

Shocking rats and hungry pigeons...

Life as a Handmaid is filled with lots of empty time, a time where Offred has nothing to do but think about her past life or dread the conditions of her current life. With so much empty time on her hands, she wishes she could do something to keep herself busy, "If only I could embroider. Weave, knit, something to do with my hands"(pg 69). Her time to spare makes her think of her past life, a life that was filled with wandering art galleries and taking psychology classes.

A few times in the book Offred mentions the psychology classes she took before the age of Gilead. Offred shares with the reader what animals would do to keep themselves entertained, something she learned about in class. Curious pigs would push around balls, and rats would shock themselves, these animals would do these things just to keep themselves occupied. This shows the reader that the psychology behind humans and animals is similar in the sense that both species crave something to keep them busy and their minds occupied. After Offred explains what the animals would do she admits, "I wish I had a pig ball" (pg 70). Offred so desperately wishes she could have something to keep her busy in the same way the pigs could be occupied with the balls in their pens for hours, just continuously rolling around the same ball. Showing the reader how desperate she is for something that gives her a feeling of occupied.

When talking about the animals she also mentions a psychological study done on pigeons. Three groups of pigeons were trained to peck a button to get corn. The first group got corn for each peck, the second group corn for every other peck, and the third group corn was random. "When the man in charge cut off the grain, the first group gave up quite soon, the second group a little later. The third group never gave up. They'd peck themselves to death rather than quit." The third group of pigeons is holding out for something that they don't know will ever come. The pigeons who never give up are similar to Offred who is stuck hoping for her past life and wishing she could have things that keep her occupied, or see the people she once knew. But thinking like this will kill her because things will probably never change for her, just like how the pigeons were never going to get corn.

I decided to represent Offred's thoughts because her boredom is something she thinks about often. And I made it a collage because it reminded me of her memories, choppy but they come together, just like how a collage is bits and pieces that come together to make a whole. And I decided to represent it in her mind by making the background brains. And then in her brain, you can see she is thinking about the animals who don't have to experience empty time like she does. That is why you see the animals she described in the collage, the pigs and their balls, the rats and the electrical shocks, and the pigeons and the corn.

Psychology

