Reading Comprehension Questions: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo‚Äôs Nest*

**P 1**

1. What does the Big Nurse think about the new admission (McMurphy)? Why does she think that McMurphy is in the psychiatric ward in the first place?

1. How does the Chief describe the Combine? What does he seem to think of the "Inside" and the "Outside" world?

1. What is the Big Nurse's idea of an ideal staff member? How does the Big Nurse make sure that all of the staff members working at the ward agree with her ways of operating the facilities?

1. What does the Chief reveal about the dwarf black boy? What do we know about his history? Why do you think this is important?

1. What further descriptions does the Chief give us of the black boys? What do they look like? How do they behave?

1. Describe the regular routines in the Ward. Include as many important details as you can (you may want to do this in a bulletpoint format to help you keep track of what is going on). How does the day usually begin? What do the different types of patients do?

1. What did Mr. Taber once do while in the medication line? How did the nurses and the staff members react to Mr. Taber's outburst? What do the black boys do to Mr. Taber?

1. How does the Chief describe the Public Relations man? What does the Public Relations man do throughout the day?

1. In a flashback, the Chief describes a moment in high school. What event was going on? What happens to the Chief when he looks at all the machines?

1. What is the interchange that the Chief has with one of the girls during his high school flashback? What does the girl want? What is strange about the way that the Chief describes the girl?

1. What ultimately happens to Maxwell Taber?

**P 2**

1.     During the group meeting, what does the Nurse reveal about Mr. Harding and his relationship with his wife?

2.     During the group meeting, what does the nurse reveal about McMurphy's criminal history? What has he been accused of? What does McMurphy say about the accusations?

3.     What do we learn about McMurphy's psychological history? What note did the doctor from the work farm write on his evaluation of McMurphy that made the nurse question McMurphy's intentions?

4.     What action does McMurphy take that defies the order of the meeting and upsets the Big Nurse?

5.     What is the "theory of the Therapeutic Community" (p. 48)? What is the idea behind therapy? How are the patients asked to participate in one another‚Äôs "therapy"?

6.     What kinds of disturbing details to the patients reveal during one specific group therapy meeting when the Nurse asks them to let out their secrets?

7.     What do we learn about Old Pete's physical condition? How did he get that way? Why can't the "Combine" or the black boys control Old Pete? How does the situation with Old Pete ultimately end?

8.     After the group meeting with Harding, how do all of the other patients react? Why do they react this way?

9.     What does McMurphy mean when he describes the group meetings as a chicken "pecking party"? How does McMurphy see to feel about the group meeting and about what happened to Harding?

10.  When responding to McMurphy, what value does Harding says the group meetings have? What is the purpose of the meetings? What does he say about Nurse Ratched?

11.  Why does McMurphy refer to the Nurse as a "ball-cutter"? What does Harding think about all of this? How does Harding later change his mind? What does he eventually admit about the Nurse?

12.  Why does Harding compare all of the patients in the ward to rabbits? What is he trying to say? What does McMurphy think of this whole "rabbit" analogy?

13.  What do the patients say might happen if you don't follow the Nurse's orders or if you become aggressive with her?

14.  How is the electroshock therapy described? Which patients has it affected and how has it affected them?

15.  What do the men say about the Nurse's sexual attractiveness?

16.  What are the terms of the bet that McMurphy makes at the end of the section? How will the patients be able to pay for the bet?

**P 3**

1. What does the Chief see one Christmas? Why do you think this section is included?

1. What does the Chief say about how the Nurse can change the time? Does this seem to be real or imagined? Give reasons for support.

1. What are McMurphy's feelings about the radio? How do the other patients react to it?

1. How is McMurphy so successful at playing blackjack? How does he make sure that the patients will keep playing against him?

1. What has the young nurse been told about McMurphy? How does she react when McMurphy approaches her?

1. McMurphy and the Chief are roommates. When McMurphy offers the Chief his medication that night, how does the Chief respond? How does McMurphy know that the Chief isn't deaf?

**P 4**

1. What do the ‚Äúred pills‚Äù do and what had the Chief previously witnessed when he didn‚Äôt take the red pills?

1. What does the Chief imagine is happening to the room when one of the black boys "twists a knob"? What does he imagine seeing once he reaches the solid bottom floor?

