

## The Handmaid's Tale

### A. The poster (doc 2)

- What strikes you the most ?
- What can you imagine the series is about ?

### B. The trailer (doc 3) : watch it and understand the plot

- Who's speaking ? Identify as many details about her as possible
  - Explain the situation : what happened ? What changed ?
  - What's the effect of the voice over ?

### C. The Handmaid's Tale : summary (doc 4)

Watch the video and answer the questions

1. What's the name of the Christian fundamentalist regime depicted in the Handmaid's Tale?
2. What type of government has it established?
3. Where ?
4. who has the power in this government ?
5. When was the novel published ?
6. What was happening at the time in the US ?
7. What was this movement advocating ?
8. What are the relationships between men and women in the novel ?
9. Name the 4 different women social classes of the novel.  
Associate a colour to each of them.
10. Show that women are no longer free in this regime.
11. Recap what you have learnt about the main character.

### D. The extracts from the article from The Guardian (doc 5)

Read the 6 extracts from the article.

- Explain what initial ideal America was built on ? Did this ideal survive ?
- Why does Atwood say : « science fiction is really about now » ?  
Remember when and where she wrote the book and draw your own conclusions.
- How does modern day America resemble an « Atwellian » era and echo the Handmaid's tale ?
- What power or effect does dystopian fiction have ?

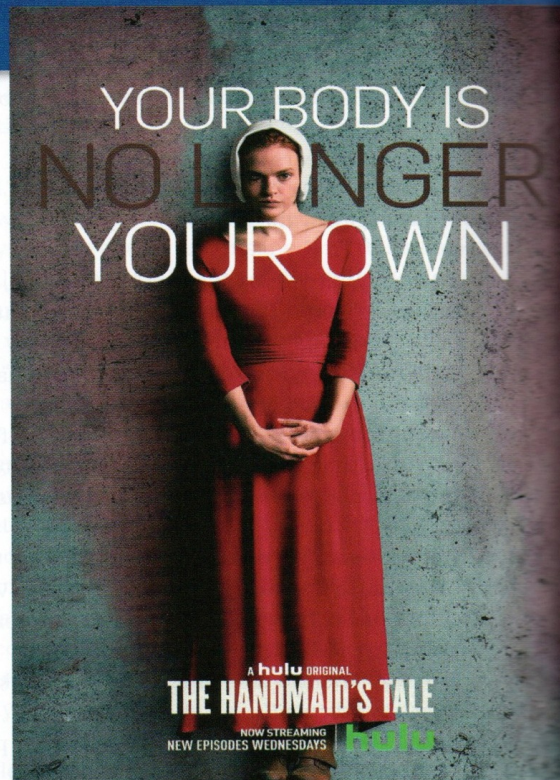
"I'M NOT A PROPHET.  
SCIENCE-FICTION IS REALLY ABOUT NOW."

Excerpts from Margaret Atwood's interview with *The Guardian*  
by Lisa Allardica, Jan. 2018

*The Handmaid's Tale* was written in 1984 in West Berlin – when else? where else? – to answer the question: if there was a totalitarian regime in the United States, what kind of regime would it be?

The series honours Atwood's rule of not including anything that hasn't happened somewhere in the world already; the addition of modern horrors makes it all the more chillingly plausible.

"I'm not a prophet", she says. "Let's get rid of that idea right now. Prophecies are really about now. In science fiction it's always about now. What else could it be about? There is no future. There are many possibilities, but we do not know which one we are going to have." She is, however, "sorry to have been so right".



Poster for the TV series *The Handmaid's Tale*, 2017



A picture of women dressed up as handmaids demonstrating against budget cuts to Planned Parenthood (an organization that provides sexual health care) in Washington D.C., 2017

American democracy has never felt so challenged [Atwood says]. "The real reason people expect so much of America in modern times is that it set out to be a utopia. That didn't last very long. Nathaniel Hawthorne nailed it when he said the first thing they did when they got to America was build a scaffold and a prison.

Post Trump's election, the novel is back on the bestseller lists, placards reading "Make Atwood fiction again" appear on the streets, and women have adopted her red robes in silent protest at threatened anti-abortion legislation. We are living in an Atwellian era, and it's not pretty.

"There is always hope. Otherwise why get up in the morning?" she says. And as for human nature: "We are capable of the most amazing altruism and wonderfulness and we are also capable of the most vile atrocities and horrible acts. It's not news. We behave well when times are good."