

**AP English Literature and Composition**  
**Summer Assignment**  
**The Handmaid's Tale & How to Read Literature Like a Professor**

*A gripping vision of our society radically overturned by a theocratic revolution, Margaret Atwood's **The Handmaid's Tale** has become one of the most powerful and most widely read novels of our time.*

*Offred is a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead, serving in the household of the enigmatic Commander and his bitter wife. She may go out once a day to markets whose signs are now pictures because women are not allowed to read. She must pray that the Commander makes her pregnant, for in a time of declining birthrates her value lies in her fertility, and failure means exile to the dangerously polluted Colonies. Offred can remember a time when she lived with her husband and daughter and had a job, before she lost even her own name. Now she navigates the intimate secrets of those who control her every move, risking her life in breaking the rules.*

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### Assignment #1

**PART 1: Read and enjoy *The Handmaid's Tale*.**

**PART 2: Watch several** episodes of *The Handmaid's Tale*. This is currently available on a variety of streaming services.

**PART 3: Create** a Dialectical Journal that focuses on your response to the text, the TV show, and the world. I encourage you to also look for current articles on reproductive rights, feminism (globally) and issues regarding the separation of church and state and/or theocratic political structures. As you read, look for quotations that seem significant, thought-provoking, or puzzling. Once you choose a passage that stands out to you, record it in the left column of a T-chart with the page number. In the right column, have a conversation--or "dialogue"--with the text by questioning, connecting to, predicting, reflecting on, or evaluating the passage.

#### *How to Set Up Your Dialectical Journal*

Your dialectical journal should be typed and set up like a T-chart with two columns. The left column must include a **direct quotation** from the text with a **page number citation**. The right column must include the **context** of the quotation, or a brief summary of what was happening in the book where you found that quote, as well as a thoughtful **response** to the quotation. Your response can either...

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| (Q) Question | -- ask about something in the passage that is unclear   |
| (C) Connect  | -- make a connection to your life, the world, or another text, and the TV show  |
| (P) Predict  | -- anticipate what will occur based on what's in the passage  |
| (R) Reflect  | -- think deeply about what the passage means in a broad sense – not just to the characters in the story. What conclusions can you draw about the world or human nature? |
| (E) Evaluate | -- make a judgment about the character(s), their actions, or what the author is trying to say   |

**\*Please label each entry (Q, C, P, R or E) so that Ms. Thurston can easily identify which response style you choose.**

**Sample Dialectical Journal Entry for *The Handmaid's Tale***

Quotation	Response
<p>“We folded our clothes neatly and laid them on the stools at the end of the beds. The lights were turned down but not out. Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth patrolled; they had electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts” (4).</p>	<p><b>Context:</b> The narrator has just described what <i>used</i> to happen in a school gymnasium and now she is beginning to talk about how the function of the gymnasium has changed. Specifically, the narrator seems to be living in the gymnasium and is describing what it is like to sleep there every night.</p> <p><b>(R)</b> The details in this passage make it seem like the women are in jail. For example, the lights are turned “down” but not turned off entirely; this suggests that they have no privacy, not even the privacy that comes with darkness. The fact that the women who “patrolled” the gym are called aunts is disturbing. An aunt is a female relative and usually family members love and take care of one another. However these “aunts” wear leather belts and carry “cattle prods.” Cattle prods are sticks that can be used to move or herd cattle. Some cattle prods are electric, meaning they work by shocking the cow with a pulse of electricity. These aunts seem to have weapons and I have a feeling the narrator is being forced to stay in the gymnasium.</p>

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**Grading Rubric:**

You should have a minimum of **fifteen (15) entries** from the book-- five (5) entries from the early chapters, five (5) entries from the middle chapters, and five (5) entries from the final chapters.

- All entries must contain: direct quote, page number, context statement, thoughtful response paragraph. Response paragraphs must expand on quoted passage not restate or rephrase.
- All entries must be typed into one document and submitted to Ms. Thurston in the MAX Summer Canvas Course by **AUGUST 6, 2019**
- Students who have conflicts with this expectation are expected to discuss conflicts with Ms. Thurston **BEFORE** the end of this school year, and make alternate arrangements.

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**Assignment #2--There will be an in-class essay on this text in August.**

In addition to reading and writing about *The Handmaid's Tale*, AP Literature and Composition students should obtain a copy of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster.

While you are welcome to read the entire book, I would like you to focus on Chapters 2, 5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19, and 20. Please annotate these chapters the way you would any text that you are reading for informational purposes – make note of key ideas, important details, and anything in the text you think is especially interesting. If you have your own copy of the text, you may annotate directly into it, or you can use sticky notes. Connect the ideas in the book to texts you have read in school as well as books and films you know from outside of school.

Your annotated copy of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* is due to Ms. Thurston **on the first day of school.**