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### “Leave Flowers For Algernon”

The year is 1965, we find ourselves in the mind of Charlie Gordon, a eager to learn 37-year-old man who is mentally retarded. In the short story, “Flowers For Algernon,” written by Daniel Keyes, Charlie Gordon is a character that starts off very slow and dumb to be blunt, but after an “operation,” he starts gaining more and more knowledge. He always wanted to be smart, and over the course of the story, he improves himself by learning more and more, while also having multiple others help out along the way. The main theme that the story is trying to give off is self improvement. This is shown by his IQ increasing after learning, learning and communicating with others, and taking multiple tests to improve himself.

To begin with, Charlie improves his I.Q. over the course of the entire story. As he writes in his “progris ript 4,” “DrStrauss said I had something that was very good. He said I had a good motor-ation. I never even knew I had that. I felt proud when he said that not every body with an eye-q of 68 had that thing.” (P. 287) Charlie thinks that he is really good, and so he motivates himself to do better, even as he fails over and over, he pushes on. And another contribution to this is when he... “...beat Algernon! I dint even know I beat him until Burt the tester told me. But after i that I beat him 8 more times. I must be getting smart to beat a smart mouse.” (P. 290) He thinks highly of himself, and wants to continue beating him, however, “I wanted to race Algernon some more but Burt said thats enough for me.” (P. 291) Even though this win may

seem small, he gets excited and wants to become even better. It contributes to him, and makes him want to be a better person. He sees that he can do more.

Furthermore, he also gains contributions to himself via communicating and learning more from others, and his mistakes. An example of him learning from his past mistakes with others is, when people say “Hey look at Joe or Frank or George he really pulled a Charlie Gordon. I dont know why they say that but they always laff. This morning Amos Borg who is the 4 manat Donnegans used my name when he shouted at Ernie the office boy. Ernie lost a packige.” (p. 289) He does not understand at the time what his co-workers mean by “pulling a charlie gordon”. However, this contributes to his realization later on, as he realizes... “I never knew that Joe and Frank and the others liked to have me around all the time to make fun of me. Now I know what it means to pull a Charlie Gordon.” (P. 293) After realizing this, he stops going to work, or ends up quitting his job. This is not only in part of being made fun of, but also because he wants to spend more time at the lab and take more studies and tests. It helps him by gaining more time to learn more information. He also gets to learn from his mistakes, and realizes what he has done in the past.

Another point, he is eager to take the test to improve himself and his I.Q. During different parts of the story, Charlie takes multiple different tests and helps Dr. Strauss. While doing these tests, he also improves himself in his test taking skills. He starts off not being able to understand the inkblots, as in the instance where he... “Closd my eyes for a long time to pretend. I told him I pretend a fowtan pen with ink leeking all over the table cloth. Then he got up and went out.” (P. 285) He thinks about the inkblot literally, and not being able to see the “pictures” in the inkblot is just because he has not gotten the operation yet. However, after getting the operation, he

“Goes through the cards slowly. One of them looked like a pair of bats tugging at something. Another one looked like two men fencing with swords.”(P. 294) After he gets the operation, he is able to see the inkblots as a collection of images. He is able to improve over the course of the story, and can take the test like a normal person. He not only started off kinda dumb, but he improves and is able to take these tests just as well as somebody else.

To conclude, “Flowers For Algernon” is a story about self improvement, and how multiple different events can help or contribute to Charlie's improvements. From little hints like how Joe and Frank are laughing, to bigger events like the operation. Overall, the story shows how self improvement not only helps improve yourself, but how it can also help improve others, and in this case, Charlie Gordon. Three examples of this being, his IQ increase, communicating with others, and improving test taking skills.