Unit 1

Title: Flowers for Algernon

Suggested Time: 5-7 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3; W8.1, W8.4, W8.9; SL8.1; L.8.1, L.8.2

[Additional Tasks: RI8.8, RI8.9]

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings:

* Students should work through the idea that different levels of intelligence, emotional and intellectual, lead to different types of interactions with people and society.
* Students should evaluate moral/ethical decisions of characters.

Synopsis

A mentally challenged man is presented with an opportunity to have an operation that will triple his intelligence. The story chronicles the journey that he takes as his intelligence progresses and regresses.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Anticipatory Set: Discuss the following questions with students to guide deeper understanding of the main themes of the story: What is intelligence? Can a person ever be too smart? What is meant by the saying “ignorance is bliss”?
2. Students read the entire selection independently.
3. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other in pairs or small groups. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
4. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| Using evidence from Progress Report 1, who is Charlie Gordon? | He says, “My name is Charlie Gordon. I am 37 years old and 2 weeks ago was my birthday.” Based upon his writing and the fact that he says, “They can make me smart” we can infer that he is of below-average intelligence and he wants to be smart. |
| What do we learn about Charlie Gordon’s character from Progress Report 2? | When he says, “I had my rabbits foot in my pockit” we learn that he is superstitious; he says “I spilled ink too”, revealing that he has no ability to think abstractly. Make sure students understand Charlie’s test phobia and desire to be right or smart by his persistence with the test. Also, “I’m a slow reeder too in Miss Kinnians class for slow adults but I’m trying very hard” shows that Charlie wants to be smart. |
| Why does the author tell us that Charlie thinks, “maybe white mice are smarter than other mice?” | This line indicates that he is aware that there are differing levels of intelligence. (Students may also reflect upon racial inequality hinted at by the “white” mice terminology – refer to time period of 1965 – historically relevant). |
| Is Charlie a good candidate for the experiment? | The doctors are looking for a subject that has a low I.Q., but is willing to work. Charlie mentions that he “felt proud when he [Dr. Strauss] said that not everybody with an eye-q of 68 had that thing [motivation].” The doctor’s mention of apathy and being uncooperative are directly related to motivation. They need a patient that has motivation because they are going to complete many tests on the subject and they are going to monitor intellectual growth, thus they need someone who is willing to try.  (Some readers may also feel that Charlie is too sensitive and should not participate in the study. This is acceptable so long as text evidence is used to support the answer.) |
| What do we learn about Charlie through his own analysis of Robinson Crusoe? | Based upon the quotes, “He’s all alone and has no friends,” “marooned on a desert island,” and “I hope he gets a friend and not be lonely,” Charlie is coming to understand what loneliness is. Some students may also see the direct comparison between Charlie and Robinson Crusoe. Also, his ability to think about someone else and their place in the world shows an increased emotional intelligence. |
| What does Charlie mean when he says “I felt naked”? | Other lines surrounding the line “I felt naked” show Charlie’s embarrassment. These lines include: “I wanted to hide myself, and I ran out into the street and I threw-up,” and “Charlie is blushing.”  The “nakedness” is a reference to the Garden of Eden and the casting out of Adam and Eve from Paradise after they have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge (this mention of nakedness will later be used in reference to Fanny’s remarks about the evilness of Adam and Eve and even later alluded to when Charlie is unable to read Paradise Lost and has lost the knowledge that he gained.) |
| How have Charlie’s feeling changed from earlier in the story? | Charlie is beginning to understand social acceptance and question the motives of others. Earlier in the text, Charlie says “We had a lot of fun at the factory today.” Then, he tells a story about George losing a package and sometimes people will say, “Look, he really pulled a Charlie Gordon. They’re really my friends and they like me.”  This passage shows that he was unaware of being made fun of and had no shame or embarrassment about his intelligence. In comparison, Charlie’s understanding about “nakedness” allows the reader to see Charlie’s progression toward understanding that not every one is his friend and laughing with him, especially Joe and Frank. |
