

Are There Perks of Being a Wallflower?

The Perks of Being a Wallflower, by Stephen Chbosky

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Fiction

206 pages

Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* tells the story of an insecure young boy named Charlie who, having been sexually abused, struggles with daily life. In order to cope with life's pressures, Charlie writes a series of journal entries about school, love, drugs, and family to an anonymous friend. Just as a missing puzzle piece tries to fit into a larger image, Charlie strives to find his place in society. Charlie's journal entries enable the reader to solve the mystery of the benefits of being a wallflower.

Perks may not be for everybody because it deals with dark issues. Some readers might be disturbed or saddened by Charlie. Charlie is pessimistic due to the emotional scars of having been raped. Even when his world is at peace his mind is always racing. He is nervous and quiet, but it is as if there are loud noises inside his head. Sometimes these thoughts are so alarming that it may turn off readers.

One of the strengths of *Perks* is that Chbosky draws deep characters. For example, Charlie says, "I don't want to start thinking again. Not like I have this last week. I can't think again. Not ever again. I don't know if you've ever felt like that. That you wanted to sleep for a

thousand years. Or just not exist. Or just not be aware that you do exist.” Passages like these force the reader to continue. People see themselves in these characters and can relate to them.

While Chbosky depicts well rounded characters, he also creates strong thematic plot lines, such as the one between Charlie and his friend Sam. This is best represented by the line “we accept the love we think we deserve.” This quote applies to one of the main characters, Sam, because she does not believe she deserves someone who treats her with respect.

Throughout the novel she pursues relationships with bad boys because that is the kind of love she thinks she deserves. Sam grows to learn that she deserves better and develops a new definition of the word love.

Although people may gravitate to boisterous personalities, it is frequently those who lurk in the background that are the most important. Charlie keeps quiet about his and other people’s secrets. Like a wallflower, Charlie absorbs his surroundings but fails to communicate or express his feelings. Chbosky shows his audience that all people have value and when one values themselves, others will also.

There are definitely perks of being a wallflower, as demonstrated by Charlie. For Charlie, a benefit is researching and virtually interacting in social situations, which would otherwise be too overwhelming. Watching and observing his surroundings gave him the confidence to break out of his shell and develop friendships.

“I do see life the way Charlie does. Actually, it was writing the book that made me understand I had so many of these thoughts and feelings about people and the world”, Chbosky articulated. The author of this novel is 43, and is a native of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Chbosky is a gifted author, editor, screenwriter and film director. He studied screenwriting in college at the

University of Southern California. His novel was made into a major motion picture which provided him recognition for his many talents. While developing Charlie as a character, Chbosky realized how much he and Charlie had in common. He wanted to see if other people share his views and would be interested in a book about a teenage boy experiencing the stress of adolescence.

This novel was astonishing and eye opening. Although I did not bond with the characters I learned from them. After reading this novel, I have a comprehensive grasp and appreciation for teenagers who are on the outside trying to fit in. I found this book to be a fantastic learning experience.

One criticism of Blind Brook High School is that everybody is a carbon-copy of one another. If most people label someone as “different”, that person may feel out of place. A person who feels out of the box will relate to *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and connect to Charlie. Even if the reader cannot relate to Charlie, the novel is worthwhile and memorable.

