**Reading Questions.**

1. In the following scenarios, Margaret Atwood portrays an array of characters and emotions. We can observe in scenario A, a supporting and healthy relationship leads to a prosperous and happy lifestyle desired by all. In the next scenario, Mary’s obsessiveness and John’s ignorance lead to the sad demise of Mary. And John’s unbothered behaviour paved the way for a happy life for him, as he was unaffected by Mary’s death. In the third scenario, John cheated on his family by having an extramarital affair with Mary, whereas Mary fooled around mindlessly even though she was in love with James. When John caught Mary with James, he shot both of them out of jealousy and despair, and later killed himself. Scenario D sets a perfect example of how working out together through all difficulties leads to a delighted life.

In conclusion, positive and honest intentions can give you a plausible and fruitful life. Whereas selfishness, lack of faith and untruthfulness devastates relationships not only of those who are in the relationship but the people associated with them.

1. Every relationship goes through several ups and downs, some of which may even end tragically. For instance in scenario B, there was a conflict of perspectives between Mary and John. Mary’s so-called love, which was more of an obsession for John, but he did not share the same feelings for Mary. This conflict in thought resulted in a very sorrowful ending for Mary. Well, in scenario C, there was conflict of character vs. self, where Mary's indecisiveness and carelessness, again led to a tragic ending, for John and James as well. Even John was in conflict with his commitments, that is being in love with Mary but at the same time unable to leave his wife ‘cause of his duties and promises.
2. By this story, “Happy Endings”, with the help of wide ranging scenarios, the author ‘Margaret Atwood’ wants to catch the eye of the reader to the fact that, even though the life proceeds through many permutations and combinations, the end is always predefined, the unavoidable, inescapable, ultimate departure from this world. The author conveys the fact that all other endings are deceptive or misleading,and the only end is the unpreventable death. The author advises readers to enjoy the fruitful beginning, and have a taste of this peculiar world while striving ahead in life, till the inevitable arrives.
3. In the storyline, it seems that the author Margaret Atwood tries to draw our attention to how the interaction between the characters contributes to their characterization. The story revolves around different characters of John and Mary, leading to several plot twists depending on their character interactions. In the first storyline both John and Mary loved each other and because of no misunderstanding nor miscommunications, their story ended in a very blissful way. In the second storyline, John's selfish character is portrayed from how he interacts with Mary and uses her while Mary's interaction with John shows how compassionate Mary is towards John. Even when Mary's death was near, her devotion towards John made her believe that John would come to save her. In the third storyline, John's character is perceived as an old man who has lost interest in his family and is trying to enjoy life with Mary who is much younger than him. James is the one Mary loves, who is a young motorcyclist living a very exciting life. Mary's undecisive behaviour towards either of them lead to a traumatic end for all three of them. In the fourth storyline, Fred and Madge were very much affectionate to each other and so even in times of peril they managed to survive and had a happy ending.

Ultimately it is a conflict of interest between the characters that gives the story a meaning. The contrasts between the characters helps in building the plot of the story.

1. The setting describes the physical ambience of the story. The whole story takes place in Canada around the 60s. These were times where societal norms were challenged and redefined.

In scenario A the characters spend most of their lives in a desirable estate. This reflects upon their peaceful and satisfactory life.

While scenario B mostly takes place in Mary’s house which depicts Mary’s captivity. Mary tries her best to keep her house tidy in fear of being judged by John. This displays the toxicity of their relationship. On the other hand John takes Madge to a restaurant, a luxurious place because he loved her so much.

In scenario C Mary isn’t fascinated by John’s job or his wealth. She chose James because he roamed around with his motorcycle due to his freedom which she was deprived of. John finds Mary and James together in the bed. This intimacy shattered John completely.

Scenario D the characters lived by the seashore and they had a pretty settled life. This helped them through the ups and downs. One day an unexpected giant tidal wave approached and the real estate value drastically decreased. In Spite of these materialistic casualties they were able to survive.

7) **“Inside John, she thinks, is another John, who is nicer.”**

Here the writer tries to convey the message that over-attachment with someone blinds one’s vision to see the truth. Mary always overlooked the mistreatment given by John. She was in love, as she called it so, and wanted John to reciprocate the feeling because of which she became pretentious and failed to remind herself of how unfair it was. She was delusional to think that John would change himself and eventually return the fondness. It is important to ponder over this quote as it points out that losing yourself will ultimately only knock you down emotionally and end up in self destruction. It is significant also because this is the turning point for the plot where we come to know that why she wanted to stick around till the end instead of moving on, which was actually the only right thing to do.

**“You’ll have to face it , the endings are the same however you slice it”**

Every story has an ending, whether happy or sad. This line signifies that however, all these endings are merely for entertainment of readers and sometimes for readers to even empathize with situations the protagonists are undergoing. Frank Herbert once said, “there is no real ending. It’s just the place where you stop the story.” The only trustable and absolute ending is the death.

8) Technology does not play a significant role in most of the stories.But in scenario E where Fred was suffering from a heart disease, the outcome of the story could have been very different if there were enough technological developments in the field of medicine as Fred would have possibly survived for a longer period of time. Most of the stories revolve around love, relationships and character interaction so the technological factor is given less significance in these stories.

9) ‘Happy Endings’ by Margaret Atwood published in 1983 is a short story and perfectly fits into its subject category. It is written in third person omniscient narration and occasionally in second person. It has six chronologically unrelated paragraphs by plot but connected through two main protagonists and the common theme of ‘memento mori’ and tells the readers of the futility of human endeavour in this post Lapsarian world. Her writings were heavily influenced by femminist professors at the University of Toronto and the second feminist moment.

The author outwardly attempts to keep the readers engaged by making them address provocative and thought provoking ideas on the highly explored theme in English literature i.e. love, courtship and marriage. (In the end she writes “Now try how and why”). This also suggests the writer is refraining from giving her interpretation and keeps the piece open ended for the reader to decide which is the happy ending?

It possesses the chief characteristics of a short story- a theme, limited characters , a setting , a point of view, a plot, a conflict, and the climax (we see different climaxes in each paragraph).