

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

The 281 page novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, is written in the first person by Ken Kesey and is set in a mental hospital in the Pacific Northwest during the 1960s. The story is narrated by Chief Bromden, a tall, half-Indian man who suffers from schizophrenia. The Chief hallucinates as he relates what takes place in the mental hospital, but he knows he is not seeing things correctly. He says, "But, please. It's hard for me to have a clear mind thinking on it. But it's the truth even if it didn't happen" (8). Because he is delusional, he may not be such a trustworthy narrator. Nonetheless, this is what makes the story so interesting, because the reader gets a first person view of the mind of a schizophrenic. One night when the Chief refrains from taking his sleeping pill, he has a hallucination of one of the black aides pressing a button and the entire dorm rolling under the ground. He sees the patient named Blastic, who is a vegetable, being cut open with a scalpel by a machine-like worker. The Chief is pulled out of his reverie by Mr. Turtle, an elderly, black, night custodian, who smokes cannabis. The next morning, we find out that Blastic actually died in the middle of the night, so there may be some truth to the Chief's visions.

The novel's antagonist, Nurse Ratched, also known as the Big Nurse, is a middle aged, sterile woman who controls the hospital. She needs everything to turn out her way so she can have complete power and dominance over everyone. Nurse Ratched says, "Please understand we do not impose rules and restrictions on you without a great deal of therapeutic value" (171). Randle P. McMurphy, an unruly, flamboyant, redhead who is also known as Mac, is the novel's