

Middle School English Language Arts Enrichment

2 of 2



Harrison Bergeron

Short Story by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

What if everyone were **THE SAME?**

COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. **RL 3** Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot. **L 5** Demonstrate understanding of word relationships.

What would the world be like if everyone were the same—average in intelligence, talents, appearance, and strength—and no one was better than anyone else? How do you think people would feel and act toward each other? Would they be happy and satisfied?

BRAINSTORM With your class, brainstorm possible advantages and disadvantages of a world where everyone is the same—exactly average. Try to generate as many ideas as possible.

Advantages	Disadvantages
no more jealousy	nothing to live up to

Meet the Author

● TEXT ANALYSIS: PLOT AND CONFLICT

The plot of a story is driven by a **conflict**, or struggle between opposing forces. In some stories, the conflict is between the main character and society. In “Harrison Bergeron,” for example, the title character struggles with U.S. society in the year 2081. As you read, notice ways in which Harrison and the government oppose each other. Follow events to see who prevails.

● READING SKILL: DRAW CONCLUSIONS

When you **draw conclusions**, you make judgments based on story details and your own prior knowledge. Use the following strategies to draw conclusions about the society depicted in “Harrison Bergeron”:

- Note what results from the society’s practices and laws.
- Apply your own knowledge to speculate about the motives of its officials.

As you read “Harrison Bergeron,” use a chart like the one shown to make notes about the society. Also include your own thoughts or reactions about the information.

<i>Details About Society</i>	<i>My Reactions</i>
<i>Constitutional amendments make everyone equal in every way.</i>	<i>It would be hard to enforce equality.</i>
<i>My Overall Conclusions</i>	

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Vonnegut uses the following words in relating his futuristic tale. To see how many words you already know, substitute a different word or phrase for each boldfaced term. Write your answers in your *Reader/Writer Notebook*.

1. **vigilance** with the children crossing the street
2. **wince** in pain after the injection
3. filled with **consternation** at the thought
4. **cower** in the corner
5. **synchronize** our watches
6. **neutralizing** the impact



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

1922–2007

Serious Humor

Kurt Vonnegut Jr. was one of the most acclaimed satiric writers in America. After working briefly as a journalist, he began writing short stories in the late 1940s and continued writing stories, novels, dramas, and essays for more than 50 years. His fiction deals with sobering topics—war, brutality, and fear of technology. But Vonnegut writes with dark humor and elements of fantasy and even absurdity, which have given his writing lasting appeal.

Voice of Experience

During World War II, Vonnegut was held as a prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany. The city was leveled by a fierce firebombing, and the destruction and horror of that event became the focus of his most famous novel, *Slaughterhouse Five*. Vonnegut wrote in a preface to the novel that it was about “the inhumanity of many of man’s inventions to man.” Vonnegut’s early work was not well received by critics, but since the 1970s he has been regarded as a major American writer.

BACKGROUND TO THE STORY

What’s Your Handicap?

If you have ever run a footrace or played golf, you might know the sports term *handicap*. It refers to a way to even up a game so that good, average, and poor players can compete as equals. In a footrace, for example, faster runners might handicap themselves by giving slower runners a head start. In “Harrison Bergeron,” people are given handicaps in daily life so that no one will be any stronger, smarter, or better looking than anyone else.

Author
Online



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KEYWORD: HML10-37



Harrison Bergeron

Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing **vigilance** of agents of the United States Handicapper General.

Some things about living still weren't quite right, though. April, for instance, still drove people crazy by not being springtime. And it was in that clammy month that the H-G men took George and Hazel Bergeron's fourteen-year-old son, Harrison, away.

It was tragic, all right, but George and Hazel couldn't think about it very hard. Hazel had a perfectly average intelligence, which meant she couldn't think about anything except in short bursts. And George, while his intelligence was way above normal, had a little mental handicap radio in his ear. He was required by law to wear it at all times. It was tuned to a government transmitter.¹ Every twenty seconds or so, the transmitter would send out some sharp noise to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage of their brains. **A**

George and Hazel were watching television. There were tears on Hazel's cheeks, but she'd forgotten for the moment what they were about.

On the television screen were ballerinas.

A buzzer sounded in George's head. His thoughts fled in panic, like bandits from a burglar alarm.

"That was a real pretty dance, that dance they just did," said Hazel.

"Huh?" said George.

"That dance—it was nice," said Hazel.

"Yup," said George. He tried to think a little about the ballerinas. They weren't really very good—no better than anybody else would have been, anyway. They were burdened with sashweights² and bags of birdshot,³ and

vigilance (vĭj'ə-ləns)
n. alert attention,
watchfulness

A DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Reread lines 1–17. Cite specific details that describe society in 2081. What is your opinion of the society so far?

Analyze Visuals ►

Examine the image of the television announcer and the picture behind him. What does this painting suggest about television?

1. **transmitter**: an electronic device for broadcasting radio signals.

2. **sashweights**: lead weights used in some kinds of windows to keep them from falling shut when raised.

3. **birdshot**: tiny lead pellets made to be loaded in shotgun shells.

Detail of *TVTime-Announcer* (2002), Charles Foster-Hall. Acrylic on canvas, 16" x 20", 41cm x 51 cm. © Charles Foster-Hall.



TV TIME

their faces were masked, so that no one, seeing a free and graceful gesture or a pretty face, would feel like something the cat drug in. George was toying with the vague notion that maybe dancers shouldn't be handicapped. But he didn't get very far with it before another noise in his ear radio scattered his thoughts.

George winced. So did two out of the eight ballerinas.

Hazel saw him **wince**. Having no mental handicap herself, she had to ask George what the latest sound had been.

"Sounded like somebody hitting a milk bottle with a ball peen hammer,"⁴ said George.

"I'd think it would be real interesting, hearing all the different sounds," said Hazel, a little envious. "All the things they think up."

40 "Um," said George. **B**

"Only, if I was Handicapper General, you know what I would do?" said Hazel. Hazel, as a matter of fact, bore a strong resemblance to the Handicapper General, a woman named Diana Moon Glampers. "If I was Diana Moon Glampers," said Hazel, "I'd have chimes on Sunday—just chimes. Kind of in honor of religion."

"I could think, if it was just chimes," said George.

"Well—maybe make 'em real loud," said Hazel. "I think I'd make a good Handicapper General."

"Good as anybody else," said George.

50 "Who knows better'n I do what normal is?" said Hazel.

"Right," said George. He began to think glimmeringly about his abnormal son who was now in jail, about Harrison, but a twenty-one-gun salute in his head stopped that. **C**

"Boy!" said Hazel, "that was a doozy, wasn't it?"

It was such a doozy that George was white and trembling, and tears stood on the rims of his red eyes. Two of the eight ballerinas had collapsed to the studio floor and were holding their temples.

"All of a sudden you look so tired," said Hazel. "Why don't you stretch out on the sofa, so's you can rest your handicap bag on the pillows, honeybunch."

60 She was referring to the forty-seven pounds of birdshot in a canvas bag, which was padlocked around George's neck. "Go on and rest the bag for a little while," she said. "I don't care if you're not equal to me for a while."

George weighed the bag with his hands. "I don't mind it," he said. "I don't notice it any more. It's just a part of me."

"You been so tired lately—kind of wore out," said Hazel. "If there was just some way we could make a little hole in the bottom of the bag, and just take out a few of them lead balls. Just a few."

"Two years in prison and two thousand dollars fine for every ball I took out," said George. "I don't call that a bargain."

wince (wĩns) v. to shrink or flinch involuntarily, especially in pain

B DRAW CONCLUSIONS

How does the society affect the thoughts and reactions of the people? How does it influence their job performance?

C PLOT AND CONFLICT

George's thoughts reveal more about the conflict between Harrison and the society. On the basis of what you've read so far, what behavior do you think might be viewed as abnormal and illegal?

4. **ball peen hammer**: a hammer with a head having one flat side and one rounded side.

70 “If you could just take a few out when you came home from work,” said Hazel. “I mean—you don’t compete with anybody around here. You just set around.”

“If I tried to get away with it,” said George, “then other people’d get away with it—and pretty soon we’d be right back to the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else. You wouldn’t like that, would you?”

“I’d hate it,” said Hazel.

“There you are,” said George. “The minute people start cheating on laws, what do you think happens to society?”

80 If Hazel hadn’t been able to come up with an answer to this question, George couldn’t have supplied one. A siren was going off in his head.

“Reckon it’d fall all apart,” said Hazel.

“What would?” said George blankly.

“Society,” said Hazel uncertainly. “Wasn’t that what you just said?”

“Who knows?” said George. **D**

The television program was suddenly interrupted for a news bulletin. It wasn’t clear at first as to what the bulletin was about, since the announcer, like all announcers, had a serious speech impediment.⁵ For about half a minute, and in a state of high excitement, the announcer tried to say, “Ladies and gentlemen—”

90 He finally gave up, handed the bulletin to a ballerina to read.

“That’s all right—” Hazel said of the announcer, “he tried. That’s the big thing. He tried to do the best he could with what God gave him. He should get a nice raise for trying so hard.”

“Ladies and gentlemen—” said the ballerina, reading the bulletin. She must have been extraordinarily beautiful, because the mask she wore was hideous. And it was easy to see that she was the strongest and most graceful of all the dancers, for her handicap bags were as big as those worn by two-hundred-pound men.

100 And she had to apologize at once for her voice, which was a very unfair voice for a woman to use. Her voice was a warm, luminous, timeless melody. “Excuse me—” she said, and she began again, making her voice absolutely uncompetitive.

“Harrison Bergeron, age fourteen,” she said in a grackle⁶ squawk, “has just escaped from jail, where he was held on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government. He is a genius and an athlete, is under-handicapped, and should be regarded as extremely dangerous.” **E**

A police photograph of Harrison Bergeron was flashed on the screen—upside down, then sideways, upside down again, then right side up. The

D DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Reread lines 68–85. What do you think of George’s reasons for not lightening his handicap bag?

COMMON CORE L5

LanguageCoach

Antonyms Reread lines 95–96. An **antonym** is a word that means the opposite of another word. Which word in this sentence is an antonym for *beautiful*?

E PLOT AND CONFLICT

Here the **rising action** begins. What more do you learn about the conflict between Harrison and the society?

5. **speech impediment** (īm-pēd’ə-mənt): a physical defect that prevents a person from speaking normally.

6. **grackle**: a blackbird with a harsh, unpleasant call.



TVTime 2 (2002), Charles Foster-Hall. Acrylic on canvas, 16" × 28", 41 cm × 72 cm. © Charles Foster-Hall.

110 picture showed the full length of Harrison against a background calibrated in feet and inches. He was exactly seven feet tall.

The rest of Harrison's appearance was Halloween and hardware. Nobody had ever born heavier handicaps. He had outgrown hindrances faster than the H-G men could think them up. Instead of a little ear radio for a mental handicap, he wore a tremendous pair of earphones, and spectacles with thick wavy lenses. The spectacles were intended to make him not only half blind, but to give him whanging headaches besides.

Scrap metal was hung all over him. Ordinarily, there was a certain symmetry, a military neatness to the handicaps issued to strong people, but 120 Harrison looked like a walking junkyard. In the race of life, Harrison carried three hundred pounds.

And to offset his good looks, the H-G men required that he wear at all times a red rubber ball for a nose, keep his eyebrows shaved off, and cover his even white teeth with black caps at snaggle-tooth random. **F**

"If you see this boy," said the ballerina, "do not—I repeat, do not—try to reason with him."

There was the shriek of a door being torn from its hinges.

Screams and barking cries of **consternation** came from the television set.

The photograph of Harrison Bergeron on the screen jumped again and again, 130 as though dancing to the tune of an earthquake.

▲ Analyze Visuals

How would you describe the figures watching television? How well do they represent George and Hazel?

F PLOT AND CONFLICT

Why has Harrison been so handicapped by the government?

consternation

(kŏn'stər-nā'shən)

n. confused amazement or fear

George Bergeron correctly identified the earthquake, and well he might have—for many was the time his own home had danced to the same crashing tune. “My God—” said George, “that must be Harrison!”

The realization was blasted from his mind instantly by the sound of an automobile collision in his head.

When George could open his eyes again, the photograph of Harrison was gone. A living, breathing Harrison filled the screen.

Clanking, clownish, and huge, Harrison stood in the center of the studio. **G**

The knob of the uprooted studio door was still in his hand. Ballerinas, technicians, musicians, and announcers **cowered** on their knees before him, expecting to die.

“I am the Emperor!” cried Harrison. “Do you hear? I am the Emperor! Everybody must do what I say at once!” He stamped his foot and the studio shook.

“Even as I stand here—” he bellowed, “crippled, hobbled, sickened—I am a greater ruler than any man who ever lived! Now watch me become what I *can* become!”

Harrison tore the straps of his handicap harness like wet tissue paper, tore straps guaranteed to support five thousand pounds.

150 Harrison’s scrap-iron handicaps crashed to the floor.

Harrison thrust his thumbs under the bar of the padlock that secured his head harness. The bar snapped like celery. Harrison smashed his headphones and spectacles against the wall.

He flung away his rubber-ball nose, revealed a man that would have awed Thor, the god of thunder.

“I shall now select my Empress!” he said, looking down on the cowering people. “Let the first woman who dares rise to her feet claim her mate and her throne!” **H**

A moment passed, and then a ballerina arose, swaying like a willow.

160 Harrison plucked the mental handicap from her ear, snapped off her physical handicaps with marvelous delicacy. Last of all, he removed her mask. She was blindingly beautiful.

“Now—” said Harrison, taking her hand, “shall we show the people the meaning of the word dance? Music!” he commanded.

The musicians scrambled back into their chairs, and Harrison stripped them of their handicaps, too. “Play your best,” he told them, “and I’ll make you barons and dukes and earls.”

The music began. It was normal at first—cheap, silly, false. But Harrison snatched two musicians from their chairs, waved them like batons as he sang
170 the music as he wanted it played. He slammed them back into their chairs.

The music began again and was much improved.

G GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread line 138. Notice how Vonnegut uses the **precise adjectives** *clanking*, *clownish*, and *huge* to create a vivid image of Harrison’s appearance.

cower (kou’er) v. to crouch down in fear

H PLOT AND CONFLICT

Reread lines 142–158. Notice how Harrison views himself in relation to other people. How do his views put him in conflict with the government?

Harrison and his Empress merely listened to the music for a while—listened gravely, as though **synchronizing** their heartbeats with it.

They shifted their weights to their toes.

Harrison placed his big hands on the girl's tiny waist, letting her sense the weightlessness that would soon be hers.

And then, in an explosion of joy and grace, into the air they sprang!

Not only were the laws of the land abandoned, but the law of gravity and the laws of motion as well.

180 They reeled, whirled, swiveled, flounced, capered, gamboled, and spun.

They leaped like deer on the moon.

The studio ceiling was thirty feet high, but each leap brought the dancers nearer to it.

It became their obvious intention to kiss the ceiling.

They kissed it.

