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*One Flew Over
the Cuckoo's Nest*

BY KEN KESEY



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Research I****Objective:** Researching an era**Activity**

The 1950s and 60s in America gave rise to a subculture known as the “Beat Generation,” of which Ken Kesey was a part. The locations of the clusters of “Beats” were important to Kesey because he lived in one of those areas. Further, because of his beliefs, talents, and goals, Kesey was ripe to become one of the foremost authors to come out of that period; Kesey is not associated with the Beatniks, but he was greatly influenced by many of their beliefs, philosophies, and behaviors. With any resources available to you, research the Beat Generation and write an essay about it. Include in your writing:

- some important Beat authors,
- the main geographic areas in which the culture was born,
- how it was seen by the general public,
- what it offered the nation,
- the main characteristics of its members,
- any other information you feel would help describe what the Beat Generation was and how it may have influenced our present culture.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part 1**Poetry****Objective:** Writing a poem from prose**Activity**

Sometimes, prose can sound musical, poetic, or lyrical as opposed to sounding straightforward, like a news story. Parts of Chief Bromden's mental escapes, for example, present interesting, sometimes frightening, memories that would be appropriate or meaningful in poetic form.

Write at least ten lines of poetry based on Bromden's reflections on his father and the days he recalls that seem to give him some satisfaction. Try to look at his past as he did, and write your poem from the Chief's mental images. Your poem, certainly, does not have to rhyme.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part 2**Characterization****Objective:** Tracking the evolution of the main character**Activity**

In this part of the novel, we see a dramatic change in Randle McMurphy's outlook, one that makes his fellow patients react differently to him and one which greatly affects his own reactions to Nurse Ratched. In Part 1, McMurphy is determined to overturn Nurse Ratched's influence on the men and decrease her power over the decisions made in the ward.

A series of events abets McMurphy's about-face. One catalyst is McMurphy's hearing the pool lifeguards say, "being committed ain't like being sentenced. 'You're sentenced in a jail, and you got a date ahead of you when you *know* you're gonna be turned loose.'" (Pg. 147) McMurphy realizes that the nurse is the primary determiner of when a person is ready to be released. He has second thoughts about pursuing his immediate plan to outsmart the nurse.

Cite and explain a few incidents in Part 2 that either make McMurphy change his point of view and his actions or that reveal that he has actually changed them. Quote the text and include the page numbers. Explain the effect each incident has on McMurphy or what it reveals about his character.

We have completed one for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part 3**Imagery****Objective:** Rewriting examples of imagery**Activity**

In Part 3, there are many distinct passages where the use of imagery gives the reader an exact picture of something or someone because the figurative language used by Ken Kesey is very clear. In this activity you are going to take the author's portraits and repaint them as you would have written the particular scene, event or character.

In Part 2, for example, we are given the picture of McMurphy striding up to the Nurses' Station and running his fist through the glass enclosure.

“He walked with long steps, too long, and he had his thumbs hooked in his pockets again. The iron in his boot heels cracked lightning out of the tile. He was the logger again, the swaggering gambler, the big redheaded brawling Irishman, the cowboy out of the TV set walking down the middle of the street to meet a dare.”

Find several instances of imagery in Part 3, and rewrite them using your own descriptive terms. For each, list the quote and page number before you rewrite the quotation. Follow it with your writing. The above passage has been rewritten below for you.

We couldn't believe what we saw. It was the reincarnation of John Wayne rising up in his saddle, swinging a leg down on the ground at the same time he was yanking a six-shooter out of his holster. He had fire in the meeting of his eyebrows and he threatened to burn the place down with it. McMurphy was back; his old self had reappeared.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Parts 1, 2, and 3

Metaphor

Objective: Recognizing metaphor

Activity

The narrator, Chief Bromden, refers to a number of things as being something other than what they really are. He frequently refers to “the Combine,” and he indicates that he knows exactly what it is and how it works. It has nothing to do with a literal factory that makes something, but Ken Kesey uses the term as a metaphor to accentuate Bromden’s mental difficulties. It is, according to Bromden, both the power that makes humans conform and the government that forces people into specific pigeonholes.

Below are four metaphors that the Chief uses throughout the book. Under each heading, write what you think the metaphor represents (1) to Bromden, and (2) to the reader.

THE NURSE’S ABILITIES, SUCH AS MECHANICAL FEATURES, EXPANDABLE LIMBS, TELEPATHIC POWERS, COLD TOUCH, ETC.

1. _____

2. _____

