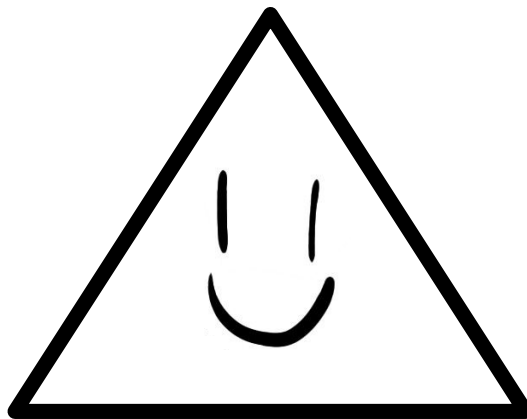
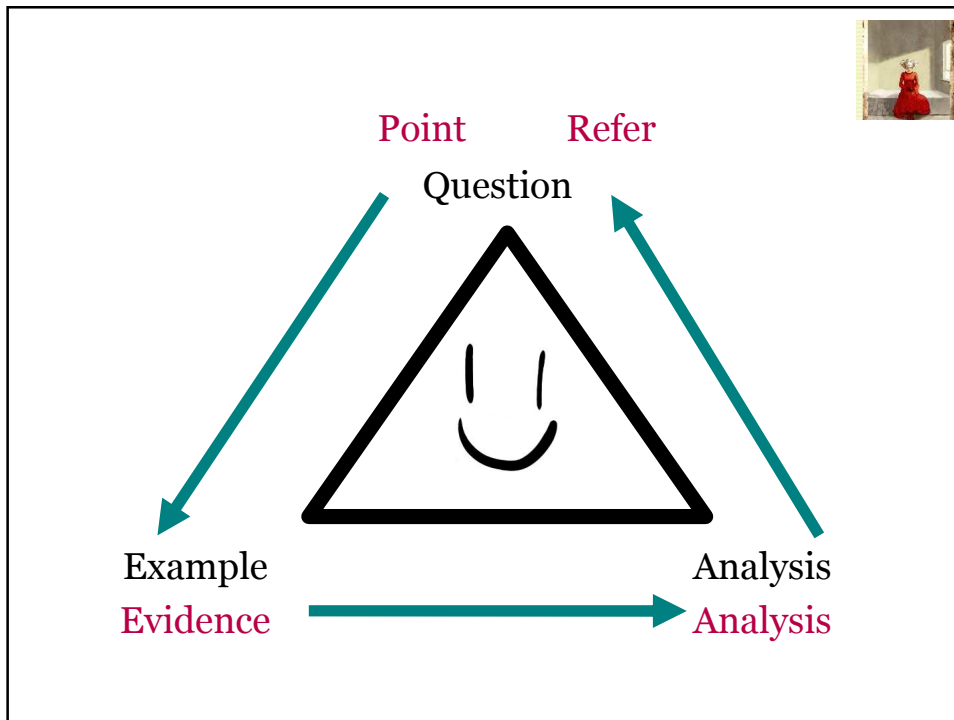




Approaching the Essay


Remember Me?





## Structure

<b><u>P</u>oint</b>	discuss a technique/event / aspect of characterisation used by Atwood which helps to underline the theme you are writing about.
<b><u>E</u>vidence</b>	remember to <b>contextualise &amp; integrate</b> a quotation. You can paraphrase events from the novel and offer them as evidence as well.
<b><u>A</u>nalysis</b>	Explain the importance of the event or quotation in underlining and highlighting the theme you are writing about.
<b><u>R</u>efer</b>	...back to the question / thesis statement




## Themes in *The Handmaid's Tale*



Desire

Envy

A woman's destiny being linked to her biology.

Religion

Identity

Language

Male control of the social discourse

Stories & Storytelling

The position of women in society

Language as a tool of power

Individual vs Society

Women's bodies as a political instrument

Fear as a powerful motivator

Oppression / Freedom

Power

Before you can begin an essay, you have to ensure you have a clear view or standpoint on the question the essay is asking you.

This is called a **Thesis Statement**. You will refer back to this repeatedly throughout your essay – usually at the end of each paragraph.



