

Directions: Some writers will forever be identified with a time period. Kesey will forever be labeled and pigeon-holed into the 1960s, along with the Grateful Dead and Peter Fonda. This novel rages and rails and is written in an unusual and bizarre style. Be patient with it. Answer all of the questions fully and in complete sentences. Incomplete answers, sentence fragments, and spelling errors will cause loss of points.

One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest; 1-41

Introduction: The first scene sets up the novel. It is an example of "in media res" or beginning in the middle of things. This first part of the novel takes us through the daily life of the ward and the exposition. Be patient with your narrator, the Chief. He has had too much electroshock and drugs.

1. How does the Chief feel about the black boys? Show an example. How do they feel about Nurse Ratched?
2. What does Chief Broom see Ratched transform into? What does that say about her? How does her name show her character?
3. What is the last line of Chapter One? Paraphrase it please. What does it mean, and what does that imply about the rest of the story?
4. What is unusual about McMurphy? How does his voice and his laughter affect the ward? How are his hands different from Hardings? What does this difference signify?
5. Describe the ward. How does McMurphy upset it? How does he establish control?
6. How has Nurse Ratched set the ward up as an anti-cure?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: 41-82

Introduction: With McMurphy, the ward begins to change and the fundamental battle between Ratched and McMurphy looms.

1. What do you suppose the fog is? Is it real? Why does the Chief need it?
2. What does Nurse Ratched do to try and intimidate McMurphy? How is he supposed to feel? How does he feel? How does McMurphy feel about his own sexuality? How does McMurphy turn the tables on her?

3. What is the Combine? How has McMurphy managed to avoid the Combine?
4. Define pecking party? How are the meetings like "a bunch of chickens at a peckin' party"?
5. What is the difference between a chicken and a rabbit?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: 83-128

Introduction: Ratched loses her first battle ever, and manhood is ecstatic. Generalizing, people, like the inmates, are afraid of standing up for themselves and would rather hide in a crowd. Consider how the novel shows this

1. How did Mack manipulate the doctor? How is the Doctor manipulated by Ratched?
2. What gets Mack really mad? Why didn't the men do anything?
3. What will happen if the Chief lost himself in the fog? How does Mack bring the Chief back? What unusual thing happens to the Chief when Mac brings him back?
4. What important event does Ratched miss in the voting? What trick does she pull? Why might the men have trusted her before? Why don't they now?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: 129-173

Introduction: Part II of the novel begins with the problems of rule. Nurse Ratched works to regain the control she has lost, while McMurphy becomes a full fledged insurrectionist. This novel includes many women who work at "emasculating" men. Consider how the novel does this.

1. What does the Chief remember happening at the staff meeting? What was his role?
2. How does Ratched manipulate the meeting without saying anything? What does that say about the other Doctors?
3. What is her final ace in the hole—or Ratched's ultimate power of McMurphy?
4. How are Ratched and Mrs. Harding similar? What does Mrs. Harding do to her husband?

5. How has Mack changed? What has changed him? Is he thinking for himself or for others?
6. What does the broken glass foreshadow? What power does Mack have over Ratched? What power does Ratched have over Mack?

One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest: 174-190

Introduction: One section ends, another begins. Self-sacrifice and healing become the guiding force in McMurphy's life. Ratched, however, gets the machine going again. McMurphy works hard at giving the men their "manhoods" back. Consider how the men are becoming whole again.

1. What does McMurphy do, now that he has more power?
2. How is basketball good therapy for the inmates? What does it force them to do? How is it different from the talks?
3. What are the first words the Chief says? What does that show about Mack? How has Mack changed since the first chapter?
4. How does Mack get the Chief to laugh? Why is laughter powerful? What is happening to the Ward?
5. How is Mack bigger than the Chief? Who else had that same size?
6. How does the Chief explain the Combine?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: 190-218

Introduction: McMurphy begins to get paired with Christ. The men are pulled from the Combine and dropped into the ocean.

1. How are McMurphy and the whore similar? How do they both feel about their sexuality?
2. Who is more powerful: Candy or Ratched? Explain.
3. How many are going fishing? What is the significance (symbolism) of that number?
4. How does the fishing help the men therapeutically?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: 218-241

Introduction: Like many of the novels, this story moves towards its inevitable and painful conclusion. McMurphy's ultimate triumph comes from the men. They are now ready to join the world, for better or for worse.

1. What are the black boys going to do in the tub room? Is what they do to George therapeutic? Why is it important that Washington is clothed and Mack is naked?
2. What are the conditions for Mack not to get shock? What can't he take the deal?
3. How is McMurphy similar to Christ? What will happen to Mack at the end of the book, following the allusion? What will happen to the men?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: 241-end

Introduction: The novel ends in bittersweet triumph. Think about the positive here. Billy Bibbit begins to emerge as an important minor character in this novel.

1. How is Mack winning the battle with Ratched, even though he isn't there? Why does she bring McMurphy back to the ward?
2. How old is Billy Bibbit? Is this a surprise to you? What did his mother used to do for him? How did his mother hold him back? At the party how does Billy's voice change? Why does Ratched mention Billy's mother? How does it change back?
3. Harding draws up a plan for Mack. What important change does this show for Harding?
4. What happens to Billy? Who is to blame for this?
5. Overall, who wins on the ward? How do you know?

Writing Topics: Don't do these now. We will either do them as an in-class writing one day or as a group activity. Read them and consider the possibilities.

Writing pp. 1-41: The Chief sees everything as metaphor. When he is bored, time creeps by, literally. One commentator thought that this novel would make a tremendous cartoon and you can see why. Try to describe my classroom as if you were using the Chief's eyes.

Writing pp. 41-82: Write a first person account of the meeting from Billy Bibbit's point of view?

Writing pp. 83-128: How is McMurphy's successful rebellion different from John the Savage's rebellion in *Brave New World*?

Writing pp. 129-173: Cast your mind back to the beginning of the novel. Does Mack remind you of anyone in your life or anyone from history or the media?

Writing pp. 174 - 190: What would happen if Lenina and Bernard from *Brave New World* were put into the ward?

Writing pp. 190-218: How has McMurphy given these men their manhood's back. Explain the process.

Writing pp. 218-240: Mack gets compared to Christ throughout this novel. Follow this out. Suppose the men leave the ward in the end and form a church called "Mackanity." What would the ten commandments of this church be?

Writing pp. 241 - end: Write an alternative ending to this novel. How else could it have ended? Why would your ending be better? Why would it be worse?

Writing: Overall

- How are high school students like the inmates in the ward? How could they change that without leaving school?
- In real life, what is the Combine? How can you avoid it?
- Compare Nurse Ratched with other authority figures you have had in your life.