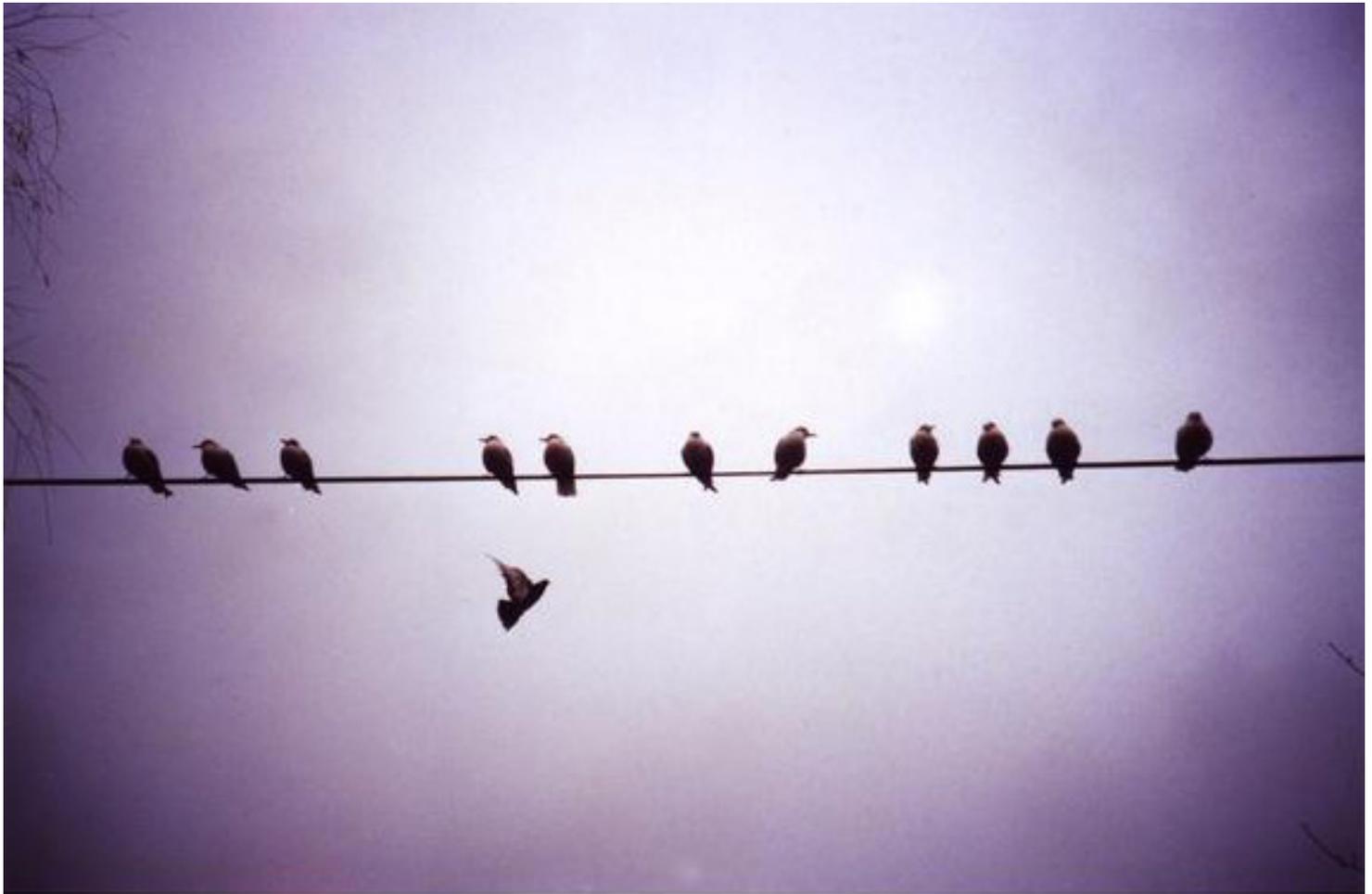


**The Broad Stage and  
Bonnie Franklin's Classic & Contemporary American Plays  
present**

# One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest



17\18 SEASON

THEBROADSTAGE.ORG/EDUCATION

**STUDENT MATINEE**  
**TUES OCT 17 & WED OCT 18, 2017 10:30 AM**  
**Grades 11-12**



THE BROAD STAGE AT THE SANTA MONICA COLLEGE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
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Education and Community Programs at The Broad Stage is supported in part by

*The Herb Alpert Foundation*

*Bank of the West*

*Barbara Herman in honor of Virginia Blywise*

*The California Arts Council*

*Johnny Carson Foundation*

*City of Santa Monica and the Santa Monica Arts Commission*

*the Colburn Foundation*

*The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation*

*Leonard M. Lipman Charitable Fund*

*Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission*

*The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation*

*Sidney Stern Memorial Trust*

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*Dwight Stuart Youth Fund*

*Ziering Family Foundation, a Support Foundation of the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles.*



# Greetings from The Broad Stage!



Dear Educators,

We are so excited to bring Bonnie Franklin's Classic and Contemporary American Plays (CCAP) back to The Broad Stage for another season of education partnership. CCAP was founded to fill a void in the English and Humanities curriculum of the greater Los Angeles public school system by providing underserved junior and senior high school students the opportunity to experience staged concert readings of plays by great American playwrights. This is the perfect collaboration for high school teachers (like you!) with curious and capable students.

