



2017: The first season of "The Handmaid's Tale" premiered on Hulu (USA)



The Handmaid's Tale

The Handmaid's Tale is a dystopian novel written by Canadian author Margaret Atwood and published in 1985. Set in a very near-future New England, in a patriarchal and totalitarian state called Gilead, it tells the story of Offred, a "handmaid" assigned to bear children for a "commander" (a member of the male ruling class). A successful TV adaptation of the novel was launched by Hulu in 2017.

Atwood wrote her novel in 1984 while she lived in West Berlin and has stated that her environment inspired the content of her novel. Its original title was *Offred*, after the narrator and main character, but she eventually changed it to allude to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and to fairy tales. Atwood never explained when her story was taking place, even though some deduced that it occurred in around 2005.

The novel was so successful that it has never gone out of print since its first release. In 2016, right after Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, the sales of the novel increased by 200 percent. During the worldwide Women's March in January 2017, some women held signs stating that "*The Handmaid's Tale* is NOT an instruction manual".

Teaching ideas

★★★ LYCÉE - Have students watch trailers from *The Handmaid's Tale* TV series. Ask them to write a feminist manifesto inspired by the show, explaining why women's rights should not be abolished.