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The Perks of Being a Wallflower
By: Stephen Chbosky

When the book starts out, Charlie is addressing a friend in his letters, but he does not want the friend to be named. I found this to be a little odd and made me curious as to who the friend was.

I was also wondering who it was. By the way his letters sound it seems like he had a very friendly relationship with whoever he is addressing.

At first, I thought he was possibly talking to his Aunt Helen, but he mentions her name multiple times throughout the book, so I do not know if it is her or not. I also considered it to be Michael, I believe his name was, the friend who killed himself.

I thought it could be his Aunt Helen too because she seemed to be the only family member who really understood that Charlie is a bit different from his sister and brother in the way that he processes emotions and different things that happen.

I agree. All of his family members do not pay much attention to him or respect him. They usually make fun of him or tell him to cut it out, even though he cannot help when he gets overwhelmed. The sister in particular, I do not remember her name if she was ever named, seems to pick on Charlie the most. Aunt Helen seemed to be like Charlie's best friend.

The sister was never given a name, but I do agree with you when you say she was the one who made fun of Charlie the most. For instance, when Charlie saw his sister's boyfriend hit her, she got mad at him for telling on her. She even called him a freak and a pervert. I definitely think Aunt Helen was Charlie's best friend, and I think that he might be so shy now because the only person who truly cared for him got ripped away from him.

Yes, the sister calls him names and makes him feel helpless throughout most of the book. When Charlie, the sister, and his mother were going Christmas shopping, the sister kept rushing Charlie to pick a present for their dad quickly so she could meet up with her boyfriend. She does not seem to care if she upsets him or causes him to panic. Why do you think the sister was never named? Now that I think about it, Charlie's immediate family were never given names. I looked in the book to find smaller roles of family members, such as Aunt Rebecca named, but the mother, father, sister, and brother are not.

For me, when I noticed that a lot of people weren't named, I immediately thought of this same recurring thing throughout Of Mice and Men.

I think those characters are the only ones (so far) that have been named because they are the only ones to make Charlie feel like he actually matters. He might feel that the other people aren't worth mention by name because they wouldn't show him the same type of respect in real life.

On Page 2, there is a quote I find very important and relatable for me, and it reads, "So, this is my life. And I want you to know that I am both happy and sad and I'm still trying to figure out how that could be," (Chbosky 2). What is your reaction to this excerpt?

I do agree with a similar theme in Of Mice And Men and this book. I find that quote to be extremely relatable and can easily be applied to my life. I have never found the right words to be able to describe my feelings, but I feel this quote captures the essence of my emotions a lot of the time. Charlie has never been scared to share his emotions, like how on page 22, he admits to Sam that he has a crush on her. he tells her, ““Sam, I’m thinking about you that way”” (Chbosky 22). He explained that he had a romantic dream about her, but started crying because he felt bad about thinking of her like that. It is almost as if he does not have a filter and shares everything with people, except for when he started to have his “thoughts” that have not been fully described yet. Charlie seems to be very sensitive and cries quite a few times in the book.

I also think it is a possibility that he cried because he doesn’t know how to process these feelings. He has never really met a girl, besides his Aunt Helen, who makes him feel important. So he does not know how or what to feel this emotion of love and perhaps desire. Do you think one of the reasons Charlie likes Sam is because she reminds him of his Aunt? (In the way that she cares about him and is there for him whenever he needs her.)

I think that it is a possibility that he found a piece of Aunt Helen in this beautiful girl, and is attracted to her partly because of their similarities. Another thing with Charlie, is he does not seem to understand things that go on around him. On page 31, Charlie is reflecting on a sad memory. He tells Sam and Patrick, “I had to stop watching at that point because I started to feel sick, but it kept going on, and they kept doing other things, and she kept saying ‘no’

(Chbosky 31). Charlie witnessed a girl getting raped, but did not fully understand what was happening to her. He simply was scared and uncomfortable, which is completely understandable due to his situation, but he does not understand what the “normal” person understands.

