OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 8 ENGLISH/HANDOUT 16

Around the World in Eighty Days Spelling Review

The following sentences are from *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Pay attention to words that may be challenging to spell, because there will be a spelling assessment soon. Your teacher will decide when this assessment will occur.

Spelling test date:_____

1. Was Phileas Fogg rich? Undoubtedly. But those who knew him best could not imagine how he had made his fortune, and Mr. Fogg was the last person to whom to apply for the information. He was not lavish, nor, on the contrary, avaricious; for, whenever he knew that money was needed for a noble, useful, or benevolent purpose, he supplied it quietly and sometimes anonymously.

2. Calm and phlegmatic, with a clear eye, Mr. Fogg seemed a perfect type of that English composure which Angelica Kauffmann has so skilfully represented on canvas.

3. In short, the house in Saville Row, which must have been a very temple of disorder and unrest under the illustrious but dissipated Sheridan, was cosiness, comfort, and method idealised.

4. A memorandum of the wager was at once drawn up and signed by the six parties, during which Phileas Fogg preserved a stoical composure. He certainly did not bet to win, and had only staked the twenty thousand pounds, half of his fortune, because he foresaw that he might have to expend the other half to carry out this difficult, not to say unattainable, project. As for his antagonists, they seemed much agitated; not so much by the value of their stake, as because they had some scruples about betting under conditions so difficult to their friend.

5. One was the British consul at Suez, who, despite the prophecies of the English Government, and the unfavourable predictions of Stephenson, was in the habit of seeing, from his office window, English ships daily passing to and fro on the great canal, by which the old roundabout route from England to India by the Cape of Good Hope was abridged by at least a half. The other was a small, slight-built personage, with a nervous, intelligent face, and bright eyes peering out from under eyebrows which he was incessantly twitching. He was just now manifesting unmistakable signs of impatience, nervously pacing up and down, and unable to stand still for a moment.

6. This methodical record thus contained an account of everything needed, and Mr. Fogg always knew whether he was behind-hand or in advance of his time.

7. He was not listening, but was cogitating a project. Passepartout and he had now reached the shop, where Fix left his companion to make his purchases, after recommending him not to miss the steamer, and hurried back to the consulate. Now that he was fully convinced, Fix had quite recovered his equanimity.

8. Everybody knows that the great reversed triangle of land, with its base in the north and its apex in the south, which is called India, embraces fourteen hundred thousand square miles, upon which is spread unequally a population of one hundred and eighty millions of souls. The British Crown exercises a real and despotic dominion over the larger portion of this vast country, and has a governor-general stationed at Calcutta, governors at Madras, Bombay, and in Bengal, and a lieutenant-governor at Agra.

9. The celebrated East India Company was all-powerful from 1756, when the English first gained a foothold on the spot where now stands the city of Madras, down to the time of the great Sepoy

insurrection. It gradually annexed province after province, purchasing them of the native chiefs, whom it seldom paid, and appointed the governor-general and his subordinates, civil and military.

10. Mr. Fogg accordingly tasted the dish, but, despite its spiced sauce, found it far from palatable. He rang for the landlord, and, on his appearance, said, fixing his clear eyes upon him, "Is this rabbit, sir?"

11. Passepartout was now plunged into absorbing reverie. Up to his arrival at Bombay, he had entertained hopes that their journey would end there; but, now that they were plainly whirling across India at full speed, a sudden change had come over the spirit of his dreams. His old vagabond nature returned to him; the fantastic ideas of his youth once more took possession of him.

12. The discordant tones of the voices and instruments drew nearer, and now droning songs mingled with the sound of the tambourines and cymbals.

13. And, if she were not, you cannot conceive what treatment she would be obliged to submit to from her relatives. They would shave off her hair, feed her on a scanty allowance of rice, treat her with contempt; she would be looked upon as an unclean creature, and would die in some corner, like a scurvy dog. The prospect of so frightful an existence drives these poor creatures to the sacrifice much more than love or religious fanaticism. Sometimes, however, the sacrifice is really voluntary, and it requires the active interference of the Government to prevent it.

14. The detective was not far wrong in making this conjecture. Since leaving London, what with travelling expenses, bribes, the purchase of the elephant, bails, and fines, Mr. Fogg had already spent more than five thousand pounds on the way, and the percentage of the sum recovered from the bank robber promised to the detectives, was rapidly diminishing.

15. But could he even wait till they reached Hong Kong? Fogg had an abominable way of jumping from one boat to another, and, before anything could be effected, might get full under way again for Yokohama.

