

The Handmaid's Tale — Quotes

- *“girls, felt-skirted as I knew from pictures, later in mini skirts, then pants, then one earring, spiky green-streaked hair.”* (1)
- *“yearning for something that was always about to happen, and was never the same as the hands that were on us there and then.”* (1)
- *“the heart of Gilead, where the war cannot intrude except on television”* (5)
- *“There is more than one kind of freedom... Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it.”* (5)
- *“They are very interested in how other households are run; such bits of petty gossip give them an opportunity for pride or discontent.”* (5)
- *“Ordinary, said Aunt Lydia, is what you are used to. This may not seem ordinary to you now, but after a time it will. It will become ordinary.”* (6)
- *“She doesn't make speeches anymore. She has become speechless. She stays in her home, but it doesn't seem to agree with her. How furious she must be now that she has been taken at her word.”* (8)
- *“Nolite te bastardes carborundorum”* (9) — Don't let the bastards grind you down
- *“We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edge of print. It gave us more freedom.”* (10)
- *“I don't want to look at something that determines me so completely.”* (12)
- *“Her fault, her fault, her fault, we chant in unison.”* (13)
- *“I have failed once again to fulfill the expectations of others, which have become my own.”* (13)
- *“Moirra was like an elevator with open sides. She made us dizzy.”* (22) — Offred's thoughts after Moira has escaped. The idea of freedom frightens the women who have become used to their limited lives.
- *“Maybe none of this is about control. [...] Maybe it's about who can do what to whom and be forgiven for it. Never tell me it amounts to the same thing.”* (23)
- *“Live in the present, make the most of it, it's all you've got.”* (24) — Offred tries to compose her thoughts after her first visit to the Commander's office.
- *“Context is all”* (24) — Circumstances change her perception of the significance of events
- *“There is something subversive about this garden of Serena's, a sense of buried things bursting upwards, wordlessly, into the light, as if to say: Whatever is silenced will clamor to be heard, though silently.”* (25)
- *“That was one of the things they do. They force you to kill, within yourself.”* (30)
- *“Better never means better for everyone, he says. It always means worse for some.”* (32)
- *“Don't let the bastards grind you down. I repeat this to myself but it conveys nothing. You might as well say, Don't let there be air; or Don't be. I suppose you could say that.”* (46)
- *“And so I step up, into the darkness within, or else the light”* (46)
- *“Are there any questions?”* (Historical Notes)
- **Biblical references:**
 - *“Blessed be the fruit”* (4) — Ofglen gives the standard Handmaid greeting to Offred.
 - *“Gilead is within you”* (to be compared with *“The kingdom of God is within you”*)
 - *“Give me children, or else I die.”* (15)
 - Gilead: a place in the Old Testament, a mountainous region east of the Jordan; Jeremiah was a Gileadite