This, again, relates to his sister being abused by her boyfriend. Had Charlie understood what had happened to his sister, he would’ve been able to help her sooner. But because he didn’t understand, he only told his parents because his english teacher told him to. Likewise, if he understood that that girl was being raped and that it was wrong, he could’ve helped her escape that toxic relationship. I have a question that could be answered either way. On page 15, Charlie starts to think to himself about who celebrities really are. He thinks to himself, “I think it’s nice for stars to do interviews to make us think they are just like us, but to tell you the truth, I get the feeling that it’s all a big lie. The problem is I don’t know who’s lying,” (Chbosky 15). Who do you think celebrities are? Are they just like us or are they on a whole different level?

Obviously, celebrities are not like the average person because “normal” people do not have paparazzi or attends major events, gets nominated for awards, stars in movies, or has millions of dollars on hand. On the other hand, I think it depends on the person. Some celebrities do let the fame and fortune go to their heads, but others try to be like the average Joe. I feel as though this question has many different areas and ways to be Answered and that it is a matter of opinion. What do you Think? Also, I made another connection to Of Mice And Men. The idea of

being “above” another person is conveyed in this book by Charlie’s family treating him like a freak and feeling like he is below them because he thinks differently than they do. Thoughts?

I think some celebrities that are “on the same level” as everyday people. Like those who are completely down to earth and don’t care about their “celebrity Status.” People like Robin Williams who loved their job because they could make people laugh. But then you have celebrities like Kim Kardashian who only worry about the supposed importance of material things instead of making an impact on the world. I think you made a really great connection between these two texts. I don’t think he’s below them at all. He has the gift of seeing life in a different light than everyone else. Another connection to Of Mice and Men would be the innocence of both Lennie and Charlie. Neither of them want to do any harm or make anyone upset, yet they end up doing it anyways. They don’t always know when something is wrong or shouldn’t be happening.

That is a very good point.

As I was reading back through our earlier Comments, I realized that we may be wrong on the reason behind the other characters being nameless. I think they’re addressed by simple titles only because this protects the identity of the writer of the letters. If he were to include his family member’s names, it would be easier to figure out who’s writing the letters.

That is true, but he includes the first names of his Friends and the first names of his family members would be too generic to be able to fully identify

someone. If he does not want the reader of these letters to know who he is, then why does he sign his name at the end of every letter? It does not make sense to me because he is telling someone about his entire life story and signs his name, but wants to remain anonymous. I think that you had a good thought, but I am still confused as to the real reasoning behind giving some names, but not all.

I thought in the beginning he said Charlie was a fake name, almost like an alias he used to keep people from figuring out who he is. I'm probably wrong but that's okay.

OHHHHHHHH you are right. I just looked back, and the first page says that he will use fake names. My bad. Nevermind then. Good catch, I would have never caught that. Moving on then, on page 42 at the top of the page, Charlie says, "It was one of those days that I didn't mind going to school because the weather was so pretty. The sky was overcast with clouds, and the air felt like a warm bath. I don't think I ever felt that clean before" (Chbosky 42). I really like this quote because I have never heard anything like this before, although I am not quite sure if I know exactly what he means by this.

I'm also not sure exactly what Charlie is referencing here. I can't tell if he's talking about the kinds of days where the sun is covered in a gray sky but it is still warm outside or if he is describing a dark and gloomy rainy day. Which one do you think it is?

I think Charlie is talking about a warm, but gray and misty kind of situation. I am more curious about the part where he says that he has Never felt so clean. I do not know if he is Referring just to the weather or if he is talking More like his problems were washed away. This is off topic, but I was just thinking, do we really

know if Charlie is a boy? I have not fully thought this through and I cannot think of any clues off of the top of my head that would refer to anything, but could Charlie be a girl. the name Charlie makes me think of the little girl on *Good Luck Charlie*, the old Disney TV show.

I would agree with you because the hints That Charlie is a boy are very hard to find And they aren't always very direct. I don't Remember which page it is on, but when Charlie has to play a role in *Rocky Horror* in Which he must touch Jan aka Sam all over, He is saying to himself that he hopes he Doesn't get an erection. This is the only Example I can think of that proves he's a boy.

He probably is a boy, but I was just thinking about if we know that he is a boy since the writer is hiding their identity. Charlie seems to be extremely sensitive, which I know is because of his illness and his issues, but he seems a little too overly sensitive, to me, to be a boy. I am not saying that boys do not cry or have feelings, but that part of him strikes me as being very feminine. Also, is it possible that Charlie is bisexual? I do not remember the page number, but Charlie says that he used to kiss the little boy around the neighborhood a lot when he was young. Along with that, he did not stop Patrick from kissing him when Patrick was upset. He claims that it was because he was "being a friend", but it happened more than once. Charlie is also in love with Sam, which could be the bisexual part. What are your thoughts?

