

## Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes Writing Assignment-Success?

There are many different ways of measuring success. For some people, very tangible things like money or material goods measure success. For others, success is gauged in a more intangible way by how much happiness one finds in relationships with family and friends.

**Task:** Write an essay in which you analyze and decide whether or not Charlie from Daniel Keyes's short story, "Flowers for Algernon" is a success. You will base your analysis on the poem "What Is Success?" by Ralph Waldo Emerson. In a three paragraph essay, prove your claim that Charlie **IS** a success or Charlie **IS NOT** a success.

### Plan Ahead...

- Read the poem "What Is Success?" by Ralph Waldo Emerson.
- Determine what the requirements for success are according to Emerson.
- Decide whether or not Charlie Gordon's life is a success based on Emerson's definition.

### Gather Text-Based Evidence

List the requirements for success that are mentioned in the poem. When it applies, find an example from the text that illustrates that idea.

Requirement for Success	Example from "Flowers for Algernon"
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8a.	
8b.	
8c.	
9.	

**The Question:** Explain how Charlie Gordon is a success according to Emerson's poem "What is Success?"

**Type of writing:** Argument- you must make a claim, support it with relevant evidence from both texts, and provide ONE counterclaim (negates or disagrees with your claim) and a rebuttal for that counterclaim (negates or disagrees with counterclaim) in a well-written essay.

**Be sure to:**

- Include an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- State your claim and provide evidence from BOTH texts to support it.
- Provide ONE counterclaim and a rebuttal for that counterclaim.

**Model Argument Paper:**

If you asked ten people to define success, they would probably define it in ten different ways. Success depends on the experiences a person has had in their life. There are a wide variety of factors that lead to a person's definition of success. According to "What is Success?" by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charlie, the main character in "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes, is a success.

Using Emerson's definition, Charlie Gordon is a success. Although Charlie has not won the affection of children, he has won the respect of intelligent people. Dr. Strauss and Dr. Nemur are both highly intelligent people. It is clear that they respect Charlie because they allow him to continue their research on his own and give him his own lab. Also, Charlie learns to appreciate beauty he states, "I don't understand why I never noticed how beautiful Miss Kinnian really is." Here Charlie's increased intelligence allows him to appreciate beauty for the first time. Finally, Charlie is able to endure the betrayal of false friends. Although Joe Carp and Frank Reilly initially made fun of Charlie, they eventually became his friend. He endured their false friendship. Near the end of the story Charlie goes back to working at the factory. He is getting slower so he returns to being a janitor. When a new employee makes fun of him, Joe and Frank come to his defense. Frank Reilly says, "Charlie, if anybody bothers you, or tries to take advantage, you call me or Joe and we will set them straight." You can see that Joe and Frank have changed and become Charlie's true friends.

Success is described very specifically in Emerson's poem. Based on his definition, it is clear that Charlie Gordon is a success. Although people can describe success in a variety of ways, Charlie Gordon would be considered a success by many people.



## What is SUCCESS?

To laugh often and much  
to win the respect of intelligent people  
and affection of children; to earn the  
appreciation of honest critics and  
endure the betrayal of false friends;  
to appreciate beauty, to find the best  
in others; to leave the world a bit  
better, whether by a healthy child  
a garden patch or redeemed  
social condition; to know even  
one life has breathed easier because  
you have lived. This is to have  
succeeded.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



Requirement for Success	Example from "Flowers for Algernon"
1. laugh often/much	
2. win respect of intelligent people	
3. win affection of children	
4. earn appreciation of honest critics	
5. endure betrayal of false friends	
6. appreciate beauty	
7. find best in others	
8a. leave world better b/c of child	
8b. or b/c of garden patch	
8c. or b/c of redeemed social condition	
9. even one life breathed easier b/c of you	

