

**HEALING THROUGH FRIENDSHIP AND SELF-DISCOVERY
IN STEPHEN CHBOSKY'S MOVIE SCRIPT
“THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER”**

A THESIS

BY

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM
FACULTY OF LITERATURE
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM SUMATERA UTARA
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**SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF LITERATURE
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The Writer ,

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APPENDIXES

A. Biography of Stephen Chbosky

Stephen Chbosky is an acclaimed American novelist, screenwriter, and director whose body of work is known for its emotional depth and strong focus on psychological development, adolescence, and identity. Born on January 25, 1970, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Chbosky grew up in a suburb of the city and developed a passion for storytelling from an early age. He attended the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts, where he majored in screenwriting. This formal education laid the foundation for his multifaceted career in both literature and film. Influenced by literary giants like J.D. Salinger and filmmakers such as John Hughes, Chbosky gravitated toward stories that center around youth, emotional complexity, and the journey toward self-discovery.

His literary breakthrough came in 1999 with the publication of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, a coming-of-age epistolary novel that explores the inner life of Charlie, a teenage boy grappling with trauma, grief, and social alienation. The novel was groundbreaking for its time, addressing taboo topics like mental illness, abuse, and suicide with compassion and authenticity. It resonated deeply with young adult readers and mental health advocates, quickly gaining a loyal following and eventually becoming a staple in contemporary American literature. Due to its candid portrayal of adolescent struggles, the book was both celebrated and challenged, facing bans in some schools while being praised in others for its honesty and impact.

In 2012, Chbosky adapted *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* into a major motion picture, which he also directed. The film was well-received by critics and audiences alike, especially for its faithful adaptation and strong performances. Chbosky's ability to direct his own novel allowed him to preserve its emotional integrity and tone. His dual role as author and filmmaker demonstrated his versatility and deep understanding of character-driven storytelling. In subsequent years, Chbosky expanded his artistic reach by contributing to major Hollywood projects such as the screenplay for *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and directing *Dear Evan Hansen* (2021), both of which deal with themes of love, acceptance, and the human need for connection. Through both his novels and films, Stephen Chbosky has established himself as a prominent voice in modern storytelling, particularly in narratives that explore the inner lives of marginalized or emotionally complex individuals.

B. Literary works Stephen Chbosky

1. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) – Novel
2. *Imaginary Friend* (2019) – Novel (horror-thriller genre)
3. *Jericho* (2006–2008) – Creator and executive producer of the TV series
4. *Rent* (2005) – Screenwriter for the film adaptation
5. *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) – Screenwriter for the Disney live-action film
6. *Dear Evan Hansen* (2021) – Director of the film adaptation of the Broadway musical

C. The Summary of The Perks of Being a Wallflower

Perks of Being a Wallflower, written and directed by Stephen Chbosky, is a profound coming-of-age film that delves into the emotional and psychological journey of a teenage boy named Charlie. Told through a series of deeply personal letters addressed to an anonymous recipient, the narrative provides an intimate portrayal of Charlie's thoughts, struggles, and growth. Set in the early 1990s, the film begins with Charlie entering his freshman year of high school. Isolated and burdened by the recent suicide of his best friend, Charlie also battles repressed childhood trauma, making him anxious and emotionally fragile. His introverted personality renders him socially invisible, but also exceptionally observant, leading others to label him a 'wallflower.' Charlie's early experiences in high school are marked by loneliness and fear. He finds comfort in literature and his English teacher, Mr. Anderson, who quickly notices his intellectual potential. Mr. Anderson provides Charlie with extra reading assignments, including classics like *The Catcher in the Rye*, which resonate deeply with Charlie's inner life. However, what Charlie truly yearns for is genuine human connection someone who understands and accepts him. This longing is fulfilled when he meets two seniors, Sam and Patrick, who welcome him into their friend group with warmth and authenticity. Their friendship marks a turning point in Charlie's life, as he begins to experience joy, inclusion, and a sense of belonging for the first time in a long while.

Patrick's exuberant personality and Sam's nurturing demeanor help draw Charlie out of his shell. The trio's friendship is built on shared experiences late-night drives, school dances, music, and unfiltered conversations. One of the most

iconic scenes is when they drive through a tunnel while David Bowie's 'Heroes' plays. Charlie, overwhelmed by the sensation of connection and presence, narrates, 'In that moment, I swear we were infinite.' This line encapsulates the fleeting but powerful emotional highs of adolescence. It is in these moments that Charlie begins to understand the healing power of community, reminding viewers that recovery is often rooted in the love and acceptance of others.

As Charlie becomes more integrated into the social world, he begins exploring different aspects of teenage life. He briefly dates Mary Elizabeth, another member of the group, but the relationship exposes Charlie's discomfort with intimacy and conflict. Despite trying to maintain peace, his emotional unavailability causes friction, pushing him into a period of self-reflection. While the surface of Charlie's life begins to show signs of normalcy, deeper emotional disturbances begin to surface. Flashbacks, dissociation, and periods of extreme sadness begin to intensify, hinting at unresolved trauma from his past.

