

Flowers for algernon- is charlie gordon a hero

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Daniel Keys wrote the short story Flowers for Algernon in 1958. The story took over 14 years to develop. He did not have a good relationship with his parents who wanted him (especially his dad) to become a doctor. In college he had two professors (Dr. Nemur and Dr. Strauss) whose names he decided to use in his story along with the name Algernon which belonged to one of the mice he dissected. Before that he also taught children with special needs and one day one of the children asked him if he could be put in a normal class if he became smart enough.

This really triggered Daniel to write the short story in the first place. After the story was finished he tried to publish it but was unsuccessful because they wanted him to change the ending so that Algernon did not die. Daniel liked the ending and the message which the story gave and in the end his story was finally published. It was banned in a few states in the US and Canada because this was considered to be wrong to want to alter the human mind and it went against religion.

Charlie is the main character of this story who has a low IQ, but by getting an operation by a group of scientists he manages to triple his IQ. Charlie is a unique and brave individual, who by making a choice, becomes a tragic hero, causing him to possibly lose more than he gained and regretting the choice of having the operation. Intelligence is more complicated than just the traditional IQ test and scientists have a hard time agreeing on anything. The traditional view on intelligence includes the IQ tests which are usually have short and to the point answers.

In the short story they talk a lot about Charlie's low IQ and how they manage to triple it. Also traditional intelligence also looks at the idea of having a fixed intelligence without any change. This theory is proven wrong because Charlie actually manages to become smarter which leads to the next theory of multiple intelligence. This theory talks about humans having intelligence but in unique combinations which make us better and worse in different subjects and topics.

It focuses on the 7 main types which are Linguistic, logical/ mathematical, bodily/ kinesthetic, spatial, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal and tests to measure this intelligence focus on the subject's strengths and weaknesses. But one thing that Charlie really lacks in the start of the story is Social and Emotional intelligence. He has a hard time understanding others and acting accordingly but also understanding his own emotions.

When Charlie Gordon first does the ink blot test he has a hard time creating and imagining pictures that were not really there. I didn't see anything in the ink but he said there were pictures there other people saw some pictures. I couldn't see any pictures. I really tried. " Not only does this quote show us that Charlie is determined and hardworking but it also helps us see how some things that are just so easy and natural for us, are totally different for him. Charlie Gordon makes a risky choice with consequences no one can be sure of, but is it right in the first place to use humans for scientific experimentation? Because Charlie was the first human to undergo the operation no one could really be sure what would change.

He manages to triple his I. Q. but also develops changes in his personality and relation to others. He becomes better friends with Ms. Kinnian and in the movie they develop this idea further to the point where they are in love. But was Charlie fit to make such a big and life changing decision without knowing what the dangers are and what bad might happen? What really won him over was the idea that he might become smarter, something he wanted really badly. Before the operation Charlie was approachable, easy to make friends with and loyal.

But after the operation and when people start noticing changes he becomes intimidating, threatening, distant, independent, gaining financial wealth and emotions and in some eyes he no longer becomes special. Though there is one quality that he gets to keep, and that is the ability to work hard. The story portrays a message of compassion towards people with mental illnesses and disabilities and the treatment they have to undergo. The author defiantly wants the readers to feel sympathy towards Charlie but also other people dealing with mental disabilities.

Instead of looking weirdly at them or laughing, put yourself in their shoes and try to help them and treat them with the respect they deserve. But the story also gives another strong message, be happy with who you are. Many people want to be different because they believe that they are the weird and abnormal but what you have to learn to do is not always to change it, though it might be tempting but to embrace it. Charlie Gordon is not just a hero but also a tragic hero who, by making an error in judgment, brings on a tragedy by fate and external forces.

The dictionary definition of hero is: a man of distinguished courage or ability admired for his brave deeds and noble qualities. Though Charlie has no super power or special ability his deeds can be looked up to. He is a good example for not giving up and fighting for your goals and dreams. Then I decided to take this definition a step further and see what type of hero Charlie could possibly be. I found that he fit best under the category of a tragic hero, the definition is: a literary character who makes an error of judgment or has a fatal flaw that combined with fate and external forces brings on a tragedy.

This does not follow the story line of a typical comic book hero like Batman or Spiderman who usually wins in the end. Charlie's big mistake in the story was having the operation. Without it he would have not been able to understand a lot of things but he would also not feel the need to leave the town. This decision really changes Charlie for the worst in the end when Algernon dies and he himself loses his I. Q . going back to the place he started with many emotionally strong experiences. In Conclusion I believe Charlie is a tradic hero who had to go through a lot of live changing situations.