



English III (Form V) Summer Reading Questions

You will quickly note that Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (ISBN: 978-0141181226) is a novel of extremes. While it was controversial and groundbreaking upon its publication in 1962, a number of its themes are even more jarring today.

Because your English teachers would like you to engage with these problematic themes before we gather in September, we want you to think about the following four lenses.

1. **RACE** - On the novel's first pages, Chief refers to members of the hospital's staff simply as "the black boys." Select at least three passages that exemplify the novel's racial norms. How should contemporary readers consider these depictions of race?
2. **WOMEN** - Many readers have noted that the female characters are either overly sexualized (Mrs. Harding, Candy), meek and helpless (Nurse Pilbow), or cruelly emasculating (The Big Nurse). Select at least three passages that present this limited range of female characters. How should contemporary readers consider these depictions of women?
3. **SEXUALITY** - We learn early on that McMurphy was accused of statutory rape of a sixteen-year old girl. Overt sexual language pervades the patients' conversations, often instigated by McMurphy. Select at least three passages that highlight characters' views of sexual behavior. How should contemporary readers consider these depictions of sex?
4. **MENTAL HEALTH** - Kesey's depiction of the ward is likely based on his experience volunteering and working in similar institutions in California in the 1950s. Mental health communities today look little like the nightmare in which Kesey places his characters. Select at least three passages that present the ward's professionals in extreme, negative lights. How should contemporary readers consider these depictions of mental health treatment?