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Close Reading Organizer - Chapter 29 **Sample Answers**

Directions: Read each summary entry and think about which themes listed in the Themes Key apply to it, then color in those themes in the Theme Tracker. Next, write a few sentences of Analysis to explain how the themes you chose apply to each summary section.

Note: There is not always a definitive set of “correct” answers for which themes should appear in the Theme Tracker. Answers that differ from the ones we propose below should therefore not automatically be treated as incorrect, and in fact can serve as great discussion starters.

Themes Key

1	Gender Roles
2	Religion and Theocracy
3	Fertility
4	Rebellion
5	Love
6	Storytelling and Memory

Summary	Theme Tracker						Your Analysis
Offred plays Scrabble in the Commander’s office, at ease in her chair, perfecting the scene by imagining a fire in the fireplace. She finds the Commander father-like, and maybe even friendlier than Luke . Still, she wonders the goal of his kindness. He allows her to read magazines and even books by Charles Dickens or Raymond Chandler. But tonight she wants to talk to him about himself. He says he used to be a market researcher and is now some kind of scientist. Offred daringly asks him	1	2	3	4	5	6	When Offred talks about the Commander, she is particularly upfront about her storytelling impulse to improve and embellish. This indicates both an improved sense of creativity (maybe stemming from the books she’s finally allowed to read) and a sense of disappointment or shame that she wants to disguise from her readers.

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what “Nolite te bastardes carborundorum” means, and writes it for him.							
The Commander says it’s only joke Latin, from his schoolboy days. He shows Offred an old textbook with different Latin jokes, and explains that the phrase means “Don’t let the bastards grind you down.” Offred understands that the previous Handmaid must have learned the phrase from the Commander.	1	2	3	4	5	6	The origins of the rebellious-seeming phrase are a disappointment. The previous Handmaid isn’t so mysterious, and Offred’s relationship with the Commander isn’t so special. And yet it indicates that the Commander has long felt the need to break the rules of government he helped build in order to share human connection.
Offred simply asks what became of “her,” and the Commander knows what she’s asking. He says that the previous Handmaid hanged herself, which is why they plastered over the place where there used to be a hanging light. Cora found her, and so Offred understands Cora’s overreaction when Offred fell asleep in the closet.	1	2	3	4	5	6	Offred and the previous Handmaid seem to have a lot in common. Both wanted some connection to each other (achieved via writing), and both considered suicide—though, for once, Offred’s passivity on this matter is reassuring.
Offred realizes that the Commander has been spending time with her to raise her spirits, so she won’t do the same as the previous Handmaid . Offred says that maybe she shouldn’t come to his office anymore. She realizes that his own guilt is motivating this kindness. To discourage her leaving, he asks what she wants, and she says she wants to know what’s happening.	1	2	3	4	5	6	Offred has been concerned since the beginning about the Commander’s motives, but she seems disappointed to learn that they’re more about his feelings than a specific desire for her. Yet Offred’s love for others (such as her mother at the end of Chapter 28) also takes this form.

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