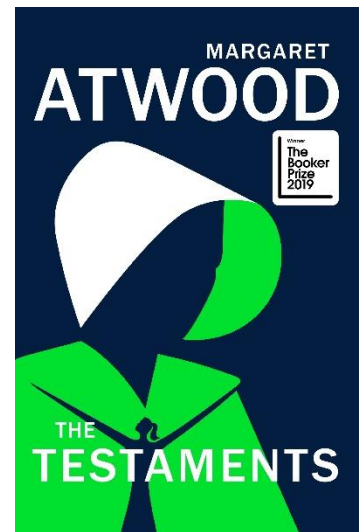


Skaneateles Library
Books by the Stack
Discussion Questions

The Testaments
by Margaret Atwood



1. Clothes play a dual role in the novel. They signal life stages as well as status and class: the pink, white and plum dresses worn by “special girls”; the drab prison-like stripes of the Econofamilies; and the green dresses of the betrothed girls. Did this aspect of the novel strike you as odd? Or is it actually not very different from our own obsession with brands and logos that convey a certain level of wealth and status?
2. Aunt Lydia tells us that Gilead actually has “an embarrassingly high emigration rate.” Can those who manage to leave Gilead ever truly “escape”?
3. Daisy/Jade is, to say the least, a reluctant revolutionary. But if you were her age and were asked to absorb all of the shocking information she has to process in a very short period of time, would you have reacted any differently?
4. Agnes’ interpretation of “Dick and Jane” showcases Margaret Atwood’s trademark wit, but there is more to it than that. Discuss the ways in which the author cleverly builds the sense of suspicion and fear that informs the way Agnes processes the events in her life at Ardua Hall.
5. Several references are made to shortages of basic necessities such as food and electricity. Birth defects and juvenile cancer also seem to plague Gilead. What do you think has caused this? Possibly environmental issues? Or the ongoing war?
6. Agnes considers her admittance to Hildergard Library to be a “golden key” that will reveal “the riches that lay within.” But it is here that she learns the truth about the bible, as well as the truth about her half-sister. Is there any book that provided you with a similar pivotal and eye-opening experience?
7. If you read *The Handmaid’s Tale* did you expect the ending and the role that Aunt Lydia played?

Discussion questions adapted from those on LitLovers.com