

## Thematic Essay – Flowers for Algernon

A **theme** is a life lesson of a story or the author's message about the world. In most stories, the author will not tell readers what the theme or lesson of the story is. As a reader you have to think about what the characters did wrong or right.

You will be writing a **four paragraph** essay (introduction, 2 body paragraphs, & conclusion) discussing a theme from Daniel Keyes *Flowers for Algernon*. Today you will work on finding themes that you can choose to write about. Also, you will find text based evidence to help support the theme that you will be discussing

### In your essay be sure to...

- State a theme of the story *Flowers for Algernon*
- Use two text based details to support the theme
- Explain/analyze how these details support the theme
- Include a counterclaim, or misconception a reader might have about the theme

### Remember a great essay will include...

- An introduction that names the title/author, a brief summary of the text (discuss the central idea or problem), and a strong claim
- Solid evidence to support the claim
- Explanations of how the evidence supports the claim
- Transitions between ideas

**Choosing a Theme to Write About**  
**Flowers for Algernon**  
**By Daniel Keyes**

*Flowers for Algernon* is a text in which Charlie Gordon decides to undergo an intelligence surgery to increase his IQ. He believes that being smarter is the key to happiness and acceptance. As humans this is something we all want and look for in life.

**Your Task:** Daniel Keyes has many different themes (life lessons) that exist in the text. You need to choose one theme in which you feel as though there is strong evidence within the text to discuss and analyze (explain why it's important).

<b>Theme:</b>	
The Importance of Intelligence	
<b>Evidence from Text</b>	<b>Analysis – Why is it important?</b>
1) Attends Miss Kinnian's night class  2) Applies for and goes through the intelligence surgery  3) After the surgery, Charlie learned foreign languages, advanced math concepts, and become smarter than the doctors in 3 months  4) Charlie takes over the experiment	1) This shows that Charlie wants to learn & put forth the effort in order to be accepted  2) Willing to do whatever it takes to increase his intelligence  3) Still wants to learn and willing to grow; has a hunger/desire to learn  4) Realizes he can help others like himself

<b>Theme:</b>	
Love	
<b>Evidence from Text</b>	<b>Analysis – Why is it important?</b>
<p>1) Falling in love and having a relationship with Miss. Kinnian</p> <p>2) Charlie’s connection with Algernon, and care for his body after he dies, shows Charlie’s love concern for the one creature that he can relate to.</p>	<p>1) No matter what Charlie’s intelligence level, he wants to be loved and to love someone. It’s human nature.</p> <p>2) By not allowing Algernon to be treated like, disposed of like a common lab specimen, Charlie understands that Algernon is a representation of himself.</p>

<b>Theme:</b>	
The Mistreatment of the Mentally Disabled - Bullying	
<b>Evidence from Text</b>	<b>Analysis – Why is it important?</b>
<p>1) Joe and Frank’s mistreatment of Charlie happens mainly before the surgery (Ex. Telling him to mop out the toilets, ditching him, the phrase “to pull a Charlie Gordon”)</p> <p>2) Treatment from kids his own age as seen in the memory of Valentine’s Day with Harriet.</p> <p>3) The scene with the boy in the diner.</p>	<p>1) Joe and Frank believe everything is fun and games with the “harmless” jokes they play on Charlie. However, they are adults and fully understand the cruel nature of what they are doing. Their jokes cause Charlie to be embarrassed in public, puts him in unsafe and dangerous situations, and makes a mockery of his disability.</p> <p>2) Hymie takes advantage of the fact that Charlie cannot read or write to play yet again a “harmless” joke. This leads to Charlie being put into a situation in which he is confused and unable to defend himself as he is brutally beaten by two boys, much older than Charlie, who do realize Charlie is different than everyone else.</p> <p>3) This scene is important because Charlie witnesses the subconscious reaction of people laughing, cat calling, and making fun of a mentally disabled boy who drops a tray of</p>

	dishes. Charlie even laughs himself. This is an important moment when Charlie realizes that he must help others like himself.
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<p><b>Theme:</b></p> <p>Friendship/Acceptance</p>
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Evidence from Text	Analysis – Why is it important?
<p>1) Before the surgery, Charlie feels accepted when his friends Joe and Frank joke around with him and invite him out.</p>	<p>1) Before the surgery, Charlie believes that Joe and Frank are his friends and good people, and he feels accepted. As his intelligence grows, Charlie realizes this is not how you treat a friend or someone with low intelligence.</p>
<p>2) As his intelligence changes so do Charlie’s relationships. With Miss Kinnian, Charlie develops a friendship and romantic relationship. Unfortunately, his friendships at work disappear. His coworkers sign a petition to have Charlie fired.</p>	<p>2) With increased intelligence, Charlie is able to interact with Miss. Kinnian on a more adult level. However, Charlie becomes arrogant and snobby. He begins to treat others as they treated him. Once he leaves his job, Charlie feels more isolated and alone than ever before.</p>
<p>3) Charlie returns to his job once he knows he will regress back to his former self. He is welcomed back with open arms.</p>	<p>3) Mr. Donnegan and the people at the factory understand the sacrifice Charlie made in an effort to fit in and be accepted like everyone else.</p>
<p>4) Charlie witnesses first hand a true act of friendship when Joe and Frank stick up for him against a new employee.</p>	<p>4) Without the surgery, Joe, Frank, and Charlie would have never fully understood one another and the importance of their friendship. The surgery and the changes within Charlie helped to show each man how to be compassionate towards each other.</p>