

# One flew over the cuckoos nest



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

One flew East, One flew West, One died without a part of his brain. In my opinion the main theme of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is conformity. The patients at this mental institution, or at least the one in the Big Nurse's ward, find themselves in a rough situation where not following standards costs them many privileges being taken away. The standards that the Combine sets are what makes the patients so afraid of a change and simply conform hopelessly to what they have since anything out of the ordinary would get them in trouble. Such conformity is what McMurphy can not stand and makes him bring life back to the ward by fighting Miss Ratched and creating a new environment for the patients. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* represents a rebellion against the conformity implied in today's society. Ken Kesey, the author, offers many examples of imagery through the Chief's detailed narrative of the story. Appealing to the sense of sight, Bromden, describing the reactions of some invalid patients, says: "the Chronics woke up to look around with heads blue from lack of blood" (214). A touch imagery is present when the Chief describes McMurphy's hands: "I remember the palm was smooth and hard as bone from hefting the wooden handles..."(23). After killing McMurphy, Bromden's narrative appeals to the sense of sound when he expresses he "heard the wires and connections tearing out of the floor" (310). Guessing that fall is coming and using the sense of smell, Bromden states: "I can smell that sour-molasses smell of silage" (155). Last, but definitely not least, is an example of an imagery appealing to the sense of taste that is present in the Chief's description of the drink they mixed: "The syrup had a taste like a kid's drink but a punch like the cactus apple wine we used to get in The Dalles, cold and soothing on the throat and hot and furious once it got down" (288). Kesey makes sure the reader gets a

mental picture of the situations but he also makes use of many literary terms. The most common literary term used, that is present at least twice in every page of *One flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, is simile, where a comparison is made between two seemingly unfamiliar things. An example of a simile is present when Bromden describes one of the prostitutes: " Her fingernails are red as drops of blood against the shiny black patent-leather purse" (172). The author makes use of onomatopoeia when the Chief narrates: " He pulls the cigarette from his thin crack of a smile, and the laugh starts up again—eee-eee-eee" (62). Kesey also makes use of a metaphor when Harding says: " Mr. McMurphy... my friend.. I'm not a chicken, I'm a rabbit. The doctor is a rabbit. Cheswick there is a rabbit. Billy Bibbit is a rabbit. All of us in here are rabbits of varying ages and degrees, hippity-hopping through our Walt Disney world." (62), implying that all of the patients are, indeed, rabbits. " Our sweet, smiling, tender angel of mercy"(58) is an ironic kenning referring to Miss Ratched. There also are a series of flashbacks throughout *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* that reflect Chief Bromden's past. An example of such a flashback is present when he remembers hunting experience: " Papa tells me to keep still, tells me that the dog senses a bird somewheres right close... Then the bird breaks, feathers springing, jumps out of the cedar into the birdshot from pap's gun." (6-7). Ken Kesey used a first person point of view by using Chief Bromden's character as the narrator who gives vivid descriptions of his sensations and experiences. The first person point of view allows the reader to experience the story on a unique way. The language used is simple and rich on description even though there is some cursing involved in the dialogues between characters like Harding and McMurphy. The imparities of the

patients are easily noted because of the way they are expressed, as well as the physical descriptions for all of the characters. Conformity doesn't occur only in the Big Nurses' ward, it occurs everywhere. Persons are afraid of not following 'rules' set by society or they might be considered weird. When the Earth was considered to be flat those who believed it was round were accused of being crazy because everyone knew the Earth was flat; examples like this are the reason for which many individuals live in conformity, not daring to do anything out of the ordinary. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* Randle Patrick McMurphy underwent lobotomy because of his desire, and attempts, for change in the ward, in our school you get a referral if you happen to express your opinion about someone in a high rank on a very passionate way. Conformity will most likely continue in today's society unless people dare to fight against the mundane, stand for their rational beliefs and are willing to fearlessly deal with the consequences that society makes them go through, even it means die without a part of their brains just the way McMurphy did.