And then, **neutralizing** gravity with love and pure will, they remained suspended in air inches below the ceiling, and they kissed each other for a long, long time. **I**

190 It was then that Diana Moon Glampers, the Handicapper General, came into the studio with a double-barreled ten-gauge shotgun. She fired twice, and the Emperor and the Empress were dead before they hit the floor.

Diana Moon Glampers loaded the gun again. She aimed it at the musicians and told them they had ten seconds to get their handicaps back on.

It was then that the Bergerons' television tube burned out. **I**

Hazel turned to comment about the blackout to George. But George had gone out into the kitchen for a can of beer.

George came back in with the beer, paused while a handicap signal shook him up. And then he sat down again. "You been crying?" he said to Hazel.

"Yup," she said.

200 "What about?" he said.

"I forget," she said. "Something real sad on television."

"What was it?" he said.

"It's all kind of mixed up in my mind," said Hazel.

"Forget sad things," said George.

"I always do," said Hazel.

"That's my girl," said George. He winced. There was the sound of a riveting gun⁷ in his head.

"Gee—I could tell that one was a doozy," said Hazel.

"You can say that again," said George.

210 "Gee—" said Hazel, "I could tell that one was a doozy."  **K**

synchronize

(sŭng'krə-nīz') v. to match the timing of

neutralize (nōō'trə-līz') v.

to counteract or cancel the effect of

I DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Reread lines 177–188.

What words and phrases indicate how the **narrator** views this breaking of the laws?

I PLOT AND CONFLICT

How is the conflict resolved?

K DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Why do George and Hazel react this way to their son's death?

7. **riveting** (rĭv'ĭ-tĭng) **gun**: a power tool used to hammer bolts (called rivets) that are used in construction work and manufacturing to fasten metal beams or plates together.

Comprehension

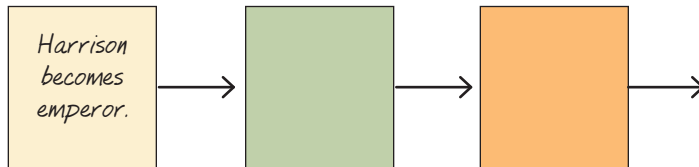
1. **Recall** Why does the government handicap George but not Hazel?
2. **Recall** Why is the government looking for Harrison?
3. **Recall** What does the Handicapper General do to Harrison?
4. **Clarify** Why don't Harrison's parents respond with more feeling to what they have seen?

COMMON CORE

RL 1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. **RL 3** Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot.

Text Analysis

5. **Analyze Plot and Conflict** Summarize the main conflict in "Harrison Bergeron." How is this conflict resolved? How does the resolution help to make the story successful?
6. **Recognize Climax** Recall that the climax, or turning point, is the high point of interest and tension in a story. What is the climax of this story?
7. **Draw Conclusions** Look back at the chart you created as you read. What overall conclusions can you draw about the society depicted in the story? Consider how people must function and what has become "normal."
8. **Interpret Theme** What is Vonnegut saying about improving society by making everyone average? Support your opinion with evidence from the story.
9. **Evaluate** Would society have been better off with Harrison in charge? Using a chart like this one, predict the effects of Harrison's becoming emperor.



10. **Synthesize** Think about the criticisms of society made in "Harrison Bergeron." What aspects of today's society seem open to Vonnegut's criticisms?

Text Criticism

11. **Critical Interpretation** One critic has argued that Vonnegut portrays television as "a kind of desensitizing, numbing, and clearly thought-stifling, rather than thought-provoking, medium" that is partly responsible for the state of society. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion.

What if everyone were **THE SAME**?

Would you be happier if no one were better (or worse) than anyone else?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Write the letter of the word that is most different in meaning from the others.

1. (a) vigilance, (b) attention, (c) alertness, (d) laziness
2. (a) grin, (b) flinch, (c) wince, (d) shrink
3. (a) joy, (b) consternation, (c) happiness, (d) elation
4. (a) tower, (b) crouch, (c) cower, (d) cringe
5. (a) time, (b) synchronize, (c) set, (d) separate
6. (a) neutralize, (b) worsen, (c) lessen, (d) decrease

WORD LIST

consternation
cower
neutralize
synchronize
vigilance
wince

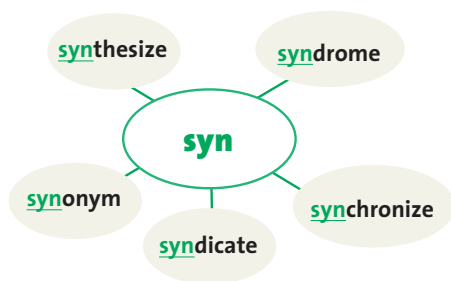
ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• affect • communicate • definite • establish • identify

Identify the social tendencies Vonnegut is warning against in “Harrison Bergeron.” Analyze the flaws of the society he depicts and discuss with a partner what Vonnegut seems to be recommending. Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your discussion.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE GREEK ROOT *syn*

The vocabulary word *synchronize* contains the Greek word root *syn*, which means “together” or “similar.” This root is found in a number of English words. To understand the meaning of words with *syn*, use context clues as well as your knowledge of the root.



COMMON CORE

L.4c Consult reference materials to determine or clarify a word's meaning or etymology.

PRACTICE Write the word from the word web that best completes each sentence. Use context clues to help you or, if necessary, consult a dictionary or glossary.

1. A _____ is a group of symptoms that together indicate a disease.
2. A _____ is a word that has the same or a similar meaning to another word.
3. A _____ is a company that is made up of different parts, such as a newspaper, a magazine, and a TV network.
4. Swimmers often _____ their movements in an underwater ballet.
5. To _____ something is to combine separate elements to form a whole.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

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KEYWORD: HML10-46

Language

GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Use Precise Language

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 43. Vonnegut creates effective images, such as the image of Harrison in the TV studio, by using **precise adjectives**. When describing people, places, and events in your own writing, choose adjectives that allow readers to easily visualize them. Avoid using such adjectives as *good* and *nice*, which are too general to give readers a true sense of what is described.

Here are two examples of Vonnegut’s use of precise adjectives:

She must have been extraordinarily beautiful, because the mask she wore was hideous. (lines 95–96)

Her voice was a warm, luminous, timeless melody. (line 101)

Notice how the revisions in blue make this first draft more descriptive. Revise your own writing by using more precise adjectives.

STUDENT MODEL

Harrison Bergeron has a ^{difficult} big problem. He’s ^{smarter, stronger, and more attractive} better than everyone else, and the government says that’s ^{illegal} bad.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Increase your understanding of “Harrison Bergeron” by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

WRITING PROMPT

Short Constructed Response: Description

Imagine that a film version of “Harrison Bergeron” is being released and you have been assigned to write a blurb, or brief description, for a local newspaper. In **one or two paragraphs**, describe the plot and conflict in a way that makes people want to see the movie.

REVISING TIP

Review your response. How have you used precise adjectives to describe the people, places, and events in the film?



L3 Apply knowledge of language to make effective choices for meaning or style.

Interactive
Revision



Go to [thinkcentral.com](https://www.thinkcentral.com).
KEYWORD: HML10-47

SHORT STORY

Preparing to Read

Flowers for Algernon



by **Daniel Keyes**

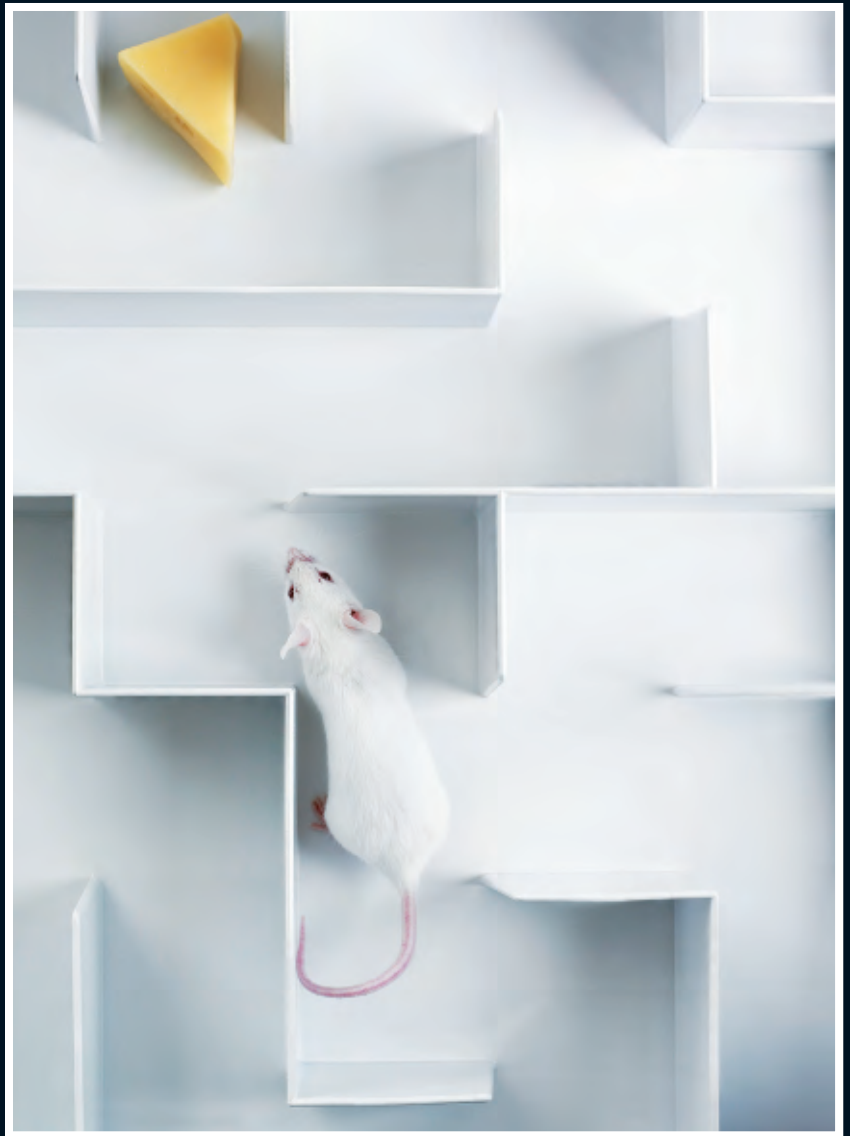
What Do
You
Think

When is knowledge
power? When is
ignorance bliss?



QuickWrite

Why might a person hesitate to tell a friend something upsetting? Write down your thoughts.





Reader/Writer Notebook

Use your **RWN** to complete the activities for this selection.

SKILLS FOCUS **Literary Skills** Understand subplots and parallel episodes. **Reading Skills** Track story events.

Literary Focus

Subplots and Parallel Episodes A long short story, like the one that follows, sometimes has a complex plot, a plot that consists of intertwined stories. A complex plot may include

- **subplots**—less important plots that are part of the larger story
- **parallel episodes**—deliberately repeated plot events

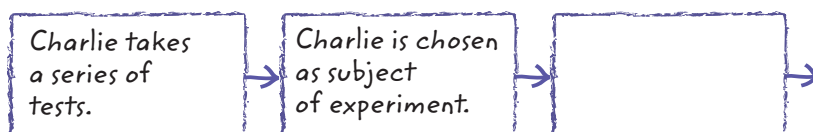
As you read “Flowers for Algernon,” watch for new settings, characters, or conflicts that are introduced into the story. These may signal that a subplot is beginning. To identify parallel episodes, take note of similar situations or events that occur in the story.

Literary Perspectives Apply the literary perspective described on page 55 as you read this story.

Reading Focus

Tracking Story Events To follow a story’s plot and identify subplots and parallel episodes, pause every now and then to think about what has happened so far.

Into Action Use a chart like the one below to **track story events**. Underline events that introduce new settings, characters, or conflicts. Circle any event that is similar to an event that happened earlier.



Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

Find It in Your Reading In this story, events unfold through a character’s journal entries. In your *Reader/Writer Notebook* note how Keyes develops Charlie’s character through that character’s use of language (his word choice, spelling, and grammar).

Vocabulary

misled (mihs LEHD) *v.*: fooled; led to believe something wrong. *Joe and Frank misled Charlie into believing they were his friends.*

regression (rih GREHSH uhn) *n.*: return to an earlier or less advanced condition. *After its regression, the mouse could no longer find its way through a maze.*

obscure (uhb SKYOOR) *v.*: hide. *He wanted to obscure the fact that he was losing his intelligence.*

deterioration (dih tihr ee uh RAY shuhn) *n.* used as an *adj.*: worsening; declining. *Charlie could predict mental deterioration syndromes by using his formula.*

introspective (ihn truh SPEHK tihv) *adj.*: looking inward. *Charlie was introspective about all the changes he went through.*

Language Coach

Word Origins Which Vocabulary word above looks as if it is derived from the Latin verb *specere*, meaning “to see”? What other words do you know that contain the word part *-spec-*?



Learn It Online

Expand your story experience by visiting Literature Links at:

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L8-53

Go

MEET THE WRITER

Daniel Keyes

(1927–)

“Fascinated by the . . . Human Mind”

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Daniel Keyes says that he is “fascinated by the complexities of the human mind.” In fact, he studied psychology so that he could create more believable characters in his stories.

Unhelpful “Advice”

When Keyes was looking for a publisher for “Flowers for Algernon,” he was advised to change the ending of his story to a happy, “Hollywood” ending. Keyes refused. His decision proved to be a good one. His story became famous around the world and was made into a novel, a play, a movie, and even a musical.

“When I went to Tokyo, they . . . brought me gifts, flowers, candy, letters, and I sat there thinking, ‘I feel like a rock star.’”

Think About the Writer What might Keyes’s refusal to change his story say about him?



Build Background

You will find terms dealing with psychology and science in “Flowers for Algernon.” Here are some terms to know:

- **Rorschach** (RAWR shahk) **test:** psychological test in which people describe the images suggested to them by a series of inkblots. See page 59 for an example.
- **IQ:** short for *intelligence quotient*; a number that is meant to show how intelligent someone is. An IQ score is determined from an intelligence test.
- **hypothesis:** a theory to be proved. In the story, the doctors’ hypothesis is that they can improve intelligence through surgery.

Preview the Selection

In this story you’ll meet **Charlie Gordon**, who undergoes experimental surgery to increase his intelligence. Charlie keeps a journal to record his progress and to share how the experiment affects his life.

Read with a Purpose Read this story to find out what Charlie gains and loses as he participates in a medical experiment.

Flowers for Algernon

by **Daniel Keyes**

Part 1

progris riport 1—march 5 1965

Dr. Strauss says I shud rite¹ down what I think and evrey thing that happins to me from now on. I dont know why but he says its importint so they will see if they will use me. I hope they use me. Miss Kinnian says maybe they can make me smart. I want to be smart. My name is Charlie Gordon. I am 37 years old and 2 weeks ago was my brith-day. I have nuthing more to rite now so I will close for today.

progris riport 2—march 6

I had a test today. I think I faled it. and I think that maybe now they wont use me. What happind is a nice young man was in

the room and he had some white cards with ink spilled all over them. He sed Charlie what do you see on this card. I was very

Literary Perspectives

Use this literary perspective to help you analyze the story's main character.

