

Our class discussion and analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale* has centered heavily on literary, thematic analysis -- for this assignment, you are invited to use our close reading skills to make more personal and creative connections. You will turn in **TWO lit logs** to help you to synthesize and process what you've read and deepen your understanding of the novel. There are four prompts -- choose any two to complete.

Each Lit Log should:

- Present your unique, insightful, specific response to the prompt - the opposite of generic
- Include evidence of close reading -- multiple direct quotes from the text (with page numbers)
- meet a target length of 750 words
- Have an engaging title
- be posted on the class Slate blog on the date it is due
- be submitted as a link on Canvas for credit

LIT LOG DUE DATES

#1 - Monday, 9/29

#2 - Monday, 10/12

(Respond to a different prompt for each deadline)

Lit Log Assignment Options

1. Track your own intellectual and emotional experience through a **close reading** of a particular section. You are encouraged to tackle sections that you have found confusing, uncomfortable, or intriguing. You can write this in first person, citing specific examples from this selection as well as other parts of the novel that connect these ideas. Your selected text can be as short as one sentence or paragraph, and should not be from one of the sections we've used as an all-class close reading.
2. Create a **visual representation** of a scene or a moment from the reading. Include a write-up explanation of the piece. What is your artwork about? Why did you make the choices you made to create the scene in this way? What is portrayed in your scene and why is it significant? (500 word count minimum for the artist's statement, separate from artwork)
3. Write a **reader response** journal entry. What about this selection resonates with you? What connections can you make to your own life and personal history? Cite specific examples from the selection, as well as specific stories from your life and experiences, then discuss why you react to them the way you do.
4. Even though music is entirely absent from Gilead, make a **playlist** for what you've been reading. Identify five songs that you would include as connections to specific moments, characters, motifs, or themes of the novel. For each song, write an explanation analyzing how the song connects to events in the novel using specific textual evidence to cite the novel. This submission must include an audio component: you may select to record your entire analysis including clips from the songs into a single file, or you may choose to add playable YouTube links into your Slate post. (Please do not research the Hulu show and pull from its playlist. This will bum us out and earn an automatic zero.)

Rubric for Grading (Each Lit Log is worth 20 total points)

An assignment that **exceeds expectations**:

DESIGN // Lit Log engages with the prompt in a specific, insightful way, avoiding generic and surface-level commentary.

KNOWLEDGE // All claims and evidence are accurate and text-based.

APPLICATION // Writer demonstrates “reading between the lines” of the text; close reading is evident in deep analysis.

PRESENTATION // Lit Log is the appropriate length and format, has an engaging title, and is proofread to be free of errors in grammar and mechanics.

PROCESS // Thorough evidence of your original thought and composition process -- including hand-written notes -- is included in this google doc template. (Projects without this will not be scored.)

PROCESS DOCUMENTATION -- in this box, include evidence of your mind at work: brainstormers or partial drafts in your class notebook, rough drafts of artwork, typed stream-of-consciousness while you listen to potential playlist songs, etc.

Lit Log #2 Brains form

Talking points

- How fear is used to control people
- Offred's relationship with Nick
- Ending that leaves us uncertain of what happens to Offred
- Offred's hope and hopelessness
- The "Participation"
- Ofglen's replacement
- Theme of uncertainty

Quotes

- "Trust me" (294)
- "And so I step up, into the darkness; or else the light (295)
- "Neither of us says the word "love" (270)
- "This room is one of the most dangerous places I could be." (270)

Lit Log Final Draft Here:

What Fear Does to Us

For my first Lit Log, I will analyze the final 7 chapters of *The Handmaid's Tale*: Chapters 40-46.

The last 7 chapters of *The Handmaid's Tale* focus on Offred's mental state, her relationship with Nick, and the falling apart of everything around her. These chapters show how oppressive systems control not only people's actions but also their emotions and memories. Through Offred's narration, we can see how this has affected her.

Offred's relationship with Nick is one of the main topics in these chapters. Throughout the book, no one has really cared about Offred. All of the handmaids have been deprived of any emotional connection, because they're only valued as people who clean and have babies. Because of this, her relationship with Nick feels important to her, even though it's risky. "This room is one of the most dangerous places I could be. If I were caught there would be no quarter, but I'm beyond caring." (270) In chapter 40, Offred admits to making up what she said about her and the commander. This shows us that her need for an emotional connection may have affected her memory. It's possible she didn't forget, and she was just fantasizing about an emotional connection. Offred wants her time with Nick to feel meaningful and romantic because it gives her something to hold on to. That's why she wanted to stay with Nick instead of leaving. At the same time, Offred knows that caring too deeply about Nick can cause problems. "Neither of us says the word 'love' not once. It would be tempting fate; it would be romance, bad luck" (270)

In these chapters, we can also see Offred switch between hopeful and hopeless. Offred constantly flips between wanting to survive and feeling like escaping is impossible. It gets to the point where she considers suicide as a way out, willing to settle for the worse option because she feels like she can't escape. Suicide is a mix of her two feelings of hopefulness and hopelessness. Yes, she would "escape", but not with her life like she wants to. We can also see this in her uncertainty about the Mayday group. She wants to believe it's real, because it presents the possibility of escape, giving her hope, but she fears that even believing in it could get her killed. This emphasizes how the government uses fear to control people. More people would try to escape if they weren't afraid to try, and more people would escape because of this. Fear is the only thing keeping people in line. People are kept from resisting not only through violence, but also because they can never be sure of what is true. It's not safe to act if there is no certainty.

Chapter 43 contains one of the most disturbing scenes in the book, the "Participation". During a participation, Handmaids are forced to take part in killing a "traitor". This event is significant, because it shows how the government is using fear to control these people to make them carry out the killing for them. This scene shows how the government relies on psychological control. Their goal is to make people numb to violence and for it to become normal.

Offred's reaction to Ofglen's replacement further shows us the power fear has over people. When Offred sees how quickly Ofglen was replaced, she will realize how dangerous even small acts of rebellion are. This could cause her to hesitate even more before trusting this group. We can see the theme of uncertainty show up again after Ofglen is replaced. Offred doesn't know who she can trust. Trusting people becomes risky, and a lack of trust from everyone can keep people under control. No one wants to act alone, and if there's no one they can trust, they won't try to rebel at all.

Nick's role in the book gets more complicated toward the end of the book. When people come to the house to take Offred away, he tells her to trust him. We don't know what happens to Offred. She doesn't know whether Nick saved her or betrayed her. "The van waits in the driveway, its double doors stand open. The two of them, one on either side now, take me by the elbows to help me in. Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing: I have given myself over into the hands of strangers, because it can't be helped.

And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light." (295)

The ending of the book reflects the theme of uncertainty and a lack of clear truth, because the reader doesn't know what happened to Offred, and we can only hope that she successfully escaped with her life.