

What I enjoy about *The Handmaid's Tale* the most is that it is told through the feminist lens. I personally have never experienced living in a dystopia or being a Handmaid but I relate to the book in many ways. *The Handmaid's Tale* touches on many topics such as sisterhood, gender roles, and power. The story of Gilead touches on these themes at extreme conditions allowing people across various backgrounds and experiences to find the book relatable.

In chapter 13 Offred narrates about her time at the Red Center. Janine tells the Handmaids a story about how she was sexually assaulted by a group of men. After giving her testimony Offred narrates "Her fault, her fault, her fault, we chant in unison" (72). It hurt me to read this because I cannot imagine how much pain this would bring upon Janine. The Handmaid's response is the kind of reaction I would expect from a man, but never a group of women. This stood out to me because it reminds me of how society usually reacts to sexual assault victims in the real world. About two years ago my mom showed me a news article on facebook about a woman being sexually assaulted on a Septa train coming home from work. The article cited that the crime took place at 9 pm and the victim was intoxicated. As my mom and I looked through the comments, there were multiple who seemed to be unphased by the incident. There were a number of comments claiming that the victim was in the wrong. "No women should be alone at that hour", "She shouldn't have been drunk", "Why would she get on the train alone". This made me feel scared because it let me know that if I were to ever be in the same position as the victim, I would be at the blame. When reading *The Handmaid's Tale* it feels like the author took all of the worst case scenarios for a woman and made them into a dystopian society. I don't relate to this scenario in particular but this does make me feel more familiar with the characters because they are witnessing the same thing that I have witnessed.

In chapter 19 Offred tells about her experience in the Red Center and the things that Aunt Lydia would preach to the Handmaids. Aunt Lydia begins to describe her distaste for the shortage of pregnancy and women who did not want children. Aunt Lydia quotes "They were lazy women, she says. They were sluts" (113). This shows that Gilead did not value women at a high standard and women were seen as useful objects to produce children. This makes *The Handmaid's Tale* more relatable for me because we

see in the real world how people lose respect for women when they do not want children. This moment from the book especially stood out to me because it is similar to Roe v Wade. The fight to ban abortion is hurtful because it is taking away a choice that a female gets to make in regard to their body and their future. In Gilead women who still have fertility do not get the choice to not have children, they have to be sexual slaves. I know that the Handmaid's Tale was written before 2022 when Roe v Wade was proposed but it feels like traits of Gilead are beginning to take place in today's society.

Offred narrates about meeting the Commander's wife whom she has a tense relationship with. Nervously Offred narrates "Aunt Lydia said it was best not to speak unless they asked you a direct question. Try to think of it from their point of view she said, her hands clasped and wrung together, her nervous pleading smile. It isn't easy for them" (13). This shows that the Handmaids should draw as little attention to themselves as possible. Gilead preaches that women should be meek and they shouldn't do anything but fulfill the roles that they are assigned. As a child I spent a lot of time with my grandfather, Poppy, who was very conservative. There was one particular evening when my grandparents allowed me to have dinner with them and their friends. I was the only child there and I felt very excluded from the conversation taking place at the table, impulsive I spoke up trying to feel included. My Poppy quickly scolded me "Be quiet, as a child you shouldn't speak at a table of adults unless spoken to, especially as a young girl". I quickly shut my mouth but the comment "as a young girl" never left my mind. I never got past what my Poppy said to me and the memory becomes more vibrant as I read the Handmaid's Tale. There is a pattern of the Handmaids being told to not speak up and to be as quiet as possible. I enjoy this story a lot because it represents the harsh moments I experienced as a young woman.

The Handmaid's Tale does a good job at displaying the challenges women face in harsh conditions. The story serves as a powerful example of society's issues and it allows me to reflect on my experiences and feel seen. It feels good to read a book and feel represented.