Analyzing Credibility in Literature Literature often requires that we believe in things that are not true, such as talking animals. Even so, we expect the characters and plots to be believable, or credible.

Analyzing the credibility of the narrator is especially important in “Flowers for Algernon.” Consider these questions as you read: How might the narrator’s perceptions of the world differ from yours? How is he unlike any narrator you have met before? As you read, be sure to notice the notes and questions in the text, which will guide you in using this perspective.

1. **shud rite**: should write. To understand Charlie’s misspelled words, try sounding them out and reading the surrounding words for clues to the meaning.



skared even tho I had my rabbits foot² in my pocket because when I was a kid I always failed tests in school and I spilled ink to.

I told him I saw an inkblot. He said yes and it made me feel good. I thought that was all but when I got up to go he stopped me. He said now sit down Charlie we are not through yet. Then I don't remember so good but he wanted me to say what was in the ink. I didn't see anything in the ink but he said there were pictures there other people saw some pictures. I couldn't see any pictures. I really tried to see. I held the card close up and then far away.

2. **rabbits foot:** The hind foot of a rabbit is sometimes used as a good-luck charm.

Then I said if I had my glasses I could see better I usually only wear my glasses in the movies or TV but I said they are in the closet in the hall. I got them. Then I said let me see that card again I bet I'll find it now.

I tried hard but I still couldn't find the pictures I only saw the ink. I told him maybe I need new glasses. He wrote something down on a paper and I got scared of failing the test. I told him it was a very nice inkblot with little points all around the eyes. He looked very sad so that wasn't it. I said please let me try again. I'll get it in a few minutes because I'm not so fast sometimes. I'm a slow reader too in Miss Kinnian's class for slow

adults but I'm trying very hard.

He gave me a chance with another card that had 2 kinds of ink spilled on it red and blue.

He was very nice and talked slow like Miss Kinnian does and he explained it to me that it was a *raw shock*.³ He said people see things in the ink. I said show me where. He said think. I told him I think an inkblot but that wasn't right either. He said what does it remind you—pretend something. I closed my eyes for a long time to pretend. I told him I pretended a fountain pen with ink

3. **raw shock:** Charlie is trying to spell *Rorschach*.

leeking all over a table cloth. Then he got up and went out.

I dont think I passd the *raw shok* test. **A**

progris report 3—march 7

Dr Strauss and Dr Nemur say it dont matter about the inkblots. I told them I dint spill the ink on the cards and I couldn't see anything in the ink. They said that maybe they will still use me. I said Miss Kinnian never gave me tests like that one only spelling and reading. They said Miss Kinnian told that I was her bestist pupil in the adult nite scool becaus I tryed the hardist and I reely wantid to lern. They said how come you went to the adult nite scool all by yourself Charlie. How did you find it. I said I askd pepul and sumbody told me where I shud go to lern to read and spell good. They said why did you want to. I told them becaus all my life I wantid to be smart and not dumb. But its very hard to be smart. They said you know it will probly be tempirery. I said yes. Miss Kinnian told me. I dont care if it herts.

Later I had more crazy tests today. The nice lady who gave it me told me the name and I asked her how do you spellit so I can rite it in my progris riport. thematic apperception test. I dont know the frist 2 words but I know what *test* means. You got to pass it or you get bad marks. This test lookd easy becaus I could see the picturs. Only this time she dint want me to tell her the picturs. That mixd me up. I said the man yesterday said I shoud tell him what

I saw in the ink she said that dont make no difrence. She said make up storys about the pepul in the picturs.

I told her how can you tell storys about pepul you never met. I said why shud I make up lies. I never tell lies any more becaus I always get caut.

She told me this test and the other one the raw-shok was for getting personalty. I laffed so hard. I said how can you get that thing from inkblots and fotos. She got sore and put her picturs away. I dont care. It was sily. I gess I faled that test too. **B**

Later some men in white coats took me to a difernt part of the hospitil and gave me a game to play. It was like a race with a white mouse. They called the mouse Algernon. Algernon was in a box with a lot of twists and turns like all kinds of walls and they gave me a pencil and a paper with lines and lots of boxes. On one side it said start and on the other end it said finish. They said it was *amazed* and that Algernon and me had the same *amazed* to do. I dint see how we could have the same *amazed* if Algernon had a box and I had a paper but I dint say nothing. Anyway there wasnt time because the race started.

One of the men had a watch he was trying to hide so I wouldnt see it so I tryed not to look and that made me nervus.

Anyway that test made me feel worser than all the others because they did it over 10 times with difernt *amazeds* and Algernon won every time. I dint know that mice were so smart. Maybe thats because

A **Read and Discuss** What situation has the author set up?

B **Read and Discuss** How does Charlie handle his latest test?

Algernon is a white mouse. Maybe white mice are smarter than other mice. **C**

progis riport 4-Mar 8

Their going to use me! Im so exited I can hardly write. Dr Nemur and Dr Strauss had a argament about it first. Dr Nemur was in the office when Dr Strauss brot me in. Dr Nemur was worried about using me but Dr Strauss told him Miss Kinnian rekem-mended me the best from all the people who she was teaching. I like Miss Kinnian becaus shes a very smart teacher. And she said Charlie your going to have a second chance. If you volenteer for this expera-ment you mite get smart. They dont know if it will be perminint but theirs a chance. Thats why I said ok even when I was scared because she said it was an operashun. She said dont be scared Charlie you done so much with so little I think you deserv it most of all.

So I got scaird when Dr Nemur and Dr Strauss argud about it. Dr Strauss said I had something that was very good. He said I had a good *motor-vation*.⁴ I never even knew I had that. I felt proud when he said that not every body with an eye-q of 68 had that thing. I dont know what it is or where I got it but he said Algernon had it too. Algernons *motor-vation* is the cheese they put in his box. But it cant be that because I didnt eat any cheese this week. **D**

4. **motor-vation:** motivation, the force or inner drive that makes someone want to do or accomplish something; here, Charlie's desire to learn.

Then he told Dr Nemur something I dint understand so while they were talking I wrote down some of the words.

He said Dr Nemur I know Charlie is not what you had in mind as the first of your new brede of intelek** (coudnt get the word) superman. But most people of his low ment** are host** and uncoop** they are usualy dull apath** and hard to reach. He has a good natcher hes intristed and eager to please.

Dr Nemur said remember he will be the first human beeng ever to have his inteljence trippled by surgicle meens.

Dr Strauss said exakly. Look at how well hes lerned to read and write for his low mentel age its as grate an acheve** as you and I lerning einstines therey of **vity⁵ without help. That shows the intenss motor-vation. Its comparat** a tremen** achev** I say we use Charlie.

I dint get all the words and they were talking to fast but it sounded like Dr Strauss was on my side and like the other one wasnt.

Then Dr Nemur nodded he said all right maybe your right. We will use Charlie. When he said that I got so exited I jumped up and shook his hand for being so good to me. I told him thank you doc you wont be sorry for giving me a second chance. And I mean it like I told him. After the operas-hun Im gonna try to be smart. Im gonna try awful hard. **E**

5. **einstines therey of **vity:** theory of relativity, developed by Albert Einstein (1879–1955) and deals with matter, time, space, and energy.

C Read and Discuss What has the author hinted at now?

D Reading Focus Tracking Story Events What is the conflict between Dr. Strauss and Dr. Nemur?

E Literary Perspectives Analyzing Credibility Now that you have read this progress report, do you think Charlie will be a credible narrator? Why or why not?

progris ript 5-Mar 10

Im skared. Lots of people who work here and the nurses and the people who gave me the tests came to bring me candy and wish me luck. I hope I have luck. I got my rabbits foot and my lucky penny and my horse shoe. Only a black cat crossed me when I was comming to the hospitil. Dr Strauss says dont be supersitis Charlie this is sience. Anyway Im keeping my rabbits foot with me.

I asked Dr Strauss if Ill beat Algernon in the race after the operashun and he said maybe. If the operashun works Ill show that mouse I can be as smart as he is. Maybe smarter. Then Ill be abel to read better and spell the words good and know lots of things and be like other people. I want to be smart like other people. If it works permin-int they will make everybody smart all over the wurd.

They dint give me anything to eat this morning. I dont know what that eating has to do with getting smart. Im very hungry and Dr Nemur took away my box of candy. That Dr Nemur is a grouch. Dr Strauss says I can have it back after the operashun. You cant eat befor a operashun . . .

Progress Report 6-Mar 15

The operashun dint hurt. He did it while I was sleeping. They took off the bandijis from my eyes and my head today so I can make a progress report. Dr Nemur who looked at some of my other ones says I spell progress wrong and he told me how to spell it and report too. I got to try and remember that.

I have a very bad memary for spelling. Dr Strauss says its ok to tell about all the



Analyzing Visuals

Viewing and Interpreting

The image above is a Rorschach test. What do you see?
Why do you think Charlie has difficulty with the test?

things that happin to me but he says I shoud tell more about what I feel and what I think. When I told him I dont know how to think he said try. All the time when the bandijis were on my eyes I tryed to think. Nothing happened. I dont know what to think about. Maybe if I ask him he will tell me how I can think now that Im suppose to get smart. What do smart people think about. Fancy things I suppose. I wish I knew some fancy things alredy.

Progress Report 7-mar 19

Nothing is happining. I had lots of tests and different kinds of races with Algernon. I hate that mouse. He always beats me. Dr Strauss said I got to play those games. And he said some time I got to take those tests over again. Thse inkblots are stupid. And

those pictures are stupid too. I like to draw a picture of a man and a woman but I wont make up lies about people. **F**

I got a headache from trying to think so much. I thot Dr Strauss was my frend but he dont help me. He dont tell me what to think or when Ill get smart. Miss Kinnian dint come to see me. I think writing these progress reports are stupid too.

Progress Report 8—Mar 23

Im going back to work at the factory. They said it was better I shud go back to work but I cant tell anyone what the operashun was for and I have to come to the hospitil for an hour evry night after work. They are gonna pay me mony every month for lerning to be smart.

Im glad Im going back to work because I miss my job and all my frends and all the fun we have there.

Dr Strauss says I shud keep writing things down but I dont have to do it every day just when I think of something or something speshul happins. He says dont get discoridged because it takes time and it happins slow. He says it took a long time with Algernon before he got 3 times smarter then he was before. Thats why Algernon beats me all the time because he had that operashun too. That makes me feel better. I coud probly do that *amazed* faster than a reglar mouse. Maybe some day Ill beat Algernon. Boy that would be something. So far Algernon looks like he mite be smart perminent.

Mar 25 (I dont have to write progress report on top any more just when I hand it in once a week for Dr Nemur to read. I just have to put the date on. That saves time)

We had a lot of fun at the factory today. Joe Carp said hey look where Charlie had his operashun what did they do Charlie put some brains in. I was going to tell him but I remembered Dr Strauss said no. Then Frank Reilly said what did you do Charlie forget your key and open your door the hard way. That made me laff. Their really my friends and they like me.

Sometimes somebody will say hey look at Joe or Frank or George he really pulled a Charlie Gordon. I don't know why they say that but they always laff. This morning Amos Borg who is the 4 man at Donnegans used my name when he shouted at Ernie the office boy. Ernie lost a packige. He said Ernie for godsake what are you trying to be a Charlie Gordon. I dont understand why he said that. I never lost any packiges. **G**

Mar 28 Dr Strauss came to my room tonight to see why I dint come in like I was suppose to. I told him I dont like to race with Algernon any more. He said I dont have to for a while but I shud come in. He had a present for me only it wasnt a present but just for lend. I thot it was a little television but it wasnt. He said I got to turn it on when I go to sleep. I said your kidding why shud I turn it on when Im going to sleep. Who ever herd of a thing like that. But he said if I want to get smart I got to

F Reading Focus **Tracking Story Events** How is Charlie's spelling now? What does his spelling indicate?

G Literary Focus **Subplot** The author has introduced a new setting: Charlie's workplace. What is it like? How do his co-workers behave?



do what he says. I told him I didnt think I was going to get smart and he put his hand on my sholder and said Charlie you dont know it yet but your getting smarter all the time. You wont notice for a while. I think he was just being nice to make me feel good because I dont look any smarter.

Oh yes I almost forgot. I asked him when I can go back to the class at Miss Kinnians school. He said I wont go their. He said that soon Miss Kinnian will come to the hospitl to start and teach me speshul. I was mad at her for not comming to see me

when I got the operashun but I like her so maybe we will be frends again. H

Mar 29 That crazy TV kept me up all night. How can I sleep with something yelling crazy things all night in my ears. And the nutty pictures. Wow. I dont know what it says when Im up so how am I going to know when Im sleeping.

Dr Strauss says its ok. He says my brains are lerning when I sleep and that will help me when Miss Kinnian starts my lessons in the hospitl (only I found out it isnt a

H Read and Discuss What does this conversation between Dr. Strauss and Charlie let us know?

hospital its a laboratory). I think its all crazy. If you can get smart when your sleeping why do people go to school. That thing I dont think will work. I use to watch the late show and the late late show on TV all the time and it never made me smart. Maybe you have to sleep while you watch it.

PROGRESS

REPORT 9—April 3

Dr Strauss showed me how to keep the TV turned low so now I can sleep. I dont hear a thing. And I still dont understand what it says. A few times I play it over in the morning to find out what I lerned when I was sleeping and I dont think so. Miss Kinnian says Maybe its another langwidge or something. But most times it sounds american. It talks so fast faster then even Miss Gold who was my teacher in 6 grade and I remember she talked so fast I couldnt understand her.

I told Dr Strauss what good is it to get smart in my sleep. I want to be smart when Im awake. He says its the same thing and I have two minds. Theres the *subconscious*⁶ and the *conscious* (thats how you spell it). And one dont tell the other one what its doing. They don't even talk to each other. Thats why I dream. And boy have I been

having crazy dreams. Wow. Ever since that night TV. The late late late late late show.

I forgot to ask him if it was only me or if everybody had those two minds.

(I just looked up the word in the dictionary Dr Strauss gave me. The word is *subconscious*. *adj. Of the nature of mental operations yet not present in consciousness; as, subconscious conflict of desires.*) Theres more but I still dont

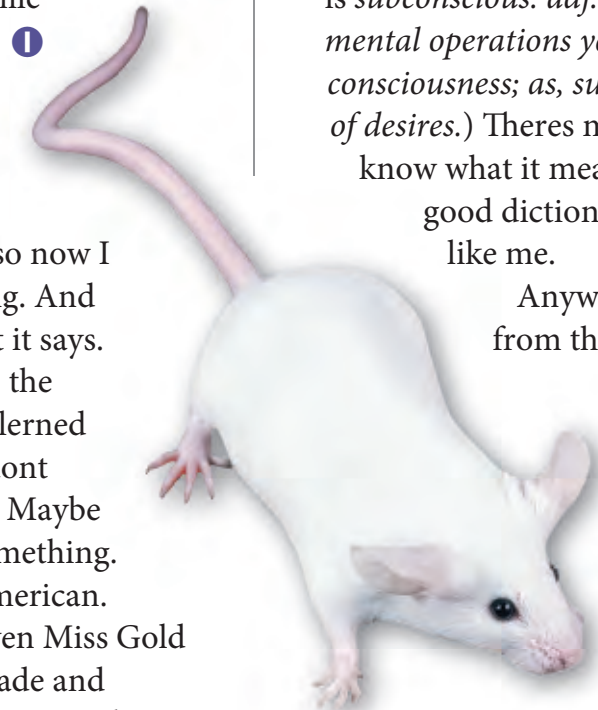
know what it means. This isnt a very good dictionary for dumb people like me.