This season, Bonnie Franklin's CCAP is presenting *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, written by Ken Kesey and adapted by Dale Wasserman. Wasserman's adaptation of Kesey's 1963 award winning book brings McMurphy, Nurse Ratched and Chief Bromden to life through the dialogue and staging. The themes of anger and control in a therapeutic setting leave audience members thinking critically about the connections between history and today. Students will be challenged to explore themes further by reflecting on their own experiences and opinions.

Please take some time to work through some or all of the activities in this guide with your students. Each element of the guide has been developed by theatre artists and educators to help explain the concepts behind the performance and to coincide with subjects you are teaching in your classroom. The activities support the California and the VAPA Standards with arts integration as the focus. We hope that this guide proves to be helpful in preparing your students to for the presentation. Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions or ideas. We'll see you at *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest!*

Sincerely,

Education & Community Programs Team

17\18 SEASON

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# Lesson 1: World of the Play

## Lesson at a Glance

**Objective:** Review the world of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by learning about group therapy and experiencing a power dynamic exercise.

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Materials:** Handout 1: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* Origins, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* script pgs. 19-26, Handout 2: Prompts for Power Dynamics Exercise

### Standards:

**CCSS Reading Standards for Literature, 11-12:** 3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters/archetypes are introduced and developed).

### Vocabulary:

**Electro Shock Therapy (EST)** – EST was developed in the 1930's by Italian neurologist Ugo Cerletti. Cerletti found that such electric shocks caused his difficult mental patients to become manageable. At first, the procedure was performed on conscious patients, without the use of anesthesia or muscle relaxants. Patients would often break bones, especially vertebrae, and pull muscles from the violent convulsions induced by the seizure. Patients grew to dread the procedure, and it was commonly employed as a means of punishment and sedation for difficult patients. EST has since been replaced by Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). In ECT, a small electrical current is passed through the brain while the patient is under general anesthesia and can quickly reverse symptoms of certain mental illnesses. It is usually performed when all other treatments have failed.

**Lobotomy** – A lobotomy consists of cutting the connections to and from, or simply destroying, the prefrontal cortex, causing major personality changes. The first human lobotomy was performed by Antonio Egas Moniz in 1936. He won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1949 for his work. He strongly cautioned that this operation should only be used when absolutely necessary.

**Acute** – Long-stay patients who were potentially curable.

**Chronic** – Patients who can no longer take care of themselves.

**Orderly** – an attendant in a hospital responsible for the nonmedical care of patients and the maintenance of order and cleanliness.

**Ward** – a separate area in a hospital, typically one allocated to a particular type of patient.

**Group Therapy** – a form of psychotherapy in which a group of patients meet to describe and discuss their problems together under the supervision of a therapist.

**Therapeutic Community** – a participative, group-based approach to long-term mental illness, personality disorders and drug addiction. The approach was usually residential, with the clients and therapists living together, but increasingly residential units have been replaced by day units.

### Guiding Questions:

What can the dialogue in the play tell us about power dynamics present in mental institutions?  
What might the patients of the day have experienced under the guide of care?

# Lesson Plan

## Mini Lesson: Timeline of Mental Healthcare and Ken Kesey

Distribute and review Handout 1: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* Origins. Discuss the information with your students.

*Did any information surprise you?*

*Did you discover something that you previously did not know?*

*What do you think motivated Kesey to write about the people he knew in the ward?*

*Do you think it is ethical to base a novel on real people who have an expectation of privacy in a therapeutic setting?*

## Mini Lesson: Group Therapy

Read pages 19-26 from the script of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (from McMurphy's "What's going on?"). After reading, discuss the main points and themes as a class or in small groups.

*How does Dr. Spivey define group therapy and the ward? Is his definition different than how you would define it today?*

*How do the patients in the ward respond to this method of group therapy?*

*How does trust factor into the "therapeutic process" in the ward?*

*Do the patients trust each other? Do they trust the staff?*

*The playwright describes the physical arrangement of group therapy. How do you think this affects the patients' participation?*

*Do you think that this method is truly therapeutic?*

## Power Dynamics

**TASK:** Stage the classroom based on the physical arrangement of group therapy described in the play so as to experience power dynamics present in the ward of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

After reading about the ward's group therapy session, ask students to practice a power dynamics exercise.

Step 1: Set up the classroom to visually represent a similar environment to that of the group therapy session that Dr. Spivey and Nurse Ratched led. Ask students to think similarly to a theatre director and stage the classroom based on what they read. Prompt students with these questions.