16. Fix and Passepartout saw that they were in a smoking-house haunted by those wretched, cadaverous, idiotic creatures to whom the English merchants sell every year the miserable drug called opium, to the amount of one million four hundred thousand pounds—thousands devoted to one of the most despicable vices which afflict humanity! The Chinese government has in vain attempted to deal with the evil by stringent laws.

17. Passepartout felt himself yielding more and more to the effects of the liquor.

18. But the Frenchman did not appear, and, without doubt, was still lying under the stupefying influence of the opium.

19. Late in the day they passed through the capricious channels of Hong Kong, and the Tankadere, impelled by favourable winds, conducted herself admirably.

20. The sea was less boisterous, since the wind came off land—a fortunate circumstance for the boat, which would suffer, owing to its small tonnage, by a heavy surge on the sea.

21. The next morning poor, jaded, famished Passepartout said to himself that he must get something to eat at all hazards, and the sooner he did so the better. He might, indeed, sell his watch; but he would have starved first. Now or never he must use the strong, if not melodious voice which nature had bestowed upon him.

22. One, with a fan and some bits of paper, performed the graceful trick of the butterflies and the flowers; another traced in the air, with the odorous smoke of his pipe, a series of blue words, which composed a compliment to the audience; while a third juggled with some lighted candles, which he extinguished successively as they passed his lips, and relit again without interrupting for an instant his juggling. Another reproduced the most singular combinations with a spinning-top; in his hands the revolving tops seemed to be animated with a life of their own in their interminable whirling; they ran over pipe-stems, the edges of sabres, wires and even hairs stretched across the stage; they turned around on the edges of large glasses, crossed bamboo ladders, dispersed into all the corners, and produced strange musical effects by the combination of their various pitches of tone.

23. Aouda, leaning upon Mr. Fogg's arm, observed the tumultuous scene with surprise, while Fix asked a man near him what the cause of it all was. Before the man could reply, a fresh agitation arose; hurrahs and excited shouts were heard; the staffs of the banners began to be used as offensive weapons; and fists flew about in every direction.

24. The road grew, on the prairies, a mile and a half a day. A locomotive, running on the rails laid down the evening before, brought the rails to be laid on the morrow, and advanced upon them as fast as they were put in position.

25. At eight o'clock a steward entered the car and announced that the time for going to bed had arrived; and in a few minutes the car was transformed into a dormitory. The backs of the seats were thrown back, bedsteads carefully packed were rolled out by an ingenious system, berths were suddenly improvised, and each traveller had soon at his disposition a comfortable bed, protected from curious eyes by thick curtains.

26. These innumerable multitudes of ruminating beasts often form an insurmountable obstacle to the passage of the trains; thousands of them have been seen passing over the track for hours together, in compact ranks.

27. The Elder's story became somewhat wearisome, and his audience grew gradually less, until it was reduced to twenty passengers. But this did not disconcert the enthusiast, who proceeded with the story of Joseph Smith's bankruptcy in 1837, and how his ruined creditors gave him a coat of tar and feathers; his reappearance some years afterwards, more honourable and honoured than ever, at Independence, Missouri, the chief of a flourishing colony of three thousand disciples, and his pursuit thence by outraged Gentiles, and retirement into the Far West.

28. A clay and pebble wall, built in 1853, surrounded the town; and in the principal street were the market and several hotels adorned with pavilions. The place did not seem thickly populated. The streets were almost deserted, except in the vicinity of the temple, which they only reached after having traversed several quarters surrounded by palisades.

29. Thus was celebrated the inauguration of this great railroad, a mighty instrument of progress and civilisation, thrown across the desert, and destined to link together cities and towns which do not yet exist.

30. Passepartout was delighted. His master's last exploit, the consequences of which he ignored, enchanted him. Never had the crew seen so jolly and dexterous a fellow. He formed warm friendships with the sailors, and amazed them with his acrobatic feats. He thought they managed the vessel like gentlemen, and that the stokers fired up like heroes. His loquacious good-humour infected everyone.

A History of Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*

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LIBR 548F: History of the Book
Anne Russell
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Introduction

Many people have read Daniel Keyes' 1966 science fiction classic, *Flowers for Algernon*. Both in its short-story format and its full-length novel format, the book is a staple in many school curriculums. The story of Charlie Gordon, the mentally-disabled man who just wants to be smart, has touched the hearts and minds of readers across the world for more than 40 years. This paper will take a look at the history of this important and influential novel.

