**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**How does Atwood reveal the features of Gilead to the reader?**

1. Why does Offred include so many flashbacks to the society before Gilead in her narrative?

2. Why does Offred refer to her story as a “reconstruction”? (134)

3. Why did the Gileadean regime decide to call the women capable of procreating ‘Handmaids’? What does this title reveal about their social status?

4. What significance does the phrase nolite te bastardes carborundorum have for Offred?

**Why does Atwood choose to situate her novel at the onset of the Gileadean regime?**

1. Why does Aunt Lydia tell the new Handmaids at the Red Center that “we were a society . . . dying of too much choice”? (25)

2. Why does the Commander tell Offred, “Better never means better for everyone . . . It always means worse, for some”? (211)

3. Why does Offred tell Moira that she can’t create a utopia by excluding men?

4. In the historical notes, why does do the conference attendees applaud when Professor Pieixoto says that “we must be cautious about passing moral judgement upon the Gileadeans”? (302)

**Are the women in the novel in any way responsible for their social status?**

1. Why does Offred ask, “which of us is it worse for, her or me” after she and Serena Joy participate in The Ceremony? (95)

2. Why are the Handmaids encouraged to tear the rapist apart at the end of the Salvaging?

3. How do Moira’s choices affect Offred’s will to survive?

4. What does Offred think about the possibilities of escape?

**FOR FURTHER REFLECTION**

1. How necessary is the freedom to read and write?

2. What motivates resistance groups to take risks for individuals?

3. Is it humane for oppressors to form personal relationships with those they rule over?

4. Can an individual live out his or her own utopia, or must all utopias be instituted as a society?