I think you have a very good point because nowhere does Charlie specifically talk about his sexuality. It's a good possibility that he could be bisexual, especially because of the aforementioned things you listed. Is it possible that if he is bisexual, he doesn't know he is because of his mental problems? Could being sexually abused by his Aunt Helen have left him incapable to think of situations like that?

I think that is a possibility, but I do not know if I think it has left him fully incapable of figuring his sexuality out. If he is bisexual, he is not willing to accept it yet. Do you think that it is because of Sam and what other's may think of him, or do you believe that he is incapable of figuring it out due to the abuse?

I think Charlie has a hard enough time figuring out his feelings about everyone except Sam. He's still observing people and trying to figure out why they're so complex. Charlie likes things nice and simple. So perhaps he knows he's bisexual and just doesn't want to come to terms with it not because he's afraid of what people will say, but because the idea itself is too hard for Charlie to wrap his brain around.

That is very true. Sorry for the spam of questions, but do you think that Charlie's friendships with the "crew" will last since they are in college now? Do you think that he will find new friends this year, or remain a loner? Do you think Charlie will be different in his sophomore year than his freshman year due to everything that has happened to him?

As much as we all want to believe that they'll stay friends throughout college, it is just not a plausible idea. Most people drift apart as they grow older, and extremely tight groups of friends are no exceptions. I've seen groups of friends

Torn apart by the rough hands of time only
Because new, different people came along.
Once Sam and Patrick get settled in at college,
They're going to make new friends and eventually
Forget about Charlie. Maybe not all the way,
But for the most part, he will no longer be their
Priority. I think Charlie won't make new friends
Only because he's very shy. I mean the book title
Itself says that Charlie is a wallflower. He also
Might think it's unfair to Sam and Patrick to have
Other friends, but he doesn't realize that they're
Going to forget about him too.
I definitely think he'll be different than he was
During his freshman year. He found out that he
Was sexually abused and that's enough to make
Anyone withdraw from society. He also went
Through some of the better things like feeling
"Infinite" with Sam and Patrick in the tunnel,
Going to his first party, and some people would
Argue having his first drink.

I agree with that answer, but I feel
like something has changed within Charlie that
made him not necessarily more outgoing, but
more open I guess. I am not sure how to word it,
but I think that eventually Charlie will say "hi"
to the right person and they will become friends.
Towards the end of the book, he said "hello" to
his locker neighbor for the very first time. He has
had a locker next to him for the entire year, yet decided
to say hi that day. I think that shows growth in Charlie
that could lead to potential friends someday.
WAIT he was sexually abused by Aunt Helen?
I must have missed that one. I was so confused about
that dream. I knew that it was something to do with
her and that it was real, I just didn't know what exactly happened.

Yes he was. Remember when he was sleeping at
Sam's house the day before she left for college,
and he had that dream about Aunt Helen touching him?

Well it wasn't just a dream, rather a suppressed memory of his childhood.

Character	Characteristics, traits, etc.
Charlie	• Very shy -HB • Doesn't process things as normal people would -HB • Over analytical -HB • Sensitive/crier -KB • Has a mental illness -KB • Intelligent- Straight A student -KB • Sexually abused by his aunt -HB • Loves to read -HB • Smoker/drinker -HB • Loner -KB • In love with Sam -KB • 16 years old -KB • Was hospitalized for a long time/missed a lot of school -KB • Believes Aunt Helen's death is his fault -HB • Loves to write -KB • Looks up to Bill -HB • Has a hard time making friends -HB • Sees a psychiatrist -KB • Hospitalized most of the Summer into sophomore year -KB • Physically strong -KB • Anger issues -KB • Scary fighter -KB
Sam	• Brown hair -HB • Green eyes -HB • Between 17 and 18 years old -HB • Patrick's step-sister -HB • Smoker -HB • Drinker -HB • Good music taste/music fanatic -KB • Very special to Charlie -KB • A hipster -KB • Newly graduated -KB • Currently goes to Penn State -KB • Molested by a family friend at a young age -HB