1. What are the "workers" doing underground? Does this seem to be real or imagined?

1. What does one of the workers do to Old Blastic? What is unusual about the way that the Chief describes the scene with Old Blastic?

1. What is the Public Relation man doing in this vision?

1. How does the Chief think other people would respond if he mentioned the scene he just witnessed?

1. Who is Mr. Turkle and what does he do?

**P 5**

1. What is McMurphy doing at the beginning of the section? Why is this important?

1. What happens when McMurphy tries to brush his teeth? How do the black boys react? How does McMurphy end up being able to brush his teeth?

1. When discussing his father, the Chief remembers an interchange between his dad and the government. What was this story about?

1. How does Nurse Ratched react when she sees McMurphy in a towel? Why is he in a towel in the first place? How does she react once she learns what has happened?

1. What does McMurphy do to further infuriate her?

**P 6**

1. What is McMurphy's general attitude about living in the mental ward?

1. What does McMurphy do with the butter? Why do you think he does this?

1. How does the Nurse respond when McMurphy asks her to turn down the volume on the radio?

1. When McMurphy asks if they could start a separate room where they wouldn‚Äôt have to listen to the music, how does the Nurse respond?

1. What do McMurphy and the doctor have in common? What do the two of them want to do together in the ward? How do the other patients react? How does the Nurse react?

1. How does the Doctor help out McMurphy in his battle against the Nurse?

**P 7**

1. Describe the Monopoly game that the patients play at the beginning of the section.

1. What does the Chief reveal about the fog (and specifically, about other people‚Äôs perception of the fog)? Why is this important?

1. How does the Nurse react when McMurphy says he wants to watch the World Series? What excuse does she give when she refuses his requests?

1. What does McMurphy propose (in his attempts to watch the World Series) and how do the other patients react?

1. When the men start talking about "busting out," what object does McMurphy think could be used to push through the window mesh? What bet surfaces as a result? How does the bet turn out and what does McMurphy do once the bet is over?

**P 8**

1. When the visiting doctor comes, the Chief looks at a picture and has a hallucination. Describe the picture/hallucination.

1. What has happened to Old Rawler?

1. What previous experience does the Chief claim to have had with "fog machines"?

1. How does the Chief describe his experiences with the fog machine in the ward? What usually ends up happening when he gets lost in the fog? Where would he usually end up?

1. What do we learn about Billy Bibbitt's past and the origin of his stutter?

1. What does the Chief see coming at him from out of the fog? He then sees a person floating by. Who does he see and what does this person talk about? What does this scene tell you about the Chief's mental state?

1. What does Billy Bibbitt reveal about his love life and about his relationship with his mother? Why might this be significant?

1. Describe the interaction that the Chief imagines taking place with his father.

1. What happens when McMurphy calls for a re-vote on the World Series? How does the Nurse react and try to keep McMurphy from succeeding? Who ultimately helps McMurphy win the vote?

1. What happens when McMurphy goes to the TV to watch the World Series? How does the Nurse react? How does McMurphy react to *her* response?

**P 9**

1. What is different about the way that the Chief is experiencing the ward at the beginning? What is different with regard to the fog and ‚Äúthe machinery‚Äù?

1. Why does the Chief think the Nurse might be getting suspicious of him?

1. Why has the Nurse called together the current meeting? What do the patients reveal about their attitudes toward McMurphy? Why do they seem to say this?

1. What do McMurphy's records show about his attitude and behavior toward authority?

1. What does the doctor recommend should be done with McMurphy (that the patients agree with as well)?

1. How does the Nurse react to the doctor's recommendation about McMurphy? What is her reasoning?

1. What final power does the Nurse reveal that she has over McMurphy?

**P 10**

1. How does McMurphy feel about the situation with the Nurse at this point?

1. What job is McMurphy assigned? How well does he fulfill his duties and how does the Nurse feel about the job he's doing?

1. What story does McMurphy tell about the rodeo? Why is this story-telling important (what does it show about McMurphy's power)?

1. What does the Chief do in the middle of the night? What does he notice when he looks out the windows? When have you read about similar images in the past?

