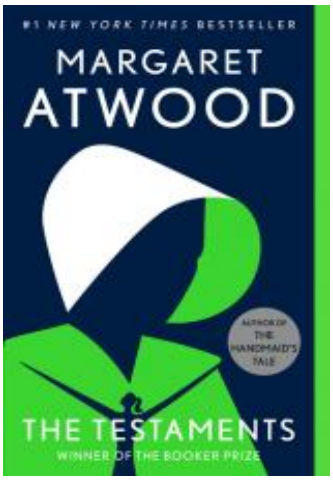
The Testaments

by Margaret Atwood



About the Book

Margaret Atwood's dystopian masterpiece, THE HANDMAID'S TALE, has become a modern classic --- and now she brings the iconic story to a dramatic conclusion in this riveting sequel.

More than 15 years after the events of THE HANDMAID'S TALE, the theocratic regime of the Republic of Gilead maintains its grip on power, but there are signs it is beginning to rot from within. At this crucial moment, the lives of three radically different women converge, with potentially explosive results.

Two have grown up as part of the first generation to come of age in the new order. The testimonies of these two young women are joined by a third voice: a woman who wields power through the ruthless accumulation and deployment of secrets.

As Atwood unfolds THE TESTAMENTS, she opens up the innermost workings of Gilead as each woman is forced to come to terms with who she is, and how far she will go for what she believes.

Discussion Guide

1. Clothes play a dual role in the novel. They signal life stages as well as status and class: the pink, white and plum dresses worn by ?special girls?; the drab prison-like stripes of the Econofamilies; and the green dresses of the betrothed girls. Did this aspect of the novel strike you as odd? Or is it actually not very different from our own obsession with brands and logos that convey a certain level of wealth and status?

2. Aunt Lydia tells us that Gilead actually has ?an embarrassingly high emigration rate.? Can those who manage to leave Gilead ever truly ?escape??

3. Daisy/Jade is, to say the least, a reluctant revolutionary. But if you were her age and were asked to absorb all of the shocking information she has to process in a very short period of time, would you have reacted any differently?

4. After Agnes is assaulted, she recalls other girls who reported such incidents having been told that ?nice girls did not notice the minor antics of men, they simply looked the other way,? which is a troubling parallel between Gilead and reality. Do you think there will ever come a time when women will feel unashamed to peak out when they are sexually assaulted? Or has this time already arrived in the age of #MeToo?

5. When Aunt Lydia dons the garb of the female stadium shooters, she says, ?I felt a chill. I put it on. What else should I have done?? What would you have done?

6. Agnes? interpretation of ?Dick and Jane? showcases Margaret Atwood?s trademark wit, but there is more to it than that. Discuss the ways in which the author cleverly builds the sense of suspicion and fear that informs the way Agnes processes the events in her life at Ardua Hall.

7. Several references are made to shortages of basic necessities such as food and electricity. Birth defects and juvenile cancer also seem to plague Gilead. What do you think has caused this? Possibly environmental issues? Or the ongoing war?

8. Agnes considers her admittance to Hildegard Library to be a ?golden key? that will reveal ?the riches that lay within.? But it is here that she learns the truth about the Concubine Cut into Twelve Pieces, as well as the truth about her half-sister. Is there any book that provided you with a similar pivotal and eye-opening experience?

9. When Aunt Lydia relays the *Aesop?s Fables* story of Fox and Cat, she reveals much about her survival skills. Which are you --- Fox or Cat?

10. Did the book inspire you to take action so that Gilead remains fiction? Did you perhaps become more active in local politics or make a charitable donation to an organization that supports women?s rights?

11. The conclusion of THE HANDMAID?S TALE left readers with many tantalizing questions. Which of your questions were answered by THE TESTAMENTS? Which were not?

Author Bio

Margaret Atwood is the author of more than 50 books of fiction, poetry and critical essays. Her novels include CAT'S EYE, THE ROBBER BRIDE, ALIAS GRACE, THE BLIND ASSASSIN and the *MaddAddam* trilogy. Her 1985 classic, THE HANDMAID'S TALE, was followed in 2019 by a sequel, THE TESTAMENTS, which was a global #1 bestseller and won the Booker Prize.

Atwood has won numerous awards, including the Arthur C. Clarke Award for Imagination in Service to Society, the Franz Kafka Prize, the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, the PEN America Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Dayton Literary Peace Prize. In 2019, she was made a member of the Order of the Companions of Honour for services to

litera-ture. She lives in Toronto.

The Testaments

by Margaret Atwood

Publication Date: September 1, 2020
Genres: Dystopian, Fiction
Paperback: 448 pages
Publisher: Anchor
ISBN-10: 0525562621
ISBN-13: 9780525562627