

Text #1:

“Instructions on Not Giving Up” - [Ada Limon](#) (2017)

More than the fuchsia funnels breaking out of the crabapple tree, more than the neighbor’s almost obscene display of cherry limbs shoving their cotton candy-colored blossoms to the slate sky of Spring rains, it’s the greening of the trees that really gets to me. When all the shock of white and taffy, the world’s baubles and trinkets, leave the pavement strewn with the confetti of aftermath, the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin growing over whatever winter did to us, a return to the strange idea of continuous living despite the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then, I’ll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I’ll take it all.

Practice: You / Me / Us

- *What do you think the creator of this text is trying to share with us? What do they seem to care about?*
- *What in this text resonates for you personally?*
- *What in this text do you think is meaningful or important for your community (or for everybody) to know or think about or hear?*

Text #2:

Excerpt from [“The Handmaid’s Tale Season-Premiere Recap: Under His Eye”](#) - [Laura Hudson](#), [New York Magazine](#) (April 2017)

There has been no shortage of essays calling *The Handmaid’s Tale* disturbingly relevant to current events, but it’s important to remember that this has always been the case. Margaret Atwood [once called](#) her novel a response to the idea that this sort of oppression “can’t happen here,” a dystopian vision designed to feel chillingly on the cusp of plausibility. The overthrow of American democracy is relatively recent when we meet our protagonist Offred (Elisabeth Moss), which means that every woman in the freshly minted totalitarian theocracy of Gilead grew up in an America like the one we know, and watched her freedoms get wrenched away by a regime that makes the Puritans look progressive.

Offred is us, in other words. The first time we see her, she’s dressed not in her Handmaid’s garb, with all its antiquated, pseudo-colonial piety, but as a contemporary in ripped jeans and a hoodie, running for the border with her husband and daughter in hopes of escaping the machine-gun-wielding men who want to turn her into nothing more than a possession, nothing more than a walking uterus forced to breed in a world where her ability to bear children makes her a very valuable commodity. A very valuable thing. She does not escape.

Practice: Know / Learn / Want

- *What did I know about this topic before I read this text?*
- *What did I learn about this topic from this text?*
- *What new questions do I have? / What does this make me want to learn more about?*

Text #3:

“You Are Not Alone” - Mavis Staples and Jeff Tweedy (2010)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW0kE6mucFY>

You're not alone
I'm with you, I'm lonely too
What's that song
Can't be sung by two?

An open hand, an open heart
There's no need to be afraid
Open up this is a raid
I wanna get it through to you
You're not alone

A broken home, a broken heart
Isolated and afraid
Open up this is a raid
I wanna get it through to you
You're not alone

A broken dream, a broken heart
Isolated and afraid
Open up this is a raid
I wanna get it through to you
You're not alone

You're not alone, every night
I stand in your place
Every tear on every face
Tastes the same

I wanna get it through to you
You're not alone
I'm gonna get it through to you
You're not alone

Practice: Pardes

- *Pshat (simple or literal): Restate what the text is saying (on its most literal level) and talk through any clarifying questions.*
- *Remez (hint): What do you think the text is implying? For example, is there a broader idea or principle that the text's creator might be implying through their particular examples or characters or situations?*
- *Drash (concept or interpretation): Expand on the text's ideas. What do you think it means? Why are the ideas valuable? What about the ideas trouble you or present something you might want to argue with? Where do these ideas lead you?*
- *Sod (secret): What feels hidden in the text? What other ideas does the text connect to (that might not be named)? What do you know about the context in which the text was created (or about the person who created it, or the people who are represented in it) and how do you think that potentially influences the text's ideas, or how does that context affect the way you personally engage with the text?*

Text #4:

Tweet from [Adrienne Maree Brown](#) (January 2021)



Practice: Lectio Divina (a Christian practice that means “divine reading” - the version written here is adapted towards universal use):

- *Read the text out loud more than once, slowly.*
- *Choose a word or phrase that touches your heart (it can be a different word or phrase for each participant).*
- *How do you see that word or phrase touching your life today? What about it is resonating or bringing something up for you?*
- *What do you see the text (or maybe just the word or phrase you chose from the text) as calling you to do or become?*