

What offered's
perspective and
make it vivid in essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' is a modern dystopian fantasy which tells the story of an ordinary woman who becomes subject to the ultra-religious beliefs of the Republic of Gilead, a state in which the law of the Bible rules. The novel is both modern and classic; drawing influence from many past works of literature such as the Bible, but still manages to show a strong significance with modern political attitudes. From the very first chapter the reader is thrust into Offred's mind, and the narrative follows a stream of consciousness thus enabling Atwood to include all of the characters' thoughts and feelings, even those which seem at a tangent to the main storyline. 'There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation' this abstract narrative style is one of the distinguishing features of the book and also works as a useful tool, as it enables Atwood to describe things from Offred's perspective as opposed to common novels which use description from the author's point of view.

I remember that yearning, for something that was always about to happen and was never the same' another advantage to this narrative approach is that the book seems more human, like an old-fashioned storyteller as opposed to simply mechanical description which draws similarities with old Bible stories which were told by people all over the world. It creates an empathy and understanding between the reader and the main character which makes every tragedy more poignant and every success more uplifting. The first chapter also instantly addresses the horrifying nature of the Republic of Gilead, with mention of 'guns... specially picked from the Angels.' The use of guns in the first chapter is a clever trick by Atwood as guns conjure up many connotations and violent imagery. This dramatically contrasts with the

imagery generally associated with angels, which manages to bring a dark tone to the novel from the outset as readers' perceptions are turned on their heads.

This use of contrasting images also adds to the dystopian feel of the novel as normality is shattered and replaced with a dark, twisted semi-normality. By seeing all of this through the eyes of someone living through it, and the way in which these strange dark images seem normal, the reader is drawn in to the story and everything seems more vivid and real. By chapter 23, the reader has become more familiar with the narrative voice in the story, and Offred seems more like an old friend. This is the strength of the distinctive narrative style, that whilst it seems unconventional at the beginning of the book, by the end it seems normal, familiar and friendly. ' This is a reconstruction. All of it is a reconstruction.

It's a reconstruction now, as I lie flat on my single bed' as the story progresses, and the reader is able to better understand the events, Atwood adds in more random strands of storytelling, to give the novel more of a sense of personality. ' I went to sleep after all, and dreamed I was wearing earrings, and one of them was broken' Dream sequences add subconscious imagery and insight to the novel, which help the reader to understand Offred and also work as tools to decipher the general storyline. Atwood also repeatedly uses the analysis of language to aid in the depiction of Offred's plight. ' The understatement of the year was the phrase my mother uses.

Used. I feel like cotton candy: sugar and air' the way Offred inquisitively picks away at statements gives her an added humanity and fallibility which

makes her story more compelling to the reader and also adds to the realism of the story; Offred is a character readers can associate with and therefore they can imagine themselves in the same situation. By showing things through the eyes of the character, it is much easier to build up a vivid mental image of what is going on and so the reader becomes totally immersed in the story and its events, each metaphor seems more realistic and each description more detailed. Another interesting tool Atwood uses is the switching of tenses and timelines in this novel. The whole story is set in the past, yet much of it is narrated in the present tense as if being read into a Dictaphone, which adds to the realism of the story. In chapter 46 Offred 'consider[s] these things idly.

Each one of them seems the same size as all the others', yet in chapter 1 'Elizabeth patrolled; they had electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts. ' This constant switch of tense makes the story seem like an organic thing, even though it is all set in the past the story still has a present, there is a definition between what is and what was which makes it seem as though the reader is present at the moment of the story's conception which gives an exclusive personal feel to the narrative. It is like the reader is in the same room as Offred is recounting the story which again makes it feel alive. The timeline of the story constantly and seemingly randomly switches between past and present events in the same way someone might if they were telling a story out loud. In conclusion, I think that 'The Handmaid's Tale' is an interesting novel which effectively tells a timeless story in a compelling way. Atwood uses a number of tools to successfully portray Offred's story in a compelling way.

The distinctive narrative style instantly makes the book stand out from others, and whilst it is initially difficult to get to grips with the constant sidetracking and jolting of position, by the end of the novel the reader seems to 'know' the main character 'Offred' like an old friend, and by being thrust inside the main characters mind, it feels like the reader is seeing events through their own eyes rather than simply reading a book. This style makes the remarkable story seem perfectly plausible and with the extra addition of 'historical notes' at the end of the novel, one finds themselves almost asking if events in the book really happened. Overall the interesting features of the book are a great success and rather than feeling gimmicky, they make this novel stand out as a possible classic for years to come.