| What do you think that the “pair of bats tugging at something” and “two men fencing with swords” symbolizes?  (Note: give a Rorschach to show how the test is administered) | Possible answers include the two doctors arguing, Charlie’s subconscious and conscious desires conflicting, Charlie’s old life versus new life, Charlie’s emotional versus intellectual intelligence  Note: if students struggle in generating these answers, tell them to look at the conflicts that arise in the story. |
| It says, “when I left afterwards, I found myself trembling,” why does Charlie react this way? | He says, “I felt like I’d seen both men clearly for the first time.” Charlie is coming to realize that the doctors have motives that go beyond simply helping him become smarter. And, Doctor Nemur calls Charlie “*his* experiment.” Clearly, this shows that Doctor Nemur views Charlie as a professional asset and not as a patient. Charlie is learning that people, himself included, act with ulterior motives in mind. This understanding is essential to his emotional growth. |
| Miss Kinnian remarks to Charlie,” I just hope I wasn’t wrong to advise you to go into this in the first place.” Looking back through the text, and considering your own beliefs, do you feel that Miss Kinnian properly advised Charlie to go through with the experiment? | Students can take many viewpoints on this issue and sight multiple moral reasons behind the ethics of the operation. Looking back at the text, students might cite Miss Kinnian’s earlier comments, where it says, “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 shouldnt feel bad if I find out that everybody isn’t nice like I think. . . Then she got something in her eye and she had to run out to the ladys room.” Miss Kinnian's comments show that she is aware of negative consequences with the experiment, such as the fact that people are mean spirited, will use others for their own glory, and will use others to gain profit. Very early on in the short story, in progress report 4, when the doctors decide that Charlie will be their subject, Charlie remarks,” Their going to use me.” On the April 27th progress report, the doctors also argue about the ethics of the experiment and publishing results too early. They also call Charlie an “experiment” instead of a patient. |
| How does the following passage, “it was evil when Eve listened to the snake and ate from the tree of knowledge,” compare to Charlie and his experience? | Charlie’s operation is equivalent to Eve eating from the tree of knowledge. His increased intelligence has shown him a darker side of human nature. Students may reference the experiment on Charlie, his awareness of Frank and Joe making fun of him, or the experimentation on animals and human subjects. |
| At this point in the story, how are things going for Charlie? How does this connect to what the author told us before?  (If students struggle to identify Charlie’s social isolation, the following question will provide more support. “What evidence do you have that Charlie’s heightened intelligence has created difficulties in his relationship with others?” | He says that he “seldom speaks to anyone” and “Dr. Nemur appears to be uncomfortable around me”. He says “I must be careful to speak and write clearly and simply so people won’t laugh.” When talking to Miss Kinnian, he says that “when I tried to explain she stopped me and laughed.” While Charlie has increased his intellectual intelligence, emotional intelligence takes much more time and experience to develop. People laughed at Charlie both before AND after his operation. |
| Using context clues from the passage, “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 me because he was mentally retarded, “ what does the word vacuous mean? | Vacuous means void and empty like a vacuum. Context clues are “The wide bright eyes of a child, uncertain but eager to please”; “vacant eyes”; “an uncertain grin” |
| What does the anecdote of the dishwasher boy reveal about Charlie? | He says, “I felt sick inside as I looked at his dull, vacuous smile…I felt ashamed for both of us.” Charlie has realized that he was once ridiculed like the dishwasher boy and he, too, misunderstood the taunting as acceptance. He had the same vacuous, unaware existence. He says, “It infuriated me to think that not so long ago I, like this boy, had foolishly played the clown. And I had almost forgotten.” (Higher level students might use the plate as a symbol for Charlie’s brokenness) |
| What is driving Charlie? | It is the same force that propelled him to work so hard when he was mentally disabled: a strong desire to succeed. At the moment, however, he realizes that time is probably running out for him.  Charlie could also just have a strong desire to understand the inequality of intelligence that he struggled to comprehend when he was mentally challenged. On page 56, in reference to the calculus of intelligence, Charlie remarks, “In a sense it is the problem I have been concerned with all my life.” Some students might indicate that this is the driving force for Charlie’s diligence to complete his data.  Likewise, it would be valid for students to say that he wants to show up Dr. Nemus and Dr. Strauss, or that he feels a moral obligation to stand up for those who are mentally challenged who might be possible test subjects after his own mental decline. He makes references to this at the end of the book when he says, “Anyway I bet Im the first dumb person n the world who ever found out something important for sience.” |
