



**BOOK REVIEW OF *THE PERKS OF BEING A ALLFLOWER***

**WRITTEN BY STEPHEN CHOBOSKY**

**A FINAL PROJECT**

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer states truthfully that this project is compiled by himself without taking the results from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma. In addition, the writer ascertains that he does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned.

Semarang, 25 July 2017

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## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

*Time you enjoy wasting, was not wasted.*

(John Lennon)

*Painting is literature in colors. Literature is painting in language.*

(Pramoedya Ananta Toer)

*Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art  
and working is art and good business is the best art.*

(Andy Warhol)

*Born To Lose Live To Win.*

(Lemmy Kilmister)

*When words fail, music speaks.*

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The writer realizes that this final project is still far from being perfect. He would be glad to receive any constructive criticisms and suggestions to help him make a better writing in the future. Still, he hopes that this final project would be useful for the readers and human lives.

Semarang, 25 July 2017

Rafi Candra

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of Study

Literature can express human feeling in several ways of action in life, and some of them reflected by literary work such asin poetry, drama, prose. Based on the literary works, it could be seen that the elements of the human feeling are described appropriately and applied into literary works. Literature is verbal or written creation that has particular features, such as its artsy and magnificence value. Literature is the representation of life events and delivers it into words (Sudjiman, 1986: 68)

In this study, the writer will discuss a novel entitled *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* written by Stephen Chbosky. This novel has an emotional story about a teenage boy who is represented as a really shy, which is refered from its title “*Wallflower*”. This novel brings up the theme about the life of a certain juvenile in around 90’s, including lonerism, sexuality, and drug use, based on the main character’s psychological issue. The story does not have a clear description about the setting, but it can be seen from the the quotation represented in the novel thatthe setting of the story is in early 1990, in anonymous place in the United State. Chbosky makes an attribute to the other literary work,movies, and American pop culture in general, because the main character never mention where exactly he lives.

Beside bringing up the popular culture in teenage life during that era, the story also deals with psychological issue that the main character needs to undergo,

through some events that ever happened in his past life about sexual abuse and death that will become more interesting to review. Aside from reviewing those issues of the main character experience in the past life, the writer also discusses words and sentences that need more references to comprehend the whole point of the novel. Moreover, the writer also figures out the end of the novel and to relate the value that may contribute to any kidslife in that age.

*The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is one of New York Time Best Seller, it means that the novel must have something that is more than just attractive enough for the readers by reading it. Thus, the writer exploring the strengths and the weakness of Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by observing specific elements.

## **1.2. Objective of Study**

The objective of the study is to give a review of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* especially to describe the strenght and the weakness of this novel through the analysis of its intrinsic elements such as the tittle, characterization, theme, and plot.

## **1.3. Biography of Stephen Chbosky**

Stephen Chbosky is and American author of young adult contemporary novels. He is such a multitalent who is best known as a novelist, screenwriter, and also a director. He was born on 25 January 1970 in Pennsylvania. . He lived with

his Catholic family, who are his mother, father, and younger sister young Chbosky was attached by J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Chbosky attend the University of Southern California's Film Writing Program. That was when he started to make his very first film called *The Four Courners of Nowhere*, that later became premiered on Sundance Film Festival. For the following years, he spent his 1990s by writing a lot of screenplays that are unpublished. In the begining of 1994, he began to write his first novel is *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, published in 1999. Due to his success after publishing the novel, he got a chance to write the screenplay for his next *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* film project. After five years of research and composition, the novel was published, and it became one of the best selling novels in 1999.

## **2. SUMMARY**

The story begins by the main character Charlie, is writing a letter to an anonym pen-pal, someone he is once suggested by his psychiatric that is really nice and humble and would be able to understand anything about Charlie's life. However, he never meets him, not even once. He starts writing about anything that happens in him recently, or his preception of things, or even his memory in the past life.

Charlie endures a post traumatic events caused by several events that happens to him on his childhood such as death of the two of his closest figure in his life, and also sex abusing that he had gone through.

Afterwards, he becomes a freshman in a high school, but at first, he is too shy to befriend with anyone around the school. Until one day, he meets Patrick and Sam, his senior, and that is when the story of the school life begins. After being very close to Patrick and Sam whom everyone at the school understands that they are very popular, Charlie starts encountering free sex and drugs use. Nevertheless, by doing all those things, it can be such helpful for Charlie as a little bit relief due to his psychological issue such as anxiety attacks. Just because he feels accepted for who he is.

