

## WAS AUNT LYDIA KIND TO JUNE AND ALL THE OTHER HANDMAIDS?

Aunt Lydia was a cold-hearted lady, unlike most of Gilead's misogynist and totalitarian authority that was made up of Commanders, guards, and Eyes. As in charge, she trained and disciplined handmaids in an infertility-plagued world the Commanders would rape them in monthly ceremonies to conceive a child. Aunt Lydia was also a perfect example of someone who—though stripped of her rights and power as well for being a woman—was desperate for even a slight amount of power and took it in the form of control over the handmaids. And this monstrous lady severed limbs, ordered to pelt stones, and gouged out eyeballs with the great belief she was serving God if handmaids didn't comply. Consequently, Aunt Lydia was not kind to June and all the other handmaids.

Aunt Lydia acted villainously and tortured the handmaids to comply with her. Her cruelty was portrayed at the Red Center when she trained one of the first groups of handmaids. She didn't hesitate to remove Janine's eye, for example, when she opposed becoming a Handmaid. Also, Aunt Lydia devised many of Gilead's contentious training techniques, making handmaids to hold rocks for hours in the rain to kill traitors in blind rages. Also, she ordered, orchestrated, or oversaw all the severe physical injuries, such as removing Janine's eye and performing female circumcision on Emily for being a gender traitor. When she wasn't disciplining handmaids with physical violence, Aunt Lydia psychologically twisted them in different ways. She also manipulated her charges into believing that the only way they might receive true love was by being good girls, meaning obedient, quiet, and utterly debased. Aunt Lydia also persecuted Emily, impelling Emily to stab her in the back. And after her recuperation, Aunt Lydia becomes even harder on handmaids.

Additionally, the relationship between Lydia and June was always tumultuous. She was abusive towards June emotionally and shamed June to believe that her actions harmed others, including their deaths. Aunt Lydia often asserted her power over June, and at one point, she even flogged her with a cattle prod, before Serena Joy (the Commander's wife) could intervene her, but Aunt Lydia tried to be kind to June due to her pregnancy as she's excited about the prospect of a baby. Moreover, Aunt Lydia ordered to execute Martha who helped June connect with her daughter, Hannah. The worst of it was that Aunt Lydia forced June and the other handmaids to execute her.

On the other hand, Aunt Lydia was a soft-hearted lady. She sympathized with Janine when Serena told her to remove Janine from an important dinner because of her missing eye. She proved her motherliness here. Also, when she ordered the other handmaids to stone Janine to death for raping a pregnant Handmaid, resulting in the baby's death, the handmaids, led by June, refused. That forced the guards ready to shoot all of them for their disobedience, but Aunt Lydia begged them to spare the handmaids saying she would punish them herself. Besides, Aunt Lydia believed herself as the protector of handmaids and blamed herself if they failed. Dowd (2017)