*In the classroom, who represents society?*

*If the students represent society, how would the patients be positioned?*

*What or who represents the barrier between the patients and society?*

Step 2: Select two responsible students to represent Dr. Spivey and Nurse Ratched. Select nine students to represent the patients. If you decide to do several rounds of this exercise, more students will have the opportunity to play different parts and experience the different perspectives.

Step 3: Stage your classroom based on what was previously discussed.

Some hints:

- Students in desks represent society.
- Patients face society and are positioned in a semicircle against the white board in the front of the room.
- Nurse Ratched and Dr. Spivey sit facing the patients between the patients and society.

Step 4: Ask the student representing Dr. Spivey to re-read Dr. Spivey's description of the ward and group therapy on page 23 aloud.

DR. SPIVEY. Ther-a-peutic Com-munity. That means that this ward is society in miniature, and since society decides who is sane and who isn't, you must measure up. Our goal here is a completely democratic ward, governed by the patients – working to restore you to the Outside. The important thing is to let nothing fester inside you. Talk! Discuss! Confess! If you hear another patient say something of significance, write it down in the Log Book for all to see. Do you know what this procedure is called?

McMURPHY. Squealing?

DR. SPIVEY. Group Therapy. Help yourself and your friends probe the secrets of the subconscious. Bring those old guilts out into the open!

Step 5: Explain the power dynamics exercise and rules to the class.

The students representing Dr. Spivey and Nurse Ratched are the "therapists" and group therapy leaders. They are the barrier between the patients and society. They have been given prompts to ask the students representing the "patients". The prompts will be positive yet personal questions that might be challenging for the student to answer in a group environment.

#### Rules:

- Students acting as the "therapists" ask the prompt questions, and can ask the "patients" to elaborate on their answer.
- Students representing patients must answer the question, honestly if possible. If they do not feel comfortable answering honestly, they may fabricate an answer.
- Students listening as society observe the experience and take notes based on what they observed about the power dynamics that the spatial relationships create.

Step 6: Begin the power dynamics exercise. Pass out the prompt questions from Handout 2 to the students and let them lead the exercise. Ensure that students are being respectful and playing their part appropriately.

#### ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

- *Students respond appropriately in their role.*
- *Students recognize the ways in which staging effects the power dynamics in a play.*

Step 7: You have the option to continue the exercise longer and ask the students to switch roles. When done with the exercise, ask students to reflect on their experience together.

*As a "therapist", how did it feel to be in position of power?*

*As a "patient", how did you feel with having to answer your question to front of your peers?*

*As "society", what did you observe between the two roles?*

*What did you observe about others in relationship to your role?*

PURPOSE: *Learn about staging while experiencing the effects of power dynamics.*

### Essay Prompts about Exercise

What was the function of your role (doctor/nurse, patient, society) in this exercise? Where do you see modern examples of this role in the world?

How did the staging of the room contribute to a feeling of power or powerlessness? Does the text support your feeling? Cite specific examples from the play.

How does the staging of a play affect the development and portrayal of its characters? Pick another scene from the play and describe how you would stage it, noting how that would influence the ways in which the characters interact, and how that staging is supported by the text.

# Handout 1:

## *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* Origins

### Key Dates

Graduated from University of Oregon in 1957

Began writing *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in 1960

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is published in 1962

### A Novel's Origins: Drug Experiments In A Mental Institution

NPR, February 1, 2012

In 1960, Kesey was working as a nurse's aide in the psychiatric ward of the Menlo Park Veteran's Hospital, near Palo Alto, Calif. He was a 25-year-old creative-writing student at Stanford University, and he had also volunteered for CIA-financed experiments with hallucinogens.

"They gave these right on the ward," says Kesey's former wife Faye Kesey McMurtry, "in a little room where you could look out and see everybody. ... And as he would look out the window, he began to wonder, you know, 'What's the difference between the orderlies and the nurse and the patients?' And he began to see that they were all damaged in some way or another."

Kesey said most of the characters in the novel were based on people in the ward where he was working.

"The only character that really wasn't there was McMurphy. And of course the Indian. But this [McMurphy] was the character that they all wanted. And you could feel their desire for this John Wayne American character," Kesey recalled.

The author's "John Wayne character" is a brawling, swearing, poker-hustling Korean War hero who fakes insanity at a prison work farm in order to be transferred to what he thinks will be easier time on the psych ward. But when McMurphy gets there, he refuses to play by the rules – and begins an epic battle with the iron-fisted Nurse Ratched.

Robert Faggen, who's writing a biography of Kesey, says conformity was a pressing issue in the America of *Cuckoo's Nest*.

"The failure to conform was looked at as something that was a deviation, and therefore dangerous," Faggen says.

In the story, McMurphy is punished for challenging authority – crucified with electro-shock therapy, then martyred with a lobotomy. When he was researching the novel, Kesey volunteered to undergo shock therapy in a secret session at the hospital.

For the full article, please visit <http://www.npr.org/2012/02/01/146210681/keseys-cuckoos-nest-still-flying-at-50>

## Handout 2: Prompts for Power Dynamics Exercise

Tell me about your favorite childhood memory.

