

In chapter 31 of *The Handmaid's Tale*, we see Offred have many thoughts and experiences that make us think about ourselves. On page 199 Offred thinks "Every night when I go to bed I think, In the morning I will wake up in my own house and things will be back the way they were. It hasn't happened this morning, either." This monologue is one that can resonate with many people who have had struggles with depression or tough times in life. I am fortunate enough to not have had too many times in my life where I had a thought like this, but I can still feel empathy for Offred due to my personal experiences.

The one experience in my life that brought me closest to feeling like Offred does was during this summer when I was dealing with an injury that prevented me from running. I remember waking up every morning wishing, and sometimes making myself believe, that I was suddenly healed and things would go back to normal. Running is the most important part of my life, and I felt a huge drop in my happiness and enjoyment with life when I was unable to do it. In some ways the way I felt every morning I felt the same as Offred, hoping to wake up with things back the way that they were. But, every day when I woke up things were just as bad as they had been the day before.

However, for Offred, she isn't just missing one part of her life. Everything that gives her joy and meaning has been taken for her. This is why I, and presumably most readers, feel such empathy for her at this moment. This excerpt causes the reader to think about a time they were struggling in their life, or had lost something important to them. The reader draws on their personal experiences, which immediately causes them to feel for Offred and understand her struggle.

Next, on page 200 we see Offred wishing Luke was with her, but not in the way you'd expect. "I'd like to have Luke here, in this bedroom while I'm getting dressed, so I could have a fight with him. Absurd, but that's what I want." I reacted to this passage because it makes you think about yourself and your past experiences. It causes the reader to think back to a time that

you have nostalgia for, even if the memory itself is not positive. One memory I recalled when reading this passage was a time I had a fight with my friend, who is in college now. Though the memory is not positive in itself, the context makes me nostalgic for it, as I miss my friend now that he's not around as much. I wish I could have the experience of fighting with my friend at this moment, because I miss not having him around as much.

This experience is obviously very similar to the one that Offred is having, but it explains why the reader understands what Offred is feeling, even if it seems weird to wish for a fight. Another example of an experience that could be similar is that I think back on my freshman year, when I didn't have as many friends or important passions, but I think of it positively just because of the fact that I want things to go back to the way they were. Many people have this experience of being nostalgic for a memory that is not necessarily more positive. This is because we are uncomfortable with change, and will automatically be nostalgic for the past. This is what the passage causes the reader to think about and is why it is so easy for the reader to understand where Offred is coming from. It makes the reader reconsider the emotions involved in their nostalgic memories.

A final part of the chapter I had a noteworthy reaction to comes from Offred's thoughts after she finds out about Ofglen's connection with the rebellion. "Afterwards, though, they seem improbable, childish even, like something you'd do for fun; like a girls' club, like secrets at school." I felt a reaction to this moment because it makes me think of the times when my brain turns something important in real life and turns it into some sort of game, or something fun. One example I can think of is that my brain will sometimes turn school as a whole into a game of sorts. I know that I have heard from others that they refer to school as a game of sorts. You have to figure out the boundaries of the game, try and forge relationships with others for a leg-up, and complete tasks for rewards. I think we as humans do this in school, and more broadly in life, to prevent ourselves from being crushed by the levity or grandness of one of these things. We

instead break things down into something more fun, which gets us through it. Offred is doing the same thing here, but with the resistance movement in Gilead. This causes the reader to think about the way that they try and make serious things in their lives more enjoyable or lighthearted.

All in all, most readers, myself included, have much easier lives than Offred does in Gilead. While I am lucky enough to live in our current society, not in an authoritarian society being spied on, I still have feelings that are similar to the ones Offred has. This is what makes many parts of *The Handmaid's Tale* so powerful, the fact that we can take the feelings of somebody in an extreme situation and compare and contrast them to the emotions we have felt.

This section has also changed the way that I think about my thoughts. It made me reflect on the fact that many of my thoughts can be somewhat nonsensical on the surface level. However, the book eventually made me realize that our brains have similar ways of coping with life. In some ways, Gilead is a big hyperbolic metaphor for our life in general, as our everyday lives can make it difficult to keep going. But the way we think, whether it's making serious things fun, remembering sad or angry memories more positively, irrationally hoping for positive change, or something else, makes it easier for us to continue on and enjoy our lives.