

Giving Charlie a Chance

Imagine living in a world where everyone is intelligent, but you are not. The short story, "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes is about a 37-year-old man who is always getting made fun of by the people around him. He has an I.Q. of 68 and he gets tested to see if he is eligible to get a surgery that will make him smarter. Attitude contributes to characters in this story showing positive and negative viewpoints in 3 different ways: the main character tries very hard to understand some basic knowledge, after the surgery the character's attitude turns negative because no improvement was shown, and lastly the main character had shown both positive and negative changes at the end of the story.

To begin with, Charlie attempts to understand basic knowledge such as the inkblots. Charlie's relentless behavior surpasses the fact that he cannot visualize anything in the ink. Charlie wrote that he does not see any pictures in the inkblots and he does not want to lie and make up a story, "I tried hard but I still couldn't find the pictures I only saw the ink" (385). Charlie can only think literally and looks at things for what they are and not what they could be. This also means that he is as not as creative and clever as other people. He also reports that the man who was giving him the test got up and left the session. This proves that he was getting impatient with Charlie's wrong answers and his lack of intelligence. This idea contributes to the fact that not only Charlie has different perspectives to the people in this story. Charlie is motivated to keep trying and not give up because he wants to get the surgery done. However, at the same time he feels that he won't be able to get it done because he failed all of the tests.

Furthermore, Charlie's graceful attitude diminishes after the surgery because no

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improvement was made to his intelligence. In one of his progress reports, Charlie wanted to know “fancy things already” (288). This means Charlie was getting impatient and wanted to see results already. He said “fancy things” because he does not think the same as standard people do. Dr. Strauss told him that things like this take time. Charlie also writes down that he hates Algernon the mouse because he always beats Charlie with the mazes (288). Algernon got the surgery done before Charlie, making him smarter than him. He feels as if the mouse was showing off to make him mad. This is when Charlie started to notice that he was not getting any smarter. Charlie’s lack of self confidence contributes to the attitude of himself and people like Miss Kinnian who really care about him.

Lastly, Charlie attitude is both happy and sad at the end of the story. He exemplifies this in his report that says that Miss Kinnian came to see him, but Charlie yelled at her telling her to go away because Charlie did not want anyone to laugh at him (304). Instead of believing that everyone likes him, Charlie locks himself in his room to avoid being made fun of. He made himself believe that people thought he was weird because he lost his ability to learn. On the other hand, the report written just three days after that, Charlie attitude brightens up because he says that he is going to another place. At that new place no one would know who he is and he will make lots of friends there (306). He wants to leave because he does not want to be viewed as a failed experiment. He gives each of his mentors some advice to be more happy. For example, he tells Dr. Nemur that he would have more friends if he was not always in a poor mood. Charlie shows how there are both positive & negative attitudes in this story and how he deals with it.

In conclusion, attitude contributes to characters in this story in these three different ways.

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This theme topic is important to know for this story because the behavior/attitude in the story does not stay the same. The theme topic helps people look at stories in all types of perspectives and not just theirs. This shows that you have to respect other people's way of thinking and you will learn things that you already know, but in a different view.