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# Close Reading Organizer - Historical Notes on the Handmaid's Tale

**Directions:** Read each summary entry and think about which themes listed in the Themes Key apply to it, then color in those themes in the Theme Tracker. Next, write a few sentences of Analysis to explain how the themes you chose apply to each summary section.

## Themes Key

- 1 Gender Roles
- 2 Religion and Theocracy
- 3 Fertility
- 4 Rebellion
- 5 Love
- 6 Storytelling and Memory

Summary	Theme Tracker						Your Analysis
<p>The notes are a transcript of a discussion from “The Twelfth Symposium on Gileadean studies,” which takes place in 2195 in Nunavit (modern-day northern Canada). Professor Maryann Crescent Moon introduces the speaker <b>Professor Pieixoto</b> from Cambridge University. She says she thinks Gilead is a worthwhile period to study. She reminds the attendees of upcoming events and talks, and tells Pieixoto to be sure to stay within the time limit so everyone can have lunch. His talk is called “Problems of Authentication in Reference to <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i>.”</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	
<p><b>Professor Pieixoto</b> begins with a joke, then launches into an</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	

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<p>academic discussion of <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>. He explains that the tale came from a collection of unlabeled cassette tapes found in a locker in Maine. His co-researcher, Professor Wade, titled the story in reference to Chaucer.</p>							
<p>After transcription, the professors made sure that the tapes weren't a forgery. <b>Professor Pieixoto</b> emphasizes that the audience should try to understand rather than judge "the Gileadean." His team tried to work out where the story had been recorded, and who else may have been involved, but they found no leads. If the house had been on the Underground Femaleroad, maybe the occupants had been killed.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	
<p><b>Professor Pieixoto</b> describes other ways that they tried to find more evidence relating to the story. He describes how <b>Offred</b> became a Handmaid because she'd had a relationship with a married man. He talks about the various factors that lead to infertility, from diseases to pollution (and later mentions that a sterility virus was specially created as a weapon). He relates the difficulty of finding anything more about Offred, <b>Luke, Nick, Moira</b> or <b>Janine</b>, as those may have been fake names. He suspects that Offred might have made the tapes within Gilead to help Mayday.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	
<p><b>Professor Pieixoto</b> describes</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	

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<p>trying to find the <b>Commander</b>. The researchers found a journal that describes two Fredericks. One, Frederick Waterford, used to do market research. He invented the Handmaid’s red habits and the name “Particicution.” Pieixoto points out that most of Gilead’s customs were taken from other societies, not invented.</p>							
<p>The other <b>Commander</b> possibility, Frederick Judd, helped with the massacre of the President and Congress and shipping away the Jews (and leaving many of them to drown in the ocean). Judd also came up with the Particicution ceremony itself. Judd conceptualized the Aunt system, understanding that women could control women. Waterford helped with the details.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	
<p>Both Judd and Waterford were sterile. Waterford’s wife Thelma had worked on television like <b>Serena Joy</b>. Waterford seems to be more likely to be the <b>Commander</b>. The authorities killed him after <b>Offred</b>’s departure, for owning banned magazines and books and for hosting a rebel, probably <b>Nick</b>. Nick was probably an <b>Eye</b> as well as a member of the Resistance. Though the Commander would have known that Nick was an Eye, the Commander probably thought he was too high-ranking for his little violations to lead to Nick turning him in.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	
<p><b>Professor Pieixoto</b> wonders</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	

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<p>what happened to <b>Offred</b>. Maybe she made it to Canada and then England, which was safest. Maybe she was captured. Maybe she cut herself off from society. After <b>Ofglen</b>'s death, when it was clear the authorities knew about the local Resistance, <b>Nick</b> could have killed Offred to protect himself, but he got her to escape with the rebel <b>Eyes</b> instead.</p>							
<p><b>Professor Pieixoto</b> closes with some poetic musings on the past, calling <b>Offred</b>'s narrative "in its own way eloquent," and talking about the difficulties of understanding messages from the past.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	