

Kennya Magana

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Learning Through Your Struggles

In this short story, A 37-year-old man, Charlie Gordon has a serious issue with his IQ. “Flowers For Algernon”, by Daniel Keyes, is a short story about the main character. In this case, Charlie Gordon. He has an IQ of 68 and he was chosen to undergo the process of an operation that will maybe increase his IQ to the level that most likely to be up to the score of 200 or higher. He goes through 3 types of tests to test his mental ability to use creativity, and speech. Charlie goes through changes that will give him a new perspective of things, after the process of the surgery. The character had some hardships in his life, and overtime they are discovered from his struggles, and the savagery behavior towards him, and being taken advantage of.

Accordingly, while he struggles with his intelligence, Charlie wouldn't be able to easily understand most things like other people would. Charlie had said some things that might not make him feel any better about himself and/or for his own being. For example, Charlie states, “Because i'm so dumb I don't even know when i'm doing something dumb.”(293) Joe and Frank have taken advantage at this point. He does not realize what he has been doing was wrong the entire time when he was “dumb”. Charlie has never felt like he has been doing anything wrong because of his intelligence. Due to this, he had just realized that no matter what he was thinking, he just did not know what he was thinking and he tries very hard to think at times but, the way that his brain works is very different than others, and his just might work a bit slower than most

people's brains. As he is trying very hard to become intelligent. As Charlie says, "I am taking a couple of books along with me even if I can't read them I will practise hard and maybe I will not forget everything I have learned." (305) Even though Charlie struggles with reading he will do anything he can to help him to be intelligent and to stay intelligent for as long as possible. This shows that he is capable of having the motivation to learn and try to succeed in it but he just cannot do it. His low IQ has gotten in the way of him being able to actually learn anything and it will be very hard to improve. It's going to take time and patience.

Additionally, the way that Joe and Frank have kind of looked through him, they have known him by the fact that he is not intelligent so they practically decide to take advantage of him. As Charlie had said, "Everybody laughed and we had a good time and they gave me lots of drinks and Joe said Charlie is a card when he's potted. I don't know what that means but everybody likes me and we have fun. I can't wait to be smart like my best friends Joe Carp and Frank Reilly." (290) They have given him too many drinks and tried to make him drunk, which worked. After they knew he was drunk, they had asked him to show the girls how he mops the toilets so Joe had gotten him a mop. Everybody laughed at him, at that point Joe and Frank have embarrassed him. In relation to this, Charlie is ashamed he felt embarrassed he has never really felt that until he knew that he was being used. Charlie writes, "It's a funny thing I never knew that Joe and Frank and the others liked to have me around all the time to make fun of me. Now I know what it means when they say 'to pull a Charlie Gordon.' I'm ashamed." (293) What I see in this statement is that he understands the meaning of being used. After that, Charlie feels ashamed with himself because the jokes they have made they all refer back to Charlie. For

example, they use the name “Charlie Gordon” for when someone has messed up. Still after all that has happened, he feels angry at Joe and Frank. Charlie knows he is getting smarter everyday.

Initially, not many people will treat others with respect, they will have some kind of cruel behavior towards him because he is not very intelligent. Especially when people have a serious mental issue or their mental abilities. For example, “ "He's a scream," one of the girls said. Everybody was laughing.”(293) People will not treat him with respect because he has a mental issue he was made fun of because he embarrassed himself, nobody had respect for him. Some will think that they should just either maybe ignore those kind of people or maybe just try to make them feel bad because of their illness. Frank and Joe are not really one of Charlie’s friends because they have no respect for him. In the words of Frank, "I ain't laughed so much since we sent him off for the newspaper that night at Muggsy's and ditched him." They left him alone and they have not returned for him. They use him for entertainment when he was not meant to be used for entertainment. In this case, there is no reason to leave him behind just because he is not like them. For Charlie he would not have understood how they could have possibly left him.

For these reasons, Hardship has become an important part of this short story because of what he has gone through, and what he has experienced. Charlie has gone through changes that he knew would make him more intelligent but, he also know that it would be temporary. It teaches him that not many people are all exactly the same, and he had slowly figured out that people can be very judgmental when others see him. As a result, Charlie has changed, he knew a lot more but then he lost his “intelligence” as the way it was before. Overall, after the procedure

he now probably has the ability to learn a little bit more easily due to the temporary procedure.