

# The Handmaid's Tale

Content Area: **ELA**  
Course(s): **Contemporary Novels**  
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**  
Length: **4-5 weeks**  
Status: **Published**

## Course Pacing Guide

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Unit	MP	Weeks
The Road	1 / 3	4-5
The Handmaid's Tale	1 / 3	4-5
The God of Small Things	2 / 4	4-5
The Parable of the Sower	2 / 4	4-5

## Unit Overview

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Students will study Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* as a work of contemporary fiction that has experienced a resurgence in relevance and popularity in recent years. They will explore narrative elements such as symbolism, point of view, structural choice, and motif and analyze how the novel speaks to the issues facing our current social and political climate and its connection to similar issues in the 1970s and 1980s.

## Enduring Understandings

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1. Students will understand the use of character to explore a range of values, beliefs, assumptions, biases, and cultural norms represented by those characters.
2. Students will understand how setting is used to not only depict a time and place, but also to convey values associated with that setting, and how a drastic change in one leads to a shift in the other.
3. Students will understand how a narrator's or speaker's perspective controls the details and emphases that affect how readers experience and interpret a text.

4. Students will understand how the arrangement of the parts and sections of a text, the relationship of the parts to each other, and the sequence in which the text reveals information are all structural choices made by a writer that contribute to the reader's interpretation of a text.
5. Students will understand how to interpret figurative representations, specifically in the building of motif and biblical allusions, to discover an author's purpose or message.
6. Students will understand how to employ textual evidence to articulate and support an interpretation of literature.
7. Students will understand how both the choices one makes and circumstances beyond one's control define character and relationships.
8. Students will understand how an individual's responses to both positive and negative experiences shape his/her identity.
9. Students will understand the individual's responsibility to respond to civil rights violations and how to work to prevent them.
10. Students will understand the dangers of remaining silent and apathetic in the face of threats to individual freedoms.

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## **Essential Questions**

- How do authors use narrative structure, including character, setting, limited narration, and arrangement of timeline, to illustrate their perspective on the human condition?
- How do authors use figurative language and other narrative techniques to represent their perspective on relationships between various elements of society and the nature of man?
- How does the choice of textual evidence impact the effectiveness of an argument?
- How does a society go from a democracy espousing equal rights for all to a dictatorship completely lacking in individual freedoms?
- Is the desire for dominance, control, and power a part of human nature? Is man inherently -- selfishly -- evil?
- How does an individual's response to circumstances beyond his/her control shape his/her character?

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## **New Jersey Student Learning Standards (No CCS)**

analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

LA.RL.11-12.2	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
LA.RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
LA.RL.11-12.7	Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (e.g., Shakespeare and other authors.)
LA.RL.11-12.9	Demonstrate knowledge of and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
LA.RL.11-12.10b	By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at grade level or above.
LA.W.11-12.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
LA.W.11-12.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
LA.W.11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
LA.W.11-12.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, or consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
LA.W.11-12.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, share, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
LA.W.11-12.7	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
LA.W.11-12.8	Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation. (MLA or APA Style Manuals).
LA.W.11-12.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
LA.W.11-12.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes.
LA.SL.11-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

LA.SL.11-12.4	Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically. The content, organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
LA.SL.11-12.5	Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
LA.SL.11-12.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
LA.L.11-12.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

## **Amistad Integration**

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Students will connect to the African-American experience with enslavement in America through the enslavement of women in Atwood's dystopian vision for the future. We will also discuss the enslavement of groups as a universal issue, analyzing its root causes in human nature.

SOC.6.1.12.A.1.b	Analyze how gender, property ownership, religion, and legal status affected political rights.
SOC.6.3.12.A.2	Compare current case studies involving slavery, child labor, or other unfair labor practices in the United States with those of other nations, and evaluate the extent to which such problems are universal.

## **Holocaust/Genocide Education**

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Students will study Atwood's creation of Gilead as a vision of future America in which prejudice and discrimination have led to genocide against some groups and the enslavement of others. We will discuss theories of human nature and behavior and how this future is a consequence of that prejudice, as well as the connected issues of morality and conscience in those who allow this to happen, emphasizing the individual's responsibility to fight against hatred, prejudice, and the oppression of others.

