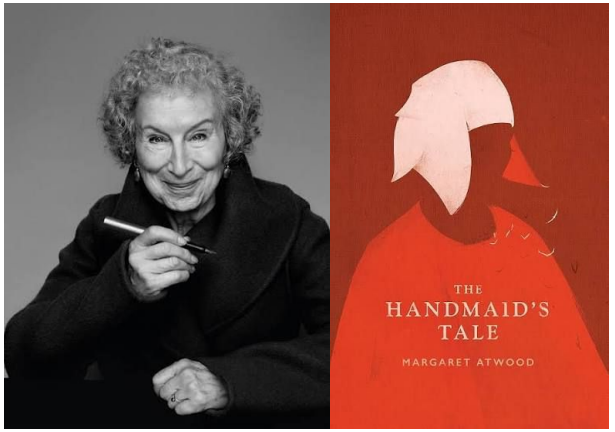
Wednesday 18th November

Happy Birthday

Happy 87th Birthday to writer Margaret Atwood. Margaret's father was an entomologist and they'd spend long periods as a family in the Canadian wilderness so her father could study the insects. She didn't complete a full year at school until she was 11. Instead she explored the forests and read voraciously.

As a teenager she began writing poetry and studied English at University. In 1984, while living in West Berlin she began writing a disturbing novel. *The Handmaid's Tale* which was published in 1985, imagines the Republic of Gilead, where women are forbidden to read, own property or have money. Some (Handmaids) are forced to bear children for the wealthy, while others (Marthas) are servants. Although it is **dystopian**, Atwood insisted that none of the practices are her invention and all the cruelties have happened somewhere in real life before.

The Handmaid's Tale became a bestseller and was adapted for TV. Its red dresses and white bonnets have become protest symbols for women's rights. Atwood has written many other novels and won The Booker Prize twice, for *The Blind Assassin* (2000) and *The Testaments* (2019), a sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*.



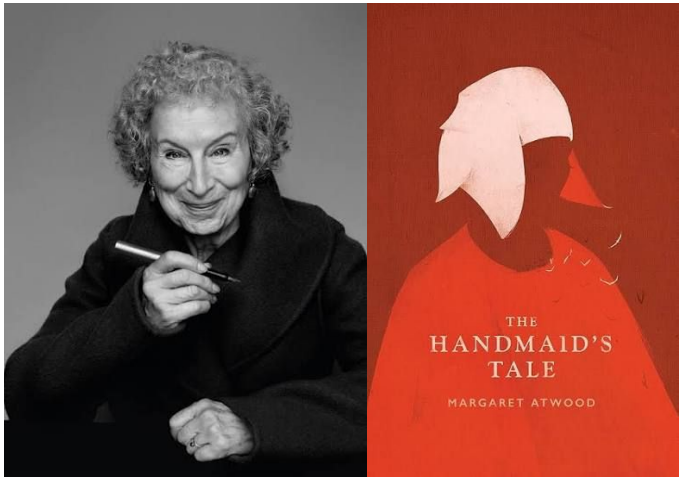
- What would you miss if you couldn't go to school all the time?
- Would you enjoy months at a time in the woods with no internet, only books?
- Is it still **dystopian** if the events have happened for real somewhere?
- Can novels and films influence people's attitudes towards real world issues?

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In 1984, while living in West Berlin she began writing a **dystopian** novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. It's set in Gilead, a world where women are forbidden to read, own property or have money. Atwood insisted that all the cruelties have happened somewhere in real life before.

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- Would you enjoy months at a time in the woods with no internet, only books?
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