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APPENDIX

A) Synopsis of the Novel

The Handmaid's Tale tells a story about a woman named Offred (real name unidentified) and her journey in the new world as a Handmaid and sometimes she recalls her previous life. The book is set in the former United States of America, specifically in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which was overthrown by a military coup called The Sons of Jacob. Then, they established a new totalitarian theocracy country called the Republic of Gilead.

It all started when a when nuclear and biological warfare has polluted the areas which result in the massive decline of the fertility rates and the rise of birth defects. Therefore, to address the declining birth rate, the Sons of Jacob used military force to overthrow the Liberal Democratic American Government and organized a new patriarchal society centered around reproduction. The justification of this new society is through passages from the Bible, which is the Old Testament.

The new law in the Republic of Gilead forbid women from having jobs and owning a property. Females who are infertile and aged, as well as homosexuals, political dissidents, supporters of abortion, non-whites, and unsanctioned religious groups (other than Christianity) are sent off as slaves in the Colonies to clean up toxic waste. When Offred were separated from her daughter and husband from an attempted escape, Offred was taken to Rachel and Leah Re-education Center, or the Red Center, where the fertile women were indoctrinated and trained to be Handmaids through violence, coercion, and biblical teachings. Handmaids are

known as an "object" to convey children for the elites in order to increase the population in the Republic of Gilead.

Offred, as a Handmaid, is assigned to a military commander household. She has to endure a monthly ritual where she has to have sex with the commander in the presence of the wife in order to bear a child for the couple. She is also confined to read, write, and speak freely. The only time she manages to leave the house is for a check-up to the doctor and her daily walk to the shops.

The novel ends in a very ambiguous way with lots of holes left to be filled by the reader to guess and come up with theories on what can possibly have happened to Offred as well as the characters afterwards.

B) Biography of the Author

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian writer who has written award-winning poetry, short stories and novels. Her works have been translated into an array of different languages and seen several screen adaptations. Atwood was born on November 18, 1939, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada to a nutritionist mother and entomologist father who fostered a love of nature. Also growing up in Quebec and showing a passion for writing at an early age, Atwood eventually pursued her undergraduate studies at Victoria College at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1961. She then earned her master's at Radcliffe the following year.

Throughout her career, Margaret Atwood has received numerous awards and several honorary degrees, including the Canadian Governor General's Award, Le Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France, and the National Arts Club Medal of Honor for Literature. Not only that, she is the author of more than

thirty volumes of poetry, nonfiction, and fiction, including children's books and short stories. Atwood's first published work was the pamphlet of poetry *Double Persephone* (1961), published via Hawkshead Press. More poetry followed during the decade as seen with the books *Talismans for Children* (1965) and *The Animals in That Country* (1968). She then published her first novel, *The Edible Woman*, in 1969, a metaphoric, witty work about the social status of a woman about to wed.

Margaret Atwood now lives in Toronto with novelist Graeme Gibson and their daughter.