

Advanced Placement in  
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**

by Ken Kesey

written by Jill Clare

Copyright © 2011 by Prestwick House Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938. 1-800-932-4593.  
www.prestwickhouse.com Permission to copy this unit for classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her  
personal use. This material, in whole or part, may not be copied for resale.

ISBN 978-1-935467-94-6  
Reorder No. 308457

# One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

## Objectives

At the end of their study of this work, students should be able to:

1. discuss the use and effectiveness of a narrator with questionable sanity.
2. analyze McMurphy as a contemporary tragic figure.
3. discuss the techniques Kesey uses to present the ward as a microcosm of the Combine.
4. analyze fantastic hallucinatory imagery and how it contributes to the work as a whole.
5. analyze Nurse Ratched as a castrating character.
6. discuss sanity and insanity, including false diagnoses of insanity.
7. discuss how size and power are related in the book and how perceived size changes.
8. discuss both the redemptive and repressive power of sexuality on the ward.
9. discuss the Combine as repressive of individuality and freedom.
10. trace the development of Chief Bromden from a passive mute to an autonomous, speaking character.

## Background Lecture

### Elements of tragedy

While *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is not a tragedy in the classical sense of the word, it contains tragic elements, and McMurphy can be interpreted as something of a contemporary tragic hero.

#### ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

In *The Poetics*, Aristotle defined tragedy as follows: "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its *katharsis* of such emotions."

In the same work, Aristotle also delineated some characteristics of the tragic hero. According to Aristotle, the tragic hero must be of royal or noble birth. He must be fundamentally good but have a fatal flaw that leads to his downfall. The hero's downfall is the result of his own free will, not an accident or a twist of fate. The audience must feel pity for the hero at his downfall because the hero's downfall is not wholly deserved. The tragic hero must die as the result of his flaw, but his fall results in increased self-knowledge. The hero's suffering must never be senseless; it should have meaning and purpose.

#### MODERN-DAY TRAGIC HEROES

In the Modernist era, a new kind of tragic hero evolved from Aristotle's classical definition. According to the modern definition, the tragic hero does not need to come from a royal or high position. Rather, he can emerge as an average person. In the Modernist definition, the tragic hero does not need to die as the result of his flaws.

#### MCMURPHY AS A TRAGIC HERO

McMurphy easily qualifies as a tragic hero, fitting somewhere between Aristotle's classical definition and the Modernist definition. McMurphy emerges as a larger-than-life character (although not of noble birth), who is fundamentally good. He is life affirming, independent, and full of personality. His fatal flaw is his arrogance, manifested in his belief that he can successfully escape Nurse Ratched's ward even after destroying her control by throwing a party. When McMurphy attacks Ratched, which leads to his lobotomy, he is acting on his own free will. He is heavily influenced by the expectations of the other men on the ward and by his desire to avenge Billy Bibbit's unnecessary suicide, but the decision to attack the nurse is ultimately his own. The reader feels pity and perhaps even outrage at McMurphy's fate. His suffering, while tragic, is not senseless. He has taught the other men on the ward about the power of individuality and the need for freedom and sexual expression. His suffering and death are redemptive for the patients on the ward. Despite his flaws, McMurphy qualifies as a contemporary tragic hero.

## Major themes

### SANITY AND INSANITY

The novel is set in an insane asylum, thus obviously setting the stage for characters of unusual or questionable sanity. The narrator himself—Chief Bromden—is a patient who experiences severe hallucinations and presents these to the reader as if they actually happened. In addition, the narrator is unusual in that he has pretended to be deaf and dumb for years, when in fact he is perfectly capable of both hearing and speaking. These are not the typical actions of a sane man.

However, the novel questions traditional definitions of sanity. Although the Chief is far from normal, he has good reason for pretending to be a mute. This allows him to hear and see things on the ward to which the other patients are not privy. It allows him to survive on a daily basis. Bromden himself considers his actions cagey. In the beginning of his narration, he tells the readers: “It’s the truth even if it didn’t happen.” He realizes that some of his story is difficult to believe. All of the things he recounts might not have *literally* happened—like the fog being pumped into the ward or the nurse growing to twice her size—but his story is nonetheless true. His hallucinations provide a different insight into the ward, and this insight is truthful even if not exactly true.

McMurphy is another character of questionable sanity. To the reader, his actions and sense of humor are life affirming and sane, if reckless. However, to Nurse Ratched and the orderlies, McMurphy represents a dangerous insanity. Since the nurse is in absolute control over the ward, only *her* definition of insanity matters. She ultimately holds the fate of her patients in her hands, and she can manipulate the definition of insanity however she sees fit.

### SEXUALITY AND REPRESSION

McMurphy is an intensely sexualized figure. He describes himself as overzealous in sex, and lost his virginity at ten years old to a nine-year-old. He calls himself a “dedicated lover.” McMurphy is, by far, the most virile figure in the novel. He is also the most active, prepared to do what is necessary to assert his independence and individuality. McMurphy’s character is an illustration of the importance of expressing sexuality.

On the ward, however, sexuality is a topic of shame, thanks to Nurse Ratched’s influence. Sex is a frequent topic of the group meetings. In the first group meeting that McMurphy attends, the patients discuss Harding’s feeling of inadequacy because of his wife’s ample bosom. The orderlies presumably commit deviant sex acts on the ward, (although they are never explicitly caught), with the nurse’s implicit approval. The novel implies that it is the air of sexual repression and shame that leads to this sexual perversion on the ward.

Nurse Ratched herself makes an effort to be as unsexed as possible, despite her large bosom. She hides or covers up all traces of her femininity. In addition, she wields a castrating power over the men in her ward. They call her a “ball-cutter” because she removes all sense of masculinity from the patients. She delights in emasculating them. At the end of the novel, McMurphy finally ends her tyrannical influence by sexualizing Nurse Ratched. He rips her uniform to expose her breasts, “forever ruining any other look she might ever try to use again.”

## Important motifs

### THE COMBINE

The Combine is an extremely important concept in the novel. Chief Bromden's pervasive hallucinations—often horrific and always bizarre—form the majority of the descriptions of the ward. Importantly, the Chief's questionable sanity makes him an effective, if unorthodox, narrator. His glimpses into the unreal give us a greater insight into the machine-like precision of the ward. However, the Chief's descriptive narration does not apply only to the ward. The Chief views the ward as a microcosm of society as a whole, which he calls "The Combine."

The term itself implies inhuman, machine-like precision. The Random House Dictionary defines combine as "a combination of persons or groups for the furtherance of their political, commercial, or other interests, as a syndicate, cartel, or trust." This combination of persons crushes individuality and free expression, all for the supposed good of the whole. Also, a combine is a harvesting machine used for threshing crops like wheat, oats, and corn. In a way, the patients on the ward represent the natural, unblemished crops before the combine harvests them. After the combine passes over, the crops are pulverized and ready for commercial use. Similarly, as the power of the Combine influences the patients, they are emasculated and powerless, thus ready for reintroduction into society.

Chief Bromden's Combine is modern society, with emphasis on its unnatural, civilizing effects. The Chief explains, "The ward is a factory for the Combine. It's for fixing up mistakes made in the neighborhoods and in the schools and in the churches, the hospital is." The ever-present machinery of the ward does not end at the ward's doors; rather, the machines are part of society. Although the machines are in place presumably to help the patients adjust, the Chief fears them. The descriptions of the machines are menacing and sinister.

The Chief was not always a tool of the Combine. In his younger years, he lived outside of the effects of the Combine, in a small native fishing village. As the Chief aged, however, his maladjustment to the sterilizing Combine became clear, ultimately landing him on the ward. The Combine is not reflective of the beneficial aspects of society; rather, it is reflective of the aspects that force conformity over free will and individuality.

Things function most smoothly on the ward and in the larger Combine when everyone follows the rules without question. It is McMurphy's boisterous arrival on the ward that begins the reemergence of the patients' free will and masculinity.

The most powerful weapons of the ward and the Combine—and thus, of Nurse Ratched—are medication, electroshock therapy, and ultimately, the lobotomy. All of these weapons are used against the patients to force conformity and passivity, thus making them perfect devotees of the Combine. These weapons serve as punishments for those who attempt to buck the authority of the Combine. They also serve as tools to force conformity to the Combine's structure.

Ultimately, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a condemnation of the civilizing nature of society. Kesey uses the Combine as a symbol of larger society, and presents it as a dehumanizing, ruthless machine.

## SILENCE AND INVISIBILITY

The Chief spends the majority of the novel pretending to be both deaf and mute. He does this in order to be as unnoticed and invisible as possible. He often imagines himself blending into the walls or becoming so small that the staff won't see him.

The reader develops an understanding of why Chief Bromden feigns deafness and muteness when the Chief begins to remember episodes from his childhood. He realizes that he wasn't the one who first started acting deaf; rather, "it was people that first started acting like I was too dumb to hear or see or say anything at all."

As the Chief begins to regain his sanity, it becomes less important for him to keep up his façade. McMurphy is the first person to whom he speaks, and by the end of the novel, everyone on the ward knows that the Chief is neither deaf nor dumb.

The glass separating the nurse's station from the day room and the rest of the ward is kept carefully cleaned. Nurse Ratched demands that it be spotless, and she chastises the orderlies if she sees that the glass is less than perfect. McMurphy uses this invisibility to his advantage when he rams his hand through it. He tells the nurse that he did not mean to break it; it was so spotless, he forgot it was there.

## FOG

The fog machine is extremely important in the first two parts of the novel. The Chief believes that there is a fog machine hidden in the walls of the ward, and that the nurse and her staff turn it on in order to confuse and isolate the patients. The Chief believes that all of the patients are aware of the fog on the ward.

Although Chief Bromden often fears the fog, he also finds it a source of safety and comfort. He often tries to hide in the fog, hoping that the staff cannot find him and thus cannot hurt him. At one point in the text, the Chief comes dangerously close to losing himself in the fog forever. He's drifting off into it, further off than he's ever been before. He says, "This is what it's like to be dead. I guess this is what it's like to be a Vegetable; you lose yourself in the fog... It's not so bad." Thus, for Chief Bromden, the fog is a source of safety and a dangerous, menacing phenomenon as well. It represents his insanity and his desire to escape from reality.

## LAUGHTER

One of McMurphy's most effective and long-lasting tools is laughter. From his arrival on the ward until nearly the end of the book, McMurphy's booming laughter echoes. When McMurphy first arrives, Chief Bromden is struck by the sound of his laughter. It has been a long time since the Chief has heard a sound like it. The patients on the ward never laugh; they sometimes snicker or chuckle, but never let out an unrepressed, genuine laugh like McMurphy's.

In fact, one of the first things that McMurphy notices about the ward is that there is no laughter. Even in prison, a place with which McMurphy is very familiar, there is laughter; yet somehow, in a relatively comfortable place like this institution, there is none. McMurphy is puzzled by this until he comes to truly understand the dynamic of the ward and the staff's castrating, dehumanizing effects.

McMurphy understands the importance of laughter. As the Chief observes: "He knows you have to laugh at the things that hurt you just to keep yourself in balance, just to keep the world from running you plumb crazy."

As McMurphy makes his presence felt and begins to influence the patients, his laughter spreads. By the end of the fishing trip, all of the patients join in thundering laughter together, symbolizing their psychological recovery and emerging humanity.

## SIZE

Chief Bromden is a narrator extremely concerned with size, specifically changes in size. The Chief believes that size is directly related to power and influence. Thus, although the Chief himself is a physically imposing figure, he sees himself as quite small and insignificant.

