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## Moria as a Symbol of Hope to Offred in the Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Inspiration can often be found even in the darkest of times. Often, when people are going through difficult times, they find inspiration in things such as religion, books, and even other people. In *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, Offred, the novel's protagonist, lives in a dystopian society called The Republic of Gilead where, because she is fertile, she is forced to have sex with one of the high ranking officers to possibly give birth to a baby. One of the only things keeping Offred going is thoughts of Moira, her friend from before she was a Handmaid. Throughout the story, Moira can be interpreted as a symbol of hope to Offred while they are at the Center and after they meet again at Jezebel's.

One of the first times where Moira truly gives Offred hope that things might get better is when they are both at the Red Center. Offred arrived at the Rachel and Leah Center, as it was officially called, weeks before Moira did, but her disposition changed once her friend arrived. This was even pointed out by Offred when she said, "it makes me feel safer, that Moira is here" (p. 71.) When Moira attempts to make an escape and fails, Offred's faith in Moira wavers. Moira's second escape attempt proves to be successful and acts as a proof that the other girls could possibly escape. Even though none of them actually did escape, Moira symbolizes hope to all of the girls at the center, but primarily Offred, because she defied the bonds that kept them all in slavery. "In the light of Moira, the Aunts were less fearsome... their power had a flaw to it (p. 133). This line proves that Moira provided Offred with hope and lifted her spirits enough to give her a different outlook on her situation.

After Offred got out of the Red Center, she became a Handmaid, and though Moira may not have been with her in person, she was in Offred's mind as a source of inspiration. As Offred became more and more close with her Commander, he began to go out of his way to do nice things for her. One of these was taking her to Jezebel's, a gentlemen's club for high up men in the government. It was at the club where Offred met Moira for the last time. Instead of the strong and brave Moira that Offred looked up to, she found a person who society had ruined and "taken away something... that used to be so central to her" (p. 249). Since Moira symbolizes hope to Offred, seeing Moira give up like that causes Offred to lose her hope for a better future. "I don't want her to be like me... I want gallantry" (p. 249). This quote shows that Offred put Moira on a pedestal in terms of resilience and the will to fight back. Because she sees her former source of inspiration in this state, Offred no longer believes that things will get better and loses her fight.

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When going through difficult times, inspiration is, without a doubt, a surefire way to keep going. When one loses their inspiration, they tend to give up or at least become much closer to it. Offred, the protagonist of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, draws hope from her former friend Moira who was always brave and rebellious. In time, Moira came to symbolize hope, and a lack thereof, for Offred and this can be seen at the Red Center and at Jezebel's.

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