The pivotal moment of the film comes when Charlie begins to recall disturbing memories related to his late Aunt Helen, who had previously been portrayed as a beloved figure in his life. It is eventually revealed that Aunt Helen sexually abused Charlie during his childhood, a fact he had repressed for years. This realization leads to a psychological breakdown, during which Charlie is hospitalized. The film handles this revelation with sensitivity and care, underscoring the complexity of trauma and the mind's way of protecting itself through repression. Charlie's breakdown is not portrayed as a failure, but as a necessary step toward healing a moment of painful clarity that allows the process of recovery to begin in earnest.

While hospitalized, Charlie receives psychiatric care and begins to articulate his pain in a safe and supportive environment. This experience is transformative, not only because it helps him confront the past, but also because it affirms the importance of seeking help. The narrative does not romanticize mental illness; instead, it emphasizes the importance of community, therapy, and emotional honesty. When Charlie is released, he finds himself supported once again by Sam and Patrick, who return from college to reconnect with him. Their presence reaffirms that he is not alone, and that healing is an ongoing, shared journey.

The final scenes of the film convey a message of hope and renewal. Charlie writes a final letter in which he reflects on his journey and affirms his decision to live more fully. He acknowledges that while he cannot erase his past, he can shape his future through courage and connection. His love for literature, writing, and introspection remains central to his character, but now these traits are coupled with a new sense of agency and self-worth. As the film ends, Charlie's internal world is no longer defined by silence and shame, but by growth, forgiveness, and the promise of becoming whole.

The *Perks of Being a Wallflower* is ultimately a meditation on adolescence, trauma, identity, and resilience. Through Charlie's story, the film offers a realistic but compassionate depiction of the complexities of growing up. It challenges the stigma surrounding mental illness by presenting a protagonist who is vulnerable yet strong, broken yet healing. The film reminds viewers that being seen, being heard, and being loved can make all the difference in someone's life. It encourages self-expression, empathy, and emotional courage qualities that are essential not only for personal recovery but for building meaningful relationships.

D. The Characters of The Perks of Being a Wallflower

1. **Charlie** : Charlie is the main character and narrator of the film. A freshman in high school, he is intelligent, introspective, and deeply sensitive. Charlie struggles with past trauma, including the suicide of his best friend and the repressed memory of sexual abuse by his Aunt Helen. Throughout the film, Charlie undergoes emotional growth as he develops friendships with Sam and Patrick. These relationships provide him with a sense of belonging and support. Despite setbacks and a breakdown, Charlie begins to heal by confronting his past and accepting help.
2. **Sam** : Sam is a high school senior and one of Charlie's closest friends and love interests. She is warm, caring, and emotionally mature. Sam encourages Charlie to value himself and stop putting others' needs above his own. Her nurturing nature plays a key role in Charlie's healing process. Though she has her own past struggles, Sam becomes a source of strength and perspective, helping Charlie realize the importance of self-worth and emotional honesty.
3. **Patrick** : Patrick is Sam's stepbrother and Charlie's other best friend. He is charismatic, witty, and confident, openly embracing his identity as a gay teen despite societal stigma.
4. Patrick introduces Charlie to friendship, humor, and loyalty. His vulnerability, especially after his secret relationship with Brad ends, teaches Charlie about resilience and authenticity.**Mr. Anderson** : Mr. Anderson is Charlie's English teacher who recognizes his talent for literature. He provides emotional and academic support, encouraging Charlie's love for reading and

writing. Though a minor character, Mr. Anderson represents the vital role teachers can play in a student's personal growth, offering stability and belief in their potential.

5. **Mary Elizabeth** : Mary Elizabeth is an outspoken and confident member of the friend group. She briefly dates Charlie, but their relationship reveals his discomfort with confrontation and intimacy. Through Mary Elizabeth, the film explores the challenges of young relationships and emotional awareness. Her presence helps Charlie understand communication and boundaries.
6. **Brad** : Brad is a popular athlete and Patrick's closeted boyfriend. Fearful of judgment, Brad hides his sexuality, which leads to emotional distress and a painful breakup with Patrick. His character highlights the inner conflict faced by LGBTQ+ youth dealing with societal expectations and internalized fear.
7. **Aunt Helen** : Aunt Helen is Charlie's deceased aunt, remembered as loving but later revealed to be abusive. The traumatic memory of her sexual abuse is repressed by Charlie for most of the film. Her complex role in Charlie's life represents how unresolved trauma can affect mental health. Her legacy is central to Charlie's emotional journey and recovery.
8. **Michael** : Michael is Charlie's best friend who died by suicide before the film begins. Though not shown directly, his death deeply affects Charlie and is a key factor in his emotional instability. Michael's character emphasizes the unseen struggles of teenagers and the lasting impact of mental health crises on those left behind.