SOC.6.1.12.A.1.b	Analyze how gender, property ownership, religion, and legal status affected political rights.
SOC.6.2.12.D.4.i	Compare and contrast the actions of individuals as perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers during events of persecution or genocide, and describe the long-term consequences of genocide for all involved.

## **Interdisciplinary Connections**

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In conjunction with the Social Studies department and its curricula, we will discuss the systematic removal of the rights of women in Atwood's fictional setting as a form of genocide, connecting it to historical incidents of genocide across the world. Additionally, students will research various cultural, political, and social issues that were at the forefront of American society in the 1970s and 1980s, in order to greater understand the roots of Atwood's vision and connect it with the issues of today.

SOC.6.1.12	U.S. History: America in the World: All students will acquire the knowledge and skills to think analytically about how past and present interactions of people, cultures, and the environment shape the American heritage. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions that reflect fundamental rights and core democratic values as productive citizens in local, national, and global communities.
SOC.6.1.12.A.1.b	Analyze how gender, property ownership, religion, and legal status affected political rights.
SOC.6.2.12.A.4.c	Analyze the motivations, causes, and consequences of the genocides of Armenians, Roma (gypsies), and Jews, as well as the mass exterminations of Ukrainians and Chinese.
SOC.6.2.12.A.6.d	Assess the effectiveness of responses by governments and international organizations to tensions resulting from ethnic, territorial, religious, and/or nationalist differences.
SOC.6.2.12.B.6.a	Determine the global impact of increased population growth, migration, and changes in urban-rural populations on natural resources and land use.
SOC.6.2.12.D.4.i	Compare and contrast the actions of individuals as perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers during events of persecution or genocide, and describe the long-term consequences of genocide for all involved.
SOC.6.2.12.D.5.d	Analyze how feminist movements and social conditions have affected the lives of women in different parts of the world, and evaluate women's progress toward social equality, economic equality, and political equality in various countries.
SOC.6.3.12.CS2	Analyze sources of prejudice and discrimination and propose solutions to eliminate them.

## Technology Standards

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TECH.8.1.12.C.1	Develop an innovative solution to a real world problem or issue in collaboration with peers and experts, and present ideas for feedback through social media or in an online community.
TECH.8.1.12.C.CS1	Interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others by employing a variety of digital environments and media.
TECH.8.1.12.C.CS2	Communicate information and ideas to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.
TECH.8.1.12.C.CS4	Contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems.
TECH.8.1.12.F	Critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making: Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources.

## 21st Century Themes/Careers

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Students will understand how culture impacts values and goals in the global marketplace, both in careers and spending, and will explore the connection between economic systems and systematic discrimination and prejudice.

PFL.9.1.12.A.5	Analyze how the economic, social, and political conditions of a time period can affect the labor market.
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PFL.9.1.12.A.7	Analyze and critique various sources of income and available resources (e.g., financial assets, property, and transfer payments) and how they may substitute for earned income.
PFL.9.1.12.A.8	Analyze different forms of currency and how currency is used to exchange goods and services.
PFL.9.1.12.A.9	Analyze how personal and cultural values impact spending and other financial decisions.
CAEP.9.2.12.C.4	Analyze how economic conditions and societal changes influence employment trends and future education.
CAEP.9.2.12.C.7	Examine the professional, legal, and ethical responsibilities for both employers and employees in the global workplace.

## **Financial Literacy Integration**

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As referenced above, students will explore the connection between economies and systematic discrimination and prejudice, specifically how one might directly cause or impact the other. Students will discuss the significance of ownership and financial freedom in determining identity and power.

PFL.9.1.12.A.5	Analyze how the economic, social, and political conditions of a time period can affect the labor market.
PFL.9.1.12.A.9	Analyze how personal and cultural values impact spending and other financial decisions.
CAEP.9.2.12.C.4	Analyze how economic conditions and societal changes influence employment trends and future education.