Anyway the headache is from the party. My friends from the factory Joe Carp and Frank Reilly invited me to go with them to Muggsys Saloon for some drinks. I dont like to drink but they

said we will have lots of fun. I had a good time.

Joe Carp said I should show the girls how I mop out the toilet in the factory and he got me a mop. I showed them and everyone laughed when I told that Mr Donnegan said I was the best janitor he ever had because I like my job and do it good and never come late or miss a day except for my operashun.

I said Miss Kinnian always said Charlie be proud of your job because you do it good.



6. **subconscious** (suhb KAHN shuhs): mental activity that takes place below the level of consciousness (KAHN shuhs nihs), or full awareness.

Everybody laffed and we had a good time and they gave me lots of drinks and Joe said Charlie is a card when hes potted. I dont know what that means but everybody likes me and we have fun. I cant wait to be smart like my best friends Joe Carp and Frank Reilly.

I dont remember how the party was over but I think I went out to buy a newspaper and coffe for Joe and Frank and when I came back there was no one their. I looked for them all over till late. Then I dont remember so good but I think I got sleepy or sick. A nice cop brot me back home. Thats what my landlady Mrs Flynn says.

But I got a headache and a big lump on my head and black and blue all over. I think maybe I fell but Joe Carp says it was the cop they beat up drunks some times. I don't think so. Miss Kinnian says cops are to help people. Anyway I got a bad headache and Im sick and hurt all over. I dont think Ill drink anymore. **J**

April 6 I beat Algernon! I dint even know I beat him until Burt the tester told me. Then the second time I lost because I got so exited I fell off the chair before I finished. But after that I beat him 8 more times. I must be getting smart to beat a smart mouse like Algernon. But I dont *feel* smarter. **K**

I wanted to race Algernon some more but Burt said thats enough for one day. They let me hold him for a minit. Hes not so bad. Hes soft like a ball of cotton. He blinks and when he opens his eyes their black and pink on the eyes.

I said can I feed him because I felt bad to beat him and I wanted to be nice and make frends. Burt said no Algernon is a very specshul mouse with an operashun like mine, and he was the first of all the animals to stay smart so long. He told me Algernon is so smart that every day he has to solve a test to get his food. Its a thing like a lock on a door that changes every time Algernon goes in to eat so he has to lern something new to get his food. That made me sad because if he couldnt lern he would be hungry.

I dont think its right to make you pass a test to eat. How woud Dr Nemur like it to have to pass a test every time he wants to eat. I think Ill be frends with Algernon.

April 9 Tonight after work Miss Kinnian was at the laboratory. She looked like she was glad to see me but scared. I told her dont worry Miss Kinnian Im not smart yet and she laffed. She said I have confidence in you Charlie the way you struggled so hard to read and right better than all the others. At werst you will have it for a littel wile and your doing somthing for sience.

We are reading a very hard book. I never read such a hard book before. Its called *Robinson Crusoe* about a man who gets merooned on a dessert Iland. Hes smart and figers out all kinds of things so he can have a house and food and hes a good swimmer. Only I feel sorry because hes all alone and has no frends. But I think their must be somebody else on the iland

J Reading Focus Tracking Story Events What do you think happened to Charlie?

K Literary Focus Parallel Episodes Charlie races Algernon again. How have their situations changed?



because theres a picture with his funny umbrella looking at footprints. I hope he gets a frend and not be lonely.

April 10 Miss Kinnian teaches me to spell better. She says look at a word and close your eyes and say it over and over until you remember. I have lots of truble with *through* that you say *threw* and *enough* and *tough* that you dont say *enew* and *tew*. You got to say *enuff* and *tuff*. Thats how I use to write it before I started to get smart. Im confused but Miss Kinnian says theres no reason in spelling.

Apr 14 Finished *Robinson Crusoe*. I want to find out more about what happens to him but Miss Kinnian says thats all there is. *Why*

Apr 15 Miss Kinnian says Im lerning fast. She read some of the Progress Reports and she looked at me kind of funny. She says Im a fine person and Ill show them all. I asked her why. She said never mind but I shoudnt feel bad if I find out that everybody isnt nice like I think. She said for a person who god gave so little to you done more then a lot of people with brains they never even used. I said all my frends are smart people but there good. They like me and they never did anything that wasnt nice. Then she got something in her eye and she had to run out to the ladys room.

Apr 16 Today, I lerned, the *comma*, this is a comma (,) a period, with a tail, Miss Kinnian, says its important, because, it

makes writing better, she said, somebody, could lose, a lot of money, if a comma, isn't, in the, right place, I don't have, any money, and I don't see, how a comma, keeps you from losing it,

But she says, everybody, uses commas, so I'll use, them too,

Apr 17 I used the comma wrong. Its punctuation. Miss Kinnian told me to look up long words in the dictionary to learn to spell them. I said what's the difference if you can read it anyway. She said it's part of your education so now on I'll look up all the words I'm not sure how to spell. It takes a long time to write that way but I think I'm remembering. I only have to look up once and after that I get it right. Anyway that's how come I got the word *punctuation* right. (It's that way in the dictionary). Miss Kinnian says a period is punctuation too, and there are lots of other marks to learn. I told her I thought all the periods had to have tails but she said no.

You got to mix them up, she showed? me" how. to mix! them(up,. and now; I can! mix up all kinds" of punctuation, in! my writing? There, are lots! of rules? to learn; but I'm getting them in my head.

One thing I like about, Dear Miss Kinnian: (that's the way it goes in a business letter if I ever go into business) is she, always gives me' a reason" when—I ask. She's a genius! I wish! I could be smart" like, her;

(Punctuation, is; fun!)

April 18 What a dope I am! I didn't even understand what she was talking

about. I read the grammar book last night and it explains the whole thing. Then I saw it was the same way as Miss Kinnian was trying to tell me, but I didn't get it. I got up in the middle of the night, and the whole thing straightened out in my mind. **L**

Miss Kinnian said that the TV working in my sleep helped out. She said I reached a plateau. That's like the flat top of a hill.

After I figured out how punctuation worked, I read over all my old Progress Reports from the beginning. Boy, did I have crazy spelling and punctuation! I told Miss Kinnian I ought to go over the pages and fix all the mistakes but she said, "No, Charlie, Dr. Nemur wants them just as they are. That's why he let you keep them after they were photostated, to see your own progress. You're coming along fast, Charlie."

That made me feel good. After the lesson I went down and played with Algernon. We don't race anymore.

April 20 I feel sick inside. Not sick like for a doctor, but inside my chest it feels empty like getting punched and a heartburn at the same time.

I wasn't going to write about it, but I guess I got to, because it's important. Today was the first time I ever stayed home from work.

Last night Joe Carp and Frank Reilly invited me to a party. There were lots of girls and some men from the factory. I remembered how sick I got last time I drank too much, so I told Joe I didn't want anything to drink. He gave me a plain Coke

L Read and Discuss What does Charlie's ability to read and understand a grammar book indicate?

instead. It tasted funny, but I thought it was just a bad taste in my mouth.

We had a lot of fun for a while. Joe said I should dance with Ellen and she would teach me the steps. I fell a few times and I couldn't understand why because no one else was dancing besides Ellen and me. And all the time I was tripping because somebody's foot was always sticking out.

Then when I got up I saw the look on Joe's face and it gave me a funny feeling in my stomach. "He's a scream," one of the girls said. Everybody was laughing.

Frank said, "I ain't laughed so much since we sent him off for the newspaper that night at Muggsy's and ditched him."

"Look at him. His face is red."

"He's blushing. Charlie is blushing."

"Hey, Ellen, what'd you do to Charlie? I never saw him act like that before."

I didn't know what to do or where to turn. Everyone was looking at me and laughing and I felt naked. I wanted to hide myself. I ran out into the street and I threw up. Then I walked home. 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.



PROGRESS REPORT 10

April 21 Still didn't go into the factory. I told Mrs. Flynn my landlady to call and tell Mr. Donnegan I was sick. Mrs. Flynn

looks at me very funny lately like she's scared of me.

I think it's a good thing about finding out how everybody laughs at me. I thought about it a lot. It's because I'm so dumb and I don't even know when I'm doing something dumb. People think it's funny when a dumb person can't do things the same way they can.

Anyway, now I know I'm getting smarter every day. I know punctuation and I can spell good. I like to look up all the hard words in the dictionary and I remember them. I'm reading a lot now, and Miss Kinnian says I read very fast. Sometimes I even understand what I'm reading about, and it stays in my mind. There are times when I can close my eyes and think of a page and it all comes back like a picture.

Besides history, geography, and arithmetic, Miss Kinnian said I should start to learn a few foreign languages. Dr. Strauss gave me some more tapes to play while I sleep. I still don't understand how that conscious and unconscious mind works, but Dr. Strauss says not to worry yet. He asked me to promise that when I start learning college subjects next week I wouldn't read any books on psychology—that is, until he gives me permission.

I feel a lot better today, but I guess I'm still a little angry that all the time people were laughing and making fun of me because I wasn't so smart. When I become intelligent like Dr. Strauss says, with three times my I.Q. of 68, then maybe I'll be like

M **Reading Focus** **Tracking Story Events** What happens when Charlie goes out with Joe and Frank?



everyone else and people will like me and be friendly. **N**

I'm not sure what an I.Q. is. Dr. Nemur said it was something that measured how intelligent you were—like a scale in the drugstore weighs pounds. But Dr. Strauss had a big argument with him and said an I.Q. didn't weigh intelligence at all. He said an I.Q. showed how much intelligence you could get, like the numbers on the outside of a measuring cup. You still had to fill the cup up with stuff.

Then when I asked Burt, who gives me my intelligence tests and works with Algernon, he said that both of them were wrong (only I had to promise not to tell them he said so). Burt says that the I.Q. measures a lot of different things including some of the things you learned already, and it really isn't any good at all.

So I still don't know what I.Q. is except that mine is going to be over 200 soon. I didn't want to say anything, but I don't see how if they don't know *what* it is, or *where*

N Read and Discuss Now that Charlie is becoming aware of his past limitations, how does he connect intelligence to the way people treat each other?

it is—I don’t see how they know *how much* of it you’ve got.

Dr. Nemur says I have to take a *Rorschach Test* tomorrow. I wonder what *that* is.

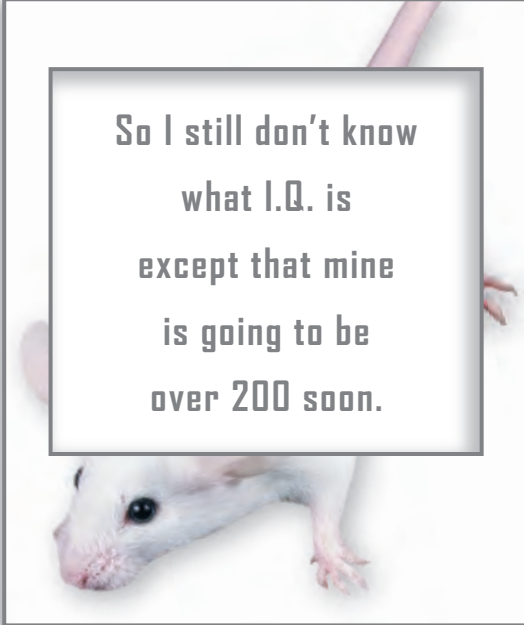
April 22 I found out what a *Rorschach* is. It’s the test I took before the operation—the one with the inkblots on the pieces of cardboard. The man who gave me the test was the same one.

I was scared to death of those inkblots. I knew he was going to ask me to find the pictures and I knew I wouldn’t be able to. I was thinking to myself, if only there was some way of knowing what kind of pictures were hidden there. Maybe there weren’t any pictures at all. Maybe it was just a trick to see if I was dumb enough to look for something that wasn’t there. Just thinking about that made me sore at him.

“All right, Charlie,” he said, “you’ve seen these cards before, remember?”

“Of course I remember.”

The way I said it, he knew I was angry, and he looked surprised. “Yes, of course. Now I want you to look at this one. What might this be? What do you see on this card? People see all sorts of things in these inkblots. Tell me what it might be for you—what it makes you think of.”



So I still don’t know
what I.Q. is
except that mine
is going to be
over 200 soon.

I was shocked.

That wasn’t what I had expected him to say at all. “You mean there are no pictures hidden in those inkblots?”

He frowned and took off his glasses. “What?”

“Pictures. Hidden in the inkblots. Last time you told me that everyone could see them and you wanted me to find them too.”

He explained to me that the last time he had

used almost the exact same words he was using now. I didn’t believe it, and I still have the suspicion that he **misled** me at the time just for the fun of it. Unless—I don’t know any more—could I have been *that* feeble-minded?

We went through the cards slowly. One of them looked like a pair of bats tugging at something. Another one looked like two men fencing with swords. I imagined all sorts of things. I guess I got carried away. But I didn’t trust him any more, and I kept turning them around and even looking on the back to see if there was anything there I was supposed to catch. While he was making his notes, I peeked out of the corner of my eye to read it. But it was all in code that looked like this:

WF + A DdF-Ad orig. WF-A SF + obj

Vocabulary **misled** (mihs LEHD) *v.*: fooled; led to believe something wrong.

The test still doesn't make sense to me. It seems to me that anyone could make up lies about things that they didn't really see. How could he know I wasn't making a fool of him by mentioning things that I didn't really imagine? Maybe I'll understand it when Dr. Strauss lets me read up on psychology. **O**

April 25 I figured out a new way to line up the machines in the factory, and Mr. Donnegan says it will save him ten thousand dollars a year in labor and increased production. He gave me a twenty-five-dollar bonus.

I wanted to take Joe Carp and Frank Reilly out to lunch to celebrate, but Joe said he had to buy some things for his wife, and Frank said he was meeting his cousin for lunch. I guess it'll take a little time for them to get used to the changes in me. Everybody seems to be frightened of me. When I went over to Amos Borg and tapped him on the shoulder, he jumped up in the air.

People don't talk to me much anymore or kid around the way they used to. It makes the job kind of lonely. **P**

April 27 I got up the nerve today to ask Miss Kinnian to have dinner with me tomorrow night to celebrate my bonus.