In the beginning of the novel, when Nurse Ratched becomes angry with the orderlies for shirking their duties, the Chief sees her size change dramatically. He says, "She blows up bigger and bigger, big as a tractor, so big I can smell the machinery inside the way you smell a motor pulling too big a load." As her influence and power increase, so does her size. The Chief also comments on McMurphy's impressive size. As he is about to break the glass, the Chief notices with absolute shock that McMurphy has become "as big as a house!"

The Chief himself grows as the novel progresses. During the first conversation he has with McMurphy, McMurphy promises that he can make the Chief big again, as big as he used to be. The Chief's metaphorical size increases as his sanity returns. By the end of the novel, he is big enough to lift the control panel and use it to escape.



## Structure

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is not terribly unique in its structure, as it is divided into four parts, and then smaller chapters within those parts. However, the length of the chapters is worth noting. As a general rule throughout the novel, the shortest chapters are those in which the Chief is completely losing contact with reality. Conversely, the longer chapters are those in which the Chief is regaining his sanity and discovering his place. The longest chapter in the book is the chapter in which the patients take the fishing trip. Since the Chief is farthest away from the ward and the effects of the nurse, this chapter shows when the Chief comes closest to discovering his place in the outside world. There are several extremely short chapters—only a paragraph each—in quick succession. These chapters occur early in the novel when the Chief still feels the chilling effects of the ward most strongly.

### **Ken Kesey's influences**

Ken Kesey worked as a night attendant in the psychiatric ward at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Menlo Park, New Jersey. It was from this experience that he drew much inspiration for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Kesey claimed to have had many discussions with patients in the psychiatric ward, leading him to believe that the patients were not all insane. In fact, he believed some of the patients to be wrongly committed; he thought that some were committed because they refused to adhere to conventional ideas of behavior, not because of actual insanity.

Kesey also had an anti-authoritarian streak. He experimented with many psychoactive drugs, including psilocybin, LSD, and mescaline. His experimentation with and study of these drugs helped to inspire the hallucinatory imagery found throughout *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

## Practice Free Response Questions

### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 1

Carefully read the passage from part 1 of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, in which the narrator, Chief Bromden, describes Nurse Ratched. The passage begins, "In my dark I hear her rubber heels hit the tile..." and ends, "By the time the patients get their eyes robbed to where they can halfway see what the racket's all about, all they see is the head nurse, smiling and calm and cold as usual." Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how Chief Bromden's questionable sanity makes him a more or less effective narrator.

### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 2

Carefully read the passage from part 1 of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, in which the narrator describes the condition of the Chronics on the ward. The passage begins, "Across the room from the Acutes are the culls of the Combine's product..." and ends, "He never does much else." Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the imagery in the passage helps to describe the state of the ward.

### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 3

Carefully read the passage from part 4 of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, before McMurphy's attack on the nurse. The passage begins, "She turned and walked into the nurse's station..." and ends, "When he finally doesn't care anymore about anything, but himself and his dying." Then, in a well-organized essay, discuss how the Chief's portrayal of McMurphy establishes him as a tragic hero.

### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 4

The apparently never-ending struggle between men and women, commonly called "the battle of the sexes," is a recurring theme in literature from as far back as Greek comedy and tragedy. Choose more than one female character from Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and write a well-organized essay in which you analyze Kesey's treatment of women. Explain how this treatment affects the impact and meaning of the novel as a whole.

## PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 5

The civilizing effect of society versus the freedom of the natural world is a prevalent theme in literature. In a well-organized essay, analyze how Kesey uses McMurphy's character as a symbol of freedom in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and explain how this affects the work as a whole.

## PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 6

The ambiguity of sanity or insanity is a prevalent theme in many literary works, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. In a well-organized essay, discuss how Ken Kesey questions the definition of sanity in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Then discuss how this ambiguity contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

## PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 7

Many important themes in literature are developed in scenes in which a death or murder occurs. Using Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, write a well-organized essay analyzing the narrator's decision to kill McMurphy. Then discuss how the scene contributes to the tone of the work as a whole.

## Practice Multiple-Choice Questions

### PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 1-5

Carefully read the passage in part 1 of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, following the first Group Meeting, in which Harding is speaking to McMurphy, explaining the dynamic of the ward and the patients' place in it. The passage begins, "She doesn't need to accuse. She has a genius for insinuation..." and ends, "Just look at me. I simply need the nurse to make me happy with my role." Then, select the best answers to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

1. Harding's characterization of the patients as rabbits in this passage indicates the patients'
  - A. unrestrained sexual practices.
  - B. small size and quick movements.
  - C. timidity and fear.
  - D. ability to overthrow the establishment.
  - E. large population in comparison to wolves.
2. Harding's tone can best be described as
  - A. resignation.
  - B. fear.
  - C. hatred.
  - D. defiance.
  - E. gratitude.
3. The characterization of the nurse as a "good strong wolf" suggests her
  - A. propensity for violence.
  - B. tendency to travel in a pack with other authority figures.
  - C. ability to insinuate.
  - D. ability to turn the patients against each other.
  - E. absolute power over the patients in the ward.
4. This passage as a whole introduces contrast between all of the following EXCEPT
  - A. patients and nurse.
  - B. rabbit and wolf.
  - C. castration and virility.
  - D. combat and peace.
  - E. strength and weakness.
5. The description of Harding's laugh, "Like a nail coming out of a plank," suggests Harding's
  - A. high, feminine voice.
  - B. anger at his situation.
  - C. lack of real humor at his situation.
  - D. masculinity and strength.
  - E. experience as a carpenter.

## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 6-10

Carefully read the passage in part 3 of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, in which Chief Bromden is remembering his childhood. The passage begins, "John's next to him, got a thick gray mustache lifted tight up under his nose..." and ends, "in fact they're all looking off from me like they'd as soon I wasn't there at all." Then, select the best answers to the multiple choice questions that follow.

6. When John refers to the Chief as "the noble leader of these people," his tone suggests
  - A. respect.
  - B. hatred.
  - C. pity.
  - D. contempt.
  - E. indifference.
7. None of the three visitors hear the boy speak because they
  - A. don't speak his language.
  - B. consider him unimportant.
  - C. cannot hear him.
  - D. are mesmerized by the fishermen.
  - E. lack respect for Indians.
8. The speaker's description of the sweaty, fat visitors suggests
  - A. the contrast between his culture and theirs.
  - B. his concern with his weight.
  - C. his connection to nature.
  - D. the contrast between his home and theirs.
  - E. his burned, "overdone" skin.
9. The speaker's description of the fishing Indians as sword-fighters suggests the Indians'
  - A. instinctive fear.
  - B. grace and poise.
  - C. power and skill.
  - D. violent propensities.
  - E. dependency on fishing.
10. The fat man is reluctant to enter the Chief's sod house because of all of the following EXCEPT
  - A. his fear of "the civilization in the walls."
  - B. its expected temperature.
  - C. its presumed filth.
  - D. its strong smell of salmon.
  - E. his hesitation to speak to the chief.

## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 11-15

Carefully read the passage in part 4 of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, following the Chief's shock treatment. The passage begins, "There had been times when I'd wandered around in a daze..." and ends, "realizing how McMurphy must've felt those months with these faces screaming up at him." Then, select the best answers to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

11. Chief's statement, "It was the last treatment they gave me," foreshadows all of the following EXCEPT
  - A. his escape from the ward.
  - B. his return to sanity.
  - C. the newfound self-confidence.
  - D. the revival of his independence.
  - E. his popularity among the patients.
12. McMurphy refers to the electroshock treatment as a "battery charger" *primarily* in order to
  - A. maximize its effect.
  - B. emphasize its sexual benefits.
  - C. alleviate his fear.
  - D. make the Chief laugh.
  - E. anger Nurse Ratched.
13. The patients in the ward look at the chief "with a different look than they'd ever given [him]" because they
  - A. fear his violent tendencies.
  - B. admire his newfound bravery.
  - C. dread the effects of the electroshock therapy.
  - D. are surprised that he is speaking.
  - E. see him as a sideshow freak.
14. The word "screaming" in the last sentence serves primarily to
  - A. describe the constant terror on the ward.
  - B. indicate the volume of the patients' questions.
  - C. describe the fear they feel of the Chief.
  - D. indicate the zealous respect they feel for the Chief.
  - E. describe the horror of electroshock treatment.
15. Which of the following best describes the Chief's typical state after an electroshock treatment?
  - A. "Ten-thousand watt psychopath!"
  - B. "Living in that foggy, jumbled blur."
  - C. "Face drained of color, looking thin and scared."
  - D. "Breaking the surface after being underwater."
  - E. "The fog was finally swept from my head."

## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 16-20

Carefully read the passage in part 1 of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, during a group meeting that McMurphy is dominating. The passage begins, "The nurse's head gives that one little jerk again..." and ends, "And the more I think about how nothing can be helped, the faster the fog rolls in." Then, select the best answers to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

16. The speaker gets a "giddy feeling" when he sees the nurse "freeze" primarily because he
  - A. realizes she fears McMurphy.
  - B. thinks the nurse was in McMurphy's dream.
  - C. is pleased to see a reaction from her.
  - D. believes that McMurphy has the ability to defeat her.
  - E. thinks the nurse will interrupt the doctor.
17. The speaker's comparison of the nurse's face to a cast "made and painted to just the look she wants" suggests the nurse's
  - A. perfect complexion.
  - B. calm patience.
  - C. absolute control over her emotions.
  - D. feminine beauty.
  - E. absolute control over the patients.
18. In describing the nurse's power in the ward, the Chief emphasizes
  - A. her size.
  - B. her face.
  - C. the fog machine.
  - D. the folio.
  - E. the metal bolt.
19. The fog "rolling in so fast I can't see a thing" symbolizes the speaker's
  - A. poor eyesight.
  - B. hallucinations.
  - C. safety.
  - D. size.
  - E. hopelessness.
20. McMurphy brings up his dream and his father's iron bolt in order to
  - A. get the doctor's professional opinion.
  - B. hear feedback from his fellow patients.
  - C. gain sympathy from his fellow patients.
  - D. make a joke out of the group meeting.
  - E. take the meeting out of the nurse's control.



## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 21-25

Carefully read the passage in part 3 of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, when Candy arrives on the ward. The passage begins, "The whores were late..." and ends, "When she blushed she didn't look more than sixteen or seventeen, I swear she didn't." Then, select the best answers to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

21. The speaker's observation that the machines were committing suicide suggests
  - A. Candy's contentment on the ward.
  - B. the speaker's questionable sanity.
  - C. the nurse's response to Candy.
  - D. the speaker's violent tendencies.
  - E. Candy's incongruity on the ward.
22. The passage as a whole introduces contrast *primarily* between
  - A. men and women.
  - B. the nurses and the girl.
  - C. the ward and the outside world.
  - D. McMurphy and the doctor.
  - E. machines and nature.
23. The various descriptions of the girl as "lightfooted," "jouncing," and "panting" suggest her
  - A. immaturity.
  - B. disrespect for authority.
  - C. freedom and spontaneity.
  - D. nerves and self-consciousness.
  - E. profession.
24. The speaker's attitude toward Candy might best be described as
  - A. disgust.
  - B. love.
  - C. awe.
  - D. indifference.
  - E. respect.
25. Candy is crying when she sees and hugs McMurphy because
  - A. he seems out of place in an asylum.
  - B. she senses he will soon die.
  - C. she regrets bringing only one car.
  - D. he seems less virile than she remembers.
  - E. she fears his anger over her mistake.

