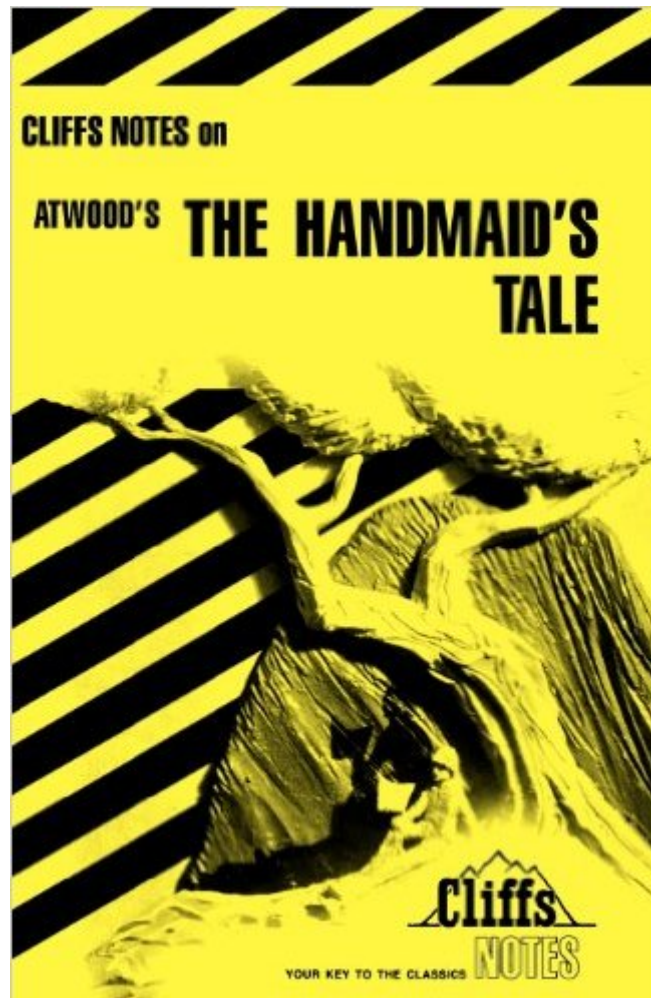


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The Handmaid's Tale (Cliffs Notes)



Synopsis

The original CliffsNotes study guides offer expert commentary on major themes, plots, characters, literary devices, and historical background. The latest generation of titles in this series also feature glossaries and visual elements that complement the classic, familiar format. In CliffsNotes on The Handmaid's Tale, you come to realize that for every utopia, there's a corresponding dystopia. This tale of a bleak future depicts a time where women are valued only for their reproductive capacities. While this cautionary tale of repression and totalitarianism is horrifying, there are moments of poetic warmth and humor. It is a brilliant satire. This concise supplement to Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale helps you understand the overall structure of the novel, actions and motivations of the characters, and the social and cultural perspectives of the author. Features that help you study include

- Chapter-by-chapter summaries and commentaries
- A timeline of critical events that leads to the climax of the novel
- A character map that graphically illustrates the relationships among the characters
- Critical essays on women's roles in the novel, and the use of literary devices, themes, and settings
- A review section that tests your knowledge

Classic literature or modern modern-day treasure — you'll understand it all with expert information and insight from CliffsNotes study guides.

Book Information

Series: Cliffsnotes Literature Guides

Paperback: 88 pages

Publisher: Cliffs Notes; 1 edition (October 17, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822005727

ISBN-13: 978-0822005728

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (25 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #973,657 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > Canadian #3707 in Books > Education & Teaching > Studying & Workbooks > Study Guides #5225 in Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > Criticism

Customer Reviews

This review is actually of Mary Ellen Snodgrass' Cliff Notes for "The Handmaid's Tale" and not Margaret Atwood's novel, which is one of the few late 20th-century works for which there is a little

yellow book. Snodgrass begins with a concise review of Atwood's life, background and published works. By way of setting up the novel, Snodgrass takes the rather unusual step of providing comments from various reviewers of "The Handmaid's Tale." Establishing it as work of speculative fiction that warns (predicts?) of a triumph of totalitarianism, Snodgrass puts the novel in the tradition of dystopian novels such as "1984," "Brave New World," "A Clockwork Orange," "Fahrenheit 451," etc. (all of which would serve as interesting analogs for students to compare/contrast). We are then provided a list of characters, a very useful time line covering the events in the novel, and a brief synopsis of the novel. In terms of Critical Commentaries, Snodgrass looks at the three epigraphs that open the novel and then each of the fifteen chapters and the "historical notes," offering brief descriptions and then commentary. Two of the strengths of her approach are that Snodgrass puts literary concepts in boldface and "translates" difficult words and phrases that are important in the novel. A Genealogy of Offred and Janine (Ofwarren) is included, along with a small map of New England. For Critical Essays, Snodgrass focuses on Literary Analysis (existential apologia, oral history, speculative fiction, confession, dystopia), over a dozen Literary Devices (simile, symbol, historical and cultural lore, literary allusion, parody, etc.

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