The Story and Its Reviews

Flowers for Algernon tells the moving story of a sweet-tempered, mentally disabled, 36-year-old man named Charlie Gordon. The novel is written in the first person via a series of journal-like progress reports. Charlie desperately wants to become smarter, so he is excited that two scientists are using him as a human guinea pig to test their technique for increasing intelligence. Dr. Strauss' and Professor Nemur's experiment thus far has only been performed on one mouse named Algernon. In preparation for his own surgery, Charlie is made to finish a maze in a race against this mouse. Algernon wins the race, but not long after Charlie's surgery, he is easily finishing the maze before Algernon. He soon leaves his janitorial job at the bakery to start a new life. As Charlie's intelligence increases, his progress reports become more sophisticated, with correct spelling and syntax and complex thoughts. In addition to an increased mental intelligence, Charlie experiences an increased emotional intelligence, and he comes to discover that the men he had worked with at the bakery, men who he had formerly considered friends weren't really his friends after all. Charlie also begins to remember his painful childhood, his mother who resented him, and his younger sister who treated Charlie poorly because she thought he received special treatment, even though she received more attention from their mother than

Charlie did. Charlie falls in love with and starts dating Alice Kinnian, his former night school teacher at the Center for Retarded Adults. Eventually, Charlie becomes even smarter than the scientists who "created" him, but with this powerful intellect comes the crushing understanding of the experiment's eventual failure. Towards the end of the book, Charlie watches as Algernon's intelligence rapidly decreases, and he knows that the same fate awaits him. Algernon eventually dies, and Charlie buries the mouse in his backyard. Despite his best attempts at holding on to even a little of the knowledge he gained, he eventually becomes the same as he was before.

The novel was well received when it was published, and continues to receive good reviews to this day. Many critics commented on Keyes' extraordinary ability to touch the hearts and minds of readers. "Charlie's hopeless knowledge that he is destined to end in a home for the feeble-minded, a moron who knows that he is a moron, is painful, and Mr. Keyes has the technical equipment to prevent us from shrugging off the pain." ("Making up a Mind" 1966).

Many critics commented on the effective use of the progress reports to tell the story. "The revelation of Charlie's raw hopes and dreams through his laborious "progris riports" works so well because the arc of his progress is apparent in his spelling, grammar, and word choices, as well as in what he chooses to record about his life" (Shelby 1998).

The critics also touched on the ethical and moral themes that the book presented. One critic highlighted one of the difficult lessons that Charlie had to learn: "increased intelligence does not hold the key to positive social interactions, to happiness, or to peace of mind" (Ickes-Dunbar 2004, 3). This reviewer also pointed out how much closer we are to the reality of the book: "What was science fiction in 1959 is science in 2004. What seemed far-fetched fifty years ago seems highly plausible today in the dawning era of genetic engineering" (Ickes-Dunbar 2004, 7).

Background

Daniel Keyes' development of the story occurred in bits and pieces. It first started in 1945 while riding the subway train to New York University. During the ride, he contemplated how his pre-med major (his parents idea) was at odds with his desire to write. He thought to himself, "My education is driving a wedge between me and the people I love." Then he wondered, "What would happen if it were possible to increase a person's intelligence?" (Keyes 1999, 16). And so the seed was planted. Algernon the mouse was inspired by a dissection Keyes had to perform on a mouse in a university science class and the name Algernon came from the poet Algernon Swinburne, a name Keyes recalled because he thought it was so unusual. Keyes wanted to study psychoanalysis in graduate school so he could learn about what motivated people. The professors he encountered were the inspiration for Nemur and Strauss in the book.

In 1957, Keyes was working as a teacher for a special needs English class. One day a student said to him, "I know this is a dummy class, and I want to ask you: If I try hard and I get smart by the end of the term, will you put me in a regular class? I want to be smart." (Keyes 1999, 97). The student's question haunted Keyes and stuck with him. The next year, when the editor of the science fiction magazine *Galaxy* called and asked for a story from Keyes, he remembered his thoughts on the train all those years ago, and the elements of the story started falling into place. When the editor wanted the ending changed so that Charlie retained his intelligence, married Alice, and lived happily ever after, Keyes refused, and instead sold his story to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. It was published as the lead story of the April 1959 issue.

