

Close Reading Organizer - Chapter 31 **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
It's a very hot July, and Offred feels listless and stiff, like an old woman. She wishes she could have a petty argument with Luke about some household chore, and passes time fantasizing about that. Today the chandelier's old spot looks like “a frozen halo” or a ripple.	1	2	3	4	5	6	Offred's fantasy about Luke shows how (as in the plastic bag memory scene in Chapter 5) the boring, everyday facts of pre-Gilead life have become rare and therefore desirable.
Offred and Ofglen go shopping. There are two dead bodies on the Wall, killed for belonging to the wrong religions. Many Jewish people, renamed Sons of Jacob by Gilead,	1	2	3	4	5	6	Harvard's formerly single-sex education system illustrates how the world of Gilead and the real world aren't so far apart. The sexism in the novel, even the law that women aren't

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<p>were able to immigrate to Israel, but those who stayed and didn't convert were being found and killed. The two Handmaids walk past Harvard's Memorial Hall, which was once a student dining hall where, Moira once told Offred, women weren't allowed to eat.</p>							<p>allowed to read, is unfortunately common in world history.</p>
<p>Ofglen says the Eyes now eat at the hall. She tells Offred about the Resistance movement's password, "Mayday," which Ofglen had once tried saying to Offred. The password reminds Offred of spy novels. The Handmaids return home, and Nick's crooked hat signals to Offred that she'll have a nighttime meeting with the Commander.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Offred now knows two secret methods of communication about rebellion: Mayday, and Nick's hat. Little by little, Offred strays from her formerly law-abiding, fearful ways.</p>
<p>Serena Joy sits knitting in the garden, and calls to Offred as she walks by. Serena Joy asks Offred to hold her wool, explaining that Offred needs air, because her room is "too damn close." The curse surprises Offred. Offred respects Serena Joy's determination to knit, despite her arthritic hands. Offred's mother didn't knit, but she made chains of safety pins from the cleaners'.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>For the first time, Serena Joy seems motherly and even worthy of admiration. Offred's amusing flashback to her mother's fiddling with safety pins recalls Offred's wish for a more conventional mother. For a moment, it's Serena Joy.</p>
<p>Serena Joy tells Offred that she's running out of time for a baby, and then</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Serena Joy shows that she's a rebel too, and a surprisingly altruistic one.</p>

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<p>daringly suggests that perhaps the Commander “can’t.” The women make eye contact, and Serena Joy suggests that Offred try with another man. Offred points out the illegality of such an action. Serena Joy continues, saying that Ofwarren (Janine) got pregnant by a doctor, and Warren’s Wife knew. Serena Joy explains she thought Nick might be suitable.</p>						<p>Certainly she’s motivated by her own desire for a baby, but her actions might save Offred’s life. Even her idea of pairing Offred with attractive, friendly Nick is strangely selfless.</p>	
<p>Offred asks about the Commander, and Serena Joy says it’ll be a secret. Offred says it’s risky, but agrees quickly. Serena Joy encourages Offred by offering to obtain a picture of Offred’s daughter. Offred is powerfully angry and hopeful at once. Finally, after cursing about the weather, Serena Joy gives Offred a cigarette and tells her to get a match from Rita.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Serena Joy’s desire to do even more for Offred, and to pull strings to convince her, shows how Serena Joy must consider Offred truly obedient to Gilead. To us, Offred seems to be an eager rebel, but she’s hidden that well.</p>