### Answers and Explanations

1. Harding's rabbit metaphor does not indicate any kind of power or strength (D), either in ability to overthrow the establishment or strength in numbers (E). Rather, the point of Harding's metaphor is to indicate the opposite—a **lack of power due to inherent fear and inferiority** (C). Since a theme of the text is castration, the reproductive habits of rabbits are not included in this metaphor (A), and since it is a metaphor, size and speed are not presented literally either (B). **Thus (C) is the correct answer.**
2. Although Harding is not speaking highly of his role as a rabbit, he is not speaking out of fear of his role (B). He believes firmly in his role as an ineffectual rodent, but (E) he is certainly not happy or grateful to be one. **He accepts his role (A) because he sees no point in trying to change it**, and has no defiant hope that he can escape from it (D). Although he may be resentful toward the nurse, his tone indicates respect for her power more than hatred of it (C). **Thus (A) is the correct answer.**
3. In the passage, the wolf is referred to as singular and a pack (B) is never mentioned. Although a wolf may be a violent creature in nature, (A) depictions of violence are not present in this passage, only (E) **depictions of the wolf's strength, intimidation, and power**. The nurse's propensity for (C) insinuation has nothing to do with her wolf-like qualities, and her (D) ability to turn the patients against each other is not discussed here. **Thus (E) is the correct answer.**
4. The passage is full of contrasts, most obviously between (B) the role of a rabbit and that of a wolf. The rabbit and wolf represent, of course, (A) the patients and the nurse. Harding's "ball-cutter" accusation and his insistence that he is weak and frightened indicate a theme of castration and virility (C), as well as of strength and weakness (E), with the nurse always coming out on top. **Combat and peace** (D), however, is a distracter, because when Harding speaks of avoiding combat, he is not referring to peace, only hiding and cowering. **Thus, (D) is the correct answer.**
5. The passage mentions nothing about Harding's profession (E). The passage insinuates a degree of homosexuality for Harding; it certainly does not portray him as masculine (D); nor does it include any description of Harding's voice (A), feminine or not. The unpleasant sound of a nail coming out of a plank cannot be inferred to be a happy or pleasant sound, as laughter should be, so such a description most likely suggests (C) **a lack of humor, not real mirth**. Although Harding is not amused by his situation, his tone does not suggest anger (B). **Thus, the correct answer is (C).**
6. In the context of the passage, it is clear that John calls the chief a "noble leader" ironically. John's response to the boy's appearance and the way he ignores the boy is not indicative of respect for the people (A). However, this lack of respect does not imply hatred (B) or indifference (E). While John *may* feel pity for the chief (C), his tone is full of scorn. John does not consider the culture and living conditions of the Indians to be respectable, **so his intent is to show contempt for their leader (D)**. **Thus, (D) is the correct answer.**

7. Although the visitors are staring at the waterfall (C) and the fishermen (D), they are able to hear each other speak over these distractions without a problem. From the passage, the boy obviously speaks English, even in a perfect schoolbook manner (A). Although the visitors *do* lack respect for the Indians (E), they desire to speak to the chief, so their lack of respect is not the *primary* reason for ignoring the boy. Rather, **they ignore the boy because they consider him unimportant (B)**, virtually a nonentity. **Thus (B) is the correct answer.**
8. The passage does not introduce a direct contrast between the sod house and the town in which the visitors presumably live (D). However, the entire passage serves as a **contrast between the Indian's natural culture and the discomfort the visitors feel (A) because of their unfamiliarity with it**. The speaker certainly has a connection to nature (C), as well as dark skin (E), but neither of these are emphasized by descriptions of sweaty visitors. Nothing in the passage speaks of the boy's weight (B). **Thus (A) is the correct answer.**
9. While fishing, the Indians are fearless (A) and impressive to the visitors. The visitors are most impressed by the **power and skill (C)** of the Indians, like experienced swordsmen. Their grace and poise (B) is overshadowed by their power, as demonstrated by the ungraceful terms "lunge" and "shoot out an arm." While the Indians may be dependent on fishing (E), the comparison to sword-fighters does not highlight this dependency. Nothing in the passage indicates any violent tendencies (D). **Thus (C) is the correct answer.**
10. The fat man mentions his fear of black widows in the house, which he describes as a fear of a "civilization" (A). In the passage, the temperature of the house (B) is a point of contention for the speaker, as he knows it is cool while the fat man assumes it is hot. The fat man uses the term "squalor" to describe the presumed filth (C) of the house. The fat man argues that it is not his job to speak to the chief, making it clear he does not wish to (E). **The smell of salmon (D) is mentioned in the passage, but the smell comes from outside the house, not inside. Thus, the correct answer is (D).**
11. Since the Chief unambiguously says that this is his last treatment, it is obvious that his time left on the ward is short (A). In addition, since he comes fighting out of this last treatment, the Chief has obviously regained his self-confidence (C) and independence (D). He does become popular—almost a hero—to the other patients upon his return to the ward, **but this popularity is not foreshadowed by his "last treatment" statement (E)**. The Chief's last treatment also coincides with his return to sanity. **Thus, (E) is the correct answer.**
12. In referring to the electroshock treatment as a battery charger, McMurphy is explicitly referring to its sexual benefits, but he knows that is not its actual effect (B). He has no desire or reason to overstate the effects of the shock, as he is already troubled by it (A). Since he is troubled by it, **he seeks to minimize his fear by speaking of it humorously (C)**. He seeks to use humor (D), but making the Chief laugh is only a by-product of his true intention. Since he is not speaking to Nurse Ratched when he makes this comment, his intent could not possibly be to anger her (E). **Thus, (C) is the correct answer.**

13. Since the Chief is returning from his electroshock therapy saner and unaffected, the patients do not dread its effects (C). Nor is there any indication in the passage that they are surprised to hear the Chief speak, as he has spoken to them before (D). They admire the fact that the Chief broke the orderly's arm, rather than fear it (A). **His unexpected bravery in breaking the orderly's arm impresses and inspires them (B).** Although the word "sideshow" is used in the passage, it is not used negatively or as an indictment of the Chief. **Thus, (B) is the correct answer.**
14. The word "screaming" usually carries connotations of fear or dread, but the patients do not feel the constant terror (A) that they felt before on the ward, nor do they fear the Chief (C). Rather, they see him as an ally. Since the Chief has returned with no visible signs of trauma from the electroshock treatment, the patients have no reason to dread its effects (E). **They feel respect for the Chief because of his triumphant return to the ward and assertive action when fighting the orderlies (D).** The volume of the inspired patients may be loud, but that is not the primary effect of this diction. **Thus, (D) is the correct answer.**
15. This question asks what is the Chief's *typical* state, not his *usual* state after a shock treatment. In the first paragraph, the Chief explains that **his usual state is dazed, or "living in that foggy, jumbled blur" (B).** Both (D) and (E) refer to his state after this *particular* shock treatment, which is far from his typical state. McMurphy refers to himself as the "ten-thousand watt psychopath," (A) not the Chief. Also, the description of a thin and scared face (C) also refers to McMurphy, not the Chief. **Thus, (B) is the correct answer.**
16. The Chief is pleased to see a reaction from Nurse Ratched (C), as she is usually carefully emotionless. However, he is *primarily* giddy because her reaction indicates that McMurphy's antics have diminished her power over the patients, **giving him the potential to defeat her (D).** The passage speaks of wars, battles, winning, and losing, which further emphasizes the theme of victory or defeat. Although the Chief believes that McMurphy has the ability to defeat her, the Nurse's "freeze" does not indicate fear (A), only surprise and calculation. The nurse does not interrupt the doctor or McMurphy (E), and is instead content to let McMurphy win this one minor battle. The Chief has no reason to believe that the nurse would appear in McMurphy's dream (B). **Thus, (D) is the correct answer.**
17. The nurse is calm and patient, calculatingly so (B), but the words "cast," "painted-on," and "red plastic" indicates artificiality and control more than simple calm. The perfect doll face metaphor has nothing to do with the nurse's literal complexion (A), nor is the nurse feminine in any sense of the word (D). Rather, **the artificiality of the face suggests her almost perfect control of her emotions (C).** The nurse does not have absolute control over the patients in this passage, as McMurphy is dominating the meeting. **Thus, (C) is the correct answer.**

18. When the Chief is discussing the Nurse's painted-on face (B), he is speaking of her power over her emotions, not directly of her power in the ward. Neither the folio (D) nor the metal bolt (E) describe the nurse's power, as both are mentioned in passing. When the Chief is speaking of Nurse Ratched's power, he refers to her as a statue, "too big to be beaten." **Her size (A) is directly related to her power.** The fog machine (C) is a hallucinatory tool that the Chief believes she uses, not a direct expression of her power. **Thus, (A) is the correct answer.**
19. The fog that comes rolling in is one of Chief Bromden's hallucinations (B), not a *symbol* of one. There is no indication that the Chief has poor eyesight (A), especially since he can see the nurse's face clearly. In other parts of the novel, the Chief mentions that he feels safe hiding in the fog (C), but there is no mention of safety in this particular passage. The Chief does not speak of his own size anywhere in this passage (D). As the fog continues to roll in, the Chief feels more and more powerless, and **repeats the word "hopeless" (E) a number of times.** Thus, (E) is the correct answer.
20. This passage is focused on winning and losing; battles and wars. Thus, McMurphy's main motive is to defeat the nurse by **taking the meeting out of her control (E).** He brings up his dream exactly when Nurse Ratched is about to start speaking in an effort to defy her, not in an effort to get the doctor's opinion (A), or the patients' opinions (B). Nor is he interested in sympathy (C). Although it is possible that McMurphy's dream is completely fabricated and is rather amusing, his main goal is not to make a joke out of the meeting (D), but to antagonize the nurse. **Thus, (E) is the correct answer.**
21. Candy is not content on the ward (A), as she is self-conscious, like a schoolgirl on stage. Rather, Candy is extremely out of place on the ward, since she is a woman who does not hide her femininity or silence her laughter. The Chief's questionable sanity (B) is not the primary goal of his observation. Rather, the primary suggestion is that **Candy is so incongruous on the ward that the machines cannot function (E),** and thus break. Nothing in this passage suggests that the speaker is violent (D). Although the nurses, the ward, and the hallucinatory machines are closely linked, the nurses' response to Candy (C) are spelled out elsewhere in this passage. **Thus, (E) is the correct answer.**
22. Machines are an element of this passage, but nature is hardly mentioned at all (E). There is *some* contrast between men and women (A), but not nearly as much contrast as there is **between the "icy," "dipped in frost" nurses and the "jouncing," energetic Candy (B).** McMurphy and the doctor are not the focus of this passage (D). Likewise, the outside world is not a focus of this passage. It serves only as the place from which Candy emerges. **Thus, (B) is the correct answer.**

23. The girl is introduced as a whore, but all the patients discover that her profession (E) does not matter to them when they see her jouncing like “copper springs in the sun.” To the men, her profession stands in contrast to her nature. She demonstrates no disrespect for authority (B) in the passage or with her energy. When Candy becomes self-conscious (D) in the passage, she stands still, rather than bouncing. This passage primarily introduces contrast between **Candy’s freedom and spontaneity (C)** and the controlled restriction of the ward and the nurses. While she may be immature (A), her energy demonstrates her freedom in context more than her youth. **Thus, (C) is the correct answer.**
24. **The Chief is primarily in awe of the girl (C)**, as demonstrated especially by his vision of the machines breaking in response to her arrival. Like all the men, he is obviously attracted to her, not disgusted by her (A). He is too interested in her to be described as at all indifferent (D), but is not enamored enough to be in love (B) with her in the passage. The Chief may respect her spontaneity and individuality (E), but his feeling is one *primarily* of awe, not respect. **Thus, (C) is the correct answer.**
25. Candy’s emotional response to seeing McMurphy has nothing to do with his mortality, since nothing in the passage indicates that he will soon die (B). The reader knows almost nothing about McMurphy and Candy’s relationship before the asylum, so there are no clues as to whether McMurphy is more or less virile (D) than before. Candy is unconcerned about bringing only one car (C), and she starts crying before McMurphy even mentions this mistake (E), so that is not the cause. Rather, **Candy is upset to see McMurphy in an asylum rather than free (A)**. Thus, of the choices, (A) is the best answer.

