

# The Perks of Being a Wallflower

**Author – Stephen Chbosky**

The Perks of being a wallflower is a beautifully written coming-of-age story in which the protagonist, Charlie, converses with the reader in the form of letters addressed anonymously as “my friend”. Stephen Chbosky chooses to write through the eyes of an anxious, socially awkward person – a wallflower – and show how he thinks.

Charlie is not your typical main character who is oozing with charisma. He struggles with making friends, and his responses are not tailored to conventional expectations. Entering high school is a new phase for him, having recently experienced the deaths of his only middle-school friend and his beloved aunt, Helen. In school, he finds Sam and Patrick, two seniors who will shape his life in very different ways. His experiences are peppered with mind-blowing epiphanies and jolts of his repressed trauma creeping back. The story ends, however, with the hope of a new beginning.

The book manages to be fun and nostalgic, and crude at the same time. It might be whiplash-inducing at times, but the pace occasionally slows down. The author doesn't hold back from hard-hitting scenes, making us feel the entire weight of what the characters are going through, even if we cannot empathise with them. The interactions between Charlie and his aunt especially are heartbreaking. It's enriching without gripping, which is fine since it's not really a murder mystery.

Charlie is an interesting depiction of people suffering from

mental health and abuse issues. There's no glossing over issues like depression, dissociation, social anxiety or anger issues. The stories of the supporting characters are closely interlinked with that of the protagonist. It creates an authentic environment without diving too deep into their psyche. The technique addressed letters is cleverly used to create a personalised but strangely detached experience. It mimics the feeling of watching your baby videos once you've grown up. You are the same person, and yet you're not.

***“We accept the love we think we deserve.”  
– Charlie***

This story has been a source of comfort for me since my teenage years. Time and time again, it reminds you to be gentle with yourself and take your life one step at a time. The concept of love is explored deeply, and it also touches on the different kinds of love in the world. It's written keeping the worries of teenagers in mind, like someone tenderly guiding us through life.

The novel celebrates teenage years in a very empowering sense. It tells us that these years are equally important as the adult life we expect to lead. It tackles sex, drug and alcohol usage, abuse and mental health unabashedly. The way they face problems is real and raw, without the expectation of resolution. The final message it leaves us with is inspiring and freeing, or in Charlie's words – we feel infinite.

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