***The Handmaid’s Tale* Project** Your presentation date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

For our study of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, by Margaret Atwood, you and a small group will create a presentation for the class that focuses on a section of the book. You will help us make sense of the section you are assigned and point out some writerly elements of the text.

You will create a visual presentation with PowerPoint or Prezi (no Google Slides) and deliver it to the class on your assigned due date. You and your group members will be the experts on the section of the book you are assigned. You will provide a handout as an aide for the class to take notes.

I will make copies of your handout for you if you email or deliver it to me **before 2:30 on the day before your presentation.**

**Your presentation will be the source information for future activities and quizzes.**

While everyone in your group must read and reread your assigned section of the book, you will decide together how to divide up the work. Everyone must be involved in presenting the information confidently and knowledgeably. I strongly suggest that you bring note pages of cards with you to present.

**Required elements of the presentations:**

* **Plot summary**—Provide us with a brief overview of the major events in your assigned section. Remember, when talking about literature, it is conventional to use the present tense.
* **Characters**—Describe the characters in the section. Tell us about some aspects of the characters to help us get to know them AND how they have changed in the book so far. You can describe the character’s *actions, words, thoughts, physical appearance, relationships* with others, or *others’ reactions* to the character.
* **Vocabulary—**Find 5 words in your assigned section that are challenging and important in some way. These words could be new to you or used in a way that you are unfamiliar with. Provide the correct spelling and pronunciation, part of speech, definition, and a quote that uses the word and shows its significance. Writers need to continually expand their vocabularies!
* **Passages—**Locate three significant passages in your section of the book of sufficient length that show us the deliberate choices and writing style of the author. The passage should fit on one slide. Provide a page number.

Read each passage aloud (with expression) and analyze its significance. Help us think like writers. You may use passages to highlight three different kinds of choices Atwood makes. Or the passages may be used together to show us how she builds an idea or to show how she uses a single literary or rhetorical device. Consider these questions: How does Atwood use language to affect the reader in a specific way? What writing techniques does she use draw attention to ideas, actions, events, or scenes in the story?

* **Your group’s own idea—**if you and your group members want to include an additional creative element to your presentation, that would be awesome! Think of an expressive talent or skill you want to bring to your presentation that would help the class understand your section of the book. Write a song, rap or poem that helps express the meaning of your section of the book. Act out a scene or create some art.

**Required elements of the handout:**

* A 4-part **heading** beginning with all the group members’ names.
* A **title** that indicates the section and page numbers of the novel.
* Pertinent **information** related to the required elements of the presentation. You may want to put partial information on the handout and leave room for notes like a lecture guide.

**Presentation tips:**

* Make sure you have read the text thoroughly and understand every part of your presentation. Present yourself as an expert!
* Practice presenting with your group.
* Proofread your slides to eliminate mechanical, grammatical and usage errors.
* Speak to your audience, not your slides.
* Use note pages or cards to help you fully articulate your points.
* Include only key words on each slide (except for the passages). Think about what words are necessary and what you want to stick with your audience.
* Use memorable images that enhance the words on your slides.

Email your presentation to me at [kara.lycke@psd150.org](mailto:kara.lycke@psd150.org).

An example of a passage and its significance was written by novelist Edan Lepucki for *The Atlantic* (<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/09/remember-the-body/379868/>). Lepucki writes:

In my favorite passage from The Handmaid’s Tale, figurative language reminds us that Offred’s flesh is and isn’t flesh, and that although her body is controlled by the state, it’s far from a defined, closed system. This brief unhinging of meaning is an act of defiance. And in a world where all you’re allowed is your female body, it also may be a relief. Here, we witness Offred in a moment of introspection after she’s endured The Ceremony:

“Buttered, I lie on my single bed, flat, like a piece of toast. I can’t sleep. In the semidark I stare up at the blind plaster eye in the middle of the ceiling, which stares back down at me, even though it can’t see. There’s no breeze, my white curtains are like gauze bandages, hanging limp, glimmering in the aura cast by the searchlight that illuminates this house at night, or is there a moon?

I fold back the sheet, get carefully up, on silent bare feet, in my nightgown, go to the window, like a child, I want to see. The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow. The sky is clear but hard to make out, because of the searchlight; but yes, in the obscured sky a moon does float, newly, a wishing moon, a sliver of ancient rock, a goddess, a wink. The moon is a stone and the sky is full of deadly hardware, but oh God, how beautiful anyway.”

Because Gilead doesn’t allow handmaids to use lotion, Offred has moisturized with a pat of butter stowed away in her shoe. In that first sentence, she’s “like a piece of toast.” It’s a funny simile that acknowledges just how pathetic our heroine has become. It also transforms Offred’s flesh into something inert, without a lick of sentience. (Fitting, considering what she’s just gone through with the Commander and Serena Joy.) And yet, by refiguring her flesh with a strange, unexpected metaphor, Offred paradoxically becomes master of her own body again.

After providing the image of skin like buttered toast, the opening is dulled by monosyllabic words. “I can’t sleep” is the simplest and heaviest line in the passage. There’s no room for imagery or play here. It makes me itchy with desperation.

Throughout the novel, Offred continually turns her body into something other than a body in this way. At the same time, she also regularly personifies objects. In this passage, for example, while she is a piece of a toast, the ceiling has a “blind plaster eye” and the moon shines on “the breast of the new-fallen snow.” In Offred’s imagination, everything is turned on its head, or given one.