# One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

## part 1

### Chapter one

1. What is the orderlies' motive for calling Chief Bromden "Chief Broom?"

*The orderlies are sadistic and power-hungry, so mangling his name into something suggestive of servitude or menial labor serves to emphasize their power over him. His size is intimidating to them, so they aim to devalue him in any way they can.*

2. Discuss the meaning of the figurative words referring to the Big Nurse's size, such as "swelling up," and "blows up bigger and bigger, big as a tractor."

*For the Chief, size is equivalent to power, control, and influence. Thus, the changing of the Nurse's size dramatically indicates her power over the orderlies. Her anger at the orderlies for talking rather than working causes her dominance to emerge, appearing to the Chief as literal size.*

3. What does the Chief mean when he says, "It's the truth even if it didn't happen?"

*The Chief is an unusual narrator. He describes occurrences on the ward and the machinery of the ward in ways that the reader knows are not literally true. However, his insight—even when not literally true—reflects the true meaning of events and his feelings about them. Truth is subjective, and the Chief conveys his version of events in the most truthful way he can, given his sometimes insane state.*

### Chapter two

1. Where is the irony in the Public Relations man's description of the ward?

*The Public Relations man is speaking sincerely as he gives a tour to the grade school teachers. He is genuinely pleased with the state of the ward, even if he does exaggerate somewhat. However, the reader notices the ironic contrast between how wonderful the Public Relations man claims the ward is, compared to the actual state of the ward described by Chief Bromden.*

2. Why does the nurse give the orderlies a jar of Vaseline that holds at least a gallon?

*Although it is not made explicit, it appears that the orderlies use Vaseline to sexually dominate new arrivals in secret. The nurse gives the orderlies the Vaseline explicitly for the purpose of inserting the thermometer, but she knows that is not what it is really used for. The Big Nurse is thus implicitly sanctioning the orderlies' violence against the patients.*



3. How does McMurphy differ from the other patients on the ward?

*The Chief emphasizes McMurphy's size, saying "He sounds big in the way he walks," and mentioning the size of his hands. The Chief also points out McMurphy's laugh, and realizes that it is the first real laugh he has heard in years. McMurphy laughs even though there is nothing funny going on, and there is laughter in the way he talks and the way he swaggers. McMurphy is also assertive, not allowing the orderlies to shower him or insert the thermometer. McMurphy speaks frankly of sex and gambling, showing Harding his playing cards with women in sexual poses on them. In short, McMurphy is loud, life-affirming, and sexual. He represents a man in his natural state, quite different from the powerless men on the ward.*

### Chapter three

1. What does Ellis' position on the wall allude to?

*Ellis is a reference to Christ, as Ellis is nailed to the wall in a pose of crucifixion. Ellis represents a failure of the ward to successfully recondition a patient. In addition, Ellis' position of public crucifixion subtly foreshadows the same fate for McMurphy.*

2. What is a "head installation," and how did one affect Ruckly?

*A head installation is the Chief's term for a lobotomy. The staff considers Ruckly's lobotomy a failure, as it virtually made him into a drooling vegetable. He apparently has little contact with reality and does nothing but sit and stare at an old photograph. Although the staff considers it a failure, Chief Bromden believes it to be as much a success as any other lobotomy.*

3. What does the small brass tablet that reads "Congratulations for getting along with the smallest number of personnel of any ward in the hospital" indicate?

*The tablet suggest that the nurse and the staff have disproportionate control over the patients. The staff accomplish this by resorting to fear tactics, such as the one described in the previous paragraph. The Big Nurse points out that if the Acutes choose not to cooperate, they could end up as a Chronic. Since the tablet is positioned directly between the Chronic and Acute side of the ward room, the division between the two is clearly delineated. In addition, the tablet indicates the perverse pride that the Big Nurse feels with her absolute power.*



4. How does Chief Bromden's description of McMurphy's hand help to define McMurphy's character?

*The Chief remembers how McMurphy's hand looked because he is struck by how grizzled and dirty it is. To the Chief, McMurphy's hand represents a natural man's hand, as it has seen hard work and many fights. The calluses on McMurphy's hand and the scars on his knuckles suggest that he has not been broken by the rules of the Combine. Also, when the Chief shakes McMurphy's hand, the Chief feels a sense of power. He senses that his own hand is swelling up to the size of McMurphy's, making him feel momentarily powerful. This foreshadows the effect McMurphy will ultimately have on Chief Bromden.*

5. McMurphy and the nurse "size each other up." What does this foreshadow?

*Opponents often size each other up before a conflict. Thus, this action clearly foreshadows a power struggle or even a physical conflict between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched.*

### **Chapter four**

1. Why does Nurse Ratched remember Mr. Taber so fondly?

*To the nurse, Mr. Taber was an "intolerable Ward Manipulator." He had the courage to question what medications he was taking, and as a result, was subjected to electroshock therapy, forced to take medication, and possibly even lobotomized. Nurse Ratched sees the breaking of Mr. Taber as a huge success, primarily because it confirms her power over the patients. Mr. Taber was dismissed from the ward as a changed man, passive and docile.*

2. Discuss the function of the mechanical language the narrator uses to describe Nurse Ratched and the ward as a whole.

*Mechanical language is used to convey the inhuman quality of the ward and the Big Nurse. According to the Chief, what Nurse Ratched dreams of is "a world of precision efficiency and tidiness like a pocket watch with a glass back, a place where the schedule is unbreakable." The mechanical language also serves to present the ward and the Combine as a powerful machine, which intimidates the Chief into conformity and silence.*

3. Is this mechanical description realistic? Discuss the role of a narrator with questionable sanity.

*The Chief's description of the ward is not at all realistic in the literal sense. The reader is aware that the ward is not literally filled with electronic equipment that reads the patients' minds, just as the reader is aware that the actual size of the nurse changes. However, Chief Bromden's description of the ward is full of insight. As a mental patient on the ward, the reader cannot expect a completely sane narrator. Regardless of his insanity, the Chief is trustworthy. He is, in fact, more trustworthy than any other patient would be. The Chief is in a unique position because he pretends to be deaf and mute and tries to be unnoticed as much as possible. Thus, he is more aware of his surroundings than other characters who are active participants.*

4. How has Nurse Ratched ensured that the rest of the staff is subordinate to her?

*The nurse selects doctors, orderlies, and other nurses based on their passivity. If someone is hired over whom she doesn't have sufficient power, she makes life miserable for him until he requests a transfer. Over time, she has selected orderlies that are hateful and will enjoy tormenting the patients.*

## **Chapter five**

1. Is the fog machine literal or metaphorical? What is its purpose?

*The fog machine is one of Chief Bromden's recurring hallucinations. There is no literal fog machine on the ward, but the Chief talks about it often. He believes the fog is there to cloud the minds of the patients and assert the nurse's control. He speaks of losing himself completely in the fog one day, implying that the fog can also serve as an escape from reality.*

2. Discuss Harding's assertion that they are the "victims of a matriarchy."

*Harding knows that the Big Nurse holds all of the power in the ward. He explains to McMurphy that the male doctor is just as ineffectual as the patients. Nurse Ratched exercises her power by figuratively castrating the patients—that is, robbing them of their virility and manhood. Harding and McMurphy call her a ball-cutter.*

3. What is Harding admitting when he compares himself and the other patients to rabbits and Nurse Ratched to a wolf?

*Harding calls the patients rabbits, in reference to their fear and timidity. He calls Nurse Ratched a wolf because of her size and ruthlessness. Thus, Nurse Ratched is a predator, and the patients are her prey.*

4. According to Harding, what is the only reliable weapon that men have against women?

*Harding says that sex is the only truly effective weapon men have. More specifically, Harding alludes that the weapon is the penis itself when he asks McMurphy if he could “use [his] weapon against our champion.”*

5. Discuss McMurphy's motive in deciding to challenge Nurse Ratched.

*McMurphy is both a gambling man, and a man who does not like to be dominated by a woman. His most obvious motive in choosing to “get the best of that woman” is to make money off of the bets he has collected. He is also motivated by a desire to show the other men in the ward that the nurse is not entirely impregnable. He wants to show the men, just one time, that “she ain't so unbeatable as you think.”*

## Chapter six

1. How does the Chief's belief that Nurse Ratched controls the clocks in the ward develop the nurse's character? The Chief's?

*The Chief believes that the nurse is so power-hungry that she goes to ridiculous lengths to keep the patients at her mercy, including making time appear to move more slowly or more quickly by controlling the clocks. Although this further develops Bromden's paranoia, it also further develops the nurse as dominating and arbitrarily callous. Her character is so controlling that she seeks to control even time. The Chief is sometimes so paranoid and psychotic that any machine, even something as innocuous as a clock, can be used against him as an oppressive device.*

2. Discuss McMurphy's white whale boxers, and why the literary major calls him a “symbol.”

*The white whale shorts are an allusion to Moby-Dick, especially as a literary major gave them to him. Various interpretations of Moby-Dick characterize the whale as a symbol of power, nature, and God. These various interpretations all apply to McMurphy, as McMurphy himself is a symbol of potency (both sexual and physical), man in his natural state, and he is alluded to as a Christ-figure.*

3. How does the young Catholic nurse's response to McMurphy further develop the theme of sexuality and repression?

*The young nurse is yet another female in the novel who is carefully non-sexual around the patients. Unlike Nurse Ratched, the Catholic nurse does not repress her sexuality in order to exercise power; rather, her reason for repressing her sexuality is rooted in fear. Nurse Pilbow fears McMurphy because Nurse Ratched identifies him as a “sex maniac.” Even when McMurphy approaches her to pick up the watering can for her, she assumes his motives are nefarious. McMurphy's potency stands in direct contrast to her repression.*

## Chapter seven

1. Discuss the function of the pervasive mechanical imagery in Chief Bromden's dream.

*One ubiquitous image in the novel, exemplified by this chapter, is machinery and mechanisms. Machinery stands in direct contrast to nature. This imagery contributes to the theme that the ward treats its patients in unnatural, inhuman ways. The Chief describes the machinery as menacing and evil. The machines, like the ward, rob the patients of their individuality and humanity.*

2. Based on the Chief's description, is his trustworthiness as a narrator compromised?

*In this chapter, the Chief's disturbing dream coincides with Blastic's death. The reader realizes that Blastic dies of natural causes, not actually the result of being sliced with a scalpel while hanging from a hook. However, the Chief's description of how he believes Blastic dies allows the reader a figurative glimpse into how the ward really functions. When the scalpel splits Blastic open, rush, ashes, and wires spill out of his body rather than blood or innards. This represents how the ward and the Nurse have taken Blastic's humanity, which is a more important observation than Blastic's actual cause of death. Thus, although the Chief is obviously out of touch with reality in this chapter, his efficacy as a narrator is emphasized, not compromised.*

## Chapter eight

1. How does McMurphy's choice to brush his teeth with soap powder advance the conflict of the novel?

*Since the toothpaste is locked in the cabinet, in accordance with ward policy, McMurphy decides to assert his independence by using the only thing that is freely available—soap powder. Rather than follow the ward's arbitrary rules, McMurphy demonstrates his contempt for those rules. The conflict between McMurphy and the ward in general—and Nurse Ratched specifically—continues to grow in this chapter, thanks to minor disruptions like this one. McMurphy succeeds in “getting the black boy's goat like not many men could.”*

