

Further Reading

Oryx and Crake

Margaret Atwood (2003)

ATWOOD

Snowman, known as Jimmy before mankind was overwhelmed by a plague, is struggling to survive in a world where he may be the last human, while also mourning the loss of his best friend, Crake, and the beautiful and elusive Oryx. In search of answers, Snowman embarks on a journey through the lush wilderness that was so recently a great city, until powerful corporations took mankind on an uncontrolled genetic engineering ride. Book 1 of a trilogy.

Hag-Seed: The Tempest Retold

Margaret Atwood (2016)

ATWOOD

A retelling of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Hag-seed follows the retribution plot of a deposed artistic director who teaches prison inmates while consulting with a fantasy child who has taken the place of the daughter he lost years earlier.

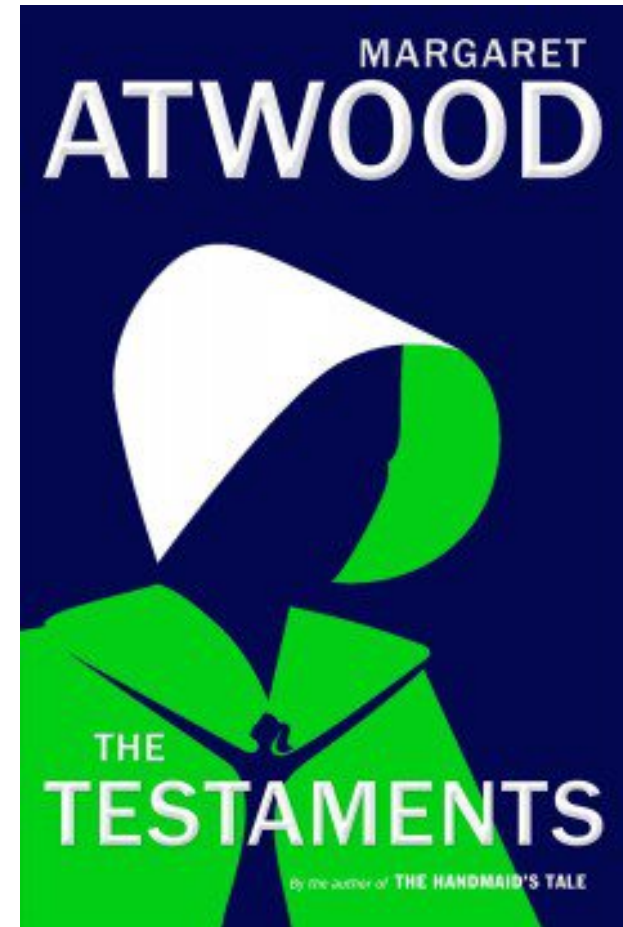
The Heart Goes Last

Margaret Atwood (2015)

ATWOOD

Enrolling in a project that allows them to live in safe homes between alternate service months spent in prison, a homeless couple is threatened by troubling events stemming from the wife's involvement with another project member.

Book Discussion Guide



About the Book

Set fifteen years after events in the *Handmaid's Tale*, the theocratic regime in Gilead is beginning to show signs of rotting from within. At this crucial moment in time, the lives of three women converge. One is from Gilead, the privileged daughter of an important Commander; one is from Canada, where she marches in protests; and one is an enforcer for the regime, a woman whose power comes from secrets. When secrets bring the women together, there are explosive results.

Discussion Questions

1. Clothes play a dual role in the novel. They signal life stages as well as status and class. Did this aspect of the novel strike you as odd? Or do you see an equivalent in our society?
2. Aunt Lydia tells us that Gilead actually has “an embarrassingly high emigration rate.” Can those who manage to leave Gilead ever truly escape?
3. Daisy/Jade is, to say the least, a reluctant revolutionary. But if you were her age and were asked to absorb all of the shocking information she has to process in a very short period of time, would you have reacted any differently?
4. After Agnes is assaulted, she recalls other girls who reported such incidents having been told that “nice girls did not notice the minor antics of men, they simply looked the other way.” What do you think about this statement? Can you relate it to the present day?

5. When Aunt Lydia dons the garb of the female stadium shooters, she says, “I felt a chill. I put it on. What else should I have done?” What would you have done?

6. Agnes’ interpretation of “Dick and Jane” showcases Margaret Atwood’s trademark wit, but there is more to it than that. Discuss the ways in which the author builds the sense of suspicion and fear that informs the way Agnes processes the events in her life at Ardua Hall.

7. Several references are made to shortages of basic necessities such as food and electricity. Birth defects and juvenile cancer also seem to plague Gilead. What do you think has caused these unstable circumstances?

8. Agnes sees her admittance to Hildegard Library as a “golden key” that will reveal “the riches that lay within.” But it is here that she learns the truth about the Concubine Cut into Twelve Pieces, as well as the truth about her half-sister. What do you think Atwood is trying to say about acquisition of knowledge in the world of the novel? Can you think of any other examples that support/disprove your view?

9. When Aunt Lydia relays the *Aesop's Fables* story of Fox and Cat, she reveals much about her survival skills. Which is she, Fox or Cat? What are you?

10. Did the book change your view about any aspect of our contemporary society? If so, how? What do you think Atwood wanted readers to take away from the story?

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