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Flowers for Algernon
Daniel Keyes

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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

progris riport 1

1. In this first report, Charlie is following Dr. Strauss' instructions to write down, in the same way he talks, everything that happens to him. In one long paragraph, Charlie reveals many details about his life. He also reveals that he is a hard-working, optimistic, and agreeable person. Using the same format and style as Charlie does, write one paragraph revealing details about your life and about yourself.

progris riport 2

2. Charlie patiently tries over and over again to see pictures in the inkblots. He wants to please Burt, and he wants to pass the test, but he cannot see any pictures in the ink. Write about a time you failed at something. How did you feel? How did you respond to your failure?

progris riport 3

3. Charlie tells Professor Nemur that he tries to learn because "all my life I wantid to be smart and not dumb and my mom always tolld me to try and lern." For what reasons do you try to do your best in school? List the reasons, beginning with the most important ones.
4. Charlie muses about how Gimpy might react if Charlie became smarter. Imagine you could take a pill before going to sleep, which makes you a smarter person when you awake. Who would you like to surprise with your new intelligence? How do you envision this person's reaction to the new you?

PROGRESS REPORT 7

9. Charlie writes in his progress report that “If your smart you can have lots of frends to talk to and you never get lonley by yourself all the time.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write Charlie a letter explaining your point of view.
10. The scientific method is defined as a method of keeping careful records of all aspects of the experiment so that the results are reproducible. What scientific evidence is there in this chapter that the operation is successful? Write a brief, factual entry Burt might make on Charlie’s medical chart detailing his progress.

PROGRESS REPORT 8

11. Charlie is impatient. Nothing is happening quickly enough for him. Have you ever felt this way? What would you say to Charlie to help him to deal with his frustration?
12. The other college students question why Charlie, who is obviously slow, is at the college. The experiment is a secret, so Charlie cannot explain why he is on campus, and Burt tells them that Charlie is cleaning the psychology department. Assume that the experiment is not a secret, that Charlie is a minor celebrity on the campus, and that all the other students know why he is there. Write a conversation Charlie might have with two other college students who meet him in the cafeteria. What questions might they ask Charlie? How would he answer those questions?
13. Dr. Strauss reveals to Charlie that Algernon is smarter than other mice because he also had the operation. Algernon appears to be remaining smart, so Dr. Strauss is hopeful that Algernon’s increased intelligence is permanent. Before undergoing a dangerous procedure, it is customary for a patient to be fully informed of the danger and to sign a waiver form releasing the doctors from any responsibility if the procedure fails. Write the waiver form Dr. Strauss should have had Charlie sign to be fully informed about the possible long-range effects of this operation.

Flowers for Algernon

In the form of a conversation between yourself and a classmate who does not understand, explain how this allusion applies to Charlie.

Friend: Huh? Charlie didn't eat anything to get smart.

You: That's not the point...

PROGRESS REPORT 12

28. Clearly Matt and Rose disagree on how to raise their children. Write two paragraphs, one from Matt's point of view and the other from Rose's point of view, discussing their differing philosophies. Which one do feel is right? Why?
29. Charlie realizes that he no longer loves Alice. He writes, "I am just as far away from Alice with an I.Q. of 185 as I was when I had an I.Q. of 70." A couple can be separated by differences other than I.Q. For example, a couple may be incompatible because of different religious beliefs. What qualities do you look for in a romantic partner?

PROGRESS REPORT 13

30. On his first airplane ride, Charlie is anxious about wearing the seat belt because he does not like to be strapped down. His anxiety over the seat belt triggers a childhood memory of his trips to see Dr. Guarino. Sometimes a childhood memory can be triggered by an object, like the seat belt, or by a smell, taste, sound, or image.

For example, whenever I see an electric train set, I remember playing with the elaborate train layouts my father constructed in our garage. I remember the sound of the train, the smoke from the engine, and the cute little conductor holding a lantern, who came out of the house whenever the train went by.

Write about a memory of yours that is sometimes triggered by everyday events.

Response Journal

58. Write a letter from Charlie explaining to Norma why her behavior described in the following excerpt is ironic:

I'm glad. She doesn't remember much these days. It's old age-senility. Dr. Portman wants me to put her into a nursing home, but I can't do it. I can't stand to think of her in one of those institutions....I just can't do that to my own mother.

59. Charlie asks Norma about some of his childhood memories. He wants to verify the accuracy of his memories. Write about a time you discussed a childhood experience with your brother, sister, or parent. Did you both recall the incident in the same way?

60. Rose misinterprets when she sees Norma in Charlie's arms. She accuses Charlie of touching his sister inappropriately and of having a dirty mind. Charlie writes about how he and Norma felt:

We both jumped back, and for some insane reason, I felt guilty, as if I had been caught doing something wrong, and I knew Norma felt the same way. It was as if my mother's accusation had made it true, that we were doing something obscene.

Norma and Charlie feel guilty about something they did not do. Describe a time in your life when you may have felt the same kind of "innocent" guilt.

61. Charlie wonders if he ever did anything to Norma to justify Rose's fears. He concludes that, "Whatever the truth is, I must not hate Rose for protecting Norma. I must understand the way she saw it. Unless I forgive her, I will have nothing."

Charlie believes that forgiveness is very important. Do you agree? Write a short letter to Charlie discussing your views on forgiveness.

62. Charlie is crying as he leaves his mother's house to return to his car. Why do you suppose he reacts this way to seeing his mother and sister?