2. How does Nurse Ratched's reaction to McMurphy's singing and to his boxer shorts develop her character?

*The Big Nurse is so unaccustomed to hearing singing that, at first, she can't identify what it is. This indicates that the nurse is unfamiliar with natural, unrestrained acts on her ward. She is quite obviously disturbed by McMurphy's happiness. Upon seeing McMurphy's boxer shorts, which he has been wearing all along underneath his towel, Nurse Ratched is both shocked and embarrassed. These emotions quickly turn to outrage, and the white fury in her face is obvious. The sexual connotation of this encounter is also important. The nurse is offended at the idea that McMurphy is naked underneath the towel, and equally offended at being made to look foolish when he reveals his boxers. This scene is also the first time that the nurse shows real strain, indicating that she is not entirely emotionless or unbeatable.*

3. Discuss the effect that McMurphy's laughter has on the Chief. What does this foreshadow?

*Hearing McMurphy sing and laugh causes the Chief to remember an episode from his childhood. His father once poked fun at government officials, prompting his tribe to "bust up laughing fit to kill." Remembering this episode, the Chief also realizes that he "sometimes forgets what laughter can do." This sudden realization foreshadows the Chief's return to sanity, as he is realizing the power that he still has to retain his humanity. It also demonstrates McMurphy's effect on the Chief, and foreshadows McMurphy's further effect on all the patients.*

## **Chapter nine**

1. How has McMurphy influenced the other patients at this point in the novel?

*McMurphy's happy-go-lucky attitude during breakfast in this chapter clearly has an effect on the patients. The patients are still afraid to laugh; instead, they only grin and snicker behind their hands occasionally. However, they are willing to go along with McMurphy as he flicks the pat of butter at the clock, and they are eager to see how he behaves at the first group meeting. Some of the patients even break the silence in the group meeting in order to support McMurphy's idea of a carnival. The patients are slowly—very slowly—beginning to exercise their autonomy.*

2. Is the doctor a friend or enemy to McMurphy? What theme is developed by the doctor's response to McMurphy?

*McMurphy is quick to see that the doctor is an ineffectual man. McMurphy decides to use his charm and manipulative power to make the doctor an ally in the conflict with Nurse Ratched. McMurphy talks the doctor into suggesting a carnival for the patients and into allowing the hydrotherapy room to become a game room for gambling. McMurphy clearly is giving the doctor more confidence, at least to stand up for his ideas in group meetings. The doctor's apparent allegiance to McMurphy emphasizes the theme of the conflict between men and women.*

3. Characterize the language used to describe Nurse Ratched at the end of the chapter. How does this description change the tone of the chapter?

*The Chief describes the Big Nurse as inhuman and cold. Her face is "stamped out of red plastic," perfectly controlled and expressionless. He also returns to the theme of size and changing size. He observes that the nurse is as big as a "Jap statue," and relates her immense figurative size to her power and indestructibility. Throughout the chapter, the Chief has been developing hope, seeing McMurphy raise the spirits of the men on the ward and taking his first steps toward challenging Nurse Ratched. However, when Chief Bromden sees the nurse's perfect composure and incredible size, he realizes that his hope is in vain. His chilling description of the nurse closes this chapter with a tone of hopelessness. The fog rolling in from the machine also emphasizes this tone.*

## Chapter ten

1. Analyze the function of this short chapter.

*The only thing happening in this chapter is a game of Monopoly among some of the patients. Despite the changes that McMurphy has brought to the ward, this chapter emphasizes that life on the ward is not yet very different from what it was before. Three-day-long Monopoly games are still commonplace. In addition, this chapter shows that Martini is prone to hallucinations, indicating that not all the men on the ward are there only because they are ineffectual rabbits.*

## Chapter eleven

1. How does McMurphy's laughter keep him safe?

*McMurphy knows that as long as he doesn't let the arbitrary rules fluster him, he still has power over the staff. The staff—led, of course, by Nurse Ratched—wish to break McMurphy, to make him a product of the Combine. McMurphy has noticed that there is no real laughter on the ward; he is determined not to lose his laughter as the other patients have. His laughter also aggravates the staff, which is a minor victory for McMurphy.*

2. Why do the patients refuse to support McMurphy's vote to watch the World Series? What theme does this develop?

*The patients, especially Harding and Billy, try to explain to McMurphy that nothing they could do would have any effect on the quality of life in the ward in the long run. The patients' tendency to side with the Big Nurse develops the theme of the ward's destruction of independence and freedom. The nurse and the Combine have such an influence over the patients that they believe it's not worth fighting, not even for the World Series.*

3. What might McMurphy's attempt to lift the control panel foreshadow?

*McMurphy's attempt to lift the control panel demonstrates his belief that escape is possible. The act points out the control panel to the reader and suggests that it might become a means of escape later in the novel. In addition, McMurphy's incredible effort will give the patients the courage to stand up to Nurse Ratched in the next group meeting.*

4. How does McMurphy's attempt to lift the control panel develop his character?

*McMurphy's fervent attempt to lift the panel—even when he knows that he cannot do it—shows the strength of his character. He realizes that the other patients on the ward need to develop a belief in themselves and in their own effectiveness as men. His attempt to lift the panel is a metaphor for his attempt to challenge and overthrow Nurse Ratched. Even if it is ultimately unsuccessful, McMurphy's incredible attempts show the other patients that the act of trying is important. This develops his strength, fortitude, and ability to influence the other patients.*



## Chapter twelve

1. What does the Chief's reaction to the picture on the wall demonstrate about his character?

*Chief Bromden was raised in a Native American fishing village. He has a deep connection with nature and once had a deep connection to freedom. The Chief's ability to lose himself in the picture, even to the point of feeling the cold snow off of the peaks, obviously demonstrates his insanity. More importantly, however, it shows that he still has the desire for, and the potential to enjoy, freedom. The Chief is not completely destroyed. Somewhere inside him, he still has strength and virility.*

2. Discuss the irony of the Public Relation man's statement: "A man that would want to run away from a place as nice as this, why, there'd be something wrong with him."

*This is an extremely ironic statement, even though the Public Relations man says it sincerely. Thus, it's a form of dramatic irony since the reader knows something that the character does not. In the ward, the best demonstration of sanity is McMurphy, because he is the patient who is affected by the Combine the least. McMurphy is also the character most eager to escape. Those who truly have something wrong with them are those who have no desire to escape the ward.*

## Chapter thirteen

1. Why does the fog make the Chief feel safe?

*The Chief knows that the fog is the product of Nurse Ratched's machinery of control on the ward. Thus, he knows that it is a tool of the Combine. Despite this knowledge, however, he feels safest when he is able to hide in the fog. There, he is not "easy to get at." He is not outside of the nurse's control, but he is able to avoid it when he hides in the fog.*

2. The Chief believes McMurphy wants to drag the patients out of the fog. How does his belief change the reader's perception of McMurphy?

*In this short chapter, the Chief's description of McMurphy becomes wary. In the previous chapter, Bromden's attitude toward McMurphy bordered on hero worship. Now, Bromden believes that McMurphy may be putting all the patients in danger by dragging them out of their safe hiding places. The fog allows the patients to hide from reality; McMurphy wants to drag them into reality to assert themselves.*

## Chapter fourteen

1. Describe the significance of Old Rawler's method of suicide.

*Old Rawler literally castrates himself and bleeds to death. This means of committing suicide brings to the forefront the theme of castration and repressed sexuality. Nurse Ratched's goal is to metaphorically castrate the patients. She is an emasculating force. Old Rawler's method of suicide demonstrates her influence and the power of the institution.*

2. The Chief says, "What makes people so impatient is what I can't figure; all the guy had to do was wait." What does he mean?

*The Chief believes that there is no escaping the emasculating effects of the ward. It's only a matter of time before all of the patients are completely emasculated. The Chief believes it was unnecessary for Old Rawler to castrate himself. Eventually, Nurse Ratched would have done it for him.*

## Chapter fifteen

1. What might the Chief's description of the "Shock Shop" and the electroshock therapy table foreshadow?

*The table is shaped like a cross, "with shadows of a thousand murdered men printed on it." Like Ellis' crucified position on the wall in Chapter three, this is an obvious allusion to Christ's crucifixion. The imagery here most likely foreshadows someone's, probably McMurphy, somehow sacrificing himself for the sakes of the other patients.*

2. How is this chapter a reversal for Chief Bromden's character?

*The Chief is in danger of losing himself entirely to psychosis. He envisions himself floating away in his chair. He sees his father and several others from his past emerge from the fog to speak to him. He is even about to welcome it, as it will serve as an ultimate escape from the reality of the ward. It is only McMurphy's assertive presence during the group meeting that keeps the Chief from slipping away entirely. Then, in a complete reversal, the Chief raises his hand to vote for watching the World Series. Just when the Chief is about to surrender to the ward, he suddenly asserts his independence and presence of mind for the first time in the novel. The Chief has finally become an active, definitive character, a participant in his own life rather than a passive observer. He admits this explicitly when he reveals that he raised his hand on his own accord, not as the result of any manipulation by McMurphy.*



3. What does Nurse Ratched's method of tallying the votes reveal about her character?

*The nurse is completely unconcerned about the rights of the patients. Although McMurphy convinces every single Acute—all twenty of them—to vote in his favor, the nurse demands that the Chronics be counted also. Obviously, none of the Chronics has much of an ability to vote or to appreciate the World Series games. She makes a show of adhering to the ward constitution but in effect will stop at nothing to see that the patients remain powerless. The nurse's refusal to admit defeat even after the Chief has voted in McMurphy's favor reveals this need for control even more.*

4. How do the events in this chapter advance the conflict of the novel?

*This chapter is the first one in which all of the patients take a definitive stand against Nurse Ratched. More importantly, this is the first time that Nurse Ratched has demonstrated anything but perfect composure and control over the patients. Thanks to her reaction to the patients' mutiny, it becomes clear that Nurse Ratched is not indestructible. The struggle between Nurse Ratched and McMurphy is escalating. The reader knows that the nurse will not accept such a defeat without repercussions. Thus, the conflict of the novel is building to greater stakes for everyone involved.*

## part 2

### Chapter sixteen

1. How does Chief Bromden's apparent sanity differ in this chapter?

*Bromden sees no fog in this chapter. In fact, he's amazed at how clear it is. He is still speaking of delusions when he refers to what he has seen occur in staff meetings in the past. However, the fog rolling into the ward has been the definitive symbol of the Chief's insanity. Thus, it is very significant when the Chief sees no fog at all. It is clear that the Chief is returning to sanity.*

2. Why does the Chief continue his pretense that he is deaf and mute, even after his vote at the group meeting? How does this help his role as a narrator?

*The Chief feels safest when he is unnoticed. Even though he participated in the vote at the meeting, he believes that he can keep up his façade if he is careful not to be tricked into giving himself away. He desires to be as invisible as possible in order to maintain his safety. His continued pretense helps his role as a narrator because it allows him to go into places where other patients are not allowed, such as into the staff meeting. Thus, the Chief can give the reader glimpses into parts of the ward to which no other patient is privy.*

3. Discuss the behavior of the doctors toward Nurse Ratched in the staff meeting. What theme does this emphasize?

*Although the nurse has lost a battle with McMurphy, the doctors still fear and respect her. They are hesitant to speak their minds; rather, they say only what they think she wants to hear. Because McMurphy has succeeded in upsetting Nurse Ratched, the doctor and residents assume that the nurse wants to ship him to the Disturbed ward. Thus, they speak of how dangerous they believe McMurphy to be. The doctors and residents, who are all male, cater directly to what they believe Nurse Ratched wants. Thus, the theme of castration and emasculation is reinforced. Nurse Ratched does not control only the patients, but the staff as well. Her power of control and domination extends into the staff meetings, where even the doctors are desperate to please her, at the cost of their own individuality and influence.*

## Chapter seventeen

1. What does McMurphy accomplish by asking the nurse about the “inch-by-inch measurements” of her breasts? How does this emphasize his power?

