

# Torture and fear in the handmaids tale

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



The action or practice of inflicting severe pain on someone as a punishment or to force them to do or say something, or for the pleasure of the person inflicting the pain. The handmaids tale is a novel by Margaret Atwood, It describes the life of a woman who is documenting her life as it goes on, As the book progresses we are able to see the amount of torture (physical and mental) that the woman of Gilead receive. Offred and other women in Gilead are well aware of Gilead's rules and Offred acknowledges the punishments and the torture she will endure if she does not obey.

Throughout the novel we can begin to see Offred disobey the rules and begin fighting the totalitarian regime. Gilead's rules are enforced by 'god' which makes adds guilt to whoever breaks them as you are technically disobeying god. People are very likely to do things when religion is involved and Gilead uses that to its advantage especially when they add the fear and punishment of death. Serena joy, the wife of the commander was a strong advocate for submissive female roles before the war and before the formation of Gilead.

The creation of Gilead has lead Serena Joy to become a housewife. Before the Formation of Gilead, Serena joy used to be a preacher, She emphasized how woman should stay home and how they belong at home. After the totalitarian regime began, Serena Joy quickly realized how she preaches where misdirected, As Offred quotes " She doesn't make speeches anymore; she has become speechless (pg 56) this is a clear demonstration of how Gilead took her words and twisted them to their advantage and to have power over her and other woman, and with power comes fear.

Serena Joy was once a very powerful woman but due to the fact that she cannot reproduce she has very little purpose in society, which begins to create jealousy over Offred who is fertile. Serena feels very resentful over Offred as she has the chance to reproduce and that she is having a sexual relationship with her husband. Serena is forbidden to show any resentful behaviour and must show only gratitude and acceptance towards Offred otherwise her actions would be punishable.

The effect of negativity towards someone else is highly forbidden as it creates conflict and any social interaction is illegal and will result in severe consequences. The amount of fear the Gilead produces over its society is the key factor to keeping control over them. In Gilead, Women are stripped of their pride. They are taken away and isolated from their families and loved ones. Gilead uses this method as a strong method of torture as it leaves women with scared thoughts and broken hearts; inevitably this makes women very weak and desperate.

Offred explains how her husband Luke and her child were taken away from her when they tried escaping the new society. We learn how effective this method of torture is by how Offred is haunted by the thoughts of her daughter and Gilead strictly forbids her to feel any form of emotion; this puts Offred in constant risk especially due to the fact that she suffers throughout the whole novel. In Gilead you are forbidden to be seen in public unsupervised, thus you are forced to be paired with a stranger. You are refused to see your partner's face and create unnecessary discussion.

Gilead enforces a physiological fear that a group called the 'Eye'. The name the 'Eye' comes from the all-foreseeing eye which means you are being

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watching you all the time. This builds a fear that no matter what you do you are going to be judged and evaluate it and if you are seen crossing limits you will be punished. This causes Women (and men) to be narrowed down and remain quiet. The Eye is a very effective mechanism of fear as it strips women from their individuality and eventually causes them to stop thinking. The fear it generates is very immense and it deals a torture.

If one is being unlawful and disobedient, you are required by law to report them. Trust is exceptionally hard to build in the new society. Gilead takes this to its advantage as if trust cannot be sustained, that means communication will be cut off; without communication people will eventually fall into depression and feel utterly lonely. Physiological torture is very effective in a society such as Gilead as it allows 100% control over what the people do. Gilead also portrays torture by placing disobedient women on the jail wall, hung by their necks. They are placed in public so that everyone is able to see them.

The government officials keep control by forcing women attend 'salvaging's' in which they are forced to view the execution of woman who's crimes are not announced. Religion plays a major role in fear. It is used to ensure people fear breaking rules as they would be breaking something that god set them out to do. They are in fear that if they do something in which can result in a consequence, or the fact that they are doing something illegal, they are breaking Gods trust; The Gilead uses that to their advantage as they have greater control if the society is influenced by religion.

Gilead follows an obligatory rule in which woman are forced to have a male counterpart, Gilead is a male controlled society but no matter how much <https://assignbuster.com/torture-and-fear-in-the-handmaids-tale/>

women are disregarded, they are essential for the successors of the society. Being fertile in Gilead is the only form of power a woman receives, infertile women are often quickly disregarded. Gilead creates an atmosphere in which if you are capable of producing life, you are granted the chance to live. Women who are infertile are usually disposed of in outskirts of the city cleaning radioactive material or hung.