



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2002 Volume VI: Biology and History of Ethnic Violence and Sexual Oppression

Sexual Oppression and Religious Extremism in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

Guide for Curriculum Unit 02.06.04
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This unit provides some discussion of projects appropriate when teaching Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in the high school classroom. Margaret Atwood's novel is challenging and very interesting to students, who are interested in the premise: an oppressive religious movement has overthrown the U.S. government and has forced unmarried fertile women to bear children for the new government leaders, as environmental disasters have rendered 90% of the population infertile. A discussion of the novel and several of its themes is included. The novel is full of great possibilities to connect it to science, social studies, history, religion, and other literature, of course, and a handout for development of these ideas is provided. The unit is designed for students who are willing and able to do research in an area of choice and to write a paper and present it to the class. Assignment handouts, a broad supplemental reading list, and a rubric for assessment are included for the supplemental sources research project. Another project that requires creativity rather than research is included, and it contains choices related to music, journalism, and emulating the style of the author. An assignment handout and a rubric for evaluation are both included. An additional activity requires students to read Biblical passages that are twisted by the new regime in an effort to assess the ways in which different meanings can be attributed to the same excerpt.

(Recommended for English, grades 11-12.)

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