| On May 31, Charlie says, “I’ve got to know if and when it will happen to me,” what evidence exists that Charlie will or will not regress like Algernon? | Algernon was “unusually disturbed and vicious.” Charlie tells the reader that “he [Algernon] snapped at my hand.” Charlie also says that Algernon is “less cooperative,” and “everyone is upset about what this may mean.” All of the above quotes suggest that Charlie will in fact regress like Algernon because the reader has been given several examples of Charlie’s changing personality. Prior to this incident, Charlie snaps at Miss Kinnian when she is unable to understand his intellectual discussion on Vrostadt.  Also, Algernon is also being characterized the same way as many of Charlie’s lower-IQ peers were at the beginning of the story. |
| What are some of Charlie’s symptoms of deterioration in his June 5 progress report? | Possible answers include: motor activity is impaired, reduction of glandular activity, accelerated loss of coordination, and progressive amnesia. |
| What words or phrases help you define the word senility? | Senility means the loss of mental ability. “amnesia”, “second childhood”, and “deteriorating rapidly” |
| What evidence suggests Joe and Frank have or have not developed as characters? | Joe says, “leave him alone you lousy cracker or I’ll break your neck.” Student can argue both sides because Joe has identified the moral depravity of making fun of someone yet still uses a racial slur to attack the attacker. (Some kids may come back to the “white mouse” comment from earlier in the text with this racial commentary here). |
| What evidence in the text do you have that Charlie has or hasn’t changed since the beginning of the story? | 1. Charlie changed but then regressed back to an intellectual place very similar to where he began. Before his regression, he says, "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!" But, later Charlie says "Please tell Dr. Nemur not to be such a grouch when people laugh at him and he would have more friends", indicating that Charlie has regressed back to a point where he does not understand the nature of friendship.‬‬‬‬  2. Charlie has changed by the end of the story. When he initially finds out that his "friends" were just mean people who made fun of him, he says, on p. 43, "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." He cannot handle the embarrassment. However, at the end, when he says, "Please tell Dr. Nemur not to be such a grouch when people laught at him and he would have more friends. Its easy to make frends if you let people laught and you" he is showing the ability to let the embarrassment go. He has recognized that he will be happier if he lets go of his shame.‬‬‬‬ |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | marooned (spelled marooned)  “to pull a Charlie Gordon”  feeble minded  opportunist  acquire, despised, petition  cowered  cooperative, peering  irritable, instability  motor activity  impaired, senility | plateau  psychology  contrary  “narrow specialization; the broader aspects of background were neglected far more than necessary.” \*Note: spend time to interpret this because it marks an increase in his intelligence and allows the reader to avoid attempting to decode all words.  vacuous, mirrored, vacant  inferior  regress (ion)  deterioration |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | Rorscharch (spelled raw shok initially)  amazed (meant to mean a maze), motivation (spelled motor- vation initially)  fencing  neurosurgeons, “ride on his coattails”  smirking  illiteracy | Apathetic (appears as apat\*\* in the text)  IQ= Intelligence Quotient (appears as “eye-q of 68)  \*Note- an IQ below 80 designates mental retardation (mentally challenged) ), discouraged (spelled discoridged)  tree of knowledge  subconscious and conscious  vicious  “artificially increased intelligence deteriorates proportionally to the quantity of increase” (break down the sentence to see how Charlie will regress)  “general smoothing of the cerebral convolutions as well as deepening and broadening of brain fissures” (go through what this means to show that Charlie has permanent brain damage) |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*On p. 55, Charlie makes this claim about intelligence: “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.” Identify the most significant points where his understanding of intelligence has evolved. Discuss both his emotional and intellectual growth along with his eventual regression. Support your claims with valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence from the text, including direct quotes and page numbers.*

* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should remind students to use any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions. **Once students have completed the graphic organizer, have them rank evidence in significance to evaluate which points are the most significant to include in the essay.**

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| ***Rank Proof*** | ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| **7** | “I feel sick inside. Not sick like for a doctor, but my chest it feels empty like getting punched and a heartburn at the same time. . . Everyone was looking at me and laughing and I felt naked. I wanted to hide myself. . .I never knew that Joe and Frank and the others liked to have me around all the time to make fun of me. | This is Charlie’s first realization that things are not how they appear and this is the first time that he truly sees the darkness of humanity, thus the reference to nakedness from The Garden of Eden. It is also the first instance where Charlie begins to analyze the complexity of group dynamics and conformity. |
|  | “Dr. Nemur and Dr. Strauss don’t seem to be getting along very well. They’re arguing all the time. This evening . . .I heard them shouting. . .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.” | The quote also hints at this slow unveiling of human nature and the need for the strong to dominate the weak. Charlie begins to notice that these men are using him. |
|  | “I’m in love with Miss Kinnian.” | While this quote might seem to mark emotional development, I think that this line shows how minimal Charlie’s understanding of love is. He begins the progress report with mentions of Miss Kinnian’s physical beauty and considers her age to evaluate her potential. Charlie is mostly concerned with courtship with lines like “she took out a cigarette and I lit it for her” and less with love.  This part can be later linked with his recollection of his relationship with his mother and father and minimal understanding of personal relationships. |
| **6** | “Once again now I have the feeling of shame in me. This intelligence has driven a wedge between me and all the people I once knew and loved. Before, they laughed at me and despise me for my ignorance and dullness; now, they have me for my knowledge and understanding. What in God’s name do they want of me?” | Charlie separates intelligence from emotional growth at this point, but begins to examine how acceptance or isolation is closely aligned with intelligence and social awkwardness.  He is still puzzled by human nature. |
| **4** | “Now I’m more alone than ever before.” | Charlie’s intelligence has created social isolation. |
| **2** | “No one I’ve ever known is what he appears to be on the surface.” | This is finally when Charlie accepts that intelligence is a mirage. He now examines the intricacies of human nature and interaction. |
|  | “I must be careful to speak and write clearly and simply so that people won’t laugh.” | One must conform to roles in society and cloak intelligence at times to meet the needs of others. Charlie really always just wanted to fit in. |
| **5** | “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.” | Charlie is capable of seeing his role in society and his desire to conform to others. This desire to fit in causes many people to act cruel.  Is Charlie more disgusted because he realizes he was once like the dishwasher or more because he is like all of those who made fun of him? |
| **3** | “A child may not know how to feed itself, or what to eat, yet it knows of hunger.” | Charlie always believed that his biggest ordeal in life was intelligence, but as his character develops, he realizes that acceptance was his true dilemma. |
|  | “I got mad and chased him out because he [the doctor] was making fun of me the way they all used to.” | This scene begins to pose the question, is it better to know or is ignorance bliss? |
|  | “Please . . .please let me not forget how to read and write . . .” | Charlie may regress beyond his starting intelligence. |
|  | “I told myself Charlie if they make fun of you don’t 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 doesn’t mean anything because they liked you too.” | Charlie has lost his intellectual intelligence, but gained emotional intelligence. He knows that relationships are a give and take and has experienced that he has the potential to be the bully. At this point in the short story, he has come to terms with human nature and accepts his role in society (not as a resignation, but as a choice.) Charlie just wants to fit in. |
|  | “I didn’t expect Joe to take my part so I guess hes really my friend.” | Charlie feels that he has developed a real friend. |
|  | “I don’t want Miss Kinnian to feel sorry for me.” | This line shows that Charlie has grown as a character. He finally realizes that his real concern is acceptance and intelligence is just one vehicle to get there. |
|  | “I lerned a lot of things that I never even new were in this world and I’m gratefull that I saw it all for a little bit.” | Intelligence is about experience, not knowledge. Charlie has come full circle (notice that he has gone through all of the seasons on his journey) and answers the question that Daniel Keyes poses earlier (is ignorance bliss.) Charlie would rather know and be unable to change things, then not know. Ignorance is not bliss. |
| **1** | “Its easy to make frends if you let pepul laff at you. Im going to have lots of frends where I go.” | This is Charlie’s biggest resignation to social conformity, and his ultimate sacrifice of acceptance. Charlie is able to weigh consequences and decide to embrace his fate. His life is within his control. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, and sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

Charlie’s understanding of intelligence begins with a basic assumption that intelligence is tied to intellectual knowledge. In the opening of the story, Charlie is primarily motivated by a child-like definition of intelligence with comments such as “I don’t think I passed the *raw shok* test,” and “I always failed tests in school.” To Charlie, intelligence is a measurable entity and directly related to facts. Intellectual intelligence will make him smart. By the end of the story, after Charlie has realized, “no one I’ve ever known is what he appears to be on the surface,” Charlie’s understanding evolves into a compromise that examines emotional growth, acceptance, and the intricacies of human nature.

Road-marked by events that influence who he will decide to become, Charlie’s journey quickens with his first realization of group dynamics and conformity when he says, “I feel sick inside not for a doctor, but my chest it feels empty like getting punched and a heartburn at the same time . . . Everyone was looking at me and laughing and I felt naked. I wanted to hide myself . . .I never knew that Joe and the others liked to have me around all the time to make fun of me.” Up until this point, Charlie minimally questioned the intentions and motivations of others. Initially, Miss Kinnian warns him not to feel bad that everybody isn’t nice like he thinks. Charlie is naïve to the ways of the world. He is still a long way from gaining emotional intelligence.