*McMurphy knows that his unrestrained sexuality is one weapon he has against the nurse. He and Harding discussed this in chapter five, while referring to the nurse as impregnable. McMurphy knows that by pointing out the femininity that the Big Nurse tries to hide, he is revealing her vulnerability. The theme of the battle between the sexes continues to develop, and McMurphy is working to turn the tide in his favor.*

2. How does Chief Bromden feel about McMurphy in this chapter?

*The Chief feels great respect for McMurphy at this point in the novel. As in the beginning of the novel, the Chief feels something close to hero worship for McMurphy. However, at this point, Chief Bromden recognizes characteristics of McMurphy other than his size and laughter. The Chief is struck by McMurphy's artistic talents, recognizing McMurphy for a more complex individual than Bromden had noticed before. The Chief's respect for McMurphy only increases because of this; he says McMurphy “hadn't let what he looked like run his life one way or the other, anymore than he'd let the Combine mill him into fitting where they wanted him to fit.”*

3. What does Chief Bromden's reaction to seeing the outside world indicate?

*The mere fact that Bromden is able to see the outside world indicates an extraordinary change in his state of mind. He has the presence of mind to notice the seasons changing for the first time in many years. Chief Bromden also notices an extraordinary amount of detail in what he is watching. This contrast is especially notable because the Chief was unable to see any detail before, as it was all obscured in fog.*

4. Discuss the significance of the nurse with the birthmark and the way the Chief describes her. What is unusual about the narration in this section?

*The Catholic nurse is a representation of the dangers of sexual repression. She desires to be pure so much that she rubs her crucifix over her birthmark, which the Chief refers to repeatedly as a “stain.” The narration is quite unusual in this section. It appears that Chief Bromden has suddenly switched to omniscient narration. He is now narrating events that he has not observed firsthand. This change in point of view perhaps indicates the influence that McMurphy is having on Chief Bromden. The Chief is analyzing and guessing about people based on sexual observations. The word “stain” has obvious sexual connotations as well as connotations of guilt and shame.*

## Chapter eighteen

1. How does McMurphy's realization that he is committed for an indefinite amount of time affect his plan to bring down Nurse Ratched?

*With this realization, McMurphy understands why Nurse Ratched has been acting so confident. After this epiphany, McMurphy understands why the other patients had been acting so subdued and cagey. McMurphy begins to act this way as well, as he now realizes how much power Nurse Ratched has over him.*

2. Discuss the ambiguous circumstances surrounding Cheswick's death. How does his death reveal the influence McMurphy has over the patients?

*It is unclear whether Cheswick's death is an accident or a suicide. When McMurphy fails to support Cheswick at the group meeting, Cheswick is taken to the Disturbed ward. Presumably while there, he was given shock treatment. Perhaps this treatment has something to do with Cheswick's clumsiness in getting his fingers stuck in the drain. Or perhaps Cheswick intentionally killed himself when he realized that he could not stand up for himself without McMurphy's help. Either way, Cheswick's death indicates that McMurphy's effect on the patients is anything but minimal. The battle between McMurphy and the Big Nurse will have casualties.*

## Chapter nineteen

1. How does the incident of Sefelt's seizure contribute to the reestablishment of the Big Nurse's power on the ward?

*Nurse Ratched uses Sefelt's seizure as a lesson to the other patients in the importance of taking their prescribed medications. Even when he is still lying on the floor after his seizure, the nurse chastises him for refusing medication, and tells McMurphy that Sefelt "insists on acting foolish." Frederickson steps forward to defend Sefelt from the nurse's character assassination, but he is quickly silenced by Ratched's manipulation.*

2. What does McMurphy's "haggard, puzzled look" indicate about the evolution of his character?

*McMurphy is conflicted. He realizes that he must behave passively in order to be released from the ward. However, he also realizes the importance of standing up to the Big Nurse. He knows that the other patients on the ward have already come to depend upon his boisterous personality. McMurphy is trapped in a morally perplexing situation at this point in the novel.*

## **Chapter twenty**

1. What is the importance of the recurrence of the mechanical imagery in this short chapter?

*The Chief again starts to see the ward operating smoothly, like an impersonal machine. This indicates the nurse's growing power over the ward yet again. Despite the victory that McMurphy won during the World Series, Nurse Ratched is regaining control. McMurphy's influence is fading. The returning machine-like efficiency of the ward confirms this.*

## **Chapter twenty-one**

1. What theme does the interaction between Harding and his wife emphasize?

*The conversation between Harding and his wife is almost entirely about sex—specifically, their sexual problems. Harding's wife is an over-sexualized woman who takes pleasure in humiliating her husband for his alleged sexual shortcomings. Harding is likewise rude and condescending toward his wife. This interaction highlights the theme of conflict between men and women. Even though Harding's wife stands in direct contrast to Nurse Ratched in terms of sexuality, Harding's wife is an emasculating figure just like Ratched.*

## **Chapter twenty-two**

1. How does Harding's explanation of EST and lobotomy affect McMurphy?

*When Harding explains that Nurse Ratched has the power to decide which patients will receive extreme treatments—like EST or lobotomies—McMurphy has yet another reason to “act cagey.” McMurphy is surprised to discover that Ratched has that kind of power—power over a man's brain itself.*

2. What does McMurphy mean when he says that the nurse isn't the root of the trouble?

*Although McMurphy is unable to express himself adequately, his suspicion that Nurse Ratched is not the cause of all the trouble on the ward reveals his understanding that the ward is merely a microcosm of the Combine. The Combine—or society and its civilizing, emasculating effect—operates everywhere, even outside the ward. McMurphy is unable to express this belief fully. Nonetheless, his belief causes him to be hesitant to defy Nurse Ratched again because he knows it would ultimately solve nothing.*

3. In this chapter, McMurphy's reactions swing from very docile to very impassioned. What causes this change?

*McMurphy is docile when he learns about the nurse's power to prescribe EST and lobotomy. However, when McMurphy discovers that most of the other patients on the ward are there voluntarily, he reacts strongly. He is flabbergasted that the men would choose to stay there by their own accord, even while they complain about Nurse Ratched and the terrible state of affairs on the ward. McMurphy "just can't seem to get it straight in [his] mind" why the men would stay on the ward voluntarily.*

### **Chapter twenty-three**

1. When McMurphy puts his fist through the glass, is his action premeditated or impulsive?

*McMurphy has been greatly disturbed by the revelation that most of the patients are in the institution voluntarily. As a result, he realizes just how much these patients need him to stand up for them after all. He methodically stops by the canteen to buy cigarettes before the meeting. He pays very close attention to the group meeting, rather than fiddling with a deck of cards or reading a magazine like usual. The Chief senses something reckless about McMurphy. This indicates that McMurphy has been planning his rebellion since the beginning of this chapter; it is not a spontaneous decision.*

2. What does the abrupt beginning and end to the ringing in Chief Bromden's head signify?

*The ringing begins as the Chief senses that McMurphy wants to challenge the nurse's authority again. It builds and builds throughout the entire chapter, creating a sense of urgency and rising action. Only after McMurphy breaks the glass does the ringing stop abruptly. The ringing was the Chief's anticipation of a major change on the ward.*

3. What motif does McMurphy emphasize with this explanation?

*Nurse Ratched has demanded that the glass be absolutely clean on several occasions, chastising the black boys when it is not perfect. McMurphy uses the extremely clean glass to his advantage, saying that he didn't see it. This way, McMurphy can pass it off as an accident—even though everyone knows it's not—and thus avoid direct punishment. The invisibility of the glass is not the only time invisibility turns up in the text. Invisibility is a motif that the Chief employs throughout the text, as he always makes a point to make himself unseen and unheard. By smashing the glass, McMurphy is demonstrating the futility of invisibility.*

4. How does this chapter clarify the conflict of the novel?

*Part 2 of the book is characterized by a softening of McMurphy's aggressive nature, and a lessening of his influence over the patients. Naturally, as McMurphy's influence dwindles, Nurse Ratched's influence grows. Suddenly, however, at the end of Part 2, McMurphy reasserts himself, acting out in a physically aggressive manner. The conflict between McMurphy and Ratched is now not merely a battle of wills; it has become a physical battle as well.*

### part 3

#### Chapter twenty-four

1. What is the narrative purpose of the Chief's story from his childhood? How does this experience contribute to his character?

*The Chief relates this story as he is reflecting on the importance of pretending to be deaf and dumb on the ward. He realizes that it was not he who first started acting deaf; rather, it was "people that first started acting like I was too dumb to hear or see or say anything at all." His memory of the first time someone treated him like this explains how the Chief learned to use this manipulative, cagey tool. The Chief also realizes that this was the first time he has been able to remember anything from his childhood, further emphasizing the effect McMurphy is having on Chief Bromden's sanity.*

2. How does Chief Bromden's conception of size relate to power?

*Although the Chief is by far the largest patient on the ward, he sees himself as small and ineffectual, practically invisible. The Chief's ideas about size become clear when he has his first conversation with McMurphy. The Chief tells McMurphy how his mother got bigger all the time. She grew to bigger than Bromden and his father put together. This could not possibly be literally true; rather, the Chief is referring to her influence, power, and will. Likewise, the Chief's father was a large man in stature. However, by the end of his life, after the government had taken his land, Chief Bromden saw him as "shrunk, wrinkled, and yellow."*

#### Chapter twenty-five

1. What is the overall effect of the fishing trip on the patients?

*In short, the fishing trip makes the patients feel like men, rather than emasculated victims of a matriarchy. The experience of being outside of the ward, outside of the Big Nurse's control, is a revolutionary one for Chief Bromden. The patients recognize that they have power solely by virtue of their insanity because their insanity gives them the power to intimidate those in the outside world. The patients feel McMurphy's influence strongly on the trip. They transform from timid mental patients at the beginning of the trip to strong, confident men upon their return.*

2. How does Candy contrast with the other female characters from the story?

*Candy is not a symbol of sexual repression like Nurse Ratched or the Catholic nurse. She is also unlike Harding's wife, in that she does not use her sexuality to emasculate or humiliate. Rather, Candy is a female who embraces her sexuality in order to fortify masculinity, not to tear it down. Candy is a symbol of the empowering effect of sexuality.*

3. Discuss the freeing effect of McMurphy's laughter.

*McMurphy's laughter, even while the other patients are calling for his help, is contagious. As the laughter spreads, the men "swell bigger and bigger." Chief likens the laughter to waves crashing on the shore. He recognizes its power and importance, especially as it spreads to all the men on board the boat.*

4. What might the expression on McMurphy's face foreshadow?

*Although McMurphy has presented himself as a larger-than-life, indestructible figure, the Chief knows that he has weaknesses. The expression on his face in the car, when he assumes that no one else can see it, reveals this weakness. McMurphy knows that his rebellion against the nurse and the ward will continue to be a difficult task. However, he feels compelled to keep fighting for the sake of the patients. His haggard, strained look ends the chapter with a foreboding tone. McMurphy's expression seems to say there isn't "enough time left for something he had to do." It foreshadows an untimely end to McMurphy's life.*



**part 4****Chapter twenty-six**

1. How do the patients' opinions of McMurphy change over the course of this chapter?

*The chapter begins with McMurphy's return from the fishing trip, while the patients still think extremely highly of him. However, Nurse Ratched manages to plant doubt in the minds of the patients about McMurphy's real motives. She shows the patients the amount of money that McMurphy has made—primarily from gambling—in the time he has been on the ward. Even Chief Bromden begins to doubt McMurphy's true motives when McMurphy collects on bets that the Chief can't move the control panel. By the end of this same chapter, however, McMurphy has once again become a sort of hero in the minds of the other patients. He accomplishes this by attacking the orderlies in defense of George. Thus, Nurse Ratched nearly succeeds in driving a wedge between the patients and McMurphy. He redeems himself in their eyes when he risks being shipped to Disturbed in defense of another patient.*

2. How does McMurphy's attack on the orderlies advance the conflict of the novel?

*When McMurphy attacks the orderlies in the shower room, he is lashing out with physical rage against a staff member for the first time. He has been careful during his time on the ward to avoid direct physical violence against anyone. With this attack, however, that has changed. This brings McMurphy one step closer to a physical attack upon Nurse Ratched herself. In addition, this physical attack finally allows Nurse Ratched to exercise her more powerful weapons against McMurphy—EST and lobotomy.*

3. What prompts Chief Bromden's decision to join in the fight? What does his participation reveal about the development of his character?

