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The Perks of being a Wallflower

(Stephen Chbosky)

The perks of being a wallflower is a novel written by Stephen Chbosky which follows the story of a teenager named Charlie. This is a coming-of-age novel which was published in 1999 and is set in the 1990s. The story deals with issues such as mental health, abuse, sexuality, and the complicated nature of teenagers.

Charlie, the 15-year-old narrator of The Perks of Being a Wallflower, has just started his first year of high school when the book begins. Charlie is the "wallflower" of the same name. He is quiet and reserved, but also extremely observant, always paying attention to everything that happens around him, even if he is only a silent witness. Charlie writes the entire book as a series of letters to an unnamed "friend". The reader never finds out who this "friend" is, and the "friend" never writes back. Each letter begins with the greeting "Dear friend" and ends with "Love always, Charlie." Since the recipient of the letters never writes back, the novel reads like a series of diaries. At the beginning of the novel, Charlie struggles with two traumatic deaths of loved ones in the past. The most recent death occurred last spring when his only high school friend committed suicide. When Charlie was seven years old, his beloved Aunt Helen died in a car accident on Christmas Eve, which is also Charlie's birthday. Although Charlie is nervous about entering high school, he soon receives approval from two primary sources. First, his English teacher Bill Anderson recognizes Charlie's literary talent and takes him under his wing, giving him extra books and essays to read throughout the year. In addition, Charlie begins to participate in more events and befriends Patrick and his half-sister Sam, who join him in the group of friends. Charlie has a huge crush on Sam that he talks about, but Sam treats him gently. Patrick, who is gay, has a close relationship with Brad, the football team's quarterback. Sam kisses Charlie so that his first kiss could be from someone who loves him. As the school year progresses, Charlie begins to come out of his shell, but Charlie's life, the lives of his family, and the lives of his friends become more and more complicated. The holidays are always a difficult time for Charlie's family because they bring back memories of Aunt Helen's death. This year is no exception. Although Charlie finds solace in reading and rereading *The Catcher in the Rye*, he continues to struggle with his depression and memories of Aunt Helen. But Charlie's acceptance by the group of friends helps him become more at peace with himself. As Charlie matures, his relationships with his siblings also deepen. Charlie's sister has an abusive boyfriend. Charlie tells Bill about the boyfriend and Bill tells their parents, which makes his sister angry at Charlie. However, when Charlie's sister becomes pregnant, she decides to have an abortion and trusts Charlie to drive her to the clinic. When Charlie appears as Rocky at one of his group of friends' regular screenings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Mary Elizabeth, a wise and beautiful older member of their group of friends, begins dating Charlie. However, Charlie is far more interested in Sam than in the relationship. During a game of truth or dare, Patrick dares to kiss the prettiest girl in the room and he kisses Sam. Mary Elizabeth angrily leaves the room. The rest of the party is in solidarity with Mary Elizabeth, and Patrick advises Charlie to stay away from everyone for a while until tempers cool down. Brad's abusive father

finds out about Patrick and Brad's relationship and Brad is sent to rehab. When Brad returns, he refuses to speak to Patrick. Patrick confronts Brad in the cafeteria, Brad makes disparaging comments about Patrick's homosexuality, and Brad's football teammates beat up Patrick. Charlie jumps in and breaks up the fight in a flurry. His defense against Patrick wins back the respect of Sam and his circle of friends. Patrick is deeply depressed and turns to Charlie for emotional support. Patrick gets drunk and kisses Charlie, but Charlie apologizes and Charlie realizes that Patrick is lonely and doesn't know how to deal with it. Later, Patrick sees Brad kissing a stranger in the park, which helps Patrick pull himself together and move on.

At the end of the school year, Charlie is further upset when all his older friends move away. As Sam packs her things to go to a summer preschool program, she and Charlie begin to make up and have sex, but Charlie suddenly feels very uncomfortable. Sexual contact brings up a repressed memory of Aunt Helen, who molested her as a child. In the epilogue, Charlie writes a final letter to his "friend" dated two months later, saying that his parents found him naked on the couch in a catatonic state. They take him to an insane asylum, where Charlie finally realizes that Aunt Helen sexually abused him, but that he repressed the memories. Charlie forgives the memory of his Aunt Helen, and the novel ends with Charlie writing that he intends to stop writing letters and become fully involved in her life.

The film adaptation of the book was released in 2012 and is also directed by the original author of the book, Mr. Stephen Chbosky. It authentically captures the essence of the novel while adding visual and emotional depth. Staying true to the narrative approach of the book, the film follows Charlie, played by Logan Lerman, on his journey of introspection during his freshman year of high school. The film effectively portrays the concepts of friendship, love and self-discovery when Charlie forms a strong bond with step-siblings Patrick and Sam, played by Ezra Miller and Emma Watson. Their performances bring the characters to life with honesty and nuance, conveying the complexities of youth. Visually, the film captures the mood of the early 1990s, and the music of popular songs from that era influenced the mood and emotions of important chapters. The cinematography effectively conveys Charlie's moments of inner struggle and joy, resulting in an immersive and realistic viewing experience.