Who is your hero and why?

What is your proudest moment?

Tell me about your best quality.

What qualities do you look for in a friend?

What was the last time you had to make an important decision?

If you want questions to be more deeply explained, ask people to elaborate, be more specific about, or tell you more about that.

# Lesson 2: Character Work

## Lesson at a Glance

**Objective:** Learn how an actor prepares to play a role through textual analysis, discussion and performing elements of the three main characters in the play.

**Duration:** 60 min per Part

**Materials:** *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* script, Handout 3: McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Nurse Ratched Monologues

### Standards:

**CCSS Reading Standards for Literature, 11-12:** 4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

**VAPA Theatre, Grades 9-12:** 1.3 Identify the use of metaphor, subtext, and symbolic elements in scripts and theatrical productions.

**VAPA Theatre, Grades 9-12:** 2.1 Make acting choices, using script analysis, character research, reflection, through the rehearsal process.

**VAPA Theatre, Grades 9-12:** 3.1 Research and perform monologues in various historical and cultural accurate and consistent physical mannerisms and dialect.

### Concepts/Vocabulary:

**Characterization (theatre)** – the construction of a fictional character by the playwright and then by the actor who plays the role, using physicality and vocal variation.

**Vocal Dynamics** – Appropriate variation of vocal techniques to denote intensity of emotion, meaning and mood.

**Physicality (theatre)** – techniques an actor uses to create the physical presence of a character such as posture, gesture, speed of movement, etc.

**Theme** – a subject or topic of discourse or of artistic representation.

### Guiding Questions:

What methods does an actor use to prepare for a role?

What can we learn about the traits of a character from the methods the actors use to prepare for a role?

# Lesson Plan

## Part 1: McMurphy

### Read

Pass out copies of the script and re-read the following pages with your students. While reading, ask students to annotate and highlight key moments or word choices, symbols or possible themes that have reoccurred elsewhere in the text.

1. Pages 21-22: Start on page 21 with Nurse Ratched's "McMurphy, Randle Patrick..." and end on page 22 when McMurphy says, "Do I look like a sane man?"
2. Pages 54-56: Stage on page 54 with Nurse Ratched's line after the stage directions. End on page 56 when Nurse Ratched's "I see. That's fine, boys."

### Discuss

Discuss the key moments, words, symbols or themes that students' identified in the text as a class. Note: We hope students will identify elements that lead to a discussion of themes of control and good vs. bad. If needed, use the prompt questions below:

*Does McMurphy sound like a sane man to you? Who identified him as insane?*

*What is the difference between McMurphy and Harding? Discuss concrete differences between the two.*

*To whom does McMurphy compare himself? Does this seem like an apt comparison?*

*Why or why not?*

*In your opinion, is McMurphy in control of the ward? What is he in control of or not in control of?*

*Is McMurphy a good or bad influence on the other men in the ward? Why?*

### Perform

Use the inquiry learned after analyzing and discussing the character to practice performative elements in that role.

### Voice

*Warm Up: I can place my voice anywhere I'd like*

Define pitch, tempo and dynamics when performing a role on stage. Review the differences between them by doing this exercise.

1. Have your students stand in a neutral position with their feet shoulder width distance apart and repeat after you.
2. Put your hand on the top of your head and say "I can" in a higher pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.
3. Put your fingers on the front of your throat and say "place" in a medium pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your fingers.
4. Put your hand on your heart and say "my voice" in a lower pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.
5. Put your hand on your belly and say "anywhere I'd like" in a deep voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.

### *Voice Work for McMurphy*

Vocal variety is often used to demonstrate a change in a character. Before you begin the activity below, ask your students to describe the qualities of different voices. What does a youthful, naive voice sound like? What does a more mature, grounded voice sound like? Before beginning the following activity, encourage the students to think about how an actor playing McMurphy might change their voice over the course of the play.

1. Distribute copies of Handout 3: McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Nurse Ratched Monologues and read the excerpts quietly. Ask students to circle words in the entries that may be fun to say, words that may have more feeling when spoken, and phrases that might have low or high pitch depending on a feeling.
2. Place your students in small groups and have them rehearse by reading the entries out loud using their vocal variety.
3. Ask student volunteers to perform a short monologue in front of the class.
4. Classmates should engage in active listening by writing down the words that they hear the performer exaggerate.

### Physicality

#### *Mini Lesson: Status Strings*

Have students stand up and make space to move around the room. As an option this exercise can be done outside. Facilitate a physicalizing exercise for students to recognize different ways to stand and hold the space based on a feeling or role that they are playing.

Start with students walking around the room naturally. Ask students to become aware of their surroundings and peers walking around them. Once students get into the rhythm of walking, start to provide guiding prompts to help explore different ways of physicalizing characters.