*The Chief helps McMurphy in the fight partly because he feels a sense of guilt. Chief Bromden believes that when he confronted McMurphy about his "winning things," he indirectly forced McMurphy to attack the orderlies, presumably in order to prove his allegiance to the other patients. The Chief's participation in the fight is a huge departure from his efforts to be invisible in the beginning of the novel. The Chief is now taking an active role in life on the ward, "without thinking of being cagey or safe."*

## Chapter twenty-seven

1. Identify some of the religious language and allusions in this chapter. What might these foreshadow?

McMurphy says to the EST technicians: “Anointest my head with conductant,” a clear allusion to Psalm 23, in which the Psalmist, praising the Lord as his shepherd, says, “Thou anointest my head with oil.” McMurphy then asks the technicians, “Do I get a crown of thorns?” an obvious reference to Christ, who wore a crown of thorns when he was crucified. An unknown patient who has just received electroshock treatment is crying, “It’s my cross, thank you Lord” over and over again, another reference both to the Crucifixion and to Jesus’s teaching that whoever wanted to follow him would have to “take up [his] cross” (Mark 8:34). Another unknown patient mysteriously tells McMurphy that he washes his hands of the whole deal, a reference to Pontius Pilate’s infamous action in the Crucifixion story. All of these religious allusions foreshadow McMurphy’s martyrdom.

2. What is the function of the disjointed prose in this chapter?

The disjointed prose here—especially while the Chief is receiving his electroshock treatment—is indicative of the effects of the treatment. The Chief experiences a carnival of images in his head, much the way Harding described the EST in chapter twenty-two. His thoughts are a fragmented jumble of memories, sounds, and images. This disjointed prose serves to reveal the extremely damaging effects of the EST, in spite of its supposed therapeutic effects.

## Chapter twenty-eight

1. Why does the Chief fight so hard to come out of his post-EST haze?

Chief Bromden has never emerged from the jumbled blur following an electroshock treatment so quickly before. He comes fighting out of it in less than a day. This is another indication of his returning sanity. The Chief does not want to hide from reality anymore; he is engaged in reality because of his concern for McMurphy and his belief in the weaknesses of the ward.

2. Why does McMurphy reject Harding’s plan for his escape from the institution? How does this begin to establish him as a tragic character?

McMurphy sees no reason to escape from the ward just yet. He reminds the other patients that Candy is scheduled to return for an overnight visit with Billy. McMurphy does not want to miss that experience. Thus, although Harding’s plan for McMurphy’s escape might have been a successful one, McMurphy’s overconfidence in his own ability convinces him to stay on the ward for a while longer. It is this hubris that contributes to his death.

3. How is Harding's prayer during the party both ironic and prophetic?

*Harding says, in his prayer, "You are witnessing the end, the absolute, irrevocable, fantastic end. I've finally realized what is happening. It is our last fling. We are doomed henceforth." His prayer is ironic because this party is the representation of the patients' awakening. Their total rebellion against the ward and Nurse Ratched's rules is complete during this party. The party thus is the fantastic beginning for the patients. However, in reference to McMurphy, his prayer is prophetic. Upon the end of this party, McMurphy is doomed.*

### **Chapter twenty-nine**

1. McMurphy has the opportunity to escape the ward one last time with Turkle and Sandy. What does his decision to stay reveal about his character?

*McMurphy claims that he can't escape because he's too drunk to do so. Even when Harding attempts to explain to McMurphy how much trouble he is in, McMurphy seems unconcerned. However, McMurphy is not foolish enough to actually believe his actions will be without consequence from the Big Nurse. Rather, McMurphy still recognizes that the patients need him on the ward, if only for a little while longer. This noble decision serves to be a set-up for tragedy.*

2. Why does Billy not stutter at all when Nurse Ratched first discovers him in bed with Sandy? What theme does his perfect speech emphasize?

*Billy has finally lost his virginity. He has become—if only for a short time—an assured, confident man. He has finally expressed his sexuality rather than repressed it; thus, he is finally aware of the power of healthy masculinity. This short scene emphasizes the theme of the importance of expressing sexuality and the liberating effects of doing so.*

3. How does McMurphy's sexualized attack on Nurse Ratched ruin her authority forever?

*McMurphy is finally driven to do what Harding suggested after the first group meeting: to use sex as a weapon against Nurse Ratched. McMurphy exposes Nurse Ratched as a woman, ripping her uniform down the front until her breasts are exposed. Nurse Ratched's carefully repressed and hidden sexuality is finally exposed, simultaneously exposing her weakness and humanity. She is human and can thus be beaten. Even when she returns with a new, tighter uniform, the patients know that a uniform "could no longer conceal the fact that she was a woman."*

4. Does Chief Bromden's decision to smother McMurphy cast doubt on his sanity?

*Chief Bromden's ultimate decision to put McMurphy out of his misery is the act of a completely sane mind. The Chief wishes to save McMurphy—or the memory of McMurphy—as a boisterous, powerful figure. The Chief refuses to allow McMurphy to lie in the day room as "an example of what can happen if you buck the system." Rather, the Chief gave McMurphy the dignity of death. This is the best decision that the Chief can make, and it is a sane one.*

# One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

## part 1

### Chapter one

1. What is the orderlies' motive for calling Chief Bromden "Chief Broom?"

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss the meaning of the figurative words referring to the Big Nurse's size, such as "swelling up," and "blows up bigger and bigger, big as a tractor."

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What does the Chief mean when he says, "It's the truth even if it didn't happen?"

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter two**

1. Where is the irony in the Public Relations man's description of the ward?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Why does the nurse give the orderlies a jar of Vaseline that holds at least a gallon?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. How does McMurphy differ from the other patients on the ward?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Chapter three

1. What does Ellis' position on the wall allude to?

---

---

---

---

---

2. What is a "head installation," and how did one affect Ruckly?

---

---

---

---

---

3. What does the small brass tablet that reads "Congratulations for getting along with the smallest number of personnel of any ward in the hospital" indicate?

---

---

---

---

---

4. How does Chief Bromden's description of McMurphy's hand help to define McMurphy's character?

---

---

---

---

---

5. McMurphy and the nurse "size each other up." What does this foreshadow?

---

---

---

---

---

### **Chapter four**

1. Why does Nurse Ratched remember Mr. Taber so fondly?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss the function of the mechanical language the narrator uses to describe Nurse Ratched and the ward as a whole.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Is this mechanical description realistic? Discuss the role of a narrator with questionable sanity.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. How has Nurse Ratched ensured that the rest of the staff is subordinate to her?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Chapter five

1. Is the fog machine literal or metaphorical? What is its purpose?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss Harding's assertion that they are the "victims of a matriarchy."

---

---

---

---

---

3. What is Harding admitting when he compares himself and the other patients to rabbits and Nurse Ratched to a wolf?

---

---

---

---

---

4. According to Harding, what is the only reliable weapon that men have against women?

---

---

---

---

---

5. Discuss McMurphy's motive in deciding to challenge Nurse Ratched.

---

---

---

---

---



## **Chapter six**

1. How does the Chief's belief that Nurse Ratched controls the clocks in the ward develop the nurse's character? The Chief's?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss McMurphy's white whale boxers, and why the literary major calls him a "symbol."

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. How does the young Catholic nurse's response to McMurphy further develop the theme of sexuality and repression?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter seven**

1. Discuss the function of the pervasive mechanical imagery in Chief Bromden's dream.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Based on the Chief's description, is his trustworthiness as a narrator compromised?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Chapter eight

1. How does McMurphy's choice to brush his teeth with soap powder advance the conflict of the novel?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. How does Nurse Ratched's reaction to McMurphy's singing and to his boxer shorts develop her character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Discuss the effect that McMurphy's laughter has on the Chief. What does this foreshadow?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter nine**

1. How has McMurphy influenced the other patients at this point in the novel?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Is the doctor a friend or enemy to McMurphy? What theme is developed by the doctor's response to McMurphy?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Characterize the language used to describe Nurse Ratched at the end of the chapter. How does this description change the tone of the chapter?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter ten**

1. Analyze the function of this short chapter.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter eleven**

1. How does McMurphy's laughter keep him safe?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Why do the patients refuse to support McMurphy's vote to watch the World Series?  
What theme does this develop?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What might McMurphy's attempt to lift the control panel foreshadow?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. How does McMurphy's attempt to lift the control panel develop his character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter twelve**

1. What does the Chief's reaction to the picture on the wall demonstrate about his character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss the irony of the Public Relation man's statement: "A man that would want to run away from a place as nice as this, why, there'd be something wrong with him."

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Chapter thirteen**

1. Why does the fog make the Chief feel safe?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. The Chief believes McMurphy wants to drag the patients out of the fog. How does his belief change the reader's perception of McMurphy?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### **Chapter fourteen**

1. Describe the significance of Old Rawler's method of suicide.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. The Chief says, "What makes people so impatient is what I can't figure; all the guy had to do was wait." What does he mean?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter fifteen**

1. What might the Chief's description of the "Shock Shop" and the electroshock therapy table foreshadow?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. How is this chapter a reversal for Chief Bromden's character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What does Nurse Ratched's method of tallying the votes reveal about her character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. How do the events in this chapter advance the conflict of the novel?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**part 2****Chapter sixteen**

1. How does Chief Bromden's apparent sanity differ in this chapter?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Why does the Chief continue his pretense that he is deaf and mute, even after his vote at the group meeting? How does this help his role as a narrator?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Discuss the behavior of the doctors toward Nurse Ratched in the staff meeting. What theme does this emphasize?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter seventeen**

1. What does McMurphy accomplish by asking the nurse about the “inch-by-inch measurements” of her breasts? How does this emphasize his power?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. How does Chief Bromden feel about McMurphy in this chapter?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What does Chief Bromden’s reaction to seeing the outside world indicate?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. Discuss the significance of the nurse with the birthmark and the way the Chief describes her. What is unusual about the narration in this section?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter eighteen**

1. How does McMurphy's realization that he is committed for an indefinite amount of time affect his plan to bring down Nurse Ratched?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Discuss the ambiguous circumstances surrounding Cheswick's death. How does his death reveal the influence McMurphy has over the patients?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter nineteen**

1. How does the incident of Sefelt's seizure contribute to the reestablishment of the Big Nurse's power on the ward?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What does McMurphy's "haggard, puzzled look" indicate about the evolution of his character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter twenty**

