

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest – Study Guide

Part 4

Chapter 1 - pgs. 261 - 275

1. What plan does Nurse Ratched put into operation after the fishing trip? Is Nurse Ratched telling the truth?
2. How does Nurse Ratched succeed in planting her idea in the patients' minds? Why is this questionable?
3. How does McMurphy inadvertently alienate Billy Bibbitt? How does this act reflect Nurse Ratched's accusations?
4. How does McMurphy upset the Chief? How is the Chief's accusation ironic?
5. How does Nurse Ratched punish the men for attending the fishing trip? Why is this act not a legitimate one? How do the men treat the aides?
6. How does McMurphy's actions in the shower scene prove Nurse Ratched wrong? Why does the Chief get involved? How do the men consider this a victory? How is it really the opposite? How has the Chief actually lost in this?

Chapter 2 - pgs. 276 - 288

7. Explain the significance of the following excerpt: "There's a singed smell of men scared berserk and out of control, and in the corners and under the Ping-Pong table there's things crouched gnashing their teeth that the doctors and nurses can't kill with disinfectant."
8. Where have McMurphy and the Chief been sent? How does the Japanese nurse treat them, and how is this a sharp contrast to Nurse Ratched? How do the Japanese nurse's question reveal that Nurse Ratched and the aides aren't deceiving everyone?

9. How does Nurse Ratched employ EST? What does she ask McMurphy to do? How does he respond? To what does he compare Nurse Ratched's tactics?
10. What is significant about the following comment by McMurphy: "Anointest my head with conductant. Do I get a crown of thorns?"
11. While enduring the EST, what memory does the Chief recall? What is the significance of names? When recalling his grandmother's rhyme, why does he especially like the goose who flies over the cuckoo's nest? What is the meaning of "goose swoops down and plucks you out"?
12. What considerable victory does the Chief attain at the end of the chapter? How does it vindicate McMurphy, in spite of all the losses?

Chapter 3 - pgs. 289 - 309

13. How does Nurse Ratched continue her reign of terror against McMurphy? How does McMurphy respond to her each time?
14. As McMurphy resists the EST torture, what is Nurse Ratched planning when she asks if "more drastic means might be required to make contact with him"?
15. What plan do the patients hatch for McMurphy? Why does he refuse for the time being? How does this add to his characterization?
16. Who interrupts the party, and why? How does Turkle handle it? Who helps Turkle, and how does this add to the idea of empowerment?
17. What do the men discover about their files in the Nurses' station? How does McMurphy's reaction comment on societal management of mental illness?
18. What does the Chief realize about their freedom and the power of the Combine? Is he right?

19. Why does the Chief volunteer to stay behind, instead of escaping with McMurphy?
20. How does Harding employ euphemism in his explanation of his illness? What exactly is his illness, and how has society created it?
21. How does the chapter end?

Chapter 4 - pgs. 310 - 325

22. How does Nurse Ratched deal with Turkle? How do the patients act? What subtle act does Turkle carry out in support of McMurphy? What is Harding concerned about, and how does McMurphy react?
23. How do the patients react as Nurse Ratched demands information from each of them about Billy's location? How does Nurse Ratched turn the battle around? What tactic does she exploit when she confronts Billy?
24. What happens to Billy? How does Nurse Ratched react, and how does she relay this to McMurphy? What else does she blame McMurphy for, and is this justified?
25. What does McMurphy do? Why don't the patients try to stop him? Why don't the aides try to stop him? Who does stop him? What is the meaning of the final cry McMurphy utters?
26. What becomes of McMurphy? How do the patients initially react? What does the Chief know he must do?
27. How does the Chief carry out his final act with McMurphy? How does the Chief feel? What does Scanlon say to him, and what must the Chief do?
28. What aspect of McMurphy's personality has the Chief inherited? How does this fact have spiritual meaning?