

### 3 Inside the Writer's Mind

*Can fiction help us to seek a better future?*

#### 1 A moment with Margaret Atwood



A. Listen to an interview with Margaret Atwood on **MP3 n°93**.

B. What does the author reveal about her writing process?  
What were her sources of inspiration?

##### Cultural fact

Margaret Atwood wrote *The Handmaid's Tale* in 1985 and since then, it has sold over 8 million copies in English. It became a hit television series when it was adapted in 2017.



#### 2 The thin line between reality and fiction

A. Read the article. What were Margaret Atwood's hopes when she wrote the book?

Focus on the words "prediction", "antiprediction" and "wishful thinking".

B. Focus on paragraph 2 (l. 11). What elements of current events could inspire people to write about them?

C. From the extracts you have read, would you consider *The Handmaid's Tale* a prediction? Why (not)?

D. **Have your say.** How does reality inspire fiction, and how does fiction invite us to reflect on the real world?

#### YOUR PROJECT

You are the narrator (Offred). You want the world to know about what you are not allowed to do anymore. Write a letter in secret to a journalist from a foreign country about your new life in Gilead. Express your regrets about people's inaction (*If we had...*).

Use **Worksheet n°49**.

Is *The Handmaid's Tale* a prediction? That is the third question I'm asked – increasingly, as forces within American society seize power and enact decrees that embody what they were saying they wanted to do, even back in 1984, when I was writing the novel. No, it isn't a prediction, because predicting the future isn't really possible: there are too many variables and unforeseen possibilities. Let's say it's an antiprediction: if this future can be described in detail, maybe it won't happen. But such wishful thinking cannot be depended on either. [...]

In the wake of the recent American election, fears and anxieties proliferate. Basic civil liberties are seen as endangered, along with many of the rights for women won over the past decades, and indeed the past centuries.

In this divisive climate, in which hate for many groups seems on the rise and scorn for democratic institutions is being expressed by extremists of all stripes, it is a certainty that someone, somewhere – many, I would guess – are writing down what is happening as they themselves are experiencing it. Or they will remember, and record later, if they can. Will their messages be suppressed and hidden? Will they be found, centuries later, in an old house, behind a wall? Let us hope it doesn't come to that. I trust it will not.

Margaret Atwood, \_\_\_\_\_,  
10 March 2017