At first she wasn't sure it was right, but I asked Dr. Strauss and he said it was okay. Dr. Strauss and Dr. Nemur don't seem to be getting along so well. They're arguing all the time. This evening when I came in to

ask Dr. Strauss about having dinner with Miss Kinnian, I heard them shouting. Dr. Nemur was saying that it was *his* experiment and *his* research, and Dr. Strauss was shouting back that he contributed just as much, because he found me through Miss Kinnian and he performed the operation. Dr. Strauss said that someday thousands of neurosurgeons might be using his technique all over the world.

Dr. Nemur wanted to publish the results of the experiment at the end of this month. Dr. Strauss wanted to wait a while longer to be sure. Dr. Strauss said that Dr. Nemur was more interested in the Chair of Psychology at Princeton than he was in the experiment. Dr. Nemur said that Dr. Strauss was nothing but an opportunist who was trying to ride to glory on *his* coattails.

When I left afterwards, I found myself trembling. I don't know why for sure, but it was as if I'd seen both men clearly for the first time. I remember hearing Burt say that Dr. Nemur had a shrew of a wife who was pushing him all the time to get things published so that he could become famous. Burt said that the dream of her life was to have a big shot husband.

Was Dr. Strauss really trying to ride on his coattails?

April 28 I don't understand why I never noticed how beautiful Miss Kinnian really is. She has brown eyes and feathery brown hair that comes to the top of her neck. She's

O Literary Perspectives Analyzing Credibility How are Charlie's relationships changing? If you only know about these characters through Charlie's eyes, are you getting the whole story?

P Literary Focus Subplot What events are taking place where Charlie works?

only thirty-four! I think from the beginning I had the feeling that she was an unreachable genius—and very, very old. Now, every time I see her she grows younger and more lovely.

We had dinner and a long talk. When she said that I was coming along so fast that soon I'd be leaving her behind, I laughed.

"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."

"I don't feel intelligent. There are so many things I don't understand."

She took out a cigarette and I lit it for her. "You've got to be a *little* patient. You're accomplishing in days and weeks what it takes normal people to do in half a lifetime. That's what makes it so amazing. You're like a giant sponge now, soaking things in. Facts, figures, general knowledge. And soon you'll begin to connect them, too. You'll see how the different branches of learning are related. There are many levels, Charlie, like steps on a giant ladder that take you up higher and higher to see more and more of the world around you.

"I can see only a little bit of that, Charlie, and I won't go much higher than I am now, but you'll keep climbing up and up, and see more and more, and each step will open new worlds that you never even

knew existed." She frowned. "I hope . . . I just hope to God—"

"What?"

"Never mind, Charles. I just hope I wasn't wrong to advise you to go into this in the first place."

I laughed. "How could that be? It worked, didn't it? Even Algernon is still smart."

We sat there silently for a while and I knew what she was thinking about as she watched me toying with the chain of my rabbit's foot and my keys. I didn't want to think of that possibility any more than elderly people want to think of death. I knew that this was only the beginning. I knew what she meant about levels because I'd seen some of them already. The thought of leaving her behind made me sad.

I'm in love with Miss Kinnian.



PROGRESS REPORT 11

April 30 I've quit my job with Donnegan's Plastic Box Company. Mr. Donnegan insisted that it would be better for all concerned if I left. What did I do to make them hate me so?

The first I knew of it was when Mr. Donnegan showed me the petition. Eight hundred and forty names, everyone connected with the factory, except Fanny Girden. Scanning the list quickly, I saw at once that hers was the only missing name. All the rest demanded that I be fired.

Joe Carp and Frank Reilly wouldn't talk to me about it. No one else would either,

Q Literary Focus Subplot What complication has arisen in the relationship between Miss Kinnian and Charlie?

except Fanny. She was one of the few people I'd known who set her mind to something and believed it no matter what the rest of the world proved, said, or did—and Fanny did not believe that I should have been fired. She had been against the petition on principle and despite the pressure and threats she'd held out.

"Which don't mean to say," she remarked, "that I don't think there's something mighty strange about you, Charlie. Them changes. I don't know. You used to be a good, dependable, ordinary man—not too bright maybe, but honest. Who knows what you done to yourself to get so smart all of a sudden. Like everybody around here's been saying, Charlie, it's not right."

"But how can you say that, Fanny? What's wrong with a man becoming intelli-

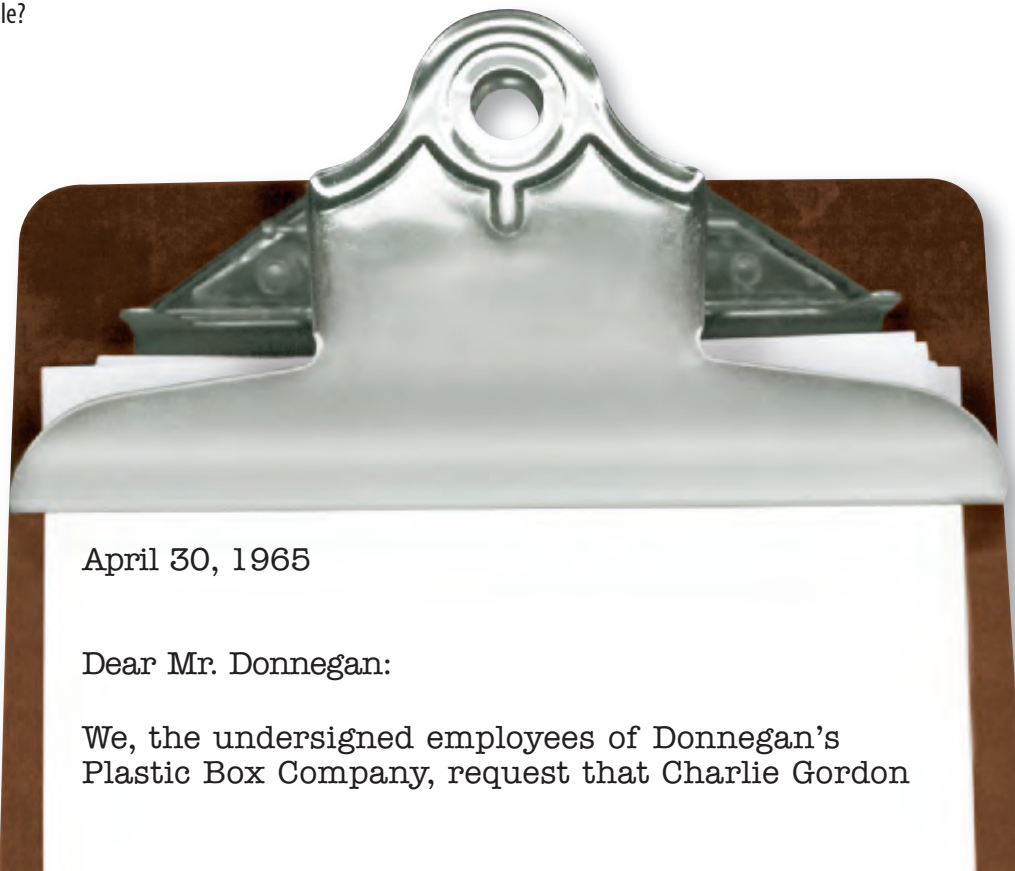
gent and wanting to acquire knowledge and understanding of the world around him?"

She stared down at her work and I turned to leave. Without looking at me, she said: "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."

Once again now I have the feeling of shame burning inside me. This intelligence has driven a wedge between me and all the people I once knew and loved. 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 of me?

They've driven me out of the factory. Now I'm more alone than ever before . . . **R**

R Literary Perspectives Analyzing Credibility How are Charlie's tone and personality changing? Does he seem more or less credible?



April 30, 1965

Dear Mr. Donnegan:

We, the undersigned employees of Donnegan's Plastic Box Company, request that Charlie Gordon

Applying Your Skills

SKILLS FOCUS **Literary Skills** Analyze subplots and parallel episodes; analyze point of view. **Reading Skills** Track story events.

Flowers for Algernon, Part 1

Respond and Think Critically

Reading Focus

Quick Check

1. Why does Charlie want to be in the experiment?
2. Why does Dr. Strauss think Charlie would be a good subject for the experiment?
3. Who is Algernon? What does he have in common with Charlie?
4. What are some signs that Charlie's operation has been effective? How is he changing?

Reading Skills: Tracking Story Events

5. Look over your tracking chart, and re-read the story events that you have underlined. This review will help you piece together the subplots. Next, briefly describe the subplots you have found, noting conflicts and complications that are developing.

Literary Focus

Literary Analysis

6. **Interpret** What does it mean "to pull a Charlie Gordon"?
7. **Evaluate** Early in the story, Dr. Strauss tells Dr. Nemur that Charlie's learning to read and write is as impressive as their learning a difficult scientific theory without help (page 58). What does Dr. Strauss mean? Challenge or defend his statement.

8. **Compare and Contrast** Re-read Fanny's comments about the changes in Charlie (page 71). How are Charlie's experiences similar to those of Adam and Eve in the Bible? (Look especially at the entry for April 30. You may want to compare Charlie's description with the Biblical account in Genesis 2:25–3:24.)
9. **Connect** Re-read the last few lines in Part 1. What do you think about people who dislike others who are different from them?

Literary Skills: Subplots and Parallel Episodes

10. **Analyze** Charlie takes a Rorschach test twice. How do these parallel episodes reveal what is happening to Charlie?
11. **Infer** An important subplot in this story involves Charlie's relationship with Miss Kinnian. What have you learned about Charlie through this subplot?

Literary Skills Review: First-Person Point of View

12. **Extend** This story is told in the **first-person point of view**, in which one of the characters tells the story as "I" and readers know only what the character tells them. In "Flowers for Algernon," we experience everything through Charlie's eyes and see how he thinks and how he often misunderstands a situation. Choose one of Charlie's journal entries, and retell it from the point of view of one of the other characters, for example, Joe Carp for April 3 or Miss Kinnian for April 15.

Flowers for Algernon

Contrary to my earlier impressions of him, I realize
that Dr. Nemur is not at all a genius.



Part 2

May 15 Dr. Strauss is very angry at me for not having written any progress reports in two weeks. He's justified because the lab is now paying me a regular salary. I told him I was too busy thinking and reading. When I pointed out that writing was such a slow process that it made me impatient with my poor handwriting, he suggested that I learn to type. It's much easier to write now because I can type nearly seventy-five words a minute. Dr. Strauss continually reminds me of the need to speak and write simply so that people will be able to understand me. **A**

I'll try to review all the things that happened to me during the last two weeks. Algernon and I were presented to the American Psychological Association sitting in convention with the World Psychological Association last Tuesday. We created quite

a sensation. Dr. Nemur and Dr. Strauss were proud of us.

I suspect that Dr. Nemur, who is sixty—ten years older than Dr. Strauss—finds it necessary to see tangible results of his work. Undoubtedly the results of pressure by Mrs. Nemur.

Contrary to my earlier impressions of him, I realize that Dr. Nemur is not at all a genius. He has a very good mind, but it struggles under the specter of self-doubt. He wants people to take him for a genius. Therefore, it is important for him to feel that his work is accepted by the world. I believe that Dr. Nemur was afraid of further delay because he worried that someone else might make a discovery along these lines and take the credit from him.

Dr. Strauss on the other hand might be called a genius, although I feel that his

A Reading Focus Tracking Story Events What does Dr. Strauss's request about writing and speaking simply tell you about Charlie's progress?

areas of knowledge are too limited. He was educated in the tradition of narrow specialization; the broader aspects of background were neglected far more than necessary—even for a neurosurgeon.

I was shocked to learn that the only ancient languages he could read were Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and that he knows almost nothing of mathematics beyond the elementary levels of the calculus of variations. When he admitted this to me, I found myself almost annoyed. It was as if he'd hidden this part of himself in order to deceive me, pretending—as do many people, I've discovered—to be what he is not. No one I've ever known is what he appears to be on the surface.

Dr. Nemur appears to be uncomfortable around me. Sometimes when I try to talk to him, he just looks at me strangely and turns away. I was angry at first when Dr. Strauss told me I was giving Dr. Nemur an inferiority complex. I thought he was mocking me and I'm oversensitive at being made fun of.

How was I to know that a highly respected psychoexperimentalist like Nemur was unacquainted with Hindustani and Chinese? It's absurd when you consider the work that is being done in India and China today in the very field of his study.

I asked Dr. Strauss how Nemur could refute Rahajamati's attack on his method and results if Nemur couldn't even read them in the first place. That strange look on Dr. Strauss's face can mean only one of two

things. Either he doesn't want to tell Nemur what they're saying in India, or else—and this worries me—Dr. Strauss doesn't know either. I must be careful to speak and write clearly and simply so that people won't laugh.

May 18 I am very disturbed. I saw Miss Kinnian last night for the first time in over a week. I tried to avoid all discussions of intellectual concepts and to keep the conversation on a simple, everyday level, but she just stared at me blankly and asked me what I meant about the mathematical variance equivalent in Dorbermann's Fifth Concerto.

When I tried to explain she stopped me and laughed. I guess I got angry, but I suspect I'm approaching her on the wrong level. No matter what I try to discuss with her, I am unable to communicate. I must review Vrostadt's equations on *Levels of Semantic Progression*. I find that I don't communicate with people much anymore. Thank God for books and music and things I can think about. I am alone in my apartment at Mrs. Flynn's boardinghouse most of the time and seldom speak to anyone. **B**

May 20 I would not have noticed the new dishwasher, a boy of about sixteen, at the corner diner where I take my evening meals if not for the incident of the broken dishes.

They crashed to the floor, shattering and sending bits of white china under the

B Read and Discuss Charlie found it hard to communicate with others before his operation. What new problem is hampering his efforts to connect with others?



tables. The boy stood there, dazed and frightened, holding the empty tray in his hand. The whistles and catcalls¹ from the customers (the cries of “Hey, there go the profits!” . . . “Mazel tov!”² . . . and “Well, *he*

1. **catcalls**: shouts and whistles made to express disapproval or ridicule, so called because people used to make noises like a cat’s cry to show disapproval.
2. **mazel tov** (MAH zuhl tohv): Yiddish expression conveying “congratulations.”

didn’t work here very long . . .” which invariably seem to follow the breaking of glass or dishware in a public restaurant) all seemed to confuse him. C

When the owner came to see what the excitement was about, the boy cowered as if he expected to be struck and threw up his arms as if to ward off the blow.

“All right! All right, you dope,” shouted the owner, “don’t just stand there! Get the

C **Literary Focus** **Parallel Episodes** How does the dishwasher’s experience resemble episodes from Charlie’s own life?

broom and sweep that mess up. A broom . . . a broom, you idiot! It's in the kitchen. Sweep up all the pieces."

The boy saw that he was not going to be punished. His frightened expression disappeared and he smiled and hummed as he came back with the broom to sweep the floor. A few of the rowdier customers kept up the remarks, amusing themselves at his expense.

"Here, sonny, over here there's a nice piece behind you . . ."

"C'mon, do it again . . ."

"He's not so dumb. It's easier to break 'em than to wash 'em . . ."

As his vacant eyes moved across the crowd of amused onlookers, he slowly mirrored their smiles and finally broke into an uncertain grin at the joke which he obviously did not understand.