The progression of Charlie’s intellectual and emotional understanding begins when he feels isolated because of his intelligence. He has gained immense intellectual knowledge, but his emotional I.Q. has failed to keep up. Charlie observes, “now I am more alone than ever before”. Like a policeman in a biker bar, Charlie isolates himself with his inability to connect with those surrounding him. His comment, “Once again now I have the feeling of shame in 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 have for my knowledge and understanding,” pinpoints Charlie’s struggle with social awkwardness.

The ultimate realization comes when Charlie finds himself drawn into the pack mentality of society with the dishwasher anecdote. Charlie examines his role as a perpetrator when he says, “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.” This glimpse into the darkness of his own human nature, educates Charlie on the innateness of human suffering. Charlie realizes that he is a part of the faulted society which he is struggling to comprehend.

Midway through the story, Charlie remarks, “a child may not know how to feed itself, or what to eat, yet it knows of hunger,” and he begins to ponder his own concept of intelligence and slowly becomes self-aware of his own desire to use knowledge as a vehicle to feed his hunger. While Charlie has dwelled intensely on the desire for aptitude, he slowly begins to realize that his true desire, acceptance and the need to fit into society, was masked by intelligence. At the closing of the short story, Charlie has increased his own intellect by compromising. Charlie is able to negotiate his dignity for self-preservation and acceptance. The ending remarks in the story, “its easy to make frends if you let pepul laff at you. Im going to have lots of frends where I go,” indicates that Charlie has examined the give and take of social admittance and decided that ignorance is bliss.

Additional Tasks

1. Intelligence Essay:

*What is intelligence? In Progress Report 10, Dr. Nemur and Dr. Strauss debate the origins of I.Q. Dr. Nemur said, “It was something that measured how intelligent you were- like a scale in the drugstore weighs pounds,” while Dr. Strauss debated* *“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.” When Charlie asks Burt, the tester, to clarify what intelligence is, Burt says, “both of them were wrong . . . 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.”*

*Is intelligence a number you are born with, just a predictor of how intelligent you can be, or is it meaningless in telling anything about a person’s intellect? In constructed response format, look at the following articles to guide your decision and provide evidence from the article (s) to support your opinion. Use the graphic organizer to organize your thoughts and evidence.*

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/articles/i/intelligence_quotient.htm>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/iq-tests-are-fundamentally-flawed-and-using-them-alone-to-measure-intelligence-is-a-fallacy-study-finds-8425911.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2250681/IQ-tests-meaningless-simplistic-claim-researchers.html>

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| **What I think** | **What is my proof from the articles?** |
| People have different ability levels with different cognitive tasks. | “An aptitude is an innate ability to do a certain kind of work.”- Science Daily article |
| IQ cannot be measure by one number. | “The results disprove that a single measure of intelligence is enough to capture all of the differences in cognitive ability that we see between people.”   * Largest single study in human cognition * Steve Connor article |

**Sample Constructed Response Answer 1:**

Intelligence is a combination of ability and desire. People have different ability levels based on the different cognitive tasks that they perform, but with practice, any human can develop their intelligence. The Science Daily article agrees that “an aptitude is an innate ability to do a certain kind of work;” however, aptitude is reinforced with practice and placing oneself in situations that challenge them. This means that you can be naturally gifted in areas, but if you don’t use it, you cannot expand your intelligence.

**Sample Constructed Response Answer 2:**

I.Q cannot be measured by one number because human beings brains are often not equally balanced. I may be really talented at language acquisition, but not skilled with mathematics. That does not mean that I have a lower I.Q. than someone who naturally absorbs mathematical concepts, but is average with other skills such as understanding analogies. According to the largest single study in human cognition in the Steve Connor article, “The results disprove that a single measure of intelligence is enough to capture all the differences in cognitive ability that we see between people.” This study indicates that intelligence is relative to many different domains of knowledge and can never be a singular number.

**\*Note for assessment:** Constructed response answers should include a specific thesis that indicates the writer’s viewpoint, supporting evidence tied to the thesis that is cited from one or multiple articles, and a conclusion that summarizes why the thesis and evidence is valid reasoning

1. Consider the opening of John Milton’s Paradise Lost (1667): “Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit of that forbidden tree whose moral taste brought death into the world, and all our woe, with loss of Eden…” Use quotes from the text to evaluate what “paradise” Charlie has lost in Progress Report 12?

