Offred ~ Property OF Commander FRED

Offred is the protagonist and narrator of The Handmaid’s Tale. Readers view the society of Gilead through her eyes - through her continual snippets of the past and her sharp observations of the present.

She is denied all her individual rights and is confined to a ‘domestic space’. Her role in Gilead is to reproduce. However, even though she is reduced to these circumstances, Offred does make some efforts to resist. She employs strategies to retain her individuality and psychological freedom. Remember when Offred says that she will “tell, rather than write (P49)” her story.

She observes her surroundings with a critical eye. Sometimes, she allows you to hear her sense of humour and quick wit.

You could say Offred lives a ‘double life’. On the exterior, Offred is a demure and subservient Handmaid who performs her duties obediently. She wears her repressive red uniform and the white hat that skews her vision of the physical world. But, on the interior, Offred refuses to forget her past. She remembers a time when she had control of her body, her relationships and her freedom. She escapes into her mind to cure her boredom, loneliness and isolation. It provides her with hope and allows her to survive.

Offred is actually very curious and observant - this is how we are allowed a view of this world.

Offred is mischievous.

She likes to play with words - because it is forbidden and because she refuses to be bamboozled by Gilead’s twisting of words and their meaning.

Her attitude is discreetly subversive but never openly rebellious.