

College English
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Motherhood

During class on wednesday we took a deep dive into the way that motherhood plays a role in gilead's society. When you think of motherhood today you think of a woman being a motherhood to her own child without someone else taking care of their baby. But in this society it's completely different. Even though it's a society filled with mainly women I can see that the commander feels as though he holds a very great power over these women. It doesn't sit right with me at all. To me women should be able to express themselves and be comfortable within their own community and not feel like a man has any type of power over them. I believe that they should be able to be independent and feel loved. In this instance they are treated differently based on their age and what kind of power they hold. For instance women who give birth are held at a much higher standard than the other women in the society because when a baby is born it's like a pot of gold to them. Even though it can only be for a few months while they nurse them. It was also very difficult to understand how these women couldn't get along with each other. I realized that they would feel this envy for anyone who's giving birth or just held a higher position in society. For example in chapter 21 it says " Envy radiates from them I can smell it, faint wisps of acid, mingled with their perfume. The commander's wife looks down at the baby as if it's a bouquet of flowers: something she's won as a tribute." This shows how they look at the women in the society as a prized possession. Especially when the text says "looks down at the baby as if it's a bouquet of flowers." When i saw this i said to myself that when women receive flowers they are usually pleased by what they got so the baby is what made her feel that. Also I realized that Jennie sees that there is a lot of jealousy in the air since the baby has been born. Usually this happens because the other women want to have a kid but they haven't been chosen yet to have one. But it makes me think about what happens after? It's not like you can just keep the baby and live a happy life. You take care of it for a few months and then it's given to the commander's wife. It doesn't make sense to me why these women would want to do that to themselves. The babies become objects of possession. Offred would think about all kinds of things but would never react which kept her level headed in my opinion. Women who don't have kids have to play different roles such as wives like Serena Joy. She's married to a high ranking official. They don't have much freedom and are resentful towards handmaids because they are having the kids not them. Then there's aunts who basically control the handmaids and enforce the rules of the society. Lastly I wanted to talk about the marthas, they are the household servants. When I look at these different types of roles it shows me that women aren't allowed to be who they want to be and they are forced to do such things just for society. During chapter 23 I read this quote " I am a national resource. I am a piece of equipment, like a water purifier, or a furnace used for burning bodies, or a tool for digging. It's only the insides of my body that are important." When I read this I thought immediately of her status as a handmaid and how it makes her feel knowing that she is a part of this cruel society. As I dig deeper into this quote I realize that motherhood feels like a transactional process where they basically do a service for the commander and then the baby is the payment. When she says "national resource" I can see that gilead views her as an object rather than a woman. Further along the quote It says "something about a furnace used for burning bodies or a tool for

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digging. It's only the inside of my body that's important." I thought this meant how they use her body and shes discarded after that or how gilead exploits their bodies at a physical and emotional cost. As I said before, I think women should have the right to feel free, so as I read this book it makes me feel uncomfortable that they have to go through these types of situations.