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Period 7-8

The Hope of Charlie Gordon

Back in the 1960s, there were not many treatments for adults or children who had learning disabilities or mental issues in general. “Flowers For Algernon,” a short story by Daniel Keyes, talks about a 37-year-old man named Charlie Gordon who has a learning disability. His teacher, Miss Kinnian, recommends him to Dr. Strauss and Dr. Nemur to have an operation that will triple his IQ. The short story shows how after the surgery his intelligence slowly triples itself. It also shows how it slowly regresses back to his intelligence quotient of 68. Hope causes many changes over the course of time. It is scattered throughout the story and is mostly depicted through the character Charlie, who is full of hope, and through Miss Kinnian who encourages Charlie to try his best.

Initially, hope shines in many instances during the story. It usually shines through the character Charlie. One instance in where Charlie shows hope or happiness is when he “... beat Algernon!” (290). This shows that Charlie has hope in being intelligent. It shows how excited he is because he beat Algernon. It shows he has *hope* in getting smarter. Another example is when Miss Kinnian said that Charlie was “... coming along fast ...” That made me feel good. After the lesson I went down and played with Algernon. We don’t race anymore.” (292). This shows Charlie has hope. It shows how he’s happy that he’s been complimented on how well he is doing and how he’s improving more and more. It shows that not only does Charlie have hope, but Miss Kinnian has *hope* on Charlie and his intelligence.

Furthermore, hope also shines through the character Miss Kinnian. Daniel Keyes incorporates hope when Miss Kinnian went to the laboratory after Charlie came back from work. She shows hope for Charlie by stating “...I have confidence in you Charlie the way you struggled so hard to read and

right better than all the others. At worst you will have it for a little while and your doing something for science.”(291). This connects to hope because it shows that Miss Kinnian has hope in Charlie. It proves that Miss Kinnian believes in Charlie because of how much he struggles in trying to be intelligent.

Another incorporated example of hope in Miss Kinnian and Charlie went out for dinner. She tells him 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.” (296). Miss Kinnian knows that Charlie is getting smarter by the hour and that he is learning faster than the average human, by comparing him with a sponge that soaks up water. This connects to the theme because it shows that she has hope that he'll soon start connecting with everything that he learns. Miss Kinnian has hope, mostly in Charlie. She shows it in the way she talks to him, and the way she knows he's getting smarter.

At last, Hope shines through Charlie once again. This time it shines through him when he found out they were gonna use him for the surgery. When Dr. Nemur said that they were gonna use Charlie, “...I got so excited I jumped up and shook his hand for being so good to me. I told him thank you doc you won't be sorry for giving me a second chance.” (287). It shows that he really wants this surgery. He wants to be smart. It gives him hope in becoming intelligent. Hope shines once again when Charlie realizes he's getting smarter. He now knows he is 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.” (293). This quote shows proof because Charlie is getting smarter. He knows he is. It proves that he has hope in himself, and in his intelligence. Hope shines through Charlie a lot. He shows it quite a bit, especially when it comes to his intelligence.

Overall, Hope is used throughout the story in many instances. It usually shines through the character Charlie. Hope is an important factor in the story because it is shown throughout the characters. Like Charlie, he has hope. Hope in becoming intelligent. It affected Charlie in many ways. It made him have faith in himself, in his intelligence. In the end, hope is an important factor. It has its ups and downs. You may not think that it's there but in the end it is always there.