

- Repeated use of rhetorical questions show that Offred is never going to be respected enough as a human being to have her concerns addressed – "But is she mourning or gloating?" – she is silent and can only hope that one day someone will answer her.
- "I resent this grace of hers. I resent her meek head, bowed as if into a heavy wind. But there is no wind" – repetition of Offred's feelings as she tried to reaffirm to herself that this is what she is thinking – she has no other outlet so has to repeat her thoughts in order to make them seem real.
- Repetition of phrases such as "Under His Eye," become mantras that are repeated, referencing the persistent brainwashing that occurs in Gilead, and the religious monotony of their lives.
- Use of capitalisation is unusual and inconsistent: "husbands ... Wives." Wives is capitalised but husbands is not and there is no grammatical explanation for this.
- Completely out of context descriptions of small details, or small events. Offred is trying to distract herself from her current reality by diverting her attention to something that she knows. She never describes the Handmaid's wings or the Eye van thing with this much detail – she only describes everyday objects like carrots or flowers – these are things that she already knew before Gilead became a thing and so her descriptions of them are her trying to root herself in the past and make herself think that things haven't changed that much "Old carrots they are, thick ones, over-wintered, bearded from their time in storage. The new carrots, tender and pale, won't be ready for weeks" (castration allusion?)
- Devolution to archaic speech "I wish to ingratiate myself." instead of "I want to ingratiate myself"
- Alternation between passive and active "I've been dismissed. I pick up the basket. She holds on to the fragments of life that she has control over.

3. Are you starting to notice any motifs emerging? What are they? Why is Atwood using them?

- Silence and speechlessness – Offred herself only narrates inside her head and when she speaks to Ofglen or other members of the house it is filtered and censored so as not to arouse suspicion. She categorically states of Serena Joy that "She doesn't make speeches any more. She has become speechless"
- When Offred is describing things, she often uses sexual innuendos "The tulips along the border are redder than ever, opening, no longer winecups but chalices; thrusting themselves up, to what end?"
- Ambiguity about the past is often referred to. Offred has a large swathe of her past missing, and it is never properly explained. It is also said that "Something like this must have happened to [Serena Joy], once she saw the true shape of things to come" – but again exactly what this event was is never stated. "*A society that does not remember its past is condemned to repeat it*"
- Idea of women becoming antagonists and fighting against their own gender (divide and conquer) "*It's not the husbands you have to watch out for, said Aunt Lydia, it's the Wives.*"

4. Why do regimes take children away from parents for political reasons in this text? What examples can you find for this in the 20th century? The 21st? Take 10 minutes to research this. Please make sure you have a look at Australia in relation to this. After researching this, please discuss with firstly, table groups, then share as a class, how this makes you feel. How does it help you to understand the point that Atwood is trying to make? What is this point?

In order to control a population, you need to keep the population small, which generally

that it was some secret firing squad or closed execution. However, by finding out that the execution is public and that the Handmaids actually are involved directly in the process, it shocks us to realise that anyone can be complicit in these atrocities and that nobody in Gilead is truly blameless for what is happening.

3. Why do you think the women participate with such enthusiasm?

It gives them power. They have had everything taken from them and subconsciously know that it was men who took these rights away from them. During the Particicution, they are allowed to retaliate against these people who have hurt them. They relish the opportunity of "revenge" because it gives them momentary power and lets them unleash the rage and resentment that they have been gradually building up in a violent way. From Gilead's perspective, this outlet stops them from lashing out at The Commanders. However the root of their enthusiasm is in the satisfaction they get for feeling they are doing something to vent their hatred and have so much power over another person.

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