Play It As It Lays: *Supporting Characters*

In *Play It As It Lays*, Joan Didion surrounds Maria with a wide range of supporting characters: ambitious actors, fading celebrities, socialites, producers, lawyers, friends and opportunists. While each plays a role in the plot, this cast of contrasting personalities also illuminate one of the novel's central questions: *how do people respond to a world that feels fragmented, morally uncertain, and increasingly devoid of meaning?* Some characters seek power, others pursue success, youth, pleasure or security; some endure, some adapt, and some surrender altogether. In this activity, match each character to the coping strategy and idea they represent:

Character(s) ??	Response to Disorder	What theme or idea is represented?
	Stops fighting altogether.	The danger of despair when life no longer seems to have purpose.
	Tries to control people, stories, and outcomes.	Power and manipulation instead of genuine human/emotional connection.
	Pursues status, sex, and personal advantage.	Predatory masculinity within Hollywood culture.
	Clings desperately to youth and attractiveness.	The pressure placed on women to remain youthful and desirable.
	Believes in ambition and the promise of success.	The vulnerability of young women entering Hollywood (an exploitative system).
	Projects confidence and professional success.	The performative nature of achievement and masculine identity.
	Adapts to whatever circumstances arise.	Survival through pragmatism, compromise, and flexibility.
	Endures and negotiates with those in power.	The limited choices available to women in a male-dominated world.
	Believes in optimism, hard work, and traditional values.	Older American ideals that seem increasingly useless in Maria's life.
	Anticipates danger and prepares for the worst.	A belief that life can be managed through caution, foresight, and practical wisdom.
	Watches events without becoming involved.	The acceptance of the status-quo, detachment and indifference.

Consider: Which responses are more, or less, successful? Do any of the characters seem genuinely fulfilled? What view of modern life is emerging across the novel as a whole? Where does Maria fit in?