Margaret Atwood (C1 -Advanced)

A — Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.
1. Have you ever read *The Handmaid's Tale* or watched the TV series?
2. If so, what did you think of it?
3. What do you know about its author, Margaret Atwood?
4. Can you name any other dystopian novels?

B — Listen and answer

Read these statements. Then listen to the two parts of the article (without reading) and write T (true) or F (false).

Part One
1. Margaret Atwood read George Orwell's book *Nineteen Eighty-Four* when she was 39 years old.
2. She realised that totalitarian states control people by restricting their access to information.
3. Her latest book *Old Babes in the Wood* imagines a posthumous interview with George Orwell.
4. Her interest in totalitarian regimes didn't develop until she started writing *The Handmaid's Tale*.
5. She is surprised that very few young writers are at present interested in dystopias.
6. In the 19th century, there was the belief that the future would bring continual improvements.
7. This optimism continued until the 1950s.

Part Two
8. Atwood thinks Kamala Harris lost against Trump because she's female and Black.
9. She notes that the Republican Party no longer represents middle-class people.
10. She firmly believes Trump will do all the things he's been threatening to do.
11. Atwood doesn't put much trust in Trump's vice-president, J. D. Vance.
12. She wonders whether Trump is really as mad as he seems to be.

C — Read and answer

Read the two parts of the article and answer the questions
1. How did the totalitarian state in Orwell's novel maintain control over all its citizens?
2. What kind of book is Atwood's latest work *Old Babes in the Wood*?
3. What is the link between the story called *Impatient Griselda* and *The Decameron*?
4. What didn't Atwood understand about Orwell's *Animal Farm* when she first read it? Why?
5. What made people living in the 19th century optimistic about the future?
6. Why was the theme of *The Handmaid's Tale* unusual when the book was first published?
7. Why does Atwood think some people were afraid of having Kamala Harris as president.
8. What kind of elites were the Democrats perceived to be representing, according to Atwood?
9. Why does she think some people in the Republican Party may try to restrain Trump?
10. Why doesn't Atwood interpret the ending of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as negative?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from singular to plural.)

1. Tom's parents _____ him to play computer games after dinner, but he did so all the same.
2. The police identified the thief thanks to the _____ cameras in the shop.
3. Daisy seems rather _____ today. Is anything wrong?
4. Since 2013, government documents have been _____ after 20 years instead of 30.
5. A president of the United States can only be elected for two _____.
6. Can't you think for yourself? You're acting as if you've been _____.

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test? (Reading and Use of English, Part 3)

Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits in the space given.

1. Orwell _____ (VISAGE) a totalitarian society where all information was filtered by the state.
2. His character, Winston Smith, is given a _____ (FORBID) book that changes his life.
3. It shows that the seemingly _____ (OPPOSE) ideologies of totalitarian states are identical.
4. Atwood understood that _____ (CERTAIN) was an effective method of control.
5. She was _____ (HORROR) to discover the true meaning of *Animal Farm*.
6. In 1898, H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* had hinted at a very _____ (PLEASE) future.
7. Atwood sees Trump's vice president as an even more _____ (QUESTION) figure.
8. She says America, though still powerful, has had a few _____ (FAIL) in recent times.

F – Talk about it

In pairs or groups.

1. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future? Why?
2. How much do you worry about these things in the future? Add other topics, if missing.

- climate change;
- inequality;
- misuse of artificial intelligence;
- disinformation;
- nuclear proliferation
- poverty

- violence;
- healthcare;
- totalitarianism;
- freedom of speech;
- food insecurity and water scarcity;
- _____

Answers: Margaret Atwood (C1)

B — Listen and answer

1. F — She read it when she was a teenager.   2. T   3. T   4. F — After reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, she had already wondered what England would be like if it became a totalitarian state.   5. F — She notes that there are so many writing about them that it has become a genre of its own.   6. T

7. F — World War I and World War II demolished the idea of a wonderful future.   8. T   9. F — She says it now represents both working-class people and middle-class people.   10. F — She doubts it somewhat.   11. T   12. T

C — Read and answer

1. It maintained it through mass surveillance.   2. It's a collection of fifteen short stories which are reflections on marriage, mortality and aliens. Some of the stories are in response to specific requests.   3. They are both set during an epidemic. In *Impatient Griselda*, Atwood chose to rewrite the last story of *The Decameron* because it was a story she disapproved of.   4. She didn't understand it was a political allegory. She thought it was about animals.   5. During the 19th century, many advances were made. These led people to believe that their lives would continue to improve.   6. Because at that time neither utopias nor dystopias were being written very much.

7. She thinks they were afraid of losing their identity, status and power, because they thought she would do to them what had been done to women and Black people in the past.   8. They were perceived to be representing snobby, educated people who thought they knew everything.   9. Because if Trump caused serious problems, it would make it impossible for the Republicans to be elected next time.   10. She maintains that since the novel ends with a Newspeak note written in standard English and in the past tense, this means that the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a thing of the past.

D — Learn it! Use it!

1. forbade   2. surveillance   3. gloomy   4. released   5. terms   6. brainwashed

E — Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test?

1. envisaged   2. forbidden   3. opposing   4. uncertainty   5. horrified   6. unpleasant

7. questionable   8. failures

SpeakUp