I felt sick inside as I looked at his dull, vacuous smile, the wide, bright eyes of a child, uncertain but eager to please. They were laughing at him because he was mentally retarded.

And I had been laughing at him too.

Suddenly, I was furious at myself and all those who were smirking at him. I jumped up and shouted, "Shut up! Leave him alone!"

It's not his fault he can't understand! He can't help what he is! But for God's sake . . . he's still a human being!"

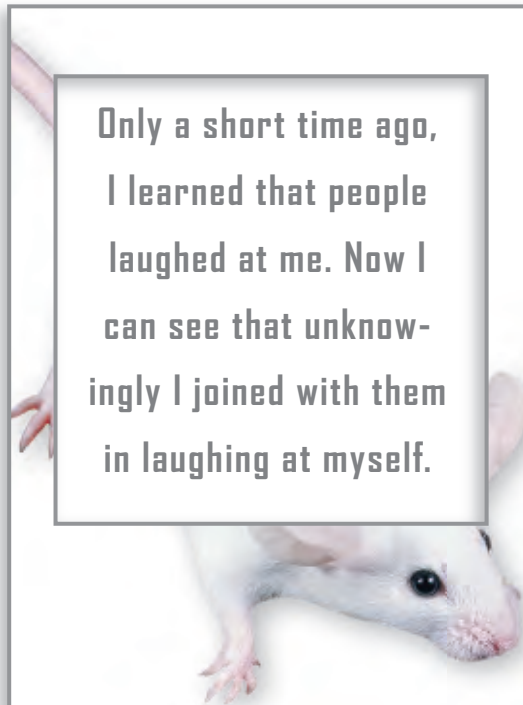
The room grew silent. I cursed myself for losing control and creating a scene. I tried not to look at the boy as I paid my check and walked out without touching my food. I felt ashamed for both of us.

How strange it is that people of honest feelings and sensibility, who would not take advantage of a man born without arms or legs or eyes—how such people think nothing of abusing a man born with low intelligence. It infuriated me to think that not too long ago I, like this boy, had foolishly played the clown.

And I had almost forgotten.

I'd hidden the picture of the old Charlie Gordon from myself because now that I was intelligent it was something that had to be pushed out of my mind. But today in looking at that boy, for the first time I saw what I had been. *I was just like him!*

Only a short time ago, I learned that people laughed at me. Now I can see that unknowingly I joined with them in laughing at myself. That hurts most of all.



D **Read and Discuss** What has Charlie learned about himself in the diner?

D

I have often re-read my progress reports and seen the illiteracy, the childish naiveté,³ the mind of low intelligence peering from a dark room, through the keyhole, at the dazzling light outside. I see that even in my dullness I knew that I was inferior, and that other people had something I lacked—something denied me. In my mental blindness, I thought that it was somehow connected with the ability to read and write, and I was sure that if I could get those skills I would automatically have intelligence too.

Even a feeble-minded man wants to be like other men.

A child may not know how to feed itself, or what to eat, yet it knows of hunger.

This then is what I was like. I never knew. Even with my gift of intellectual awareness, I never really knew.

This day was good for me. Seeing the past more clearly, I have decided to use my knowledge and skills to work in the field of increasing human intelligence levels. Who is better equipped for this work? Who else has lived in both worlds? These are my people. Let me use my gift to do something for them.

Tomorrow, I will discuss with Dr. Strauss the manner in which I can work in this area. I may be able to help him work out the problems of widespread use of the technique which was used on me. I have several good ideas of my own.

There is so much that might be done with this technique. If I could be made into

a genius, what about thousands of others like myself? What fantastic levels might be achieved by using this technique on normal people? On *geniuses*?

There are so many doors to open. I am impatient to begin.

E

Progress Report 12

May 23 It happened today. Algernon bit me. I visited the lab to see him as I do occasionally, and when I took him out of his cage, he snapped at my hand. I put him back and watched him for a while. He was unusually disturbed and vicious.

May 24 Burt, who is in charge of the experimental animals, tells me that Algernon is changing. He is less cooperative, 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.

F

May 25 They've been feeding Algernon, who now refuses to work the shifting-lock problem. Everyone identifies me with Algernon. In a way we're both the first of our kind. They're all pretending that Algernon's behavior is not necessarily significant for me. But it's hard to hide the fact that some of the other animals who were used in this experiment are showing strange behavior.

Dr. Strauss and Dr. Nemur have asked me not to come to the lab anymore. I know what they're thinking but I can't accept it. I am going ahead with my plans to carry their research forward. With all due respect to

3. **naiveté** (nah eev TAY): simplicity; foolish innocence.

E Literary Perspectives Analyzing Credibility Do you find Charlie's transformation credible? Why or why not?

F Read and Discuss What is going on with Algernon?

both of these fine scientists, I am well aware of their limitations. If there is an answer, I'll have to find it out for myself. Suddenly, time has become very important to me.

May 29 I have been given a lab of my own and permission to go ahead with the research. I'm on to something. Working day and night. I've had a cot moved into the lab. Most of my writing time is spent on the notes which I keep in a separate folder, but from time to time I feel it necessary to put down my moods and my thoughts out of sheer habit.

I find the *calculus of intelligence* to be a fascinating study. Here is the place for the application of all the knowledge I have acquired. In a sense it's the problem I've been concerned with all my life.

May 31 Dr. Strauss thinks I'm working too hard. Dr. Nemur says I'm trying to cram a lifetime of research and thought into a few weeks. I know I should rest, but I'm driven on by something inside that won't let me stop. I've got to find the reason for the sharp **regression** in Algernon. I've got to know *if* and *when* it will happen to me.

Vocabulary **regression** (rih GREHSH uhn) *n.*: return to an earlier or less advanced condition.



June 4

letter to Dr. Strauss (copy)

Dear Dr. Strauss:

Under separate cover I am sending you a copy of my report entitled, "The Algernon-Gordon Effect: A Study of Structure and Function of Increased Intelligence," which I would like to have you read and have published.

As you see, my experiments are completed. I have included in my report all of my formulae, as well as mathematical analysis in the appendix. Of course, these should be verified.

Because of its importance to both you and Dr. Nemur (and need I say to myself, too?) I have checked and rechecked my results a dozen times in the hope of finding an error. I am sorry to say the results must stand. Yet for the sake of science, I am grateful for the little bit that I here add to the knowledge of the function of the human mind and of the laws governing the artificial increase of human intelligence.

I recall your once saying to me that an experimental *failure* or the *disproving* of a theory was as important to the advancement of learning as a success would be. I know now that this is true. I am sorry, however, that my own contribution to the field must rest upon the ashes of the work of two men I regard so highly.

Yours truly,

Charles Gordon

encl.: rept

June 5 I must not become emotional. The facts and the results of my experiments are clear, and the more sensational aspects of my own rapid climb cannot **obscure** the fact that the tripling of intelligence by the surgical technique developed by Drs. Strauss and Nemur must be viewed as having little or no practical applicability (at the present time) to the increase of human intelligence.

As I review the records and data on Algernon, I see that although he is still in his physical infancy, he has regressed mentally. Motor activity is impaired; there is a general reduction of glandular activity; there is an accelerated loss of coordination.

There are also strong indications of progressive amnesia.

G

As will be seen by my report, these and other physical and mental **deterioration** syndromes can be predicted with statistically significant results by the application of my formula.

The surgical stimulus to which we were both subjected has resulted in an intensification and acceleration of all mental processes. The unforeseen development, which I have taken the liberty of calling the *Algernon-Gordon Effect*, is the logical extension of the entire intelligence speed-up. The hypothesis here proven may be described simply in the following terms: Artificially increased intelligence deteriorates at a rate of time directly proportional to the quantity of the increase.

I feel that this, in itself, is an important discovery.

G Reading Focus Tracking Story Events What changes is Algernon experiencing?

Vocabulary **obscure** (uhb SKYUR) v.: hide.

deterioration (dih tihr ee uh RAY shuhn) *n.* used as *adj.*: worsening; declining.

As long as I am able to write, I will continue to record my thoughts in these progress reports. It is one of my few pleasures. However, by all indications, my own mental deterioration will be very rapid.

I have already begun to notice signs of emotional instability and forgetfulness, the first symptoms of the burnout. **H**

June 10 Deterioration progressing. I have become absent-minded. Algernon died two days ago. Dissection shows my predictions were right. His brain had decreased in weight and there was a general smoothing out of cerebral convolutions as well as a deepening and broadening of brain fissures.⁴

I guess the same thing is or will soon be happening to me. Now that it's definite, I don't want it to happen.

I put Algernon's body in a cheese box and buried him in the backyard. I cried.

June 15 Dr. Strauss came to see me again. I wouldn't open the door and I told him to go away. I want to be left to myself. I have become touchy and irritable. I feel the darkness closing in. It's hard to throw off thoughts of suicide. I keep telling myself how important this **introspective** journal will be.

It's a strange sensation to pick up a book that you've read and enjoyed just a few months ago and discover that you don't

remember it. I remembered how great I thought John Milton was, but when I picked up *Paradise Lost* I couldn't understand it at all. I got so angry I threw the book across the room.

I've got to try to hold on to some of it. Some of the things I've learned. Oh, God, please don't take it all away.

June 19 Sometimes, at night, I go out for a walk. Last night I couldn't remember where I lived. A policeman took me home. I have the strange feeling that this has all happened to me before—a long time ago. I keep telling myself I'm the only person in the world who can describe what's happening to me.

June 21 Why can't I remember? I've got to fight. I lie in bed for days and I don't know who or where I am. Then it all comes back to me in a flash. Fugues of amnesia.⁵ Symptoms of senility—second childhood. I can watch them coming on. It's so cruelly logical. I learned so much and so fast. Now my mind is deteriorating rapidly. I won't let it happen. I'll fight it. I can't help thinking of the boy in the restaurant, the blank expression, the silly smile, the people laughing at him. No—please—not that again . . .

June 22 I'm forgetting things that I learned recently. It seems to be following the classic pattern—the last things learned

4. **brain fissures** (FIHSH uhrz): grooves in the surface of the brain.

5. **fugues** (fyoogz) **of amnesia** (am NEE zhuh): temporary states of forgetfulness.

H Read and Discuss What has Charlie learned about his condition?

Vocabulary **introspective** (ihn truh SPEHK tihv) *adj.*: looking inward.

are the first things forgotten. Or is that the pattern? I'd better look it up again. . . .

I re-read my paper on the *Algernon-Gordon Effect* and I get the strange feeling that it was written by someone else. There are parts I don't even understand.

Motor activity impaired. I keep tripping over things, and it becomes increasingly difficult to type.

June 23 I've given up using the typewriter completely. My coordination is bad. I feel that I'm moving slower and slower. Had a terrible shock today. I picked up a copy of an article I used in my research, Krueger's *Über psychische Ganzheit*, to see if it would help me understand what I had done. First I thought there was something wrong with my eyes. Then I realized I could no longer read German. I tested myself in other languages. All gone. **1**

June 30 A week since I dared to write again. It's slipping away like sand through my fingers. Most of the books I have are too hard for me now. I get angry with them because I know that I read and understood them just a few weeks ago.

I keep telling myself I must keep writing these reports so that somebody will know what is happening to me. But it gets harder to form the words and remember spellings. I have to look up even simple words in the

dictionary now and it makes me impatient with myself.

Dr. Strauss comes around almost every day, but I told him I wouldn't see or speak to anybody. He feels guilty. They all do. But I don't blame anyone. I knew what might happen. But how it hurts.

July 7 I don't know where the week went. Today Sunday I know because I can

see through my window people going to church.

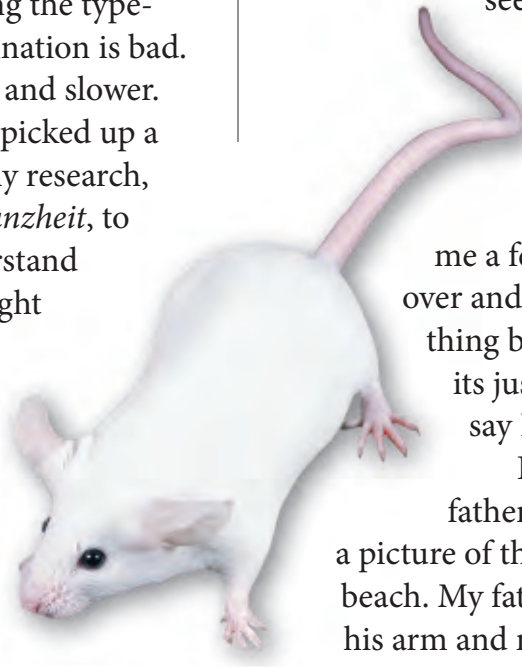
I think I stayed in bed all week but I remember Mrs.

Flynn bringing food to me a few times. I keep saying over and over I've got to do something but then I forget or maybe it's just easier not to do what I say I'm going to do.

I think of my mother and father a lot these days. I found a picture of them with me taken at a beach. My father has a big ball under his arm and my mother is holding me by the hand. I don't remember

them the way they are in the picture. All I remember is my father drunk most of the time and arguing with mom about money.

He never shaved much and he used to scratch my face when he hugged me. My mother said he died but Cousin Miltie said he heard his mom and dad say that my father ran away with another woman. When I asked my mother she slapped my face and said my father was dead. I don't think I ever



found out which was true but I don't care much. (He said he was going to take me to see cows on a farm once but he never did. He never kept his promises . . .)



July 10 My landlady Mrs Flynn is very worried about me. She says the way I lay around all day and dont do anything I remind her of her son before she threw him out of the house. She said she doesn't like loafers. If Im sick its one thing, but if Im a loafer thats another thing and she wont have it. I told her I think Im sick.

I try to read a little bit every day, mostly stories, but sometimes I have to read the same thing over and over again because I dont know what it means. And its hard to write. I know I should look up all the words in the dictionary but its so hard and Im so tired all the time.

Then I got the idea that I would only use the easy words instead of the long hard ones. That saves time. I put flowers on Algernons grave about once a week. Mrs Flynn thinks Im crazy to put flowers on a mouses grave but I told her that Algernon was special.

July 14 Its sunday again. I dont have anything to do to keep me busy now because my television set is broke and I dont have any money to get it fixed. (I think I lost this months check from the lab. I dont remember)

I get awful headaches and asperin doesnt help me much. Mrs Flynn knows Im really sick and she feels very sorry for me. Shes a wonderful woman whenever someone is sick.

July 22 Mrs Flynn called a strange doctor to see me. She was afraid I was going to die. I told the doctor I wasnt too sick and that I only forget sometimes. He asked me did I have any friends or relatives and I said no I dont have any. I told him I had a friend called Algernon once but he was a mouse and we used to run races together. He looked at me kind of funny like he thought I was crazy.

He smiled when I told him I used to be a genius. He talked to me like I was a baby and he winked at Mrs Flynn. I got mad and chased him out because he was making fun of me the way they all used to.

