



The Perks of Being a Wallflower

By Stephen Chbosky

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Standing on the fringes of life offers a unique perspective. But there comes a time to see what it looks like from the dance floor. This haunting novel about the dilemma of passivity vs. passion marks the stunning debut of a provocative new voice in contemporary fiction: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

This is the story of what it's like to grow up in high school. More intimate than a diary, Charlie's letters are singular and unique, hilarious and devastating. We may not know where he lives. We may not know to whom he is writing. All we know is the world he shares. Caught between trying to live his life and trying to run from it puts him on a strange course through uncharted territory. The world of first dates and mixed tapes, family dramas and new friends. The world of sex, drugs, and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, when all one requires is that perfect song on that perfect drive to feel infinite.

Through Charlie, Stephen Chbosky has created a deeply affecting coming-of-age story, a powerful novel that will spirit you back to those wild and poignant roller coaster days known as growing up.

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The Perks of Being a Wallflower By Stephen Chbosky Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

What is most notable about this funny, touching, memorable first novel from Stephen Chbosky is the resounding accuracy with which the author captures the voice of a boy teetering on the brink of adulthood. Charlie is a freshman. And while he's not the biggest geek in the school, he is by no means popular. He's a wallflower--shy and introspective, and intelligent beyond his years, if not very savvy in the social arts. We learn about Charlie through the letters he writes to someone of undisclosed name, age, and gender, a stylistic technique that adds to the heart-wrenching earnestness saturating this teen's story. Charlie encounters the same struggles that many kids face in high school--how to make friends, the intensity of a crush, family tensions, a first relationship, exploring sexuality, experimenting with drugs--but he must also deal with his best friend's recent suicide. Charlie's letters take on the intimate feel of a journal as he shares his day-to-day thoughts and feelings:

I walk around the school hallways and look at the people. I look at the teachers and wonder why they're here. If they like their jobs. Or us. And I wonder how smart they were when they were fifteen. Not in a mean way. In a curious way. It's like looking at all the students and wondering who's had their heart broken that day, and how they are able to cope with having three quizzes and a book report due on top of that. Or wondering who did the heart breaking. And wondering why.

With the help of a teacher who recognizes his wisdom and intuition, and his two friends, seniors Samantha and Patrick, Charlie mostly manages to avoid the depression he feels creeping up like kudzu. When it all becomes too much, after a shocking realization about his beloved late Aunt Helen, Charlie retreats from reality for awhile. But he makes it back in due time, ready to face his sophomore year and all that it may bring. Charlie, sincerely searching for that feeling of "being infinite," is a kindred spirit to the generation that's been slapped with the label X. --*Brangien Davis*

From Publishers Weekly

A trite coming-of-age novel that could easily appeal to a YA readership, filmmaker Chbosky's debut broadcasts its intentions with the publisher's announcement that ads will run on MTV. Charlie, the wallflower of the title, goes through a veritable bath of bathos in his 10th grade year, 1991. The novel is formatted as a series of letters to an unnamed "friend," the first of which reveals the suicide of Charlie's pal Michael. Charlie's response--valid enough--is to cry. The crying soon gets out of hand, though--in subsequent letters, his father, his aunt, his sister and his sister's boyfriend all become lachrymose. Charlie has the usual dire adolescent problems--sex, drugs, the thuggish football team--and they perplex him in the usual teen TV ways. [...] Into these standard teenage issues Chbosky infuses a droning insistence on Charlie's supersensitive disposition. Charlie's English teacher and others have a disconcerting tendency to rhapsodize over Charlie's giftedness, which seems to consist of Charlie's unquestioning assimilation of the teacher's taste in books. In the end we learn the root of Charlie's psychological problems, and we confront, with him, the coming rigors of 11th grade, ever hopeful that he'll find a suitable girlfriend and increase his vocabulary. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 UpAn epistolary narrative cleverly places readers in the role of recipients of Charlie's unfolding story of his freshman year in high school. From the beginning, Charlie's identity as an outsider is credibly

established. It was in the spring of the previous school year that his best friend committed suicide and now that his class has gone through a summer of change, the boy finds that he has drifted away from old friends. He finds a new and satisfying social set, however, made up of several high school seniors, bright bohemians with ego-bruising insights and, really, hearts of gold. These new friends make more sense to Charlie than his star football-playing older brother ever did and they are able to teach him about the realities of life that his older sister doesn't have the time to share with him. Grounded in a specific time (the 1991/92 academic year) and place (western Pennsylvania), Charlie, his friends, and family are palpably real. His grandfather is an embarrassing bigot; his new best friend is gay; his sister must resolve her pregnancy without her boyfriend's support. Charlie develops from an observant wallflower into his own man of action, and, with the help of a therapist, he begins to face the sexual abuse he had experienced as a child. This report on his life will engage teen readers for years to come. Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Grace Godwin:

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Patrick Bodin:

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Jacquelynn Laverty:

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