Multiple answers exist. Acceptable answers will include comparisons between the poem and the text. A possible answer is students can compare “moral taste” from the poem to the dishwasher anecdote. In other words, Charlie’s understanding of morality involving the degrading episode with the dishwasher is possible only with his operation, which is comparable to the loss of paradise in the poem.

1. While watching Flowers for Algernon, how does the director/producer emphasize the theme of intelligence and how intelligence is viewed in a society?

Fill in the graphic organizer:

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| **Places where the theme intelligence is emphasized and viewed in a society** | **What is the purpose behind it?** |
| Charlie emphasizes his misunderstanding about intelligence and disregard for emotional intelligence by calling himself a “gen-i-ass.” | To show that Charlie and the doctors have neglected the emotional and social aspects of human intelligence. |
| The movie begins by showing many mentally challenged students in a school that serves as a comedic part of the story. | The audience laughs at these examples and participates in the “making fun of lack of intelligence” that will later be expanded on with Charlie’s interactions with his co-workers. Charlie’s peers also serve as a direct contrast to who Charlie is at the start of the movie. Charlie visibly looks more attractive than his peers and appears “normal.” |
| Charlie goes to visit his mother and she discusses how beautiful he was a child and mentions that when God gives too much of one thing, he takes away in other areas. | In the movie, the director chose to expand on Charlie’s relationship with his mother and show that she abandoned him because of his low intelligence. There is also a bigger emphasis on the ethics of the operation when you find out that Charlie’s mother has received money for his operation. |
| Charlie releases the lab rats on the guests in the psychology convention. | By releasing these “lab rats,” Charlie is making further commentary on the ethics of preying on someone or something that is intellectually inferior. He also shames the doctors during the conference. |

1. Progress Report Mimic: Pick a place within the story to mimic and create your own progress report. Make sure that you have included language specific to Charlie’s intellectual and emotional development.
2. Pull out the significant passages that showcase Charlie’s progression and regression with intelligence. Rearrange them in a way that makes sense. Come up with a title that emphasizes one of the themes from in Flowers for Algernon. You must have a clear conclusion.

**Significant passages pulled out of the text (highlighted items are used in the final product)**

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| --- | --- |
| I closed my eyes for a long time to pretend  I had good *motor-vation*  Eye-q of 68  Nothing is happening  Pulled a Charlie Gordon  I don’t understand why he said that  Be proud of your job because you do it good  The whole thing straightened out in my mind  I reached a plateau  I felt naked  People don’t talk to me much anymore  Kind of lonely  I’m in love  Tree of knowledge  I’m more alone than ever before  Contrary to my earlier impressions. . . I realize  I was shocked to learn  Not too long ago, I had foolishly played the clown | Peering from a dark room through a keyhole at the dazzling light outside  There are so many doors to open  Algernon bit me  Failure important to the advancement of learning.  Mental deterioration  Deterioration progressing  Algernon dies two days ago  Picked up Paradise Lost- I couldn’t understand it  It’s slipping away like sand through my fingers  How it hurts  Making fun of me the way they all used to  Please let me not forget  If they laughed at you that doesn’t mean anything because they liked you  It’s good to have friends  I forgot  It’s easy to make friends when you let people laugh at you |

**Sample Found Poem: Peering from a dark room through a keyhole**

I closed my eyes for a long time to pretend

the Tree of Knowledge was just a myth,

a lonely plateau,

where nakedness is just a progression

Like peering from a dark room

through a keyhole

peeking at the dazzling light outside.

With *Paradise Lost*,

slipping away like sand through my fingers,

I pretend

I pretend it doesn’t hurt

(how it hurts)

I pretend if they laughed at you that doesn’t mean anything

Because they liked you

I pretend

It’s easy to make friends when you let people

laugh at you.

Note to the Teacher

\*While the additional tasks are not necessary for comprehension, the found poem and movie comparison will help strengthen students understanding of intelligence in the reading and support students with the task of pulling out significant evidence for the essay. Those tasks should be done before assigning the essay if they are used.

\*The story is longer than most short stories and may take two or three days for an initial read. We recommend reading many parts aloud or providing multiple opportunities for group, partner, or class collaboration/discussion.

\*Spend a moment talking about the political incorrectness of using the word “mentally retarded” as it is used in the text. In the time period that the story was written, “mentally challenged” was not commonly used. The author does not use this wording as an insult.