July 24 I have no more money and Mrs Flynn says I got to go to work somewhere and pay the rent because I havent paid for over two months. I dont know any work but the job I used to have at Donnegans Plastic Box Company. I dont want to go back there because they all knew me when I was smart and maybe theyll laugh at me. But I don't know what else to do to get money.

July 25 I was looking at some of my old progress reports and its very funny but I cant read what I wrote. I can make out some of the words but they dont make sense.

Miss Kinnian came to the door but I said go away I dont want to see you. She cried and I cried too but I wouldnt let her in because I didn't want her to laugh at me. I told her I didn't like her any more. I told her I didnt want to be smart any more. Thats not true. I still love her and I still want to

Read and Discuss What clues in the journal entry of July 7 suggest that Charlie is undergoing more change?

be smart but I had to say that so shed go away. She gave Mrs Flynn money to pay the rent. I dont want that. I got to get a job. **K**

Please . . . please let me not forget how to read and write . . . **L**

July 27 Mr Donnegan was very nice when I came back and asked him for my old job of janitor. First he was very suspicious but I told him what happened to me then he looked very sad and put his hand on my shoulder and said Charlie Gordon you got guts.

Everybody looked at me when I came downstairs and started working in the toilet sweeping it out like I used to. I told myself Charlie if they make fun of you dont get sore because you remember their not so smart as you once thot they were. And besides they were once your friends and if they laughed at you that doesnt mean anything because they liked you too.

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 Ill break your



neck. I didn't expect Joe to take my part so I guess hes really my friend.

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. I said thanks Frank and I got choked up so I had to turn around and go into the supply room so he wouldnt see me cry. Its good to have friends. **M**

K Literary Focus Subplot Why does Charlie send Miss Kinnian away?

L Read and Discuss What do Charlie's words "Please . . . please let me not forget how to read and write . . ." show us about his state of mind and what he's feeling?

M Literary Focus Subplot What is the resolution of the subplot of Charlie and his co-workers?

July 28 I did a dumb thing today I forgot I wasnt in Miss Kinnians class at the adult center any more like I use to be. I went in and sat down in my old seat in the back of the room and she looked at me funny and she said Charles. I dint remember she ever called me that before only Charlie so I said hello Miss Kinnian Im redy for my lesin today only I lost my reader that we was using. She startid to cry and run out of the room and everybody looked at me and I saw they wasnt the same pepul who used to be in my class.

Then all of a suddin I rememberd some things about the operashun and me getting smart and I said holy smoke I reely pulled a Charlie Gordon that time. I went away before she come back to the room.

Thats why Im going away from New York for good. I dont want to do nothing like that agen. I dont want Miss Kinnian to feel sorry for me. Evry body feels sorry at the factery and I dont want that eather so Im going someplace where nobody knows that Charlie Gordon was once a genus and now he cant even reed a book or rite good.

Im taking a cuple of books along and even if I cant reed them Ill practise hard and maybe I wont forget every thing I lerned. If I try reel hard maybe Ill be a littel bit smarter then I was before the operashun. I got my rabbits foot and my luky penny and maybe they will help me.

If you ever reed this Miss Kinnian dont be sorry for me Im glad I got a second chanse to be smart becaus I lerned a lot of things that I never even new were in this world and Im grateful that I saw it all for a littel bit. I dont know why Im dumb agen or what I did wrong maybe its becaus I dint try hard enuff. But if I try and practis very hard maybe Ill get a littl smarter and know what all the words are. I remember a littel bit how nice I had a feeling with the blue book that has the torn cover when I red it. Thats why Im gonna keep trying to get smart so I can have that feeling agen. Its a good feeling to know things and be smart. I wish I had it rite now if I did I would sit down and reed all the time. Anyway I bet Im the first dumb person in the world who ever found out somthing importent for sience. I remember I did something but I dont remember what. So I gess its like I did it for all the dumb pepul like me.

Good-by Miss Kinnian and Dr Strauss and evreybody. And P.S. please tell Dr Nemur not to be such a grouch when pepul laff at him and he woud have more frends. Its easy to make frends if you let pepul laff at you. Im going to have lots of frends where I go.

P.P.S. Please if you get a chanse put some flowrs on Algernons grave in the bakyard . . .

N

N **Read and Discuss** How does Charlie's plan to leave New York shed light on what he's thinking and feeling about his experience?

Applying Your Skills

SKILLS FOCUS **Literary Skills** Analyze subplots and parallel episodes. **Reading Skills** Track story events. **Writing Skills** Write a journal.

Flowers for Algernon, Part 2

Respond and Think Critically

Reading Focus

Quick Check

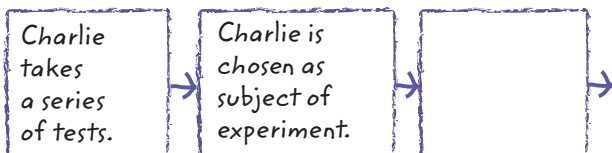
1. At the beginning of Part 2, what conflicts is Charlie having with the doctors? with himself?
2. How does Charlie react when the boy in the diner drops the dishes?
3. What does Charlie's research reveal about the outcome of the experiment?
4. What are some of the signals that tell you that Charlie's mental state is getting worse?
5. At the end of the story, why does Charlie decide to leave New York?

Read with a Purpose

6. What has Charlie gained and lost by the end of the story? How does his loss affect him?

Reading Skills: Tracking Story Events

7. Update your chart now that you have finished the story. Below your chart, write a summary of the story.



Literary Focus

Literary Analysis

8. **Analyze** How did the author's use of Charlie's journal to tell his story impact the way we as readers understand Charlie's experience?

9. **Extend** What do you think becomes of Charlie after the story ends? Why?

10. **Literary Perspectives** At the beginning of the story, Charlie's credibility as a narrator is affected by his intelligence. Was that also true as he became smarter? Which Charlie did you find more trustworthy—the original Charlie or the altered Charlie?

Literary Skills: Subplots and Parallel Episodes

11. **Analyze** What is the outcome of the subplot about Charlie and Miss Kinnian's relationship?

12. **Analyze** In addition to the Rorschach tests, what parallel episodes are in the story? What purpose do the parallel episodes serve?

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

Use It in Your Writing Review your notes on the details Keyes uses to convey story events and the changes Charlie undergoes. Now, write a journal entry about an interesting event in your life. Include details that will make the events, and your experience of them, clear to your readers.

What Do
You
Think
Now

In Charlie's case, was ignorance bliss? Would he have been better off if he had not had the operation? Explain.

Applying Your Skills

Flowers for Algernon

Vocabulary Development

History of the English Language

Digging into the Past

Where did English come from? England, of course! Not entirely. Today's English developed over a long period of time and from many sources. The history of English can be divided into three periods: Old English (A.D. 450–1066), Middle English (1066–1485), and Modern English (1485 to the present).

Old English In the fifth century, the Anglo-Saxons migrated from northern Europe to Britain. The Anglo-Saxons developed a new language, combining their old Germanic language and the Celtic language of the people native to Britain. Soon Vikings, from Scandinavia, invaded. Their language, Norse, was added to the language of Britain. We call this new language Old English. Here are three Old English words that survive today: *horse, night, wife*.

Middle English In the year 1066, William the Conqueror, from Normandy in France, conquered England. Soon French and Latin words were added to the mix. These borrowings from Anglo-Saxon, Norse, Latin, and French gave English the large, rich vocabulary it has today. Here are three words derived from French: *government, justice, literature*.

Modern English In 1485, Henry VII, the first Tudor king, came to the throne of England. The House of Tudor helped promote all things English—including the language. Printed books helped make it possible for all English people to speak, read, and write the same language.

Your Turn

Use a dictionary to find the origin of each Vocabulary word at the right. Then, make a word map like the one below. The word *obscure* is done for you.

misled
regression
obscure
deterioration
introspective

obscure

Derivation	OFr <i>obscur</i> < L <i>obscurus</i> , "covered over"
Meaning	verb, "to hide or conceal"; adjective, "not clear," "not easily understood"
Sample sentences	"The moon is obscured by a cloud." "Their reasons for leaving are obscure ."

Language Coach

Word Origins Which two Vocabulary words share word origins with these words from Spanish? How can you tell?

introspectivo deteriorar

Academic Vocabulary

Write About . . .

Do you think it is ethical, or morally acceptable, to use human subjects for medical experiments? How should experiments be conducted to ensure they are effective and have a safe outcome?



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Grammar Link

Verbs

A **verb** is a word used to express action or a state of being. The verb's role in a sentence is to tell you something about the subject. Three types of verbs are **helping verbs**, **action verbs**, and **linking verbs**.

- A **helping verb** helps the main verb express action or a state of being. It does not stand alone. Some common helping verbs are *is*, *being*, *do*, *have*, *could*.

EXAMPLE Charlie **has decided** to move to New York. [The main verb is *decided*.]

- An **action verb** expresses physical action or mental action, such as *fly*, *jog*, *celebrate*, *regret*.

EXAMPLE Algernon **finishes** the maze quickly.

- A **linking verb** connects the subject to a word or words that identify or describe the subject. Some common linking verbs are *am*, *seem*, *was*, *remain*, *feel*.

EXAMPLE Charlie **becomes** smarter than most people.

Your Turn

Fill in each blank below with a verb that fits the meaning of the sentence. Look in the brackets to see which type of verb to use.

1. Charlie ____ decided to have experimental surgery. [helping]
2. At first, Charlie ____ the same. [linking]
3. Later, he ____ at an astonishing rate. [action]
4. Charlie ____ understand several languages. [helping]
5. At the story's end, Charlie ____ to his former state. [action]

CHOICES

As you respond to the Choices, use these **Academic Vocabulary** words as appropriate: effective, outcome, reveal, structure.

REVIEW

Write a Story

Choose a familiar story, perhaps from a fairy tale, TV show, or movie. Then, select a minor character from that story to further develop. Then, develop a short narrative that provides more information about that character. Include elements of plot such as exposition, climax, and resolution.

CONNECT

Analyze the Story

Timed Writing Although the outcome of the experiment was not good for Charlie, he experienced many new things. Which lesson or experience do you think was the most important for him? In a short essay, explain your answer and support it with evidence from the story.

EXTEND

Research Psychological Tests

What sorts of psychological tests measure personality, intellect, and aptitudes? Are they effective? Perform research to find out. Record your findings in a chart that lists each test name, when it was developed and by whom, and what information the test reveals.



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Writing and Journal Ideas



1. Have your student keep a daily journal. For a twist, they could imagine that they are creating a “Captain’s Log” like Star Trek, or an island journal like TomHanks from “Castaway”. Possibilities are endless.
2. Write a Haiku poem every day. Not only are you working with syllables, but precision of word choice and language. Haiku rule:

1st line: 5 syllables
2nd line: 7 syllables
3rd line: 5 syllables

Example: (per Mrs. Tackett-Braden @ Franklin M.S.)

Take out food ordered!
Who will drive to pick it up?
Guess it will be me!

3. Read one of your favorite children’s books and then do a retelling through another character’s point-of-view.
4. Same as #3, but rewrite the ending of that story. What would’ve happened if the “Little Pigs” wouldn’t have survived?
5. Book vs. Movie argument.... Read a book that also has a movie to it. Compare and contrast the two. Write an argumentative essay outlining what you read as opposed to what you viewed.
6. Create a comic strip! Use a story that you know or make up one of your own.

Poetry Packet

This packet contains various types of poetry. The purpose of this packet is to allow you to have fun imitating different poetic forms.

1. Haiku (Set of Three)
2. If I Were
3. When I
4. Acrostic
5. I Am
6. Concrete
7. Couplet
8. Spine Poem
9. Life Lessons
10. Color My World
11. Hold On
12. Write a List
13. Septet
14. Some of my Best Friends
15. Tanka
16. Wishes and Fears
17. Writer's Affirmation
18. Biopoem
19. I Don't Understand
20. I Used To

Label each poem with its type.

You **MUST** have a title.

Follow the directions carefully for each of your chosen poems.

Each poem is worth 5 points. The final amount is 100 points.

Poems should still be **neat and written or typed in blue or black ink on typing paper** (I will not accept work in pencil or work on notebook paper).

Your five favorite poems should also be illustrated.

Include a cover with your final submission. Your cover should contain a booklet title, your name, class, instructor, and date.

You must follow the directions for each poem or points will be deducted.

Good luck and, as always, please be classroom appropriate.

Haiku—Set of Three

Haiku is a short, unrhymed poem based on a single image. Traditional Japanese Haiku focused on nature but you don't have to. The poems are 3 lines with a 5-7-5 pattern. This means 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line, and 5 syllables in the last line.

Example:

In the Chinese vase
Flowers lose petals softly
Waiting for water

Or

School in the winter
Is fine but then the spring comes
And I want to play

If you choose the Haiku form, you must do a set of at least three that have a common theme.

If I Were

If I Were in Charge of the World
~Judith Viorst

If I were in charge of the world
I'd cancel oatmeal,
Monday mornings,
Allergy shots, and also Sara
Steinberg.

If I were in charge of the world
There'd be brighter night lights,
Healthier hamsters, and
Basketball baskets forty-eight
inches lower.

If I were in charge of the world
You wouldn't have lonely.
You wouldn't have clean.
You wouldn't have bedtimes,
or "Don't punch your sister."
You wouldn't even have sisters.

If I were in charge of the world
A chocolate sundae with whipped
Cream and nuts would be a vegetable.
All 007 movies would be G,
And a person who sometimes
forgot to brush,
And sometimes forgot to flush,
Would still be allowed to be
In charge of the world.

**Write your own poem using the format
below.**

If I were in charge of the world
I'd cancel _____,
_____,
_____, and also
_____.

If I were in charge of the world
There would be _____,
_____, and
_____.

If I were in charge of the world
You wouldn't have _____.
You wouldn't have _____.
You wouldn't have _____,
or "_____."
You wouldn't even have
_____.

If I were in charge of the world
_____ would
be a vegetable.

And a person who sometimes
forgot to _____,
And sometimes forgot to _____,
Would still be allowed to be
in charge of the world.

When I . . .

How to write it:

Begin each line with When I . . .

Make a list of things you see, hear, read, feel, etc. that bother or disturb you. You must have a minimum of eight lines.

After completing your list add the last line: "I stand up" or "I will stand up"

Example:

When I See

When I see abuse.

When I see hunger.

When I see pain.

When I see fear.

When I see apathy toward learning.

When I see a disgust for knowledge.

When I hear hatred

When I hear apathy

I will stand up.

Acrostic poem:

Take a word (at least 7 letters long) and create a poem that has to do with that word by creating a sentence beginning with each letter.

Life whispers by like a dream.

I hear the sounds of laughter.

Sounds of friends playing

Then growing and leaving.

Even though they are friends now

Nothing lasts forever, so listen.

In the distance

No one stays forever. They're

Gone before you know it.

'I Am' poem

Example:

I Am Hopeless

by S. O'Rourke

I am a strong woman who still feels.
I wonder when it will stop hurting.
I see the laughter around me and
I want to join in.
I am a strong woman who still feels.

