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*The Handmaid’s Tale:* In Class Activity

**Learning Objectives/Description:**

* To acclimate students to Gilead as its own world with its own rules, structural systems, and characteristics. Students will have to “inhabit” Gilead by reproducing their own physical artifact of this world in the form of a newspaper. This activity should help students begin to recognize the role of surveillance, censorship, control, power etc. within the setting of *The Handmaid’s Tale.* Similarly, for students struggling with the sometimes jarring, non-linear structure of the text, this should be a helpful way to both contextualize the novel’s events, and to pin down the main characteristics of the world to better understand why/how plot is unfolding the way it is.
* To promote small group skills and large group discussion
* To cultivate creative and critical thinking, analytical reflection and inferential reading skills

**Supplies:**

* Fold out sheets of poster paper (1 for each small group) with enough room for multiple sections
* Index cards with the following newspaper section names and descriptions:

Entertainment Politics Current Events

Travel Tips/Tourism Culture Fashion

Health Food/Sports Education

Crime Arts Gossip

Opinions Letter to the Editor Front Page News

Comics Historical Retrospective

*Notes: Any of these sections can be duplicated between groups i.e. 2 current events cards might go out to groups. However, groups should each get as many different cards as possible so that the class works together to produce a comprehensive newspaper by working in their groups to complete individual sections that will then be compiled when returning to large group discussion. The Historical Retrospective section should be described as a way for students to create a kind of bullet point retrospective of some of the world events that led to the formation of Gilead.*

**Instructions:**

1. Split the class into small groups (Groups of 4 work well)
2. Allot each group one poster paper to share and one to two index cards per person within each group
3. Using knowledge of the text so far (the people in power, the language they use, the restrictions) students will write their own newspaper article based on the section parameters they’ve received. For example, if they’ve got fashion, they may choose to write about the Handmaid’s uniforms versus the Aunts, Wives, Marthas etc. For health, they may choose to write about the significance of reproduction. For food, they may choose to write about the strict dies the Handmaids must follow to ensure their health. For crime, they will have to think about what is truly considered a crime in the context of Gilead. For a letter to the editor they may choose to incorporate bits of sanctioned greetings or goodbyes that we see in the novel. And finally, the front page headline will be an opportunity for students to write about what they consider to be one of the most significant moments in the novel thus far. Students will have to think about who has access to voice, what that voice will be allowed to say, and how this voice will reflect some of the truths about what it would be like to actually live in Gilead. Students will have to think about what gossip might look like in Gilead, what does entertainment or art look like, if it’s present at all. This will require both creative and critical thinking skills, as well as inferencing and team work.
4. As students write, encourage them to use quotes/moments from the novel as either the basis of their story and/or as a quote that resulted from “interviewing,” a citizen for their story.
5. Come back and present each section, compiling these sections into one whole newspaper.
6. Large group discussion covering new observations about how Gilead is operating as a narrative setting.