*Walk as if you have a string attached to the crown of your head.*

*Walk with the string attached to your chest.*

*Walk with the string on both shoulders.*

*Walk with the string attached to your cervical spine or neck.*

*Walk with the string attached to your lumbar spine or the middle of your back.*

#### *Physicalizing McMurphy*

Ask students to reread the monologue for McMurphy from Handout 1. Review the same steps from vocal variety, but add physicality.

1. Distribute copies of Handout 3: McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Nurse Ratched Monologues and ask students to circle phrases or words in the entries that can be physicalized.
2. Place your students in small groups and have them rehearse by reading the entries out loud using their vocal variety and physicality.
3. Ask student volunteers to perform in front of the class.
4. Classmates should engage in active listening by writing down elements that they see physicalized and hear variety.

### Backstory

One way an actor prepares to play a role is through writing backstories for their character. Ask students to write a backstory for McMurphy beyond what is already known about him.

## Part 2: Chief Bromden

### Read

Pass out copies of the script and re-read the following pages with your students. While reading, ask students to annotate and highlight key moments or words choices, symbols or possible themes that have reoccurred elsewhere in the text.

1. Read the first of Chief Bromden's monologues on page 8.
2. Read Chief Bromden's monologue on page 17-18.
3. Read Chief Bromden's monologue on page 31.
4. Read Chief Bromden's monologue on page 36.
5. Read Chief Bromden's monologue on page 43.
6. Read pages 57-60. Start on page 57 when McMurphy says, " 'Scuse me, Chief" and end on page 60 when Chief Bromden says, "How can I be big if you ain't? How can anybody?"

### Discuss

Discuss the key moments, words, symbols or themes that students' identified in the text as a class. Note: We hope students will identify elements that lead to a discussion of the themes big vs. small and sanity vs. insanity. If needed, use the prompt questions below:

*What did Chief Bromden mean when he said to McMurphy, "How can I be big if you ain't? How can anybody?"*

*How does Chief Bromden prove to be the protagonist in the play?*

*Does Chief Bromden sound sane to you?*

*Why does Chief Bromden decide to talk?*

### Perform

Use the inquiry learned after analyzing and discussing the character to practice performative elements in that role.

### Voice

*Warm Up: I can place my voice anywhere I'd like*

Define pitch, tempo and dynamics when performing a role on stage. Review the differences between them by doing this exercise.

1. Have your students stand in a neutral position with their feet shoulder width distance apart and repeat after you.
2. Put your hand on the top of your head and say "I can" in a higher pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.
3. Put your fingers on the front of your throat and say "place" in a medium pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your fingers.
4. Put your hand on your heart and say "my voice" in a lower pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.
5. Put your hand on your belly and say "anywhere I'd like" in a deep voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.

*Voice Work for Chief Bromden*

Vocal variety is often used to demonstrate a change in a character. Before you begin the activity below, ask your students to describe the qualities of different voices. What does a youthful, naive voice sound like? What does a more mature, grounded voice sound like? Before beginning the following activity, encourage the students to think about how an actor playing Chief Bromden might change their voice over the course of the play.

1. Distribute copies of Handout 3: McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Nurse Ratched Monologues and read the excerpts quietly. Ask students to circle words in the entries that may be fun to say, words that may have more feeling when spoken, and phrases that might have low or high pitch depending on a feeling.
2. Place your students in small groups and have them rehearse by reading the entries out loud using their vocal variety.
3. Ask student volunteers to perform a short monologue in front of the class.
4. Classmates should engage in active listening by writing down the words that they hear the performer exaggerate.

Physicality*Mini Lesson: Status Strings*

Have students stand up and make space to move around the room. As an option this exercise can be done outside. Facilitate a physicalizing exercise for students to recognize different ways to stand and hold the space based on a feeling or role that they are playing.

Start with students walking around the room naturally. Ask students to become aware of their surroundings and peers walking around them. Once students get into the rhythm of walking, start to provide guiding prompts to help explore different ways of physicalizing characters.

*Walk as if you have a string attached to the crown of your head.*

*Walk with the string attached to your chest.*

*Walk with the string on both shoulders.*

*Walk with the string attached to your cervical spine or neck.*

*Walk with the string attached to your lumbar spine or the middle of your back.*

*Physicalizing Chief Bromden*

Ask students to reread the monologue for Chief Bromden from Handout 1. Review the same steps from vocal variety, but add physicality.

1. Distribute copies of Handout 3: McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Nurse Ratched Monologues and ask students to circle phrases or words in the entries that can be physicalized.
2. Place your students in small groups and have them rehearse by reading the entries out loud using their vocal variety and physicality.
3. Ask student volunteers to perform in front of the class.
4. Classmates should engage in active listening by writing down elements that they see physicalized and hear variety.

Backstory

One way an actor prepares to play a role is through writing backstories for their character. Ask students to write a backstory for Chief Bromden beyond what is already known about him.

## Part 3: Nurse Ratched

### Read

Pass out copies of the script and re-read the following pages with your students. While reading, ask students to annotate and highlight key moments or words choices, symbols or possible themes that have reoccurred elsewhere in the text.

