“Flowers for Algernon” by Daniel Keyes

Part II pgs. 51-62 Discussion Questions

1. What is ironic about Dr. Stauss’s reminder to Charlie to speak and write simply so people will understand him?
2. Describe Charlie’s relationship with Dr. Strauss and Dr. Nemur.
3. Describe Charlie’s relationship with Miss Kinnian.
4. How are the effects of the operation ironic (the opposite of what he expected)?
5. What is ironic about Charlie’s plan to review Vrostadt’s equation on Levels of Semantic Progression in order to communicate more effectively with people?
6. How does the dishwasher’s experience here resemble episodes from Charlie’s own life? Why is Charlie furious at himself as well as the smirking crowd?
7. What does, “A child may not know how to feed itself, or what to eat, yet it knows of hunger” mean?
8. Describe Algernon’s decline. What could this mean for Charlie?
9. Why is time suddenly important to Charlie?
10. Charlie says, “I know I should rest, but I ‘m driven on by something inside that won’t let me stop.” What is that something?
11. Why does Charlie sign his letter to Dr. Strauss with Charles instead of Charlie?
12. How does Charlie’s behavior on page 55 of not wanting to see Dr. Strauss mirror Algernon’s behavior earlier in the story?

FYI: It is no coincidence that Charlie no longer understands Paradise Lost by John Milton. Paradise Lost is an epic poem about Adam and Eve and their lost innocence once they eat from the tree of knowledge.

1. Provide two pieces of evidence in how Charlie writes that prove his condition is declining.
2. Why might Charlie think of his parents at this point in the story?
3. Why is it ironic that Joe Carp and Frank Reilly act as Charlie’s protectors.
4. How does the story end?
5. Go back to the journal entry you responded to about if it’s better to be smart of popular. What do you think now that you’ve read the story?