

Language Arts per.8

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Ambitious Patterns

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Today, a reported 18.53% of adults in America suffer from a mental illness. Flowers For Algernon, a fictional short story, written by Daniel Keyes shares the story of Charlie Gordon. Charlie Gordon is not just any 37-year-old, he has a mental learning disability, because of his optimism Charlie is asked if he would like to be part of an operation. The operation has only been tested once, on a white mouse named Algernon, the operation should improve his intelligence just like with Algernon, but they are not certain about the effects or if it will work on Charlie. As the story evolves, it reveals what Charlie's journey through Charlie's progress reports while he is becoming smart. Patterns such as ambition are expressed throughout the story. Ambition is shown in the beginning when Charlie wants to become smarter, towards the climax when Charlie wants to reverse the effect, so it does not go away, and in the end when Charlie's intelligence decreases but he still tries to read the difficult books he used to read while smart.

In the beginning, Charlie is optimistic when it comes to the operation. Charlie's operation is risky; no one is confident that his intelligence will increase, as it did with Algernon, but Charlie's ambition shines through. One of Charlie's most memorable quotes, that help recognize his ambition is as follows, "I'm a slow reader too in Miss Kinnians class for slow adults but I'm trying very hard"(258). This gives more context on Charlie's intellectual level and that he wants to increase it. Charlie is trying to increase his intellectual level by attending classes in his free time, something people without ambition would not do. The author also regards Charlie's enthusiasm

when Charlie writes, "I told them all my life I wanted to be smart and not dumb "(286). While this shows Charlie is desperate to gain his full capacity of intelligence, it seems as if something is reoccurring. Charlie's attitude is what is recurring he has always been ambitious; a pattern is revealed, connecting his feeling from early childhood to his adulthood. Charlie has felt stupid all his life, but his ambition shows his desire to be no longer stupid. During the initial stages of the operation, Charlie struggles to prepare for his new intelligence, but he is still ambitious.

After the operation, Charlie is determined that his intelligence will triple. Charlie's enthusiastic attitude is expressed when he writes, "What do smart people think about. Fancy things I suppose. I wish I knew some fancy things already"(288). This demonstrates that the operation is taking its time to improve Charlie's intelligence. Charlie is impatient, so he is given the conflict of determining how he can accommodate the process. Charlie is also ambitious that he will soon be able to think like smart people and do fancy thing and finally fit in. As Charlie has never been smart "fancy things" to him are sharp things such as higher academic language. Charlie's eagerness to become smart is expressed when Charlie writes the following, "I cant wait to be smart like my best friends Joe Carp and Frank Reilly"(290). Charlie is so his dull-witted he does not realize his "friends" are not his friends nor are they smart. Since Charlie does not realize his friends are not smart, he hopes to be as smart as them. While trying to gain his intelligence to the fullest level, Charlie oversees that individual elements such as his optimum are recurring.

Toward the end of the story, Charlie's intelligence starts to reduce until it goes back to his original IQ, but Charlie still holds his ambition. Charlie reveals his thoughts, when he states, "I don't know why I'm dumb again or what I did wrong maybe its because I did not try hard enuff"(306). Charlie blames himself for not trying hard enough to keep his knowledge. Just like in

the start Charlie is back to square one where he began. Supporting this claim, Charlie also states, “But if I try and practis very hard maybe Ill get a littl smarter and know what all words are Im going to have lots of friends where I go”(306). Charlie is convinced that he will gain his triple his intelligence once again. Due to his regression, Charlie's literal understanding came back; Charlie no longer realizes that “friends” are not friends. Charlie also does not understand that they will just make fun of him just like in the start of the story. Charlie is also sure that he will make new friends to wherever he goes. Even though Charlie is back to where he started, he still shows his exceptional ambition and willingness even though the pattern of his intelligence is slowly repeating.

The context of the text infers that Charlie's enthusiastic attitude is present even when events repeat themselves. The patterns Charlie undergoes are inspiring because he finds out what the actual definition of intelligence means and that it could be interpreted into many forms. This theme affects society because it shows us that someone of with so little can make a lot out of it and be resilient. The theme also shows us how “smart” can have many different definitions and that it can not be defined. It is necessary to extract ideas from stories because without, these themes there would be no lessons learned from the text.