

Choosing the Most Appropriate Prompt for Your Lesson: A Customized MY Access!® Lesson on Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*.

Target Grade Level: Middle School

Time: 2-3 class periods

Keys Concepts: Narrative writing, Writing Process, Point of View, Character Analysis, Prompt Customization.

"Flowers for Algernon," by Daniel Keyes, is a novella that is commonly taught in middle school English classrooms across the country. The story is creatively written as a series of journal entries composed by the main character, Charlie Gordon, who undergoes experimental surgery in an attempt to increase his extremely low IQ. As the story progresses and Charlie's intelligence grows, he begins to accomplish tasks that were impossible for him to complete prior to his surgery. Perhaps for the first time in his life, Charlie experiences moments where he feels proud of himself.

Making MY Access!® Work Specifically for You: While MY Access!® has a literary prompt, "Human Engineering in 'Flowers for Algernon,'" that is specifically aligned to the story, you can also assess your students' understanding of Charlie's emotional transformation by tailoring the narrative prompt, "Feeling Proud." This process of adapting a narrative prompt to align with a literary text is an effective way to help students make the reading/writing connection and demonstrate their knowledge of a character.**

****However, Intellimetric prompts cannot be completely rewritten and still be effectively scored. Rather, if you are interested in refining or revising the text of an Intellimetric prompt to fit your instructional plan, we recommend that you consult with our Scoring Experts first. They can be reached by email at: ScoringCenter@vantage.com**

Customizing the Prompt:

Step 1: Select the middle school narrative IntelliMetric, "Feeling Proud." The prompt reads as follows:

From time to time, we do things that make us proud of ourselves. Sometimes we are the only ones who even know what we have done, but we recognize that performing a good deed is often its own reward. Write a narrative about something you did that made you feel proud. Describe what happened and explain why you felt a sense of pride. Remember to make sure the reader has enough details about your experience so he or she can picture it in his or her mind. As you write, remember your story will be scored based on how well you:

- develop a multi-paragraph response to the assigned topic that clearly communicates the purpose of your story to the audience.
- describe the characters, setting, and conflict using meaningful sensory descriptions and details that enable the reader to visualize the experiences in your narrative.
- organize your story in a clear and logical manner, including a beginning, middle and end.
- use well-structured sentences and language that are appropriate for your audience.
- edit your work to conform to the conventions of standard American English.

Use any of the tools available to you, such as the Checklist, Spellchecker, or Graphic Organizer.

Step 2: Using the Assignment Wizard, select your resources and assignment preferences in steps 2-5.

Step 3: Insert or type in the following revised text in step 6 “Special Instructions”

From time to time, we do things that make us proud of ourselves. Sometimes we are the only ones who even know what we have done, but we recognize that performing a good deed is often its own reward. Think about the many moments in “Flowers for Algernon” in which Charlie feels proud. For this story, put yourself in Charlie’s shoes. From Charlie’s point of view, write a story in which you describe one of Charlie’s proud moments and explain why he feels a sense of pride. Remember to make sure to provide enough details about the experience, so the reader can picture it in his or her mind.

Step 4: Print and distribute the [revised assignment](#). **NOTE:** Although students will see the original text “Feeling Proud,” remind students that they will be writing to the revised text displayed in “special instructions” located on the dropdown menu under the PROMPT button (*on the student writing screen*).

Prewriting: It is essential that your students engage in a prewriting activity in order to gather their thoughts before responding to this customized prompt. Attached to this blog are two graphic organizers. “[Filmstrip Ideas](#)” and “[Sensory Details](#)” graphic organizers are exclusively designed to assist your students in preparing to write to the “Feeling Proud” prompt. Both organizers ask the students to recall three moments Charlie feels proud of himself. Though the prompt asks students to write about only one of these moments, it is helpful for them to prewrite on more than one proud moment, in case they hit a dead end in the beginning stages of writing and decide to change topics. The two organizers also direct students to bring each proud moment to life through the use of sensory detail. By processing these details before beginning their first drafts, students are able to begin their essays with strong senses of what they would like to communicate and what information they will use to do so.

Composing: Once students have finished their prewriting, they are ready to go online and begin drafting their stories! Remember, when students are drafting online or offline, it is important for teachers to circulate throughout the lab or classroom, providing positive instructional feedback and suggestions to their students. If you have limited access to the computer lab, have your students write their first draft by hand. Then, when the computer lab is available, they can quickly type in their stories, receive immediate instructional feedback, and begin to increase their writing proficiency!

Publishing: When students have completed their final drafts, encourage them to print a published version of their work by clicking on the “Publish” icon in their student portfolio. This feature allows their work to be printed in a variety of visually pleasing themes, including Western, Rose, and Ocean Blue. These printed pieces make wonderful wall décor for Back to School or Open House and give students a small taste of what it feels like to be a published writer.

Culminating Activity: Have your students research the author, Daniel Keyes. Students can easily find safe and authoritative resources in iSEEK (<http://www.education.iseek.com/>). In their research, students will discover that Keyes' "[Flowers for Algernon](#)" was labeled as a banned book for many years. This is a perfect opportunity to transition into a debate on whether or not books should be banned, using iSEEK to research both sides of the argument, and the MY Access! middle school persuasive prompt, "Banning Books" as a writing component.

Contributor: *Stephanie Dixon. Stephanie Dixon is a former 8th grade English teacher, user of MY Access!, and TOSA (teacher on special assignment) support provider for teachers using MY Access! within her district. She used the following lesson with her students and was extremely pleased with their deep, insightful, and polished responses. She hopes that this lesson will connect with your students in the same way that it did with hers.*

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