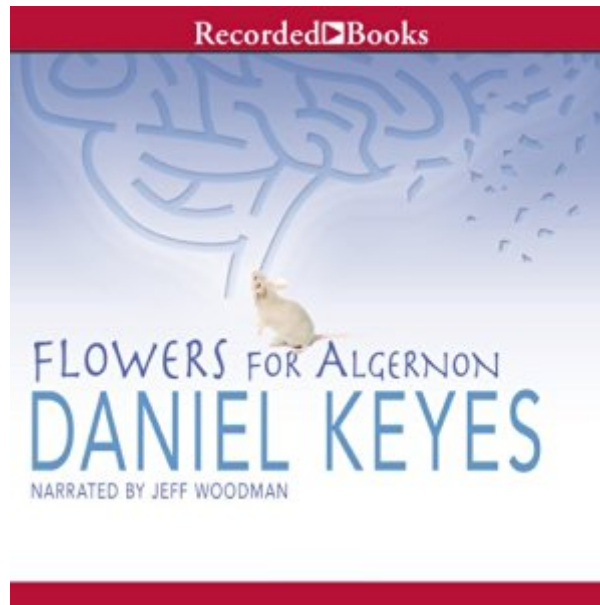


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Flowers For Algernon



Synopsis

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES ONLY. When brain surgery makes a mouse into a genius, dull-witted Charlie Gordon wonders if it might also work for him. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours and 58 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: August 31, 2009

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B002NRMNR6

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Audiobooks > Children's Books > Fiction

Customer Reviews

I read this book for school when I was in 7th grade, and just finished re-reading it ten years and a degree in biology later. I loved it when I was a teen, and (after forcing myself to ignore my instinctive scientific skepticism) still love it today. It's a very thought-provoking story, all the more so when you consider that it was written about 40 years ago when society was a bit less tolerant of the mentally retarded than it is now. Charlie is a man in his 30s with an IQ of 68 when the book starts; through a controversial experimental operation, his IQ gets higher and higher until it soars at one point to 185. The story is told through the journal entries that he is told to keep for the researchers in charge of the study. Through Charlie's words, you can see how sharply his intellect grows and how difficult it is for him because as smart as he becomes, his *emotional* intelligence is still that of a child. Charlie's emergence from ignorance is painful for him; imagine learning all of life's hard truths in a matter of weeks rather than the normal development from innocent child to worldly adult. And the ending of the book is heartwrenching. Everyone should read "Flowers for Algernon" at some point in their life. It's a classic.

I was so surprised by this book. *Flowers For Algernon* was one of the best books I've read this year and I really wasn't expecting it. It is the story of Charlie Gordon, a man in his thirties with mental retardation. Charlie is the subject of a psychological research project at a university that is examining the effects of a new surgical procedure on mental retardation. Charlie's estranged sister gives the university permission to perform the procedure on Charlie. The procedure proves to be at least a temporary success and Charlie goes from having mental retardation to having an IQ of 185 in a matter of weeks. The experiment is initially tried on a white mouse named Algernon. Algernon is tested through a complex maze where he is rewarded by food after reaching the end. Charlie races Algernon with a maze of his own and receives a shock if he goes the wrong way. At the beginning of the book, Algernon beats Charlie to the finish line every time. But Charlie soon soars past Algernon and through the process grows close to the mouse. The book is written in the form of journal entries kept by Charlie for the experiment. At the beginning of the book, words are misspelled, ideas are vague, and relationships are simple. As the book progresses, so does Charlie's thought process and so do his relationships. Charlie learns what true love is as he falls in love with his teacher, Alice. He learns what physical love is as he comes into contact with his artistic and eccentric neighbor, Fay. And he learns the pains of relational love as he relives memories of his family and friends. What was most touching to me about this book were these flashbacks and moments of recognition. When Charlie was still mentally retarded, he didn't realize when people were laughing at him or making fun of him. He didn't realize that when his mother was crying it was because she was ashamed to have him as a son. But now that he has had this operation he is able to look back on these situations and realize what was going on. You can imagine the pain of this. Charlie is initially excited about "becoming smart". He's been teased throughout his life for "being a moron" and has been the subject of people's amusement. What Charlie soon finds is that acceptance is a hard thing to come by. Charlie goes straight from mentally retarded to genius. As a genius, he is seen as arrogant and absurd and is once again estranged by his peers.

This is a wonderful and highly original novel about a mentally challenged man named Charlie who wanted to be smart. One day, his wish was granted. A group of scientists selected him for an experimental operation which would raise his intelligence to genius level. Suddenly, Charlie found himself transformed, and life, as he knew it, changed. His story is told entirely through Charlie's eyes and perceptions in the form of progress reports. The reader actually sees the change in Charlie take place, as his progress reports become more complex, well written, and filled with the angst of personal discovery and growth, as well as with his gradual awareness of his amazing and

accelerated intellectual development. The progress reports are a wonderful contrivance for facilitating the story, and the reader is one with Charlie on his voyage of self-discovery. What happens to Charlie in the long run is profoundly moving and thought provoking. It is no wonder that this author was the recipient of the Nebula Award, which is given by the Science Fiction Writers of America for having written the Best Novel of the Year. This is definitely a book well worth reading and having in one's personal collection. Bravo!

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