## **Instructional Strategies & Learning Activities**

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- Google Slides research presentations
- Shared Google Docs for collaborative notes
- Think-Pair-Share discussions
- Reading and class discussion
- Close reading analysis in small groups
- In-class writing
- Film selections/excerpts
- Guest speakers and instructors
- Student reflections/journal entries
- Reading check quizzes
- Theme & motif tracking journals
- Canvas discussion threads

## **Differentiated Instruction**

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Examples may include:

- Inquiry/Problem-Based Learning
- Learning preferences integration (visual, auditory, kinesthetic)
- Tiered Learning Targets
- Relationship-Building & Team-Building

- Self-Directed Learning
- Choice Boards
- Debate
- Mastery Learning (feedback toward goal)
- Grouping
- Socratic Seminar
- Rubrics
- Jigsaws
- Learning Through Workstations

## **Formative Assessments**

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- Google Slides research presentations
- Shared Google Docs for collaborative notes
- Think-Pair-Share discussions
- Close reading annotations
- In-class writing: journal entries
- In-class writing: practice prompts for peer editing
- Theme & motif tracking journals
- Symbolism analysis
- Film comparative analyses
- Reading check quizzes
- Guided reading questions
- Canvas discussion threads

## **Summative Assessment**

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Research synthesis essay

Objective test

## **Benchmark Assessments**

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Monitor students' writing growth and development through informal pieces for the multi-paragraph research synthesis essay.

## **Alternate Assessments**

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Apply various accommodations or modifications as needed per IEP/504 mandate, such as shortened writing assessments or reduction of multiple choice answers.

## **Resources & Technology**

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Selections from the Hulu show "The Handmaid's Tale"

Informational videos (TED talks, You Tube, Crash Course) on social issues of the 1980s

Excerpts from the Bible

Chrome books

Promethean board

## **BOE Approved Texts**

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Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

## **Closure**

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Such as:

- Gallery Walk
- Sequence It - create timelines of major events discussed
- Low-Stakes Quizzes - Give a short quiz using technologies like Kahoot or a Google form.
- Have students write down three quiz questions (to ask at the beginning of the next class).
- Kids answer the following prompts: "What takeaways from the lesson will be important to know three years from now? Why?"
- Exit Tickets

## **ELL**

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Such as:

- Alternate Responses
- Advance Notes
- Extended Time



- Teacher Modeling
- Simplified Written and Verbal Instructions
- Frequent Breaks
- E-Dictionaries
- Google Translate

## **Special Education**

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List is not inclusive but may include examples such as:

- Shorten assignments to focus on mastery of key concepts.
- Evaluate the classroom structure against the student's needs (flexible structure, firm limits, etc.).
- Keep workspaces clear of unrelated materials.
- Keep the classroom quiet during intense learning times.
- Reduce visual distractions in the classroom (mobiles, etc.).
- Provide a computer for written work.
- Seat the student close to the teacher or a positive role model.
- Provide an unobstructed view of the chalkboard, teacher, movie screen, etc.
- Keep extra supplies of classroom materials (pencils, books) on hand.
- Maintain adequate space between desks.
- Number and sequence the steps in a task.
- Have student repeat the directions for a task.
- Provide visual aids.
- Go over directions orally.
- Provide a vocabulary list with definitions.
- Permit extended time as needed per IEP to finish tests.
- Allow tests to be taken in a room with few distractions (e.g., the library).
- Have test materials read to the student, and allow oral responses.
- Divide tests into small sections of similar questions or problems.
- Allow the student to complete an independent project as an alternative test.
- Show a model of the end product of directions (e.g., a completed math problem or finished quiz).
- Stand near the student when giving directions or presenting a lesson.
- Permit a student to revise written work for a better grade.
- Average grades out when assignments are reworked, or grade on corrected work.

## **504**

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Examples of accommodations in 504 plans include but are not limited to:

- preferential seating
- extended time on tests and assignments
- reduced homework or classwork
- verbal, visual, or technology aids

- modified textbooks or audio-video materials
- excused lateness, absence, or missed classwork
- pre-approved nurse's office visits and accompaniment to visits

## **At Risk**

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Examples may include:

- Use of mnemonics
- Have student restate information
- Provision of notes or outlines
- Concrete examples
- Regular home-school communication tools (email, Canvas)
- Peer or scribe note-taking, use of Promethean Board notes
- Verbal and visual cues regarding directions and staying on task
- Adjusted assignment timelines
- Immediate feedback
- Work-in-progress check
- Pace long-term projects
- Preview test procedures
- Use peer supports and mentoring
- Chart progress and maintain data

## **Gifted and Talented**

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Focus on effort and practice

Offer the Most Difficult First

Offer choice

Speak to Student Interests

Allow G/T students to work together

Encourage risk taking