Stephen Chbosky's "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" captivates readers and watchers alike with its significant portrayal of adolescence, friendship, and the journey of self-discovery. As with any adaptation from page to screen, the shift from novel to cinema results in both faithful depictions and significant variations. When comparing the novel with its film adaptation, it becomes clear that, while both mediums provide captivating insights into the protagonist Charlie's inner world, they do so in different ways, each with its own set of advantages. Chbosky's novel unfolds through a series of letters written by Charlie, giving readers an intimate and introspective glimpse into his thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This narrative style offers a unique perspective that allows readers to delve into Charlie's psyche as he navigates the challenges of adolescence. Through Charlie's letters, readers gain a deep understanding of his internal struggles, his search for acceptance, and his longing for connection. The epistolary format creates a sense of immediacy

and authenticity, drawing readers into Charlie's world and inviting them to empathize with his joys and sorrows. In contrast, the film adaptation of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* takes a more traditional narrative approach, translating Charlie's story to the big screen through visual storytelling and dialogue-driven scenes. While the film may not have the direct access to Charlie's inner thoughts that the novel offers, it makes up for it with strong performances, memorable visuals and a carefully curated soundtrack. Through expressive cinematography and skillful direction, the film captures the emotional nature of Charlie's journey and allows viewers to explore his experiences on a visceral level. In addition, the inclusion of music adds depth to key scenes, enhancing the overall impact of the story. One major difference between the novel and its film adaptation is the portrayal of the supporting characters. In the novel, Chbosky provides extensive character development and backstories for characters such as Patrick, Sam, and Charlie's family members, enriching the story with layers of complexity and depth. Through Charlie's letters, readers understand the motivations, fears and aspirations of these characters and form a deeper connection with them. In contrast, the film adaptation focuses mostly on Charlie's perspective and direct interactions, offering less insight into the inner lives of the supporting characters. While this streamlined approach may sacrifice some depth, it allows the film to maintain a tight narrative focus and keep the story moving briskly. In addition, the film adaptation of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* includes additional scenes and details not found in the novel, providing a fresh perspective on certain events and characters. These additions enhance the movie experience by providing a visual representation of key moments and enriching the story with new layers of meaning. For example, the film expands Charlie's relationships with his siblings and deepens his interactions with his classmates, providing a more complete picture of his social and family dynamics. Despite these differences, both the novel and the film *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* manage to capture the essence of Stephen Chbosky's beloved story. Whether experienced through the intimate prose of the novel or the haunting images of the film, Charlie's journey of self-discovery resonates with audiences of all ages, offering a poignant reminder of the universal struggles and triumphs of adolescence. Ultimately, whether you prefer the depth of the novel or the immediacy of the film, both versions offer a compelling exploration of friendship, love and the search for identity in the turbulent landscape of adolescence.

The novel resonates most deeply with its authenticity in depicting the raw and unfiltered emotions of adolescence. Charlie's struggle with mental illness, his search for acceptance, and his longing for connection are completely honest and vulnerable. As readers follow Charlie as he searches for himself, they are reminded of the universal nature of the human experience and the common challenges of growing up. In addition, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is a testament to human strength, friendship and the transformative effect of true connection. Charlie learns the importance of acceptance, forgiveness, and unconditional love through his own relationships with his half-brothers Patrick and Sam and the other friends he meets along the way. These friendships act as anchors in the middle of the storm of adolescence, providing Charlie with the support and companionship he needs to navigate life's challenges.

In conclusion, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is a moving coming-of-age story that explores themes of mental health, trauma, friendship and love. Through Charlie's introspective story, we get a raw and honest portrayal of the struggles that many young adults face. The ongoing message of the novel is flexibility and the importance of seeking help when you need it. It encourages us to accept our vulnerability and find strength in our journey of self-discovery. Stephen Chbosky's masterful storytelling combined with the depth and complexity of his characters creates a story that is both moving and heartbreaking, poignant and profound. Through Charlie's journey, readers are reminded of the power of friendship, the resilience of the human spirit, and the importance of facing life's challenges with courage and compassion. It is a coming-of-age novel as Charlie emerges from childhood and leaves it behind like a butterfly emerging from its cocoon. The image of Charlie driving through the tunnel and standing in the wind is a visual metaphor for the process of him working through his past and rising to the freedom of his future. The tunnel image at the end of the novel echoes the first part of the tunnel, when Charlie first drives through with Patrick and Sam and begins to experience what it would be like to be happy. The repetition of going through the tunnel indicates that getting through the past is a long process and may have to be repeated again and again. In the end, though, the only way to get to the other side is to get through: not to avoid the past or suppress it or pretend that everything is fine, but rather to face the music and be brave enough to accept the truth, because the truth is the only thing that will set you free.

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