

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

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The Perks of Being a Wallflower is an epistolary novel (1999) and film (2012), that was written and later directed by American author - Stephen Chbosky. It follows the life of the introverted, sensitive, protagonist Charlie, who writes a series of letters to an unnamed 'friend' detailing his struggles during his freshman year of high school.

In the story, Charlie is a quiet and observant outsider who struggles to fit into social groups. The death of his best friend, who committed suicide in May, only worsens this and he finds himself alone. At least until he befriends Patrick, an outgoing senior, who introduces him to Sam and their friend group. While Charlie depicts his internal struggles through letters and grapples with the death of his friend, his new friends teach him about first love and friendship.

Although this story may come across as your usual high school romance novel - depicting the 'American high school experience', it provides a very moving and poetic perspective on the struggles of an introverted teenager. More specifically, the novel is narrated with an entirely one-sided perspective, allowing the reader to enter Charlie's head and feel his emotions. It is written very delicately and intentionally, in order to direct the reader towards reflecting on their own life, teaching lessons about self-discovery, friendship, acceptance and the power of literature.

This is one of my favourite books (and films), as I can see some of myself reflected within the characters. One quote in particular stood out to me - Charlie's question to Mr. Anderson; 'why do nice people choose the wrong people to date?' to which the latter replies: "We accept the love we think we deserve". This quote in particular really caught my attention, because I think it can apply to everyone and really forces the reader to examine the connection between their own relationships and their self-esteem. It conveys the idea that if we believe we deserve love which is conditional or unfulfilling, we may settle for less than we truly want or need.

This story has numerous other messages similar to this one, which is why I would recommend everyone and anyone reads it, as it truly gives us new perspectives, which we can apply to our own lives.

While I would especially recommend this book to those who are interested in psychology, as it explores Charlie's mind and emotions, as well as accurately portraying symptoms of

PTSD in an adolescent, it is specifically, intentionally targeted at a teenage audience, with the primary themes being teenage reality and nostalgia.

I believe it is one of the few literary pieces that accurately displays the true teenage reality and therefore believe everyone can find it interesting. I would further advise to read the book first before then watching the film; even if you are not an avid reader, this book will be able to grab and hold your attention. It is important to consider that this book cover topics including sexual assault, rape and drug use.