

Close Reading Organizer - Chapter 8 **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
The weather stays good, reminding Offred of the old days of dresses and ice cream. Back at the Wall there are three new bodies, a priest and two men hanged for Gender Treachery: homosexual activity. Offred is always the first to suggest to Ofglen that they should leave. Offred still can't tell what Ofglen's attitude towards the bodies is, but she resents her.	1	2	3	4	5	6	The executions for “gender treachery” show that Gilead forces men, as well as women, to conform to certain ideas of gender norms. The dead priest highlights the pickiness of Gilead’s biblical interpretations.
As they walk away, Ofglen comments on the beautiful May day. Offred remembers how Mayday	1	2	3	4	5	6	Offred doesn't realize that “Mayday” stands for resistance. This is the first of many occasions when

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<p>used to be used in war for pilots to signal distress. Luke once told her the word's origins, from French, meaning "help me." The women see a small funeral procession on the street, three Econowives with black veils, one carrying a jar of her dead fetus. Offred feels sympathetic pain, but the Econowives gesture rudely, disliking Handmaids. Offred and Ofglen part with the official goodbye, "Under His Eye." Ofglen seems to want to say something else, but doesn't.</p>							<p>Offred's memories and love distract her from participating in the Resistance. Instead of trying to figure out what Ofglen is attempting to signal, Offred acts typically—she feels something for the mourning Econowife, but doesn't attempt a real connection.</p>
<p>At Offred's house, Nick polishes the Commander's Whirlwind. The red tulips look like empty chalices, and Offred doesn't understand what they are striving for. Nick whistles and asks Offred how her walk was, but she doesn't speak, remembering Aunt Lydia's advice.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>In Offred's response to the tulips, we get a view into her thoughts. She doesn't see the point of attempting to bloom, or the point of attempting to connect with Nick.</p>
<p>Offred sees Serena Joy sitting in the garden, and thinks that her name sounds stupid, like a hair product. Serena Joy chose her name; her given name was Pam. Offred remembers seeing Serena Joy giving speeches about how a woman's place is in the home, although Serena Joy herself was not just a housewife. She wore a lot</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Despite Offred's detached behavior, her thoughts are angry and rebellious. The story of Serena Joy demonstrates the rigidity of Gilead. Even a woman who grew famous for her staunch support of gender divisions and religion is not allowed to have any power in the new theocracy. This scene is also the first hint that Luke and Offred might</p>

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<p>of makeup and cried dramatically. During that time, there were two attempts on her life, and though Luke found her emotional persona funny, Offred was scared. Offred imagines that Serena Joy must be angry now that she can't give speeches and has ended up stuck in the home after all.</p>							<p>not have been the perfect pair that Offred likes to imagine.</p>
<p>Offred looks at Serena Joy's sunken profile as she passes. Her face reminds Offred of fallen towns. Offred recalls Aunt Lydia saying that the Wives of the Commanders will hate the Handmaids, and that the Handmaids should be empathetic. Offred remembers Aunt Lydia's happy and devout expression as she lectured the Handmaids. Aunt Lydia looked like God was appearing to her on a cloud of powder makeup.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Offred's constant recollections of Aunt Lydia show another way that Gilead has dominated her memories. The scene also shows how Gilead cleverly caused divisions that make women hate each other. Then, Aunt Lydia's urgings for sympathy make her seem religious and fair.</p>
<p>Offred enters the kitchen, where the smell of bread reminds her of the past and mothers, though her mother didn't bake. She tries to block the "treacherous" scent. Rita cuts carrots, and Offred desires the knife. Rita, as usual, seems displeased with the groceries, and Offred mentions the oranges at Milk and Honey, to no reaction. Rita pokes at the headless chicken. Cora enters, and she and</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Though Offred shows her violently rebellious side by longing for the knife, in the scene she's paralleled with the chicken. Like the chicken, she's a passive body and a household chore that the Marthas must take care of.</p>

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<p>Rita discuss who will take care of Offred’s bath.</p>							
<p>Offred goes upstairs, pausing to enjoy the light through the stained glass. The convex mirror looks like an eye to her. The Commander is standing outside her room, which he’s never done before. He walks away when she arrives, and she tries to interpret his gesture. She realizes that she thinks of the room as hers.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<p>Like Ofglen previously in the chapter, the Commander seems to want to communicate something. But Offred worries more about his meaning than she did about Ofglen’s, showing how Offred worries most about what might personally affect her.</p>