I pretend that nothing will ever hurt
me again.
I feel my heart shattering like glass
thrown at the wall.
I touch those shards and feel my
fingers bleed.
I worry that my life is truly pointless.
I cry when no one is near to hear my
plea for help.
I am a strong woman who still feels.

I understand that I will never stop
hurting.
I say, "Why won't it stop?"
I dream of blackness and cool air.
I try to find my dreams.
I hope someone stops me.
I am a weak woman who feels
nothing.

I Am poem

I am (2 characteristics)

I wonder

I see

I want

I am (repeat the first lines of the
poem)

I pretend

I feel

I touch

I worry

I cry

I am (repeat the first line of the
poem)

I understand

I say

I dream

I try

I hope

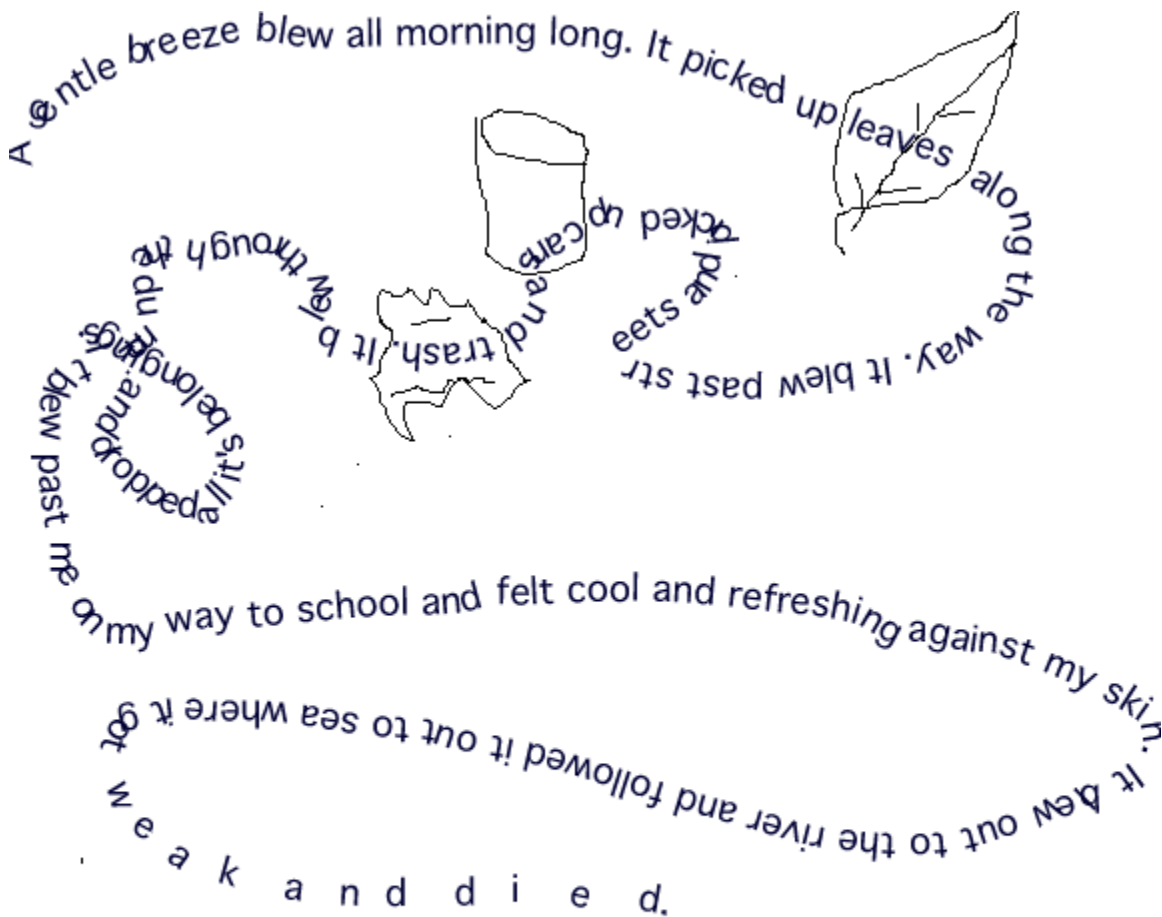
I am (repeat the first line of the
poem)

*Make the poem your own. Change
things around if you need to. Do
NOT skip lines or turn in a partially
completed poem- it will not be
accepted

Concrete Poems

A concrete poem is a poem that forms a picture of the topic or follows the contours of a shape that is suggested by the topic. These can be used effectively with reports in science or social studies. For example, my students have used them in catastrophe reports. Their poems were about a tornado, a hurricane, a flood, and an earthquake.

A GENTLE BREEZE



A CONCRETE POEM by Shannon Lea K.

Text of the poem is typed below.

A gentle breeze blew all morning long. It picked up leaves (written on a leaf) along the way. It blew past streets and picked up cans (written on a can) and trash (written on a piece of trash). It blew through the dump and dropped all its belongings. It blew past me on my way to school and felt cool and refreshing against my skin. It blew out to the river and followed it out to sea where it got weak and died.

Bird # 3

Poe's
 raven told
 him nothing nevermore
 and Vincent's circling
 crows were a threat to destroy
 sunlight. Now I saw a bird, black with a yellow
 beak, orange rubber legs
 pecking to kill the
 lawn, storm bird
 hates with claw,
 evil beak,
 s
 u
 n
 and eye

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Couplets in Poetry.

Using 4-8 couplets (that would be 8-16 lines), create a poem focused on one thing.

Couplets are any two lines working as a unit, whether they comprise a single stanza or are part of a larger stanza. Most couplets rhyme (aa), but they do not have to.

The couplet can be a very lonely stanza, minimalistic. Poems whose content is melancholy or depressing, for example, can make good use of the couplet because--on the page--there is a lot of white space, emptiness, as opposed to writing in quatrains where the stanzas are blocks which limit the white space. As well, because the couplet can be so small, it is a good idea to pack it full of image and emotion, like a hard punch packed in a tight space, very concentrated. . . This doesn't mean the idea and emotion cannot flow between or through couplets, I am only suggesting that each couplet be a powerful, emotionally-intensive unit to the whole.

-- Damon McLaughlin

Example:

I have never loved like I love you
 You could never stay true

I have never hated like I hate her
 She took your love under her power

You have never hated like you hate him
 I saw through you and your little whim

We can never love like we loved before
 You closed that when you opened the wrong door.

Spine Poem

Directions:

Take the title of your favorite book (or movie or song) that **is 5 words (or more) long** and use each of the words as the beginning of a line in your instant poem. For example, use the instant poetry form below to make a spine poem using the book title, **Where the Wild Things Are**. The sample is for the book **The Old Man and the Sea**.

Where do I go when I need
someone to talk to?
The only place I can think of is a
Wild forest filled with creatures
and
Things that bring me peace
because they
Are all in my imagination

The mermaid lived in an
old boat under the waves, where
no
man swam, only dolphins
and giant squid. She often
watched
the waves roll and sang haunting
sea chanties all night long.

Life Lessons

Line 1 I'm learning to
Line 2 And I'm learning to
Line 3 And I'm learning to
Line 4 Not _____, when I
Line 5 And I'm learning not to
Line 6 And I'm learning not to
Line 7 And I'm learning (though it sometimes really hurts me)
Line 8 Not to
Line 9 And I'm learning to
Line 10 When I
Line 11 And I'm learning that it's much
Line 12 Much easier to be

Sample: **Learning**

I'm learning to say thank you.
And I'm learning to say please.
And I'm learning to use Kleenex,
Not my sweater, when I sneeze.
And I'm learning not to dribble.
And I'm learning not to slurp.
And I'm learning (though it sometimes really hurts me)
Not to burp.
And I'm learning to chew softer
When I eat corn on the cob.
And I'm learning that it's much
Much easier to be a slob.

Color My World

Line 1

Name a color

Lines 2-4

Name 3 things that are that color

Lines 5-7

Name 3 things that sound like that color

Lines 8-10

Name 3 things that taste like that color

Lines 11-13

Name 3 things that feel like that color

Line 14

What can that color do?

Sample:

Purple
 a bruise on your leg,
 bunches of grapes in a bowl,
 a sweater that goes great with black,
 the sound of power,
 fruit juice poured into a glass
 a school bell ringing, ringing
 Grandma's rhubarb pie.
 cold medicine served up on a
 tablespoon
 squishy cough drops,
 velvet covered cushions
 pointy tip pentel markers,
 the sky before lightning starts
 Purple can take you for a sweet ride.

Hold On

Line 1: Hold on

Line 2: Hold on to

Line 3: Even if

Line 4: Hold on to

Line 5: Even if

Line 6: Hold on to

Line 7: Even if

Line 8: Hold on to

Line 9: Even if

Line 10: Hold on to

Line 11: Even when

Sample:

Hopi Prayer

Hold on to what is good

Even if it's a handful of earth.

Hold on to what you believe

Even if it's a tree that stands by
 itself.

Hold on to what you must do

Even if it's a long way from here

Hold on to your life

Even if it's easier to let go

Hold on to my hand

Even when I've gone away from you.

Write a List Poem

Directions:

Some of the most interesting poems are nothing more than lists of things. Start by thinking of an interesting place in your house that has an unusual assortment of things in it to write about. Consider one of these suggestions (What's on the top shelf of my closet? What's under my bed? What's in corner of the basement? What's in the pocket of my winter coat? What's in that old box in the garage? What's in the kitchen junk drawer?) or come up with one of your own. Make that your opening line. The rest of the poem is just a list of the items you find there.

Method:

Line 1 What's in the name the place
Line 2 name and describe item one
Line 3 name and describe item two
Line 4 name and describe item three
Line 5 name and describe item four
Line 6 name and describe item five
Line 7 name and describe item six
Line 8 name and describe item seven
Line 9 name and describe item eight

Sample:

What's in the kitchen junk drawer
One bag of AA batteries from 1984
A Scotch tape dispenser that doesn't
Pieces of curly, dried out contact paper
Twisty ties that never will again
Stained Domino's Pizza menus
Expired coupons and old Acme receipts
Sticky pennies
Dusty tic tacs melted onto a paper clip

Septet Poem

Line 1: three syllables
 Line 2: five syllables
 Line 3: seven syllables
 Line 4: nine syllables
 Line 5: seven syllables
 Line 6: five syllables
 Line 7: three syllables

Sample:
 Computer
 Sleek and black and fast
 Open Internet highway
 Shrinks the world to a very small
 place
 Point and click and point and
 click
 The site fills the screen
 Home online

Some of My Best Friends are Metaphors Poem

Directions:

Think of a friend, someone who you know very well. Try to write down a list of ten objects that remind you of your friend. Now try to turn the list into a poem. This strategy could also lead to an instant poem about a member of your family, a teacher or even one of your pets.

Method: Choose a **she** or a **he**

Samples:

She is Calico Corners and country kitchens
 She is the smelly soap store
 She is a summer stroll on the boardwalk
 She is the bash at Sym's
 She is a convertible with the top down
 She is a gold bracelet that shines
 She is an autumn wreath on the front door
 She is fabric by the yard
 She is a framed watercolor painting
 She is my best friend

Best Friend

She is an old tree trunk where we hide our secret notes
 She is penny chews bought from the old lady's penny tray
 She is sardines and cake for tea on Wednesdays
 She is her mum, still very tall to my small
 She is dancing classes on Saturday mornings
 when we can't go out to play
 She is Dandy the beagle who we walk by the river
 She is funny extra teeth that will have to come out before long
 She is a window full of jewels in her dad's shop near the cathedral
 She is my best friend

by Jill Pryor

Tanka Poem

Sample:

Line 1: five syllables
 Line 2: seven syllables
 Line 3: five syllables
 Line 4: seven syllables
 Line 5: seven syllables

Friday afternoon
 Blue screen of death server crash
 Precious data gone
 Do it over and over
 Never forget to back up

Wishes and Fears

Format:

I am afraid of
 I am afraid of
 I am afraid that
 I am afraid that
 I am even afraid

I am afraid of
 I am afraid of
 I am afraid that
 I am afraid that
 I am even afraid

I want
 I want
 I want
 I want
 I even want

I want
 I want
 I want
 I want
 And I want
 Most of all

Sample:

I am afraid of spiders
 I am afraid of lightning strikes
 I am afraid that the milk has gone bad
 I am afraid that the well will run dry
 I am even afraid I might show up ten minutes late

I am afraid of final exams
 I am afraid of making speeches
 I am afraid that my math may be wrong
 I am afraid that I'll say a bad word
 I am even afraid of the dark

I want friends who smile back
 I want fresh fruits and vegetables
 I want fewer reruns on summer TV
 I want 50% off sales
 I even want to read books with happy endings

I want to laugh
 I want to sing
 I want to dance
 I want to get the joke
 And I want to be here
 Most of all

Writer's Affirmation Poem

I am
 I value
 I write
 I trust
 I honor
 I give voice to
 I give voice to
 I am
 I make
 I hold
 I am
 I make

Sample:
 I am creative
 I value the artist in me
 I write what's in my heart and head
 I trust the nature of my truth
 I honor my kind audience
 I give voice to what haunts
 I give voice to what heals
 I am open to inspiration
 I make a place for creative
 expression
 I hold the outcome in high esteem
 I am safe writing on the page
 I make my home a place to write

Bio-Poem

Method:
 Line 1: I wish I
 Line 2: Like
 Line 3: And I dream
 Line 4: I am
 Line 5: I used to
 Line 6: But now I
 Line 7: I seem to
 Line 8: But I'm really

Sample:
 I wish I could sing
 Like Sheryl Crow
 And I dream sad story songs
 I am hitting high notes
 I used to softly hum along
 But now I've found her voice in
 mine
 I seem to be a mimic
 But I'm really uniquely me

I Don't Understand...

Method:
 I don't understand
 why
 why
 why

But most of all
 why
 why
 why

What I understand most is
 why
 why
 why

Sample: I don't understand
 why people are so picky
 why families can't just let it be
 why cats like watching reality TV

But most of all
 why people just don't think
 why families bicker year after year
 why cats stretch 'til their tongues
 peek out pink

What I understand is
 why bulbs bloom
 why the sun sets
 why fireflies burn yellow-white light

I Used To

Line 1 - I used to
Line 2 - But now I
Line 3 - I always
Line 4 - But I never
Line 5 - I once
Line 6 - But now I
Line 7 - If I could
Line 8 - I would
Line 9 - I never
Line 10 - But I might
Line 11 - I can't
Line 12 - But I can
Line 13 - I won't
Line 14 - But I might
Line 15 - I used to
Line 16 - But now I

Sample:

I used to think that summers stretched slow and lazy for a year
But now I know better
I always thought "school one year, summer one year"
But I never counted off the days on my fingers
I once felt hours stretch long and easy
But now I hear a panicky tick-tock
If I could step into a time machine
I would go back and reset the clock
I never gave it a thought before
But I might seriously consider it now
I can't turn life into a sci-fi movie
But I can gobble up every day 'til I'm filled up happy
I won't ever be 16 again
But I might be a teenager at heart
I used to think that summers stretched slow and lazy for a year
But now I know better