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### The Theme of "Flowers for Algernon"

Algernon can mean two different things: a word to describe someone who is mentally retarded, and something with whiskers or that is bearded. In the fictional short story, "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes, Charlie Gordon is a very determined 37-year-old man who has a severe learning disability. He has an opportunity to triple his low I.Q. of 68 through a surgical operation. He slowly gains intelligence and even discovers a new scientific theory for neurology, the study of nerves. He becomes a bit negative and is annoyed by many things, such as himself. But in the end, he loses most of his memory and his I.Q. goes back to 68. The most important theme of the story is change. It is expressed through the characters Charlie and how he goes from unintelligent to brilliant, Algernon and how he goes from bright to unintelligent, Joe and Frank, who went from being bullies to friends.

To begin with, Charlie is an example of how the author demonstrates change. For instance, in the text Charlie is just starting his progress reports and he states, "Mr. Strauss says I shud rite down what I think and evrey thing that st happins to me from now on. I dont know why but he says its importint Is so they will see if they will use me. I hope they use me" (285). This shows how Charlie writes and his determination to become more intelligent. In the story, Charlie is having dinner with his former teacher Ms. Kinnian and she tells Charlie, " 'It's true, Charlie.

You're already a better reader than I am. You can read a whole page at a glance while I can take in only a few lines at a time. And you remember every single thing you read. I'm lucky if I can recall the main thoughts and the general meaning' ” (296). When Charlie wrote this, he made no mistakes. This demonstrates Charlie's growth and how he can write a whole paragraph without any mistake. Since Charlie's growth is clearly shown the theme of the story is change.

Secondly, Algernon is another way the author expresses change in the story. On page 286 Charlie has to take some tests with Algernon, a white mouse who took the same operation as Charlie, and the author states, “Anyway that test made me feel worse than all the others because they did it over 10 times with different mazes and Algernon won every time “ . This shows how smart Algernon is, being able to beat Charlie at a maze. According to Burt, a person who takes care of the lab animals, Algernon is acting weird and not his usual self, so the author states, “ Burt, who is in charge of the experimental animals, tells me that Algernon is changing. He is less co-operative; he refuses to run the maze any more; general motivation has decreased. And he hasn't been eating. Everyone is upset about what this may mean “ (300). Because Algernon went back to being a regular-minded mouse and not a special and intelligent mouse, the same is expected to happen with Charlie considering the fact that they took the same medical operation. Since Algernon goes to a similar change as to Charlie's, the theme of the story is change.

Lastly, Charlie's co-workers Joe and Frank also experience change in the story. According to the text, Charlie is at a party that he got invited to by Joe and Frank, and they tricked Charlie into getting drunk. After Charlie starts to act like a dope Frank mentions, "I ain't laughed so much since we sent him off for the newspaper that night at Muggsy's and ditched him ” (293). This shows how Frank and Joe are mean to Charlie and they are not really his friends but

more of his bullies. An example of change is when Charlie is at his work and wants to be with his “friends”, and the author states, “ One of the new men who came to work there after I went away made a nasty crack he said hey Charlie I hear your a very smart fella a real quiz kid. Say something intelligent. I felt bad but Joe Carp came over and grabbed him by the shirt and said leave him alone you lousy cracker or I’ll break your neck. Later Frank Reilly came over and said Charlie if anybody bothers you or trys to take advantage you call me or Joe and we will set em straight ” (296). This means that now Joe and Frank has become his friends instead of bullying him or picking on him, showing a change in their behavior. Since Frank and Joe are showing change, the theme of the story is change.

Given these points, the theme of “Flowers for Algernon is change, and this is shown through Charlie, Algernon, Joe, and Frank. Change is always happening and it is important to know different examples of change. The story of “Flowers for Algernon” has many other themes, but this is the most important of them all. Changes can be made by anything and anybody, even you.