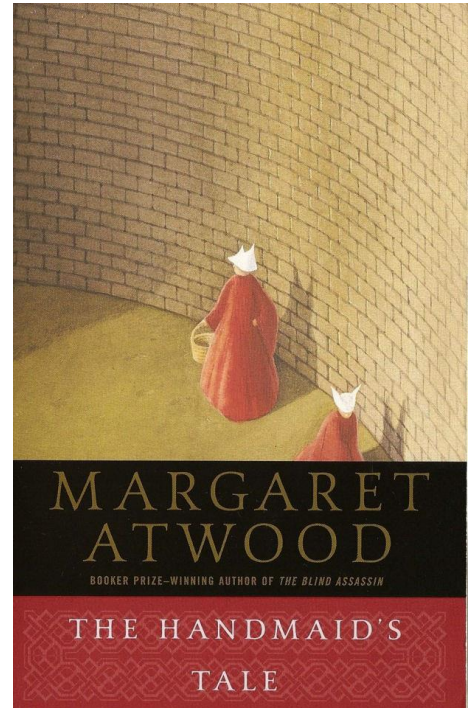


Skaneateles Library  
Books by the Stack  
Discussion Questions

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

1. The novel begins with three epigraphs. What are their functions?
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??
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." What does she mean by this statement?
7. Why is the Bible under lock and key in Gilead?
8. What do you feel the "Historical Notes" at the book's end add to the reading of this novel? What does the book's last line mean to you?
9. Atwood's title brings to mind titles from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Why might Atwood have wanted you to make that connection?
10. Would you recommend others read this book?



*Discussion questions adapted from Anchor Books and from Grand Rapids Public Library*