1. Pages 47–51. Start when McMurphy says, “Oh, man, we’re gonna have a party!” and end at the end of Act I.
2. Pages 61–62. Start when Nurse Ratched says, “Boys, I’ve given a great deal of thought...” and end when Nurse Ratched says, “And how appropriate if those first works were an apology.”

### Discuss

Discuss the key moments, words, symbols or themes that students’ identified in the text as a class. Note: We hope students will identify elements that lead to a discussion of the themes control, good vs. bad, gender stereotyping, and proportional response. If needed, use the prompt questions below:

*How does Nurse Ratched gain and practice control over the patients?*

*What is done under the guise of therapy?*

*Was Nurse Ratched’s response to McMurphy and Chief Bromden proportional to the crime?*

*How is Nurse Ratched perceived in the play? (mothering)*

### Perform

Use the inquiry learned after analyzing and discussing the character to practice performative elements in that role.

### Voice

*Warm Up: I can place my voice anywhere I’d like*

Define pitch, tempo and dynamics when performing a role on stage. Review the differences between them by doing this exercise.

1. Have your students stand in a neutral position with their feet shoulder width distance apart and repeat after you.
2. Put your hand on the top of your head and say “*I can*” in a higher pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.
3. Put your fingers on the front of your throat and say “*place*” in a medium pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your fingers.
4. Put your hand on your heart and say “*my voice*” in a lower pitched voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.
5. Put your hand on your belly and say “*anywhere I’d like*” in a deep voice. Feel vibrations in your palm.

*Voice Work for Nurse Ratched*

Vocal variety is often used to demonstrate a change in a character. Before you begin the activity below, ask your students to describe the qualities of different voices. What does a youthful, naive voice sound like? What does a more mature, grounded voice sound like? Before beginning the following activity, encourage the students to think about how an actor playing Nurse Ratched might change their voice over the course of the play.

1. Distribute copies of Handout 3: McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Nurse Ratched Monologues and read the excerpts quietly. Ask students to circle words in the entries that may be fun to say, words that may have more feeling when spoken, and phrases that might have low or high pitch depending on a feeling.
2. Place your students in small groups and have them rehearse by reading the entries out loud using their vocal variety.
3. Ask student volunteers to perform a short monologue in front of the class.
4. Classmates should engage in active listening by writing down the words that they hear the performer exaggerate.

Physicality*Mini Lesson: Status Strings*

Have students stand up and make space to move around the room. As an option this exercise can be done outside. Facilitate a physicalizing exercise for students to recognize different ways to stand and hold the space based on a feeling or role that they are playing.

Start with students walking around the room naturally. Ask students to become aware of their surroundings and peers walking around them. Once students get into the rhythm of walking, start to provide guiding prompts to help explore different ways of physicalizing characters.

*Walk as if you have a string attached to the crown of your head.*

*Walk with the string attached to your chest.*

*Walk with the string on both shoulders.*

*Walk with the string attached to your cervical spine or neck.*

*Walk with the string attached to your lumbar spine or the middle of your back.*

*Physicalizing Nurse Ratched*

Ask students to reread the monologue for Nurse Ratched from Handout 1. Review the same steps from vocal variety, but add physicality.

1. Distribute copies of Handout 3: McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Nurse Ratched Monologues and ask students to circle phrases or words in the entries that can be physicalized.
2. Place your students in small groups and have them rehearse by reading the entries out loud using their vocal variety and physicality.
3. Ask student volunteers to perform in front of the class.
4. Classmates should engage in active listening by writing down elements that they see physicalized and hear variety.

### Backstory

One way an actor prepares to play a role is through writing backstories for their character. Ask students to write a backstory for Nurse Ratched. Why is she the way she is? What previous event contributed to her personality?

### Stage Design

After reading the play and specific monologues, create a stage design for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Encourage students to read the stage directions for input and to think about how they would want the characters to take up and move around the space.

## Handout 3: Vocal Variety in McMurphy, Chief Bromden, and Nurse Ratched

### McMurphy

#### Act II, page 55

McMURPHY. Are you shittin' me? (HARDING shakes his head.) Billy – you must be committed? (BILLY shakes his head.) Then why? Why? You're just a young kid. Why ain't you out runnin' around in a convertible, cruisin' for babes? (BILLY looks at the floor.) All you guys, why the hell do you stay? You gripe, you bitch how you can't stand this place, can't stand the Big Nurse, and here all the time you ain't committed! What's the matter with you? Ain't you got any guts?

### Chief Bromden

#### Act I, page 17-18

CHIEF BROMDEN. New admission, Papa, now they gotta fix him with control. They got wires runnin' to each man and units planted in our heads. There's magnets in the floor so we can't walk no way but what they want. We got stone brains, cast-iron guts, and copper where they took away our nerves. We got cog-wheels in our bellies and a welded grin, And every time they thow a switch it turns us on or off. They got a network clear across the land – factories, like this, For fixin' up mistakes they made outside. The Combine, Papa. Big, big, big. (Listens a moment.) Oh, yes, there is too much a thing! They got me way back ago, the way they got to you!