# Thesis Statements



- Desire is an essential part of what it means to be human and cannot be suppressed
- Language forms an essential part of our identity and, when we are denied it, we are denied a massive part of that identity.
- Stories are powerful and have the ability to reconstruct our view of the world.
- By exploring the nature of stories and the process of storytelling, Atwood is demonstrating that the reader is ultimately the only person who has the power to create meaning in a narrative.
- If one can construct a story, then one has power.
- Language is used as a tool for power by the state of Gilead in the novel in order to oppress women and strip them of their identity.
- In the novel, language and desire are closely related: both are used by Offred to help reconstruct her identity once she has been reduced to the role of a handmaid.
- Through her clever use of satire, Atwood cleverly underlines the subtle social forces which control and construct women's identities.
- In the novel, women's bodies are shown to be their only source of power: their biology becomes their destiny.
- Fear is a powerful motivator.

Once you have decided on your Thesis Statement, it is then important to consider which aspects of the novel will help you to “prove” or discuss it.

These we can call **Segments**.

They will later become the Topic Sentences in your essay.



## Segments of Your Essay



Ways in which Atwood shows Offred is hungry for language and, by extension, knowledge.

How language is used as a tool of oppression in the state of Gilead.

How no character is seen to be immune from desire: even the Commander, who helped construct the state.

What effects oppressing language has on people.

How Offred's flights into her imagination and her past give her some escape from the present.

How Atwood constantly reminds the reader that what we are reading is a "reconstruction".

How Atwood hands the power over the plot and meaning to the reader.

How Atwood uses symbolism to underline the theme you are exploring.

How women's destinies are reduced to their biological make-up in the novel.

How Offred rebels in small ways to try and regain some power over her situation.

## Segments of Your Essay



Ways in which the different characters exert and try to resist power.

What role the relationship between Offred and Nick plays in the novel in terms of helping to save her.

The effect of the non-linear narrative.

How Atwood underlines Offred's feelings of isolation.

The ways in which women in the novel collude to oppress themselves and other women.

How Atwood shows Offred becoming more of a risk-taker.

How the pressure to have babies in the novel sets society on a collision course with individual freedom.

How envy is pervasive in the novel and deflects people's negativity away from the ruling state.

The role of the Historical Notes in enlightening your chosen theme.

How the state fosters the idea that the system protects women when it is designed to control them.

How the practices and beliefs in the fictional Republic of Gilead can be used to expose the roots of a non-fictional political campaign to control women for hundreds of years.

## Key Events



Offred's flights of imagination at night.

The first time the commander invites her to his study at night.

Offred's developing relationship with Nick.

The Salvaging.

The visit to Jezebel's

Any event showing how Offred saw Moira as being stronger and more resistant than her and an object of admiration.

The birth of Jeanine's baby.

Moira's escapes.

Offred's relationship with Ofglen and how it encourages her to become more reckless.

The "Ceremony".

Luke and Offred's attempt to escape Gilead.

Offred's time in the "Red" Center.

Offred's arrival at the Commander's house.

Looking at the bodies hanging on the wall.

## Key Words / Phrases



Characterisation

Pace

Narrative

Plot

Imagery

Narrative Viewpoint

Tone

Symbolism

Atwood...

For instance...

For example...

...the reader...

This underlines...

This highlights...

This emphasises...

This underscores...

This suggests...

This stresses...



For each Segment of your essay you then need to decide on which events or quotations help you discuss or demonstrate the idea in your Segment.

You will discuss each of these in a **PEAR** paragraph.



## How Do I Go About This?

**Know your thesis:**

Desire is an essential part of what it means to be human and cannot be suppressed



# Structure



<b><u>P</u>oint</b> which helps to about.	discuss a technique/event / aspect of characterisation used by Atwood underline the theme you are writing
<b><u>E</u>vidence</b>	remember to <b>contextualise &amp; integrate</b> a quotation. You can paraphrase events from the novel and offer them as evidence as well.
<b><u>A</u>nalysis</b> highlighting the	Explain the importance of the event or quotation in underlining and theme you are writing about.
<b><u>R</u>efer</b>	...back to the question / thesis statement



# How Do I Go About This?



**Work out which “segment” you can use to help support your thesis:**

Desire is an essential part of what it means to be human and cannot be suppressed



## Segments of Your Essay



Ways in which Atwood shows Offred is hungry for language and, by extension, knowledge.