On the other hand, Charlie has such a really care-loving family that always supports him in anyway. He has a relatively stable home life like common teenagers in the United States. However, there is this an embarrassing family secret that makes him feel repressed for his entire life. At the end of the novel, Charlie's mental breakdown is coming back, and finally he can manage his memory to remember about what happens to him in his childhood that affects his behaviour in present.

### **3. REVIEW**

#### **3.1 The Strengths of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower***

There are a lot of reasons why *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is recommended novel for the reader. This novel, as a literary work, has some interesting points to attract the reader to read. There are the title, the theme, the characterization, the conflict, and moral message of the novel. This review describes those points of the novel by classifying them into two parts: the strengths and the weakness of the novel.

### **3.2 Theme**

Each novel has some strength elements that is interesting to be discussed. The strengths of the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is about the themes that are brought up by the author to make the novel very attractive. Theme is an important element to show the main idea of the novel. A novel is varied by the different themes. The major theme of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is about the word *Wallflower* itself, and the minor theme is about love and friendship.

#### **3.2.1 Wallflower**

The strength of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is the title that is related to its major theme and the main character. The word *Wallflower*, according to urban dictionary, refers to a typical loner guy that is not so popular, even almost no one notice about him. However, they can be very attractive if someone really talks to them. In other words, it can be said that *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* celebrates between inclusiveness and acceptance by showing both how certain person can blossom when they feel accepted for who they are.

The title here, which is related to the major theme, can be an interesting part of the novel that its title brings up a story about a teenage school life in United States around 90's. The title, *Wallflower*, is also the representation of the main character of the novel, Charlie, that is very shy toward his school friend, but step by step he can manage himself to befriend with the seniors. That is when he feels comfortable because he can fit in there because his friends can accept him as who he is. As it is stated in the novel, Patrick once said:

“He’s something, isn’t it?”  
“He’s a wallflower.” (Chbosky, 1999:40)

Therefore, the word *Wallflower* becomes ambiguous since it combines with the word *Perks*. The reader will make an expectation about what kind of perks should they use to help a person out by being a wallflower. The readers are increasingly interested and curious to read more.

### **3.2.2 Love and Friendship**

This novel also represents the other themes such as love and friendship in most of teenage life in United State. Along with the psychological problem of the main character, Charlie, the benefit of having friends in school term can be really helpful for Charlie. However, it is the beginning of him encountering the free sex and drug use. Those things help Charlie to maintain his psychological issue that happens to him anytime. At the end of the novel, Charlie feels free. That is when he feels relief because of he finally is able to find some friends that can accept him for who he is. That can be concluded that to have friends is necessary. It can help people progressing their state of mind, and become a better person.

The novel also tells about how Charlie begins to fall in love for the first time with a senior student, Sam. Being in love can be a trigger to someone to do a better things. As can be seen that at first, Charlie is a totally an awkward and shy teen. After falling in love with Sam, he starts making a courage to ask her to the dance floor, which never he did before. He also makes multiple mixtapes

containing many love songs that probably can make Sam happy. Then he starts giving her mixtapes and records, as it is stated,

It was an old 45 records that had the Beatles' song "Something." I used to listen to it all the time when I was little and thinking about grown-up things. I decided then that when I met someone I thought was as beautiful as the song, I should give it to that person (Chbosky, 1999:70).

Those efforts can be the example that love, sometimes, can be a good influence for one's life.

### **3.3 Characters**

Character is the main element in the story. It can be described with physical and psychological conditions, or the social circumstances. The following discussion will be clearly described on the main characters in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

#### **3.3.1 Charlie**

Based on the physical condition, Charlie is described as a young teenager as a freshman of a high school in United State. He is also described as a really shy individual with a psychological problem because of the post traumatic disorder that he endures after several death problem of his aunt and bestfriend who in his past life. Once he enters the high school life, at first he becomes really awkward of everything; the people at school, the teachers, and even the cafetaria. However, he meets two popular kids at the school, who are seniors, and later he become friends with them. Going through the ups and down, he feels upset about the

school life, but after having friends, he can manage himself to fit in with the other kid.

