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## **Grande Dame of Canada**

The Grande Dame of Canadian literature is Margaret Atwood. You probably know her best as the author of “The Handmaid’s Tale.” She is also author of more than fifteen other novels, shorter fiction, poetry, books of non-fiction, books for children, and even graphic novels. She is a very prolific writer indeed, and also beloved worldwide.

She makes her home in Toronto, and from there she sometimes attends The Stratford Festival, about two hours away. My wife and I go to Stratford too to see the always outstanding Shakespearean, non-Shakespearean, and musical stage productions. With these go great restaurants with local produce highlighted on menu and the quaintness of small-town Ontario. It is my favorite away-from-home place to be, and in 2018 we were there one morning with, so to speak, Margaret Atwood, as ticket holders for the Stratford Festival Forum. She was on the stage of the Avon Theatre, one of four theatres in Stratford, and we were in the third row of the balcony with a clear view. She sat on the set of that afternoon’s production-to-come for a one-on-one discussion with Artistic Director Antoni Cimolino about her work. You can watch the almost one and half hours yourself at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h17t3R9egWY>.

She spoke quite a bit about “The Handmaid’s Tale” and also about “Hag-Seed.” Why “Hag-Seed”? Because “Hag-Seed” is based on William Shakespeare’s “The Tempest,” and the story is placed in the environs of Stratford. And, Margaret Atwood was in town also to attend a performance of “The Tempest” later that day at another venue.

“The Handmaid’s Tale” first appeared as a novel in 1985 and then as an extended TV series adaptation in 2017. Atwood laughingly told us that she was allowed input to the series as a matter of cordiality only. It is a dystopian story that obviously appeals to both the reader and the visually inclined. It is Orwellian. If you have not read the novel, you must; always do the printed or e-book version first, as then you get the fullest meaning that the author intended, her/his nuances in the first telling. Atwood’s own remark tells us that.

This is a great book from a great author of books. She is in her early eighties, and so in mid-career, from my perspective. You want to meet her, and you can by going to the YouTube website above. You will want to reflect on the “fictional” world “ that she describes, and you will want to reflect on related current events in our own country and in Canada too.

Lastly, I want to connect this short story about Atwood with an exciting new story at Murrsyville Community Library, namely the opening up of the TechNook little theater area that was constructed early this year. The project to build it was inspired by a failed attempt to stream an author live from San Francisco into a discussion that I was chairing about his book. The video part failed, probably because of limited bandwidth and the jury-rigged attempt. TechNook makes large-screen streaming into the Library reliably possible now. It makes it possible to play the Margaret Atwood interview at

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Stratford on the large-area screen anytime that one wants. So, now that you know about all of this, I hope that you will take advantage of YouTube in this way and that you will encourage the Library to bring you large-screen programming with favorite authors, taped or live, which was not doable before TechNook.

Charles B. Greenberg  
Board Director, Murrysville Community Library Foundation