#### Act I, page 43

CHIEF BROMDEN. There! The waterfall! How come I hear it, Papa? I hear it and it sounds like in the Spring. I see a salmon jump! I smell the snow where the wind is blowin' off the peaks. And the tribe out there above the falls...lissen, the way they yell each time they spear a fish! How come, Papa? What's makin' it come back?

### Nurse Ratched

#### Act II, page 61

NURSE RATCHED. Boys, I've given a great deal of thought to what I am about to say. I've talked in over with the Staff and we all came to the same conclusion – that there should be some form of punishment for the unspeakable behavior of yesterday. Most of you are here because you could not adjust to the outside world. You broke the rules of society. At some time ... in your childhood, perhaps ... you were allowed to get away with that. But when you broke a rule you knew it. You wanted to be punished – needed it – but the punishment did not come. That leniency on the part of your parents may have been the germ of your present illness. I remind you of this, hoping you will understand that it is entirely for your own good that we enforce discipline. Is there any comment? Then I assume you understand me and agree. You also understand that it is difficult to enforce discipline in these surroundings. After all, what can we do to you? You can't be arrested. You can't be sent to an institution, you're already there. All we can do is take away privileges. And so, after carefully considering the circumstances, we have decided to take away certain privileges which allowed – no, encouraged the rebellion to happen. First, for thirty days there will be no viewing of television. Second, the privilege of playing cards during recreation hours is hereby rescinded.

# Lesson 3: Connecting Cuckoo's Nest to the Current Day

## Lesson at a Glance

**Objective:** Students write, debate, research and reflect on *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* themes and make connections to the current day.

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Materials:** Internet access, paper, pencil

### Standards:

**CCSS Reading Standards for Literature, 11-12:** 2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

**VAPA Theatre, Grades 9-12:** 1.3 Identify the use of metaphor, subtext, and symbolic elements in scripts and theatrical productions.

### Guiding Questions:

What are the connections between *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and the current day?

# Lesson Plan

The following prompts for writing, debate, research and personal reflection can stand alone or can be combined into character or issue-based tracks, denoted by color coding.

## Part 1: Writing and Debate

Facilitate a deeper analysis of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by assigning quick write prompts and setting up a debate. You have the option to do both in class or one or the other.

### Writing Prompts

What is the significance of Chief Bromden's conversations with his father? At what point does Chief Bromden decide he does not have to be small? What literary devices does the author use to signify this shift?

How do the patients in the ward view Nurse Ratched? Site specific examples of symbolism from the text.

Read McMurphy's line from page 55, "That's a lotta crap! Oh, now I get it. Now I see why you guys keep comin' at me like I'm Jesus Q. Christ. It's cause I got everything to lose, and you... hooee, how'd you like that? You bastards conned me. Conned by a bunch of wackos!" Why did the author choose to include this quote?

### Debate Prompts

Who is most often in control of the ward, Nurse Ratched or McMurphy?

Is Chief Bromden's smallness a choice? Is he big or small?

Ultimately, does Nurse Ratched practice a proportional response in her treatment of her patients? Do their punishments fit their crimes?

Is the therapeutic community truly therapeutic?

## Part 2: Research

Using the following prompts, ask students to do further research about issues in the show that are relevant to other historical events and the current day. Research can be done from what they already know from other classes or more in depth internet research and findings.

### Mental Health

How has the stigma of mental illness changed over time and what does it look like today?

### Big vs. Small

At what point(s) in history has one group of people diminished the humanity of another?

### Anger

In the past or current day, what are examples of events that have been done in anger?

*Using past or current events as examples, explore what has been done out of anger or fear on the national or international stage.*

### Control

When has society chosen to define the needs and wants of individuals rather than allow for self-determination?

## Part 3: Personal Reflection

After discussing more on the themes in the play and conducting research on connections to history and the current day, ask students to write a personal reflection or response from one of the themes. This can be a homework essay assignment. When writing, have students use their notes from previous class discussions and research as support.

Do we trust those in power to truly care for us? Use examples from class discussions and research to support your response.

How do feelings of personal inferiority differ from feelings of inferiority stemming from societal expectations?

How do you create an authentic life?

How does anger affect the way you behave towards others? Do you ever overreact out of anger?

What are the possible advantages of having someone dictate the way in which you live your life? Use examples from class discussions and research to support your response.

# One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: Character List

## THE PATIENTS

### Chief Bromden

The narrator of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Chief Bromden is the son of the chief of the Columbia Indians and a white woman. He suffers from paranoia and hallucinations, has received multiple electroshock treatments, and has been in the hospital for ten years, longer than any other patient in the ward. Bromden sees modern society as a huge, oppressive conglomeration that he calls the Combine and the hospital as a place meant to fix people who do not conform. Bromden chronicles the story of the mental ward while developing his perceptual abilities and regaining a sense of himself as an individual.

