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Close Reading Organizer - Chapter 12. Sample Answers

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.

Note: There is not always a definitive set of “correct” answers for which themes should appear in the Theme Tracker. Answers that differ from the ones we propose below should therefore not automatically be treated as incorrect, and in fact can serve as great discussion starters.

Themes Key

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

Summary	Theme Tracker						Your Analysis
Back in the present day, Offred takes her bath. The bath has no mirror, razors, lock, or other items that could allow the possibility of suicide. Cora ran the bath and now sits outside. Offred remembers Aunt Lydia saying the bath is a vulnerable spot, and Aunt Lydia explaining the Biblical precedent for women having long hair. Offred enjoys taking off her habit and wings and feeling her own hair. Offred remembers Moira's disdain for pantyhose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	The bath shows the difficulty of quashing rebellion: despite the long list of banned, dangerous materials, Offred is allowed to sit alone in the bath, where she could drown. As much as Offred fantasizes about escape, she's constrained by her own mind.
Offred feels strange to be	1	2	3	4	5	6	Offred tries to ignore how

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naked, and wonderingly remembers wearing a swimsuit. She doesn't look at her body because it is "something that determines me so completely." The water feels like hands, holding her.							Gilead has reduced her to an object, a body. But her distaste for looking at herself reveals that she's internalized the Gileadean attitudes.
In a spontaneous flashback, Offred remembers her daughter as a baby. She remembers when a stranger tried to steal her eleven-month-old when she and Luke were at the supermarket. Luke was buying steak, which he thought men were proven to need more than women, affirming a real difference between the sexes. He liked to tease Offred's mother about such things. Offred heard her daughter crying and found that a stranger had taken her, saying God had told her it was hers. Luke dismissed the stranger as crazy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	As with Luke's nonchalant opinion of Serena Joy in Chapter 8, we see that Offred and Luke weren't always in exact agreement. Or perhaps before Gilead Offred agreed more with Luke (after all, Offred thought "date rape" sounded like a dessert), and only now, in memory, does she focus on his insensitivity.
Offred imagines her daughter as a ghost who died at age five. Offred laments the loss of her photos, clothes and baby hair. She remembers Aunt Lydia saying that if people should care more about spirituality than materiality. Offred wonders if her daughter remembers her, certain that the authorities must have told her daughter that her	1	2	3	4	5	6	Even Offred's love of her daughter has been tainted by Aunt Lydia's Gileadean values. Offred wants to think about objects, but Aunt Lydia comes in to scold her, and effectively reorganizes her thoughts. Even after the memory of Aunt Lydia retreats, the influence remains—Offred would rather be hopeless than feel like she could do anything.

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<p>mother had died. Her daughter would be eight now. Offred thinks it's better to imagine her daughter as dead, which is less painful than hope.</p>							
<p>Cora tells Offred to hurry up. Offred tries to make herself very clean, since her bath opportunities are limited. She looks at her tattoo on her ankle, with four numbers and an eye, which ensures she will always be identifiable. She dresses but doesn't put on the wings, since she's staying within the house.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>The number tattoo links Gilead to the Holocaust. The eye suggests that even Offred's body is watching—a metaphor come true, since she paranoiacally self-polices herself at all times.</p>
<p>Cora brings Offred her dinner, and Offred is pleased that Cora bothers to knock at her door. Rita has overcooked the chicken to show her dislike of Offred. Aunt Lydia used to emphasize the importance of proper nourishment, to be "a worthy vessel." Offred is too nervous to eat, but chokes down the food because she has no place to hide it. She imagines the luxury and freedom of Serena Joy's dinner downstairs. Offred carefully saves a piece of butter, which she plans to use for something later.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Like the "chalice"-like tulips in Chapter 8, Offred sees herself as empty and waiting to receive. But the thing she needs to fill herself with clearly isn't food. Her hiding the butter is her first real active action against the rules, suggesting that maybe Offred isn't as passive as she seems.</p>