“Flowers For Algernon” is a story about a man who suffers from developmental brain differences. In this story, the man is selected for an experimental procedure that will make him “smart.”

*I dont know why but he says its importint Is so they will see if they will use me. I hope they use me. Miss Kinnian says Ie maybe they can make me smart. I want to be smart.*

The story follows the life of Charlie Corgon, who is mentally handicapped, as he is given an experimental operation on his brain that is said to increase intelligence. Charlie is selected for the experimental procedure because he has good “motor-vation” and is “intristed and eager to please.” Charlie is also told that if the operation “works perminint they will make everybody smart all over the world.” This implies that Charlie is being used as an experimental patient because of his apparent lack of intellect and importance in society. After the operation, there is no sign of improvement, because the operation was simply meant to increase Charlie’s intelligence. The sentence structure of the progress reports is still choppy and difficult to follow, and there are many spelling mistakes. As time progresses, Charlie is taught how to write effectively and clearly. Eventually he becomes more intelligent than the doctors who are overseeing the experimental procedure and its outcome. He begins to work and study the procedure and its effects. Eventually, Algernon, the animal test subject who received the procedure before Charlie, begins to behaviourally and intellectually devolve. Charlie soon understands that he will also begin to devolve back to his original state. While he is still at his high mental state, he writes a “report entitled, ‘The Algernon-Gordon Effect: A Study of Structure and Function of Increased Intelligence,’ which [he] would like to have [Dr. Strauss] read and have published.” He concludes “Artificially increased intelligence deteriorates at a rate of time directly proportional to the quantity of the increase.” In other words, he will deteriorate just as quickly has he became intelligent.

This story fits into the theme of my anthology because it discusses the struggle between nature and mankind where mankind constantly tries to ‘outwit’ nature by circumventing natural boundaries to things like human intelligence. Charlie’s use as a *guinea pig* in the experimental operation simply proves that at the time this book was written, people with mental disabilities were not seen as products of nature, but instead simply as voids that can be used as experiments. As Charlie progresses in his intelligence, he starts to see that people have viewed him in a negative light for his entire life, and that he has a chance to make a difference. One of the final messages of this short story seems to be that nature is not to be tampered with, and that people like Charlie Gordon have equal right to live. For this reason, the story fits the theme of conflict between nature and mankind, as humans in this story are trying to overpower and circumvent the restrictions of nature.