

"flowers for algernon" character analysis on alice kinnian essay sample

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“ Flowers for Algernon” Character Analysis on Alice Kinnian Essay Sample

It takes a special kind of person to be a special education teacher. They have to be caring, patient, and understanding. People who take up this responsibility by helping these kind of people show that there are still good and selfless people out there in the world. The character Alice Kinnian in “ Flowers for Algernon” by Daniel Keyes is one of these people. She not only cares for Charlie and sees him as a person before the operation but continues on loving him even after he is way above her intellectual level. Through her caring and selflessness, Charlie is shown not only a new world of knowledge after the operation but also of emotion.

Before the operation, Ms. Kinnian taught Charlie in night school along with other mentally challenged adults. Alice Kinnian notices and admires Charlie’s enthusiasm for learning. Even Charlie noticed; “ Burt kept saying Alice Kinnian feels he has an overwhel** desir to lern. He acktually beggd to be used. And thats true because I wantid to be smart.” (Keyes, 10) Since Ms. Kinnian has been there since the beginning she might have the biggest influence on what Charlie does and says. At this stage he is very dependent on her to learn after his operation. She also gives him words of encouragement and praise which makes Charlie attracted to her because he doesn’t get that attention from anybody else.

As Charlie progresses through his intelligence, he always sees Ms. Kinnian as a sign of warmth and comfort which attracts him because all he has spent time at is the cold lab which is frustrating and confusing. He can go to Alice

for a break and to talk out his problems. Ms. Kinnian is mostly confused throughout this stage of his intelligence because she doesn't know what is appropriate or not. Through her original caring and concern for Charlie, she finds herself in love with him.

As the story progresses, Charlie discovers the emotion of love through Alice. He writes in his progress report, " Why haven't I ever noticed how beautiful Alice Kinnian is? She has pigeon-soft brown eyes and feathery brown hair down to the hollow of her neck. When she smiles, her full lips look as if she's pouting." (Keyes, 76) This is where it all starts, this wave of emotion has come over him and he doesn't know what to do with it. He was in the movie theater and all he could think about was her. " I didn't see much of the first picture because I was too conscious of her sitting next to me. Twice her bare arm touched mine on the armrest, and both times the fear that she would become annoyed made me pull back." (Keyes, 76) Charlie has never been conscious of touching Alice before. Back when she taught them in night school she probably touched him a lot like helping him write letters. Charlie is obviously maturing emotionally and he wouldn't have been able to without Alice.

When they go to the concert, Charlie doesn't know how to act in front of Alice. When she lies down to listen to music, he is confused and doesn't know what to do because he hasn't felt these emotions before. " I had no way of knowing what she expected of me. This was far from the clear lines of problem-solving and the systematic acquisition of knowledge." (Keyes, 98) He knows his problems can't be solved through books or papers but he must

experience trial and error in order to get things right. Through this experience, he finds out how good life is with love and emotion and not just intelligence. He would have never been able to see this if it wasn't for Alice.

In the middle of the book Alice gets frustrated with Charlie's intelligence level and tells him, " I'll be here when you get back. I'm just upset, that's all, and I want both of us to have a chance to think this out while we're a good distance apart." (Keyes, 122) She obviously has been overwhelmed by his intellectual growth and doesn't know what happened to the old Charlie who she used to admire because of his openness and enthusiasm which has turned to aggression. Charlie sees that she needs a break and probably himself too. He experiences the feelings of frustration and sadness. It seems as his intelligence gets higher, his love for Alice goes down.

When Alice and Charlie get back together and Alice meets Fay, you would think that she would be jealous and hate her. " No, I don't think you should cut her out of your life. She's good for you. You need a woman who's been around as she has." (Keyes, 235) Alice gives Charlie advice not telling where she fits into his life. She knows that Fay is helping Charlie and she wants the best for him. But she also wants Charlie to continue his research without interruption so he can help other mentally retarded people. This shows Alice's genuine concern for people with handicaps and her undying love for Charlie.

As Charlie starts to regress, Alice moves in with him for a while. She straightens up his mess and helps him with other things. She knows he is

regressing but still wants to help him until she can't anymore. They are at the same intelligence level now so that no longer opposes Charlie's emotions for Alice. They make love and the older Charlie has no problem with it. This is probably the climax of Charlie's emotional level even though his intelligence is regressing.

" With the relief of knowing I had passed through a crisis, I sighed because there was nothing to hold me back. It was no time for fear or pretense, because it could never be this way with anyone else. All the barriers were gone. I had unwound the string she had given me, and found my way out of the labyrinth to where she was waiting. I loved her with more than my body." (Keyes, 293)

Charlie finally has found a person who he could have a complete emotional and physical relationship with. Without this, Charlie would just be a intellectual person who has an IQ of more than 200 and now was losing all he had but now he has so much more with Alice. Alice has shown him more than what books could ever teach a person.

Alice, through her understanding and caring, has shown Charlie the side of life, where compassion and generosity are the worth of a person, not their intelligence level. She helps him find a balance between intellect and emotion. Without Alice in the story, Charlie would've never developed emotionally and would've become more of a machine than a person. Alice encourages Charlie throughout the book that he doesn't need to choose his brain or his heart over the other, but must find a balance in between.