The story was a success, and the next year in 1960, Daniel Keyes found himself accepting a Hugo Award (one of science fiction's highest honors) for best science fiction

novelette of the year. That year the story was also reprinted in *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction* and in the *Fifth Annual of the Year's Best Science Fiction*. In 1961 it was reprinted in *Best Articles and Stories* and *Literary Cavalcade*. Also in 1961, it was adapted for television in the drama *The Two Worlds of Charlie Gordon*. Keyes went on to expand the story into a full novel, which was published in 1966 by Harcourt Brace. It won science fiction's other highest honor, the Nebula Award and it quickly became a bestseller. In 1968, the Bantam paperback edition was published. That year also saw the film adaptation's release, *Charly*. Cliff Robertson won an Academy Award for his portrayal of the main character in the movie (Scholes 1975, n.p.). Among other things, it was also a Broadway musical in 1978, *Charlie and Algernon*, and a television drama in 2000.

Historical Context

For readers in the twenty-first century, *Flowers for Algernon* is a moving story about mentally disabled man. But for readers in the 1960s, the book was much more than that. In the United States, society and culture were in the process of transforming their thinking about the mentally disabled. The civil rights movement was focused on acquiring equal rights for African Americans, but it also meant that attention was given to the idea of equal treatment for all people. The book was published at a time when there was a "growing awareness of the problems and the rights of minority groups" ("Historical Context" 2004).

The President's Panel on Mental Retardation was organized in 1962 and the Declaration of the General and Specific Rights of the Mentally Retarded was created in 1968. Just a few years later, "developmental disability" replaced the term "retardation." In addition, laws were passed that protected the mentally handicapped from violence and discrimination. In the years to

follow, many issues regarding the mentally handicapped were finally dealt with in the legislature and the courts. So it is clear that the message in *Flowers for Algernon*, a message of tolerance and understanding, reflected the social and political struggles of the time ("Historical Context" 2004).

In the 1950s and 1960s, most people were familiar with psychoanalysis as a treatment of emotional disorders because of the widely-known and influential theories of Sigmund Freud. Repression, neurosis, and the unconscious were familiar concepts to most people, as was the idea of human motivation stemming from childhood experiences. Thus, readers of the novel would have recognized the psychosocial themes of Charlie's emotional problems that stemmed from the childhood abuse he suffered at the hands of his mother ("Historical Context" 2004).

Another trend of the day was a focus on scientific research. It was the height of the Cold War and many government organizations and private foundations spent millions on scientific research. Competition for obtaining and keeping funding in universities was intense. With this knowledge in mind, the pressure that Professor Nemur and Dr. Strauss feel to carry out a successful experiment on Charlie is even more understandable ("Historical Context" 2004).

It should be noted that despite the acknowledgement of the rights of mentally handicapped people at this time, political correctness was often lacking. For example, in a review of the book in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Charlie is referred to as a "moron" ("Making up a Mind" 1966), which was a common term used to refer to the mentally disabled, and even had scientific grounding in that it was the official classification for people with an IQ between 50 and 69. While the readers of this 1966 review wouldn't have thought twice about the word, today it is considered offensive to label a mentally disabled person as a moron.

Influence

In addition to being a very popular book, *Flowers for Algernon* has also been a socially and culturally influential book. The novel has an especially striking ability to appeal to adolescent readers. Like Charlie, they "are struggling with their own emerging intellect and conflicting social needs. They often experience troubled relationships with peers who are perceived as 'different'" (Ickes-Dunbar 2004, 3). The novel also teaches students a lesson in empathy in way that no teacher or parent could ever convey through lecturing. Through Charlie's eyes, many students are able to discover what it is like to be on the outside, to be tormented and teased and made fun of. Students' reactions range from "I know how Charlie feels" to "I wanted to say 'sorry!' to all the people in my life that I have ever made fun of" (Ickes-Dunbar 2004, 7).

Students at Kimball Middle School in Arlington Heights, Illinois were so inspired after reading *Flowers for Algernon* that they decided to make up their own project for class. They set out to collect donations for Little Angels, a home for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Their goal was $200, but in the end, the students collected $246 in change from students and $100 worth of individual contributions from teachers and staff at the school. They delivered the donations to the home, along with craft supplies, videos, and books on tape for the residents (Tabor 2000, n.p.).

Flowers for Algernon has been published around the world, including Japan. A 1999 survey in Japan asked more than 24,000 Japanese people to name the most memorable book they had ever read. The most popular choice was *Flowers for Algernon*, which was published in Japan in 1978 and it quickly created a large following. Just as in America, the book is often read by young students in school (Reynolds 1999, n.p.).