### Randle McMurphy

The novel's protagonist. Randle McMurphy is a big, redheaded gambler, a con man, and a backroom boxer. His body is heavily scarred and tattooed, and he has a fresh scar across the bridge of his nose. He was sentenced to six months at a prison work farm, and when he was diagnosed as a psychopath—for "too much fighting and fucking"—he did not protest because he thought the hospital would be more comfortable than the work farm. McMurphy serves as the dominant force challenging the establishment and the ultimate savior of the victimized patients.

### Dale Harding

An acerbic, college-educated patient and president of the Patients' Council. Harding helps McMurphy understand the realities of the hospital. Although he is married, Harding is a homosexual. He has difficulty dealing with the overwhelming social prejudice against homosexuals, so he hides in the hospital voluntarily. Harding's development and the reemergence of his individual self-signal the success of McMurphy's battle against Ratched.

### Billy Bibbit

A shy patient. Billy has a bad stutter and seems much younger than his thirty-one years. Billy Bibbit is dominated by his mother and has attempted suicide in the past. Billy is voluntarily in the hospital, as he is afraid of the outside world.

### Charles Cheswick

The first patient to support McMurphy's rebellion against Nurse Ratched's power. Cheswick is a man of much talk and little action.

### Martini

Another hospital patient. Martini lives in a world of hallucinations, but McMurphy includes him in the games with the other patients.

### Scanlon

Another hospital patient. Scanlon suffers from Cold War-era inspired delusions.

### Ruckly

Ruckly has been lobotomized, and the lobotomy is quite obviously botched. His "Fuck 'em all" does not come from a place of conscious thought, but from some other place, as if he has tourette's syndrome. It's a reflex verbal twitch.

## THE STAFF

### Nurse Ratched

The head of the hospital ward. Nurse Ratched, the novel's antagonist, is a middle-aged former army nurse. She rules her ward with an iron hand and masks her humanity and femininity behind a stiff, patronizing facade. She selects her staff for their submissiveness, and she weakens her patients through a psychologically manipulative program designed to destroy their self-esteem. Ratched's emasculating, mechanical ways slowly drain all traces of humanity from her patients.

### Nurse Flinn

A young nurse operating under Nurse Ratched's supervision.

### Aide Warren and Aide Williams

Warren and Williams are Nurse Ratched's daytime aides. Nurse Ratched hired them because they are filled with hatred and will submit to her wishes completely.

### Aide Turkle

Turkle is Nurse Ratched's nighttime aide. He takes a bribe in exchange for helping McMurphy throw a party in the ward.

### Doctor Spivey

A mild-mannered doctor whom Nurse Ratched chose for her ward because he is as easily cowed and dominated as the patients. With McMurphy's arrival, he, like the patients, begins to assert himself.

## OTHERS

### Candy Starr

A beautiful, carefree prostitute from Portland. Candy Starr comes to the ward for a late-night party that McMurphy arranges.

### Sandra

A friend of Candy Starr's who also attends the ward party.

# Glossary

**Acute** – Long-stay patients who were potentially curable.

**Characterization (theatre)** – the construction of a fictional character by the playwright and then by the actor who plays the role, using physicality and vocal variation.

**Chronic** – Patients who can no longer take care of themselves.

**Electro Shock Therapy (EST)** – EST was developed in the 1930's by Italian neurologist Ugo Cerletti. Cerletti found that such electric shocks caused his difficult mental patients to become manageable. At first, the procedure was performed on conscious patients, without the use of anesthesia or muscle relaxants. Patients would often break bones, especially vertebrae, and pull muscles from the violent convulsions induced by the seizure. Patients grew to dread the procedure, and it was commonly employed as a means of punishment and sedation for difficult patients. EST has since been replaced by Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). In ECT, a small electrical current is passed through the brain while the patient is under general anesthesia and can quickly reverse symptoms of certain mental illnesses. It is usually performed when all other treatments have failed.

**Group Therapy** – a form of psychotherapy in which a group of patients meet to describe and discuss their problems together under the supervision of a therapist.

**Lobotomy** – A lobotomy consists of cutting the connections to and from, or simply destroying, the prefrontal cortex, causing major personality changes. The first human lobotomy was performed by Antonio Egas Moniz in 1936. He won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1949 for his work. He strongly cautioned that this operation should only be used when absolutely necessary.

**Orderly** – an attendant in a hospital responsible for the nonmedical care of patients and the maintenance of order and cleanliness.

**Physicality (theatre)** – techniques an actor uses to create the physical presence of a character such as posture, gesture, speed of moment, etc.

**Theme** – a subject or topic of discourse or of artistic representation.

**Therapeutic Community** – a participative, group-based approach to long-term mental illness, personality disorders and drug addiction. The approach was usually residential, with the clients and therapists living together, but increasingly residential units have been replaced by day units.

**Vocal Dynamics** – Appropriate variation of vocal techniques to denote intensity of emotion, meaning and mood.

**Ward** – a separate area in a hospital, typically one allocated to a particular type of patient.