	● Low self esteem → dates guys that aren't good for her -HB ● Understanding -KB ● Caring -KB
Patrick	● Comical/entertaining -KB ● Gay -KB ● Sam's step-brother -KB ● Drinker/possible future alcoholic -KB ● Good music taste/music fanatic -KB ● Smoker -HB ● Nickname in school was "Nothing" -KB ● Involved with quarterback Brad (secretly) -KB ● Graduated high school -KB ● Going to the University of Washington for the music in that area -KB ● Wants to work in the music industry -KB ● Outgoing -KB ● Was bullied for being gay/was called a "faggot" -KB
Mary Elizabeth	● Talker -KB ● Strongly opinionated -KB ● Has tattoos and a belly button piercing -KB ● Buddhist -KB ● Dominates any and all conversations -HB ● Goes for what she wants -KB ● "Dated" Charlie/got her heart broken by him -KB ● Graduated high school -KB ● Going to Berkeley -KB ● Hard to please -KB ● Wants to be bragged about due to low self esteem -KB
Aunt Helen	● Charlie's favorite Aunt/person -HB ● Sexually abused Charlie -HB ● Struggled with drugs and alcohol throughout her life -HB ● Abused by men -KB ● Molested -KB ● Gave Charlie special treatment -KB ● Died in a car crash on the way to get Charlie his birthday present -HB
Brother	● Amazing football player -KB

	● In college (Penn State) -KB ● Confident -KB ● “Player” -KB
Sister	● Abused by her ex boyfriend -KB ● Self conscious -HB ● Confusing relationship with Charlie -KB ● Graduated high school -KB ● Second in her class -KB ● Going to Saint Lawrence -KB ● Had an abortion-KB
Mother	● Aunt Helen’s sister -KB ● Calm -KB ● Nice -KB ● Her and her husband make a great team -KB ● Has a crazy family-KB ● Has an intense father -KB ● Calms Charlie down when he gets all worked up -HB
Father	● Ex baseball player -KB ● Doesn’t like to feel emotions -HB ● Is <u>not</u> abusive -HB ● Hates fighting -HB ● Is more proud of and interested in Charlie’s brother’s life then he is Charlie -HB ● Left his sister and mother behind growing up-KB
Bill	● Teaches advanced English -HB ● Charlie’s mentor -HB ● Gives Charlie extra books to read -HB ● Sees the potential Charlie has within himself -HB ● Treats and sees Charlie as a friend -KB ● Is there for Charlie if need be-KB ● Engaged -KB ● Makes sure Charlie knows he is special -KB

Recurring Topics	● Alcohol -HB ● Drugs -HB ● Sex -HB ● Family -HB
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	• Friends -HB • Growing up -HB • Love -HB • Loneliness -KB • Abuse -KB • Internal struggles -KB • Insecurities -KB • Sexuality -KB
Motifs	• <i>Rocky Horror</i> -HB • Books -KB • Death -KB • Music -HB • Guilt -KB
Important quotes	• “ ‘He’s a wallflower [...] You see things. You keep quiet about them. And you understand’ ” (Chbosky 37). -HB • “And in that moment, I swear we were infinite” (Chbosky 39). -KB • “I just think it’s bad when a boy looks at a girl and thinks that the way he sees the girl is better than the girl actually is” (Chbosky 48). -HB • “When I fell asleep, I had this dream. My brother and my sister and I were watching television with my Aunt Helen. [...] And she was doing what Sam was doing” (Chbosky 204). -KB • “I think I thought about this present from the first time I really saw her if you know what I mean” (Chbosky 68). -HB • “I don’t know why, but I really understood why my dad had to leave this house. When he knew my grandma would never find another man [...] and when he saw his sister start bringing home younger versions

	of their stepfather to date. He just couldn't stay" (Chbosky 88). -KB ● "So, I looked up, and we were in this giant dome like a glass snowball, and Mark said that the amazing white stars were really only holes in the black glass of the dome, and when you went to heaven, the glass broke away, and there was nothing but a whole sheet of star white, which is brighter than anything[...]" (Chbosky 95) -HB ● "On December 24, 1983, a policeman came to the door. My aunt Helen was in a terrible car accident" (Chbosky 90). -KB ● "I would die for you. But I won't live for you" (Chbosky 169).
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