

Unit Overview: Parent Guide

Flowers for Algernon, Grade 8

What is the goal of this unit?

- Your child will read fiction and nonfiction texts about knowledge and intelligence to understand what happens when humans try to manipulate the minds of others and how our understanding of intelligence has evolved over time. Your child will explore how authors draw on traditional stories and develop characters and themes to teach us about ourselves and others.

What topics and skills is your eighth grader learning in this unit?

- Knowledge
- Intelligence
- Mind control
- Character development
- Theme
- Informational writing

What tasks will your child engage in to help them consider the topics and skills of this unit?

- **Culminating Writing Task:** Your child will bring together all her learning near the end of the unit by writing an essay that responds to the prompt: *Consider how Charlie has changed from the beginning of "Flowers for Algernon." How does the surgery improve or worsen his quality of life?*
- **Extension Task:** Your child will extend her learning by conducting research to write an informative essay which (1) presents at least 2 different theories of intelligence and (2) explains why each theory is or is not widely accepted today.

Your child will read these texts and watch these video clips:

Text Title	Author/Source	How it is used in the Unit
"Flowers for Algernon"	Daniel Keyes	Main text of the unit
"What's in an Inkblot? Some Say, Not Much"	Erica Goode	Student text
<i>Old Greek Stories: The Story of Prometheus</i>	James Baldwin	Student text
<i>Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus</i>	Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley	Student text

Charly	Ralph Nelson	Read Aloud
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Ideas for discussing knowledge and intelligence

- What is knowledge?
- What is intelligence?
- Can knowledge or intelligence be gained over time?
- Can you be intelligent without having knowledge?
- Can you have knowledge and not be intelligent?
- How has our understanding of intelligence changed over the years?

Want to deepen your and your child's knowledge on the topic being studied?

Here is a suggested reading list:

Title	Author
To Kill a Mockingbird	Harper Lee
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time	Mark Haddon
Adolescent Brains Are Works in Progress	PBS/Frontline
Brain Development in Teenagers	Oxford Sparks
Insight Into the Teenage Brain	TedXYouth CalTech

What does independent reading look like at home?

Independent reading gives your child the opportunity to read and interact with books that are on her reading level and that address topics that she chooses. Supporting independent reading at home helps build your child's confidence with reading, her reading stamina and reading achievement, and will help her do better in school.

Here are some ways you can encourage independent reading at home:

- Let your child pick out books that she finds interesting
- Prioritize reading. Protect time every day for reading (weekends and school breaks too!). Before bedtime is a great time to read.
- Read together
- Read aloud
- Discuss your child's reading. Ask questions like:
 - Tell me about what you read today.
 - What did you like about it?

- What didn't you like about it?
- What did you learn?
- What questions do you have about what you read?
- What didn't you understand about what you read?
- What do you want to learn more about after reading?
- How does what you've read connect to other things you've read?