The book was so widely popular and influential that in 1999 – 40 years after his story first appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* – Daniel Keyes published *Algernon, Charlie and I: A Writer's Journey*. The book traced the journey of his most popular novel, starting with his childhood desire to write and following the evolution of the story through novelette, novel, movie, and beyond. Through the retelling of this journey, Keyes talks about the life of an author, the writing process, and the trials and tribulations of getting published. He also gives the reader a fascinating look into the development of the plot, as outlined above.

Challenges

Despite its popularity with readers around the world, some people have challenged *Flowers for Algernon* in the U.S., usually attempting to have it banned from school libraries or curriculums. The book is #47 on the American Library Association's list of most frequently challenged books (ALA 2004). These challenges almost always center around the parts of the book where Charlie experiences a sexual awakening in connection with his love for Alice, and then he starts remembering his mother's brutal punishments when he started expressing sexual interests as an adolescent.

Steve Rose was a 10th grade English teacher in central Nebraska and he had taught *Flowers for Algernon* for many years. However, one year, a parent declared that he did not want his son to read the book because he found it objectionable. Neither did he want his son present during class discussions of the book. Even though past class discussions had never come close to being offensive, Rose agreed to have the student read a different book. The following year when it came time to teach the book to the new class of 10th graders, the parent from the previous year distributed photocopies of the "racy" sections of the novel to several churches in town. These

sections had to do with Charlie's struggle with sexuality and romantic relationships, which most would consider tastefully written. Even though no parents came forward with photocopy in hand demanding their children not read the book, the principle wanted the book pulled right away. During a school board meeting to discuss the issue, the only parent who showed up was the original father who had first come forward. With the lack of concern among parents, in the end, Rose was allowed to teach the book. (Rose 1998, 84).

But this was unfortunately not the only example of attempted censorship of the book. The *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* documented at least nine other challenges of the book. In 1977, parents and community religious leaders in Emporium, Pennsylvania, successfully pressured the school board to remove *Flowers for Algernon* from all the schools in the district. They objected to the book because of references to sex, specifically the scene that dealt with Charlie's attempt to understand his sexual desires. Parents felt that the scene would stir students "natural impulses" (*Newsletter* 1977, 73)

Parents in Oberlin Ohio objected to the book because of the detailed sexual encounter described. But a review committee and the school board voted not to remove the book, arguing that the sexual descriptions were not blatant and the overall theme of the book offered the opportunity for important ethical discussions in the classroom (*Newsletter* 1984, 26).

Amazingly enough, *Flowers for Algernon* has received some interesting comparisons to pornography. In Glen Rose, Arkansas, Keyes' book was compared to "books in plastic covers you see at newsstands." So school officials banned the book because of the sex scenes and explicit and obscene four-letter words (*Newsletter* 1981, 91). In Glenrock, Wyoming, a parent, who was also a community religious leader, objected to the book's use in school. He compared it to *Playboy* and *Hustler* and other forms of pornography and claimed that he had found several

explicit and distasteful love scenes just by "flipping through the book." The school board voted to keep the book in the high school curriculum anyway (*Newsletter* 1984, 122).

The book has also been challenged in Plant City, Florida, Arizona, Virginia, and Georgia. All of the challenges centered around an objection to the adult themes, profanity, and references to sex and drinking that could be found in the book (Newsletter 1976, 85; 1981, 47; 1996, 100; 1997, 97).

Conclusion

Flowers for Algernon has never gone out of print, having been through more than 30 printings. It has sold more than five million copies, been translated into 27 languages, and has been published in 30 countries. It has been a novelette, TV drama, full-length film, and full-length novel. In 2004, the book was re-released yet again by Harcourt in a new paperback edition. The story's popularity is a testament to the enduring legacy of Daniel Keyes remarkable storytelling ability. He transformed a piece of science fiction into a touching story of one man's intellectual rise and fall. Keyes could not forget the student who told him, "I want to be smart." In the same way, the reader of *Flowers for Algernon* cannot forget the sad story of a man's transformation from mentally disabled to smart and back again. And even though the reader remembers the entire experience, Charlie mostly does not. "I bet Im the frist dumb persen in the world who found out some thing inportent for sience. I did somthing but I dont remembir what. So I gess its like I did it for all the dumb pepul like me in Warren and all over the world" (Keyes 1966, 311). And just as Charlie wept when he buried Algernon and put a bunch of wildflowers on the grave, the reader will likely weep at the end of Charlie's last progress report: "please if you get a chanse put some flowrs on Algernons grave in the bak yard."

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