1. What is the importance of the recurrence of the mechanical imagery in this short chapter?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter twenty-one**

1. What theme does the interaction between Harding and his wife emphasize?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## **Chapter twenty-two**

1. How does Harding's explanation of EST and lobotomy affect McMurphy?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What does McMurphy mean when he says that the nurse isn't the root of the trouble?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. In this chapter, McMurphy's reactions swing from very docile to very impassioned. What causes this change?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Chapter twenty-three**

1. When McMurphy puts his fist through the glass, is his action premeditated or impulsive?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What does the abrupt beginning and end to the ringing in Chief Bromden's head signify?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What motif does McMurphy emphasize with this explanation?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. How does this chapter clarify the conflict of the novel?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**part 3****Chapter twenty-four**

1. What is the narrative purpose of the Chief's story from his childhood? How does this experience contribute to his character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. How does Chief Bromden's conception of size relate to power?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Chapter twenty-five**

1. What is the overall effect of the fishing trip on the patients?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. How does Candy contrast with the other female characters from the story?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Discuss the freeing effect of McMurphy's laughter.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. What might the expression on McMurphy's face foreshadow?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**part 4****Chapter twenty-six**

1. How do the patients' opinions of McMurphy change over the course of this chapter?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. How does McMurphy's attack on the orderlies advance the conflict of the novel?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What prompts Chief Bromden's decision to join in the fight? What does his participation reveal about the development of his character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Chapter twenty-seven**

1. Identify some of the religious language and allusions in this chapter. What might these foreshadow?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What is the function of the disjointed prose in this chapter?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **Chapter twenty-eight**

1. Why does the Chief fight so hard to come out of his post-EST haze?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Why does McMurphy reject Harding's plan for his escape from the institution? How does this begin to establish him as a tragic character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. How is Harding's prayer during the party both ironic and prophetic?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Chapter twenty-nine**

1. McMurphy has the opportunity to escape the ward one last time with Turkle and Sandy. What does his decision to stay reveal about his character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Why does Billy not stutter at all when Nurse Ratched first discovers him in bed with Sandy? What theme does his perfect speech emphasize?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. How does McMurphy's sexualized attack on Nurse Ratched ruin her authority forever?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. Does Chief Bromden's decision to smother McMurphy cast doubt on his sanity?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# The Perfect Balance Between Cost and Quality for Classic Paperbacks

WITH ALL OF THE DIFFERENT EDITIONS of classics available, what makes *Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classics™* better?

Our editions were designed by former teachers with the needs of teachers and students in mind. Because we've struggled to stretch tight budgets and had to deal with the deficiencies of cheaply made paperbacks, we've produced high-quality trade editions at remarkably low prices. As a result, our editions have it all.

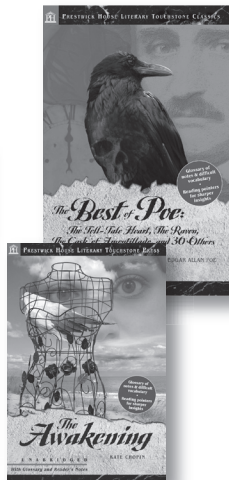
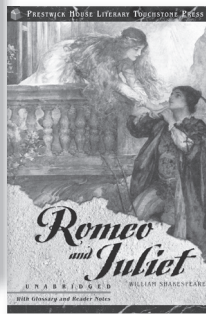
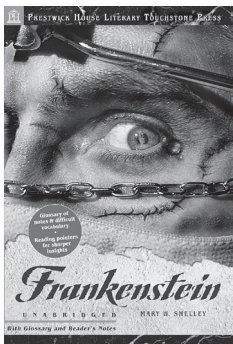
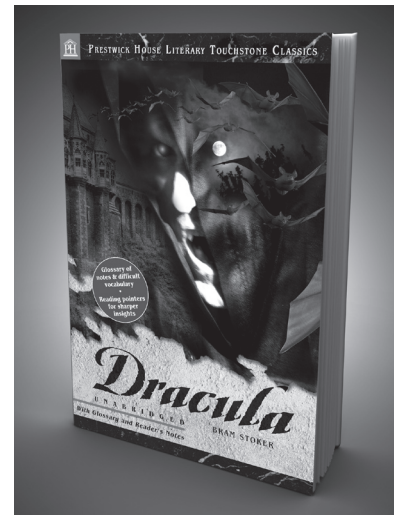
**Value Pricing** – With our extraordinary Educators' Discount, you get these books at **50% or more off the list price.**

**Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights** – Concise notes that encourage students to question and consider points of plot, theme, characterization, and style, etc.

**Glossary and Vocabulary** – An A-to-Z glossary makes sure that your students won't get lost in difficult allusions or archaic vocabulary and concepts.

**Sturdy Bindings and High-Quality Paper** – High-quality construction ensures these editions hold up to heavy, repeated use.

**Strategies for Understanding Shakespeare** – Each *Shakespeare Literary Touchstone Classic™* contains line numbers, margin notes, and a guide to understanding Shakespeare's language, as well as key strategies for getting the most from the plays.



## Special Introductory Discount for Educators only – At Least 50% Off!

New titles are constantly being added; call or visit our website for current listing.

	Retail Price	Intro.	Discount
200053..... <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> - Twain TU RJ AT AP	\$4.99		\$2.49
200473..... <i>Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The</i> - Twain TU RJ AT	\$4.99		\$2.49
202116..... <i>Alice's Adventure in Wonderland</i> - Carroll TU RJ	\$3.99		\$1.99
202118..... <i>Antigone</i> - Sophocles TU RJ AT	\$3.99		\$1.99
200141..... <i>Awakening, The</i> - Chopin TU RJ AT AP	\$3.99		\$1.99
202111..... <i>Beowulf</i> - Roberts (ed.) TU	\$3.99		\$1.99
204866..... <i>Best of Poe, The: The Tell-Tale Heart, The Raven, The Cask of Amontillado, and 30 Others</i> - Poe	\$4.99		\$2.49
200150..... <i>Call of the Wild, The</i> - London TU RJ AT	\$3.99		\$1.99
200348..... <i>Canterbury Tales</i> - Chaucer TU	\$3.99		\$1.99
200179..... <i>Christmas Carol, A</i> - Dickens TU RJ AT	\$3.99		\$1.99
201198..... <i>Crime and Punishment</i> - Dostoyevsky TU	\$6.99		\$3.49
200694..... <i>Doll's House, A</i> - Ibsen TU RJ AT	\$3.99		\$1.99
200190..... <i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> - Stevenson TU RJ AT	\$3.99		\$1.99

202113..... <i>Dracula</i> - Stoker TU RJ	\$5.99	\$2.99
200166..... <i>Ethan Frome</i> - Wharton TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
200054..... <i>Frankenstein</i> - Shelley TU RJ AT AP	\$4.99	\$1.99
202112..... <i>Great Expectations</i> - Dickens TU RJ AT AP	\$5.99	\$2.99
202108..... <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> - Swift TU	\$4.99	\$2.49
200091..... <i>Hamlet</i> - Shakespeare TU RJ AT AP	\$3.99	\$1.99
200074..... <i>Heart of Darkness</i> - Conrad TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
202117..... <i>Hound of the Baskervilles, The</i> - Doyle TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
200147..... <i>Importance of Being Earnest, The</i> - Wilde TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
301414..... <i>Invisible Man, The</i> - Wells TU RJ	\$3.99	\$1.99
202115..... <i>Jane Eyre</i> - Brontë TU RJ	\$6.99	\$3.49
200146..... <i>Julius Caesar</i> - Shakespeare TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
201817..... <i>Jungle, The</i> - Sinclair TU RJ AT	\$5.99	\$2.99
200125..... <i>Macbeth</i> - Shakespeare TU RJ AT AP	\$3.99	\$1.99
204864..... <i>Medea</i> - Euripides TU	\$3.99	\$1.99
200133..... <i>Metamorphosis, The</i> - Kafka TU RJ	\$3.99	\$1.99
200081..... <i>Midsummer Night's Dream, A</i> - Shakespeare TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
202123..... <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> - Shakespeare TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
301391..... <i>My Antonia</i> - Cather TU RJ	\$3.99	\$1.99
200079..... <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> - Douglass TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
301269..... <i>Odyssey, The</i> - Butler (trans.) TU RJ AT	\$4.99	\$2.49
200564..... <i>Oedipus Rex</i> - Sophocles TU	\$3.99	\$1.99
200095..... <i>Othello</i> - Shakespeare TU RJ AT AP	\$3.99	\$1.99
202121..... <i>Picture of Dorian Gray, The</i> - Wilde TU RJ	\$4.99	\$2.49
200368..... <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> - Austen TU RJ AT	\$4.99	\$2.49
202114..... <i>Prince, The</i> - Machiavelli TU	\$3.99	\$1.99
200791..... <i>Pygmalion</i> - Shaw TU	\$3.99	\$1.99
200102..... <i>Red Badge of Courage, The</i> - Crane TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
200193..... <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> - Shakespeare TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$0.99
200132..... <i>Scarlet Letter, The</i> - Hawthorne TU AT AP	\$4.99	\$2.49
202119..... <i>Siddhartha</i> - Hesse TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
204863..... <i>Silas Marner</i> - Eliot TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
200251..... <i>Tale of Two Cities, A</i> - Dickens AT AP	\$5.99	\$2.99
200231..... <i>Taming of the Shrew, The</i> - Shakespeare TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
204865..... <i>Time Machine, The</i> - Wells TU RJ AT	\$3.99	\$1.99
202120..... <i>Treasure Island</i> - Stevenson TU RJ	\$4.99	\$2.49
301420..... <i>War of the Worlds</i> - Wells TU RJ	\$3.99	\$1.99
202122..... <i>Wuthering Heights</i> - Brontë TU AT	\$5.99	\$2.99

TU Teaching Units RJ Response Journals AP Activity Pack AT AP Teaching Units



PRESTWICK HOUSE, INC.

"Everything for the English Classroom!"

P.O. Box 658 • Clayton, DE 19938 • (800) 932-4593 • (888) 718-9333 • www.prestwickhouse.com



P R E S T W I C K   H O U S E ,   I N C .

## Order Form

Call 1-800-932-4593 Fax 1-888-718-9333

Prestwick House, Inc.  
P.O. Box 658  
Clayton, DE 19938

Bill To: ☐ Home ☐ School

School:
Name:
Address:
City, State, Zip:
Phone:                      Email:

Ship To: ☐ Home ☐ School

School:
Name:
Address:
City, State, Zip:
Phone:                      Email:

ITEM NO	TITLE	QUANTITY	X	PRICE	=	TOTAL

### Method of Payment (Choose one)

☐ Check or Money Order Enclosed

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover Card ☐ American Express

☐ Purchase Order Enclosed

We accept purchase orders and authorized orders charged to institutions. Personal orders not on a credit card must be accompanied by a check.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Because charges for air delivery are based on weight and distance, heavy packages can be expensive to ship air freight. Typographic and photographic errors are subject to revision. Prestwick House is the sole source of all proprietary materials listed in this catalogue. Please be sure to include a street address. FedEx ground/UPS will not deliver to a P.O. Box.

Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping 12% S&H (\$6.00 minimum) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Shipping & Handling

For orders of \$50.00 or less, please add \$6.00 for shipping and handling charges. For orders from \$50.01 to \$799.99 add 12%. For orders of \$800.00 and more, add 10%.

### Delivery Service

Most orders are shipped FedEx and you can expect delivery within 7-10 working days. Items in stock are usually shipped within one working day of receiving your order.

### Expedited Delivery

for expedited delivery ask about the following options:

- Overnight Air
- 2nd day air
- 3 Day Select