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Close Reading Organizer - Chapter 28 **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
<p>Offred sits at the window of her room, still excited about her encounter with Ofglen. She’s been given an electric fan, and she imagines that Moira would know how to make it into a weapon. Moira would probably dislike Offred’s deal with the Commander, since she thought Offred was wrong to take Luke from another woman. On the other hand, Moira liked women and didn’t mind stealing them.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>This complex and important passage illustrates how everyone in the story is hypocritical, with no one fully good or evil. Though Offred’s actions with Luke or the Commander may not be morally correct, desire for human connection and love (at any cost) is universal.</p>
<p>Offred delves into a specific memory of talking</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>In this passage, too, it’s unclear who’s right and</p>

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<p>to Moira in Offred’s kitchen. Offred worked at an insurance company and lived in a run-down house. She told Moira that she couldn’t create a perfect life just by ignoring men. Moira disagreed, and the friends laughed that they sounded like Offred’s mother.</p>							<p>who’s wrong. We might fault Offred for being uninvolved in the struggle for women’s rights, but Moira’s radicalism hardly seems like the solution.</p>
<p>Later, Offred moved to a better apartment for two years until Luke got his divorce. She worked digitizing a library, sometimes saving the books that were destined to be shredded. Back in the current time, Offred ponders the strange fact that millions of women used to have jobs. She thinks about the old dollar bills, no longer in existence.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Offred spent two years of her life waiting for Luke, showing both the passion and patience of her great love for him, and also her willingness to let his needs dictate hers. She let men control her even when it was for love, even when it was her choice. The passage echoes Offred’s struggles with waiting in Chapter 13.</p>
<p>Offred thinks that the lack of paper money made it easier for the Gilead authorities to take power. After an unnamed “catastrophe,” the Gilead leaders killed the president and Congress, and “Islamic fanatics” got the blame. The army, in a state of emergency, said that it had to temporarily stop using the Constitution. Offred was shocked at the sudden collapse of the government, but Moira understood that there were deeper goals than chaos.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Finally, more than halfway through the novel, Offred reveals the origins of Gilead. The Gileadean leaders scapegoated one religion while planning to impose their own type of fanaticism, disguising their extremism as something familiar.</p>

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<p>The Gilead authorities began to make changes in the name of security, such as shuttering newspapers, adding roadblocks, and closing down “Pornomarts” and “Feels on Wheels vans.” Generally people accepted these measures, feeling safe. But one September day, when Offred and Luke had been married for years and their daughter was three or four, Offred found that her money card for her Compucount didn’t work anymore, despite her thousands in the bank.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Gilead’s inoffensive, conservative shutdowns of the porn industry seem like something that Offred’s mother and her feminist friends would agree to. Yet even these modest, agreeable shutdowns represent a loss of freedom. The text suggests that it’s better to have freedom and ugliness than neither.</p>
<p>Later that day, Offred’s boss at the library, seeming unbalanced and distracted, fired her and all the other female employees, saying the law required him to. In the hall outside were two men with machine guns. The women were confused but didn’t rally or try to fight back. Offred thought that she and the others even felt ashamed.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>This passage raises questions of self-preservation and blame. The boss acted just like Offred does now, following the rules to save his life. But Gilead succeeded because of the selfishness and cowardice of human nature.</p>
<p>Offred returned home, restless and nervous. She managed to reach Moira, who had been working for a women’s publishing company. Moira came over, and explained that every woman’s bank account had been suspended, and their money transferred to male family members. Moira</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Though Moira, at first, seems excited to resist Gilead, we see in her escape from the Rachel and Leah Center a similar form of selfishness. Unlike Ofglen, she doesn’t take part in an organized Resistance—even though, before Gilead, she was an activist for women’s rights. She just tries to save</p>

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<p>seemed happy and determined. Moira understood that, if the new government hadn't made it impossible, all the women would be trying to leave the country.</p>							<p>herself.</p>
<p>Offred picked up her daughter, and Luke came home. He tried to comfort Offred by saying that the measures were temporary and "it's only a job," but Offred felt he didn't understand, and he was even being patronizing. She pointed out that he got all her money. When she described the scene of her firing to him, she realized that the army men with machine guns didn't belong to the US Army.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>As usual, Luke comes off as both loving and slightly too carefree. On the other hand, Offred didn't mind when he argued about feminism with her mother (Chapter 20). Offred, like Luke, cares most about causes when they affect her personally.</p>
<p>There were only small protest marches, quickly controlled by the army shooting all the protesters. There were also some bombings, but maybe the army set them off too. Luke encouraged Offred not to go protest, and she didn't, and became a stay-at-home housewife. Offred and others were afraid to say anything that might get them reported.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Though Gilead uses many subtler techniques to implement its government, clearly the most effective one is violence. But violence isn't very convincing. There may be fewer true believers than Offred thinks.</p>
<p>Offred goes into a further-back memory, from when she was a teenager. She remembered her mother coming back from a march perhaps about abortions, with noisy, combative</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Offred's opinion of this memory is unclear. Does she scorn the feminists for not being more combative when Gilead appeared? Or does she sympathize with them?</p>

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<p>female friends whom Offred found annoying. Offred used to wish her mother would be less brazen. But now Offred misses her.</p>							
<p>Back in the present time, Offred watches Nick go out into the garden, and admires his body. She sees his hat is askew, which means Offred will see the Commander tonight. Offred wonders what Nick thinks of her trysts with the Commander, and if he imagines that Offred and the Commander are having depraved sex.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Though Offred often lacks empathy for others, she eagerly imagines herself into Nick's mind here. She evidently has a crush—and love, in whatever form, takes Offred out of her selfishness.</p>
<p>Offred remembers back to the day she lost her job, when Luke wanted to have sex and she didn't. Offred felt that the balance of power had shifted, that he still had everything that she had lost, that she was his possession, and that he might even like the way that events had turned. But she never asked him. From her faraway position, she asks Luke if she was right.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Though Offred sees losing her job as the turning point, we might suspect that the balance of power had never been equal, given that she was Luke's mistress, and she had to wait around for him. Gilead merely made her more aware of this implicit inequality.</p>