1. Who sneaks up behind the Chief and what do they want him to do?

1. What do we learn about the young, birthmarked nurse?

**P 11**

1. What freedoms do the patients want to have? Why does the Nurse say that they cannot have these liberties? How does McMurphy challenge the Nurse's authority throughout this whole discussion?

1. Why is the Chief afraid of water?

1. What seems to be wrong with the lifeguard? What does McMurphy notice about the lifeguard's "cast" and the way that the doctors have treated the lifeguard? How long has the lifeguard been in the ward?

1. What reality has just sunk in with McMurphy after talking to the lifeguard about being "committed" to the ward?

1. What "surprising" behavior does McMurphy exhibit the next day after the incident at the swimming pool?

1. How do all of the patients react when Cheswick complains about the cigarettes? Why is this important?

1. What do the black boys do to Cheswick as a result of the complaints?

1. How is McMurphy's behavior compared to the behavior of the Chief‚Äôs dad?

1. What happens to Cheswick at the very end of the section?

**P 12**

1. What happens to Sefelt at the beginning of the chapter? Why has this happened to him?

1. What deal has Fredrickson made with Sefelt? Why have they both agreed to this deal?

**P 13**

1. What does the section about books in the library tell us about the Chief?

1. Describe the interaction between Harding and his wife. How does his wife undermine his masculinity and mock his manliness?

1. What does Harding want to do when McMurphy brings up the "dreams" he‚Äôs been having? Why is this important?

1. What does Martini pretend while he's in the tub room? How does McMurphy react?

**P 14**

1. What is happening in the X-Ray room?

1. How does Harding describe EST (electro-shock therapy)?

1. According to Harding, what were the historical origins of EST?

1. What does Harding say about the pain? What does he say about the effects of EST?

1. What is McMurphy's view of why the Nurse acts the way she does? How is this in line with the Chief's ideas? How is it different from the ideas of the other patients?

1. What does McMurphy reveal about why he has been playing by the rules lately?

1. What does Harding reveal about the amount of men who are committed and the amount of men who are voluntarily at the ward? How does McMurphy react to this news?

1. How does Billy Bibbitt support his reasons for being in the ward?

**P 15**

1. How does the Chief feel about McMurphy? What does he want to tell McMurphy? What does this reveal about the Chief?

1. What does the Chief note about the football games and why do you think he talks about it?

1. What privilege has the Nurse decided to take away from the patients as a result of their rebelliousness and their lack of consideration?

1. What major act of defiance does McMurphy do?

**P 16**

1. What sports organization does McMurphy form and how does he get it past the big Nurse?

1. How do McMurphy and the Nurse treat one another at this point?

1. How does the Nurse react when McMurphy tries to get an Accompanied Pass with someone named Candy Starr? How does McMurphy respond to the Nurse's reaction?

1. What rebellious acts has McMurphy been doing to try to get to the Nurse? How do the other patients behave in reaction to McMurphy?

1. What trip does McMurphy propose and how does the Nurse respond to his request?

1. What did the Nurse do to psych out the men who wanted to go on the trip with McMurphy?

1. How does the Chief feel about the trip that McMurphy is planning? Why is the Chief worried about signing up for the trip?

1. How do the government white people react to the Native Americans during the Chief's flashback? How do they react to Chief Bromden and why is it significant?

1. What is Geever doing? What does he reveal about the Chief‚Äôs habits?

1. What does McMurphy do to make the Chief laugh? What does he offer the Chief? What surprising thing does the Chief do in response?

1. Why does the Chief say he can‚Äôt "tell off" the people in the ward? Why is this surprising to McMurphy?

1. What else does the Chief talk about with McMurphy? Why do you think this is significant?

1. Why does the Chief say he can't go on the trip?

1. For what purpose will McMurphy help the Chief "train"?

**P 17**

1. What does the Chief notice about the sign-up sheet for the fishing trip?

1. How do the patients initially react when McMurphy tries to recruit one more Acute for the fishing trip?

1. What does ‚Äúrub-a-dub‚Äù George mention to McMurphy about their trip? What does George reveal about his fishing experience?

1. What aspect of the fishing trip makes George nervous? What does McMurphy say to calm George's nerves? How does McMurphy convince George that he's needed on the boat?

