

# Writing Samples: Pass Or Not

The second paragraph in each box is the passing paragraph. Can you tell why?

Ever had trouble controlling someone, whether it's a little sibling, your children, niece or nephew? In the novel One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey, Nurse Ratched efficiently kept control of the ward, therefore gaining her victory in the end. Regardless of McMurphy's defiance and influence on the patients, the Big Nurse maintains her ground. The Big Nurse places restrictions and regulations in the asylum therefore depriving the patients of their privileges. Nurse Ratched intimidates the patients with her cold facial expression and emotionless threats. She also has the black boys do her bidding. In the end, she provokes McMurphy, which causes him to resort to violence, ensuring her victory.

In One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, the 1962 novel by Ken Kesey, Nurse Ratched and McMurphy are constantly battling for power over the ward. Before the arrival of McMurphy to the ward, Nurse Ratched, the head nurse of the asylum, dictated what everybody in the ward should do. However, the tables turn when patient, R.P. McMurphy arrives to the mental institute. Nurse Ratched, "the Big Nurse" no longer has total control of the patient. She notices what is been happening and she does not like another person controlling the patients that she manipulates. What does she do? She fights back. Both McMurphy and Ratched want to have more influence on the men of the ward, so they battle it out throughout the novel. Although McMurphy dies at the end of the novel and Ratched wins the battle, McMurphy was more influential to the men than Nurse Ratched.

During the fishing trip the patients are amazed with all that they see and even what they catch. They experience something that they thought they could never experience and that was the change in confidence. None of the patients were afraid to express their feelings and the fact that they all actually felt as if they're normal. Many people would look at them as if they're just crazy people and be afraid, "Never before did I realize that mental illness could have the aspect of power, *power*. Think of it: perhaps the more insane a man is, the more powerful he could become." Harding, a patient, explains to McMurphy that more other people look at them like there nothing more than just a crazy person it could rise there confidence. Now the patients look at each other and see braver, normal people that are just having a good time with one another. Without the Nurse on the trip most of the patients feel more free. They could now make there own decisions without any approval.

The fishing trip that McMurphy arranged is one of the turning points in the patients' lives. "Everyone was shouting at him to do something, but he wasn't going to do anything" (210). McMurphy was too busy doing things with Candy in the cabin. The patients had to do things on their own. McMurphy was not there all the time to rely on. "I noticed Harding beside McMurphy and is laughing too" (212). Harding, who usually does not laugh, enjoyed him time on the fishing trip. He is not shy or scared to show how he feels. He finally opened up to the group and had the most fun he had in awhile. "...these weren't the same bunch of weak-knees from a nuthouse that they'd watched take their insults on the dock this morning" (215). After the fishing trip, the patients gained confidence and were not scared of the outside world anymore. The loafers saw that in them and knew that they had changed. Thanks to McMurphy the patients came out of their shells and became butterflies.

"You can't tell if he's really this friendly or if he's got some gambler's reason for trying to get acquainted with guys so far gone a lot of them don't even know their names" (25). In the beginning of the novel, some of the inmates were confused about McMurphy's behavior. They did not know if he was very friendly or sarcastic. Bromden, who stated the quote, had observed McMurphy's behavior throughout the novel. Towards the end of the novel, McMurphy's feelings had changed during the group therapy sessions.

The workers are under the power of Nurse Ratched. At the meeting, they would try to say the things that she would want to hear. "Everybody's head junks toward her-mine too,... They figure they were proposing just what she want, just what she was planning to propose in the meeting herself" (135). The workers say what Nurse Ratched wants to hear because they don't want to be wrong and they're afraid that if they say the wrong things they would look dumb. Nurse Ratched knows that they'll say that McMurphy is a bad patient because of how he treats Nurse Ratched because they already fear her. This shows that she has power of the workers because they don't want to get in trouble or have any problems with her.

**NOTE:** *Cut up these paragraphs and give copies of each one to groups of students. Tell them that 3 passed and 3 did not. They then need to make piles of the passing and nonpassing paragraphs. It sometimes helps to give something physical to do.*

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