

“Flowers for Algernon”

Study Guide - Part I

1. Tell me what you know about Charlie. Mentally? Physically?
2. What type of test did Charlie have to do? How did you react to each of them?
3. Who is Miss Kinnian? What is her role in the story?
4. Who is Algernon? Explain Charlie’s “relationship” with him. Anything in common?
5. What is the procedure going to do for Charlie? Think about whether you would do something like this.
6. What is Charlie’s IQ? How do you think this affects his learning ability?
7. Based on Dr. Strauss’s assessment of Charlie, what does he think about Charlie? Do you think this type of behavior is normal for Charlie’s type?
8. In the ultimate act of foreshadowing, what does Charlie see walk in front of the hospital as he enters? Good or bad omen?
9. What does Charlie carry around as his good luck charms? What does this further prove about his character?
10. Why does Charlie want so bad to be smart? Would you feel the same? Do you think Charlie knows he is “different”?
11. What did the scientists do to Algernon? What are the results?
12. Describe Charlie’s “friends”? How do they treat Charlie? Why do they do it? What does Charlie do while they are maltreating him?
13. Gradually, what did you notice start to improve in Charlie’s journal entries?
14. Why is Charlie listening to the TV while he sleeps? Do you think this actually works?
15. Describe what happens when Joe and Frank take Charlie to the bar. Do you feel sorry for him?
16. Why do you think Charlie was all “black and blue all over”?
17. When do we first know that the operation may have been a success? What amusing thing happens after this?
18. What book does Charlie first read? Any connections you can make?
19. How long did it take for Charlie to finish Robinson Crusoe? What does Charlie want at the end of the book? What does this show about him?
20. When Charlie tells Miss Kinnian about his “friends”, she “got something in her eye and she had to run out to the lady’s room”. What actually happened here?
21. What amusing thing happens once Charlie learns about punctuation?

22. Why is Charlie learning so incredibly fast?
23. Why doesn't Charlie need to race Algernon anymore?
24. On April 20, Charlie says "I feel sick inside". What was he thinking about and what is he experiencing for the first time?
25. Explain what happened when Charlie went out with the girls, Joe and Frank.
26. Why is his landlady, Mrs. Flynn suddenly scared of Charlie?
27. Why do you think Dr. Strauss and Dr. Nemur don't want Charlie to read anything pertaining to Psychology?
28. Charlie figures out a new, more productive way to line up the machines at his work. What is his reward? Do you see a problem with this?
29. Why are Joe and Frank suddenly afraid of Charlie?
30. What's going on between Charlie and Miss Kinnian? Would this be our subplot...see, I told you there is always a romance.
31. Explain Miss Kinnian's sponge analogy on page 47.
32. Is Charlie really "in love" with Miss Kinnian? Explain.
33. Why did everyone want Charlie fired from his job?
34. Analyze this quote: "It was evil when Eve listened to the snake and ate from the tree of knowledge. It was evil when she saw that she was naked. If not for that none of us would ever have to grow old and sick, and die." How does this apply to Charlie's current condition?

Things to consider: phonetic spelling (the way it sounds), triple intelligence, Charlie is a lab mouse, "motivation", Charlie is scared (apprehensive), what if we could triple the entire world's intelligence, constantly trying to gain acceptance and normalcy, parallel episodes, subplots, "their really my friends and they like me", "he really pulled a Charlie Gordon", subliminal messages (Disney, commercials), conscious vs. subconscious, abandoned by his friends, science fiction genre, "The late late late late late late show" (developing a sense of humor), Robinson Crusoe - allusion ("Only I feel sorry because he's all alone and has no friends), inferencing (Miss Kinnian crying, Frank and Joe's treatment of Charlie), reading a grammar book in one night and understanding everything, Coke - tasted funny (inference), "Everyone was looking at me and laughing and I felt naked", realization about "pulling a Charlie Gordon", learn a FEW languages?, "Sometimes I even understand what I'm reading about, and it stays in my mind" (photographic memory), measuring cup analogy, starts to rationalize (Rorschach), "Dr. Nemur said that Dr. Strauss was nothing but an opportunist who was trying to ride to glory on his coattails" (idiom), noticing Miss Kinnian's beauty for the first time, Kinnian's apprehension about the long-term effects, "Before, they laughed at me and despised me for my ignorance and dullness; now, they hate me for my knowledge and understanding. What in God's name do they want from me? They've driven me out of the factory. Now I'm more alone than ever before" (Robinson Crusoe and mirrors his former feelings)