1. How do people in the ward react to "the whore"?

1. What issue surfaces with "the whores"? What does McMurphy want to do to remedy the situation?

1. What issues does the Nurse notice with McMurphy's description of the cost of the trip?

1. Who decides to go along with the patients as a responsible driver?

1. How do the gas station employees treat the patients when they pull into the station for gas? How do the patients feel about this treatment? What lie does the doctor make up to try to put the gas station employees at ease?

1. What does McMurphy say about all of the patients and their mental conditions? Why does he say this? How does this affect the way the other patients feel about the situation?

1. What issue does the captain present once the men arrive at the boat?

1. What do the men by the dock say to "Blondie" and how do the patients react?

1. How does McMurphy get around the issue with the captain?

1. What do the men bet on while on the boat?

1. Why does George direct the boat toward the birds?

1. What happens when the Chief feels a tug on his line?

1. What happens when the girl takes the pole?

1. What happens with the doctor's fish?

1. Who was waiting for the men at the dock?

1. What legal argument does the doctor make against the captain?

1. What does McMurphy do to the captain?

1. What does Billy Bibbitt ask the "whore," Candy?

1. What does McMurphy reveal about his first sexual experience? What did he do to commemorate it?

**P 18**

1. What does the Nurse plan to bring up in order to take away power from McMurphy? What does she post up to get this plan started?

1. What kinds of changes has McMurphy done lately on the patients' behalf?

1. How does Harding react after the Nurse has made her points about McMurphy in the group meeting? How does Billy Bibbitt react?

1. Why does McMurphy want money from Billy Bibbitt?

1. What has the Chief been able to accomplish with his newly acquired strength?

1. What do McMurphy and the Chief argue about that makes the Chief sad?

1. What are the black boys doing to the patients after they line up? What does Fredrickson do in response?

1. What happens when the black boys approach George?

1. How does McMurphy get in the middle of the situation with George and the black boys?

1. What happens to McMurphy? What happens to the Chief?

**P 19**

1. What is it like in the Disturbed Ward?

1. How does McMurphy react to being in the Disturbed Ward?

1. What scene does the Chief first wake up to in the middle of the night?

1. How does McMurphy react when they try to give him medication after the alarm sounds?

1. What do they do to McMurphy after they "anoint" his head with conductant?

1. What does the Chief think about as he is getting electroshock therapy?

**P 20**

1. Why does McMurphy keep receiving more electroshock treatments?

1. How do all of the patients react when the Chief comes back from the Disturbed Ward?

1. What does the Nurse think about McMurphy's electroshock treatment? How do the patients perceive McMurphy at this point?

1. What do the Chief, Scanlon, Fredrickson, and Harding plan on doing?

1. How does McMurphy act when he gets back from Disturbed?

1. What does McMurphy say about the men's plan?

1. What course of action does the Nurse suggest for McMurphy? How does McMurphy turn it into a joke?

1. Describe Billy Bibbitt and his relationships with women.

1. What plan has McMurphy devised to give Billy and Candy alone time?

1. What does Mr. Turkle want in exchange for helping arrange the plan?

1. What happens when the supervisor comes around? Where do the men hide? What issues do they face? How does Harding help out Mr. Turkle?

1. What do all of the men drink together?

1. What does the Chief notice about his current condition and how does he feel about it?

1. What is Harding's plan?

1. When does Harding plan to leave the ward? Why isn't Harding ‚Äúready‚Äù? What are his issues?

1. How did the black boys find McMurphy when they woke him in the morning?

**P 21**

1. How does the big Nurse react to the accounts of what happened the night before?

1. What is the consequence for Mr. Turkle?

1. How are all of the patients feeling in the morning?

1. What does the Nurse notice about Billy Bibbitt? How do the other patients respond when she asks them about him?

1. What happens when the Nurse opens the door to the Seclusion Room.

1. What does the Nurse threaten to do once he finds Billy with the girl? How does Billy react to the Nurse's threats?

1. What did Billy Bibbitt ultimately do?

1. What does McMurphy do to the Big Nurse?

1. How does the place operate while the Big Nurse is gone? What does Harding keep asking the Big Nurse?

1. What happened to Harding and George?

1. What life-changing thing happens to McMurphy? How do the other patients react to him when he returns?

1. What does the Chief do to McMurphy?

1. What does the Chief do in the end?