

The handmaid's tale: rebellion is freedom



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Handmaid's Tale, a novel by Margaret Atwood, is about the life of a handmaid, Offred, and what she does to survive in the Gilead. The society of Gilead in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaids Tale is based upon the idea of making a safer place to live by producing freedoms from things such as rape to protect the women society. Offred finds that all these freedoms from are restricting her personal being therefore; she becomes a bit rebellious and starts gaining actual true freedom, power and chances she would have never gotten if she lived the way of the Gilead.

" This is the heart of Gilead, where the war cannot intrude except on television. Where the edges are we aren't sure, they vary, according to the attacks and counter attacks; but this is the center where nothing moves."

(23) The Republic of Gilead is a place that is supposed to be a perfect society free from such things as rape and any type of abuse against women. Somewhere along the way the population of Gilead decreased and now the society of Gilead needed to find a way for their population to grow and still protect women. So to protect the women Gilead set up restrictions for the people of Gilead more appending restrictions on the women.

Women in the Gilead were set up in a caste system of Wives, Aunts, Handmaids, Marthas, and the Unwomen. Offred's life as a handmaid had many restrictions, more than those of a wife or aunt. Offred was not allowed to go shopping alone, go anywhere alone in fact, hold a conversation with other people, especially other men, or do anything that was against the Gilead's view of the perfect society. " There is no such thing as a sterile man anymore, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that's the law."(61) Right now she couldn't even take a

shower by herself. The Marathas had to bathe her because of her special care, for her only purpose was to produce babies so good care of the mother meant a result of a “ good baby”.

Offred had freedom from any of the abuse of women or so called abuse of women. Yet this was not enough for Offred, Offred recalls a time when she went shopping and Nick tries to talk to her. She remembers what one of the Aunts said to explain his actions. “ All flesh is weak. All flesh is grass...They can't help it she said, God made them that way but He did not make you that way, He made you different, it is up to you to set the boundaries.”(45) Offred knows that God didn't make her any different from the men. She too had needs that needed to be fulfilled. Offred at many times remembers her past life of her husband Luke, daughter, and her best friend Moira, and thinks of how she regrets not taking her life then more seriously. All that Offred wants now is for her life to return to normal like it was before the society of Gilead was made. She wanted to be free from all these freedoms from and have more freedoms to. This was the opposite thinking of the Republic of Gilead.

To suffice her needs she starts doing little things like hiding a pat of butter from dinner in her shoe. “ As long as we do this, butter our skin to keep it soft, we can believe we will some day get out, that we will be touched again, in love or desire. We have ceremonies of our own. Private ones.”(97) The butter that Offred has gives her the power to feel a sense of prettiness again. She gains the freedom to care for herself.

After small rebellious acts gain her a little freedom she goes to a higher extent. She makes relationships with certain people to gain power. “ To want

is to have a weakness. It's this weakness, whatever it is that entices me."(136) These rebellious acts begin to gain her freedoms to ironically, such as her relationship with the Commander. In her relationship with the commander; Offred gains such things as real hand lotion, the freedom to read magazines, also to know what is going on in the outside world. " Now it's forbidden, for us. Now it's dangerous...Now it's desirable"(138) Offred is not the only one gaining from this relationship. The Commander is also he is getting from her what he can not get from his wife.