### **3.3.2 Sam**

Sam is described as a very pretty girl along with her brown hair and green eyes, “The kind of green that doesn’t make a big deal about itself. I would have told you that sooner, but under the stadium lights, everything looked kind of washed out” (Chbosky, 1999:20). She is kind of popular kid at the school. She is the one of Charlie’s attention eventhough they are just friends.

Sam also has a really bad experience when she was in the primary school that her father’s boss sex abused her. Sam is not that smart, thats why Charlie tries to get her attention by always helps her on almost every schoolwork.

### **3.3.3 Patrick**

Patrick is Sam’s step brother and also Charlie’s bestfriend. He is a very attractive guy. “So, in this shop class Nothing started to do a very funny impersonation of our teacher, Mr. Callaham. I wish you could have been there because it was the hardest I’ve laughed sice my brother left” (Chbosky, 1999:13). That is when Charlie fisrt meets Patrick. Actually, Nothing is his nickname in the shop class, and as Charlie told, he is a very funny guy.

However, later it is told on the novel that he is a homosexual and having a serious relationship with one of the school football player. Sometimes Patrick can be so fun but the other time hecan be the saddest guy in the room.

Based on both physical and psychological conditions that are owned by each main characters, it is shown that this novel is very interesting. The novel brings up many unique issues through the characters such as death, anxiety in teenage year, childhood trauma, child abusing, and homosexuality.

### **3.4 The Weakness of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower***

*The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky has a weakness. The weakness is the plot. Plot is the order of a story events. It is the arrangement basis that controls the order of the events. The components of plot are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (Meyer, 1990: 43).

Plot is divided into several kind of techniques, such as suspense, flashback, foreshadowing, and interior monologue. Flashback is helpful for the writer to complete the earlier event in the story. This method has a complex way for the author to organize the memory of events and figures (Kennedy, 1983:9).

In *The perks of Being a Wallflower* the reader feels confused about the plot of the story because the author uses flash forward flashback plot. As an epistolary novel, the story begins with the introduction of the main character Charlie writing to his anonymous pen-pal.

I am writing to you because she said you listen and understand and didn't try to sleep with that person at the party even though you could have. I just need to know that someone out there listens and understands and doesn't try to sleep with people even if they could have. I need to know that these people exist (Chbosky, 1999:1)

Later, he talks about the death of his childhood friend that commits suicide. As he writes, “I try to think of my family as a reason for me being this way, especially after my friend Michael stopped going to school one day last spring and we heard Mr. Vaughn’s voice on the loudspeaker” (Chbosky, 1999:1).

Suddenly the plot goes back to a scene about the death of his aunt Helen. Then in the next letter, the author writes about Charlie school life which is about the present life. He writes, “I do not like high school. The cafeteria is called the ‘Nutrition Center,’ which is strange” (Chbosky, 1999:6).

The reader feels confused about the plot of the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. The readers need to give more concentration while reading the novel because the plot is always changing. It would be better if the plot does not change so often. So, it will be more interesting and easier for the reader to read.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This great literary work by Setphen Chbosky is worth to discuss for. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is a novel that tells about a young boy who endures an anxiety disorder caused by the death of his influential figure experience on his childhood. He grows as an awkward and shy person, but after ending high school, he meets a new friend, which he never had before. He is progressing to be a better individual because of surrounded by the people that helps him a lot, people who really accept him for who he is.

This novel has some strengths that make it as a good reading. The strength inside the novel are the theme and the characters. However, it also has a weakness that make the reader can be a bit confused to read the novel. Yet, many supporting issues inside the novel build up a good story arrangement.

Charlie is character refelcts many of teenagers around that age in the world; young and full of anxiety. The story of the main character gives moral value of how to maintain ourselves as young and brittle indivuduals in these teenage lives. The conflicts of the story that come up in the novel are raising the curiosity towards the reader to continue reading the rest of the story. Chbosky brings up a spesific issues that commonly happens in teenage life. Charlie's character is presented by the novel title *Wallflower*, refers to a type of loner, seemingly shy folks who no one really knows, but can be blossom anytime they feel accepted. It has a really interesting point toward the title that the author pick. The novel may get many attention from the reader in any age.

Because a lot of people love this novel, Chbosky made *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* into a movie in 2012. The other elements of the novel such as the conflict and the setting of time, place and the social environment really support the novel to become more enjoyable to read. The novel also has an easy language to understand, yet the story contains many underground issue that commonly happen in the United State.

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