How language is used as a tool of oppression in the state of Gilead.

How no character is seen to be immune from desire: even the Commander, who helped construct the state.

What effects oppressing language has on people.

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How Offred rebels in small ways to try and regain some power over her situation.

## How Do I Go About This?



**Work out which "segment" you can use to help support your thesis:**

Desire is an essential part of what it means to be human and cannot be suppressed

Ways in which Atwood shows Offred is hungry for language and, by extension, knowledge.

## How Do I Go About This?



**Work out a topic sentence that refers in some way to both your thesis and segment:**

**Desire** is an essential part of what it means to be human and cannot be suppressed

Throughout the novel, Atwood shows how Offred desperately **desires** the **knowledge** and **language** she is being denied by the Gilead regime.

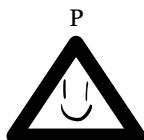
Ways in which Atwood shows Offred is hungry for **language** and, by extension, **knowledge**.

## How Do I Go About This?



**Make a Point related to your Topic Sentence:**

Throughout the novel, Atwood shows how Offred desperately desires the **knowledge and language** she is being denied by the Gilead regime. Right from the opening pages of the novel it is evident that Offred's desire for language to help her communicate and keep her identity is strong.

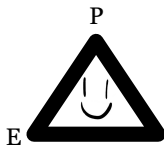


# How Do I Go About This?



**Give some evidence to back your point up:**

Throughout the novel, Atwood shows how Offred desperately desires the knowledge and language she is being denied by the Gilead regime. Right from the opening pages of the novel it is evident that Offred's desire for language to help her communicate and keep her identity is strong. For instance, in the first chapter of the novel, Offred and the other Handmaid's learnt each others' real names by passing messages from bed to bed when denied the opportunity to otherwise do so in the Rachel and Leah Center. Offred describes how "We learnt to lip read...watching each others' mouths".

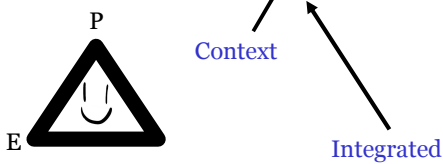


# How Do I Go About This?



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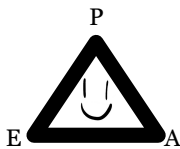
Note: How I have  
CONTEXTUALISED and  
INTEGRATED my  
quotation.

# How Do I Go About This?



## Analyse your Point and Quotation

Throughout the novel, Atwood shows how Offred desperately desires the knowledge and language she is being denied by the Gilead regime. Right from the opening pages of the novel it is evident that Offred's desire for language to help her communicate and keep her identity is strong. For instance, in the opening chapter of the novel, Offred and the other Handmaid's learnt each other's real names by passing messages from bed to bed when denied the opportunity to otherwise do so in the Rachel and Leah Center. Offred describes how "We learnt to lip read...watching each others' mouths". This highlights just how important names are in constructing our identities. The women in the centre feel it important enough to know each others' names to risk being disciplined to do so.



# How Do I Go About This?



## Refer back to your thesis:

Throughout the novel, Atwood shows how Offred desperately desires the knowledge and language she is being denied by the Gilead regime. Right from the opening pages of the novel it is evident that Offred's desire for language to help her communicate and keep her identity is strong. For instance, in the opening chapter of the novel, Offred and the other Handmaid's learnt each other's real names by passing messages from bed to bed when denied the opportunity to otherwise do so in the Rachel and Leah Center. Offred describes how "We learnt to lip read...watching each others' mouths". This highlights just how important names are in constructing our identities. The women in the centre feel it important enough to know each others' names to risk being disciplined to do so. Right from the early pages of the novel the idea that the Handmaids desire language and knowledge is established.



# Where Do I Go Next?



Another example of Offred's desire for language.

A contrasting example of how the state of Gilead attempts to suppress the desire for language by instituting an Official Language.

How excited Offred is when given access to some language and how it just provokes her desire for language further.

A completely different aspect of desire in the novel.

# The Process



What's my point?

...adapted from "Segments of My Essay" sheet.

P

What's my proof?

The quotation

E

How does that quotation demonstrate my point? What does it suggest?

Analysis

A

How does that all support / link to my thesis?

Refer back to question

R