

# Flowers for algernon

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Flowers for Algernon (1959) by Daniel Keyes uses different techniques including Changes in Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation and Algernon as a symbol to produce the themes of Mistreatment of the Mentally Disabled, The Tension between Intellect and Emotion, The Persistence of the Past in the Present and Algernon as the symbol. All these techniques are presented from Charlie's first person narration in his progress reports. Daniel Keyes signals Charlie's changing mental state through the level of accuracy or inaccuracy of the grammar, spelling, and punctuation in Charlie's progress reports.

The first sentence of the story, typical of Charlie's early reports, is full of errors: " Dr Strauss says I shoud rite down what I think and remembir and evrey thing that happins to me from now on. " By Progress Report 9, we see Charlie's immense progress in his composition of flawless sentences: " I had a nightmare last night, and this morning, after I woke up, I free-associated the way Dr. Strauss told me to do when I remember my dreams. " Similarly, Keyes initially conveys the loss of Charlie's intelligence at the end with the erosion of his grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

As Charlie grows more intelligent after his operation, effectively transforming from a mentally retarded man to a genius, he realizes that people have always based their attitudes toward him on feelings of superiority. " How strange it is that people of honest feelings and sensibility, who would not take advantage of a man born without arms or legs or eyes—how such people think nothing of abusing a man with low intelligence. " For the most part; other people have treated Charlie not only as an intellectual inferior but also as less of a human being than they are.

While some, like his coworkers at the bakery, have treated him with outright cruelty, others have tried to be kind but ultimately have been condescending in their charity. " Now I know what it means when they say " to pull a Charlie Gordon. " I'm ashamed. " Daniel Keyes uses the fact that Charlie's mental retardation affects both his intellectual and emotional development to illustrate the difficulty—but not the impossibility—of developing both aspects simultaneously and without conflict.

Charlie is initially warmhearted and trusting this is seen when harlie expresses his opinion of someone in progres report 2: " He was very nice and talked slow like Miss Kinnian does and heexplainedit to me that it was a raw shok" Keyes potrays Charlie as cold, arrogant, and disagreeable when his intelligence increases.. At his loneliest point, in Progress Report 12, Charlie shockingly decides that his genius has pushed him further away from Alice. " I tried to avoid all discussions of intellectual concepts and to keep the conversation on a simple, everyday level, but she just stared at me blankly and asked me what I meant about the mathematical variance equivalent in Dorber-mann's Fifth Concerto. Daniel Keyes uses Algernon to represent and foreshadow Charlie's intellectual and emotional journey. Charlie and Algernon are both subjects in scientific experiments.

Keyes foreshadows the tragic ending of the story through Algernon's behavior in progress report 13; " They've been feeding Algernon, who now refuses to work the shifting-lock problem. Everyone identifies me with Algernon. in a way we're both the first of our kind. They're all pretending that Algernon's behavior is not necessarily significant for me. But it's hard to hide the fact that some of the other animals who were used in this experiment

are showing strange behavior. Daniel Keyes effectively uses a range of techniques such as Changes in Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation and Algernon as a symbol to showcase a range of themes.

Flowers for Algernon, was the most inspiring and emotional book that I have ever read. Keyes makes you wonder if the operation really was worth Charlie getting hurt and ending up the way he was before. In conclusion, I feel that he should have had the operation so he would be able to experience what, we as human beings, go through and have him be able to understand it. Everyone has the right to know what is really going on in the world.