

Flowers for algernon

Literature



Flowers for Algernon Daniel Keyes' novel Flowers for Algernon follows the life of Charlie Gordon, a 32-year-old man who has an I. Q. of only 68. This book is a great piece of literature that shows how we perceive other people in our lives. In order to do this, Keyes contrasts three main time periods that Charlie Gordon, the main character, goes through: pre-experimentation, during the experiment, and post-experimentation. Keyes uses these three states of mind to show that we should judge others for who they are, not for their supposed lack of intellectual capabilities.

At the beginning of the story, Charlie explains that he has been chosen to take part in an experiment (Keyes, progress report 1). Charlie is not considered to be very smart because his I. Q. is much lower than his peers. The experiment involves a surgical procedure that aims to triple Charlie's I. Q. Even though his intelligence is not very high, Charlie is a hard-working individual, which is shown through his regular attendance at the night class at the Beekman College Center for Retarded Adults (Keyes, progress report 2). It is here that he was first recommended to be a subject for the intelligence experiment. Charlie works in New York at Donner's Bakery as a janitor and delivery boy. His co-workers tease and make fun of him, even the ones Charlie considers to be his friends.

After the operation is completed, Charlie returns to work only to find that things aren't always the way he imagined. He is now able to realize that the other workers take advantage of him by mocking him while in the company of the other employees (Keyes, progress report 8). However, his new behavior surprises many of his fellow bakery workers. Charlie is even able to operate a machine that mixes baking dough. The other workers start feeling jealous of Charlie and his newfound intelligence. Because of this, a majority of the

<https://assignbuster.com/flowers-for-algernon/>

workers agree to sign a petition to remove Charlie from his position in the bakery.

Once Charlie is fired from his job by Donner, he begins the process of cramming of whole lifetime's learning into a few short weeks. Charlie is fascinated by learning a number of ancient languages, and his intelligence level even surpasses that of Dr. Nemur and Dr. Strauss, the original scientists who began the experiment on Charlie (Keyes, progress report 12). However, Charlie's increased intelligence allows him to recall his childhood and how he was treated by his parents. His father Matt simply tried to do the best for his son; his mother Rose disowned him because of his mental retardation. Once Charlie's younger sister Norma was born, Rose sought to shield her away from Charlie for her own good. The end result was that Charlie had to move away to live with his uncle Herman. However, Herman died shortly afterwards. Rose responded to this by threatening to send him to an institution for the mentally handicapped, the Warren State Home and Training School. In remembering all this, Charlie understands why he is so motivated to learn and also why he treats women the way he does. After realizing all this, Charlie attempts to find his lost father. Once Charlie is in his presence, his father does not recognize him, but Charlie does not have the courage to tell his father who he really is. Charlie thought to himself, " I wasn't his son. That was another Charlie. Intelligence and knowledge had changed me, and he would resent me—as the others from the bakery resented me—because my growth diminished him. I didn't want that" (Keyes, progress report 14).

In conclusion, Flowers for Algernon is a great example about how we can treat others depending on our views of them. Daniel Keyes shows and <https://assignbuster.com/flowers-for-algernon/>

compares this through Charlie's character before the experiment, during the experiment, and after the experiment.

Works Cited

Keyes, Daniel. *Flowers for Algernon*. Fantasy and Science Fiction, 1959. Print.