

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

<p>Book Title: <i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Synopsis</p> <p>Charlie is shy, introspective, intelligent beyond his years yet socially awkward; he is a wallflower, caught between trying to live his life and trying to run from it. Charlie attempts to navigate his way through the uncharted territory of high school: the world of first dates and mix-tapes, family dramas and new friends. Standing on the fringes of life offers a unique perspective. But there comes a time to see what it looks like from the dance floor.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus</small></p>
<p>Book Author Chbosky, Stephen</p>	
<p>Copyright Year: 1999</p>	

Professional Reviews of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (Vol. 95, No. 12 (February 15, 1999))

"Dear friend, I am writing to you because she said you listen and understand." In his letters to a never-identified person, 15-year-old Charlie's freshman high-school year (1991-92) and coming-of-age ring fresh and true. First-novelist Chbosky captures adolescent angst, confusion, and joy as Charlie reveals his innermost thoughts while trying to discover who he is and whom he is to become. Intellectually precocious, Charlie seems a tad too naive in many other ways, yet his reflections on family interactions, first date, drug experimentation, first sexual encounter, and regular participation in Rocky Horror Picture Show screenings are compelling. He vacillates between full involvement in the crazy course of his life and backing off completely. Eventually, he discovers that to be a whole person who knows how to be a real friend rather than a patsy, he must confront his past--and remember what his beloved, deceased Aunt Helen did to him. Charlie is a likable kid whose humor-laced trials and tribulations will please both adults and teens.

Kirkus Reviews (1999)

Aspiring filmmaker/first-novelist Chbosky adds an upbeat ending to a tale of teenaged angst--the right combination of realism and uplift to allow it on high school reading lists, though some might object to the sexuality, drinking, and dope-smoking. More sophisticated readers might object to the rip-off of Salinger, though Chbosky pays homage by having his protagonist read *Catcher in the Rye*. Like Holden, Charlie oozes sincerity, rails against celebrity phoniness, and feels an extraliterary bond with his favorite writers (Harper Lee, Fitzgerald, Kerouac, Ayn Rand, etc.). But Charlie's no rich kid: the third child in a middle-class family, he attends public school in western Pennsylvania, has an older brother who plays football at Penn State, and an older sister who worries about boys a lot. An epistolary novel addressed to an anonymous "friend," Charlie's letters cover his first year in high school, a time haunted by the recent suicide of his best friend. Always quick to shed tears, Charlie also feels guilty about the death of his Aunt Helen, a troubled woman who lived with Charlie's family at the time of her fatal car wreck. Though he begins as a friendless observer, Charlie is soon pals with seniors Patrick and Sam (for Samantha), stepsiblings who include Charlie in their circle, where he smokes pot for the first time, drops acid, and falls madly in love with the inaccessible Sam. His first relationship ends miserably because Charlie remains compulsively honest, though he proves a loyal friend (to Patrick when he's gay-bashed) and brother (when his sister needs an abortion). Depressed when all his friends prepare for college, Charlie has a catatonic breakdown, which resolves itself neatly and reveals a long-repressed truth about Aunt Helen. A plain-written narrative suggesting that passivity, and thinking too

much, lead to confusion and anxiety. Perhaps the folks at (co-publisher) MTV see the synergy here with Daria or any number of videos by the sensitive singer-songwriters they feature.

Publishers Weekly (January 25, 1999)

A trite coming-of-age novel that could easily appeal to a YA readership, filmmaker Chbosky's debut broadcasts its intentions with the publisher's announcement that ads will run on MTV. Charlie, the wallflower of the title, goes through a veritable bath of bathos in his 10th grade year, 1991. The novel is formatted as a series of letters to an unnamed "friend," the first of which reveals the suicide of Charlie's pal Michael. Charlie's response--valid enough--is to cry. The crying soon gets out of hand, though--in subsequent letters, his father, his aunt, his sister and his sister's boyfriend all become lachrymose. Charlie has the usual dire adolescent problems--sex, drugs, the thuggish football team--and they perplex him in the usual teen TV ways. He hangs out with a group of seniors, among whom are Patrick and Samantha. Patrick is gay, and Charlie learns about gay. Sam is pretty, and Charlie learns about heartbreak. Sam is, alas, going out with Craig. Charlie goes out with the uppity Mary Elizabeth. Patrick goes with Brad but breaks up with him when Brad's father discovers their relationship. Into these standard teenage issues Chbosky infuses a droning insistence on Charlie's supersensitive disposition. Charlie's English teacher and others have a disconcerting tendency to rhapsodize over Charlie's giftedness, which seems to consist of Charlie's unquestioning assimilation of the teacher's taste in books. In the end we learn the root of Charlie's psychological problems, and we confront, with him, the coming rigors of 11th grade, ever hopeful that he'll find a suitable girlfriend and increase his vocabulary. (Feb.)

School Library Journal (June 1999)

Gr 9 Up An epistolary narrative cleverly places readers in the role of recipients of Charlie's unfolding story of his freshman year in high school. From the beginning, Charlie's identity as an outsider is credibly established. It was in the spring of the previous school year that his best friend committed suicide and now that his class has gone through a summer of change, the boy finds that he has drifted away from old friends. He finds a new and satisfying social set, however, made up of several high school seniors, bright bohemians with ego-bruising insights and, really, hearts of gold. These new friends make more sense to Charlie than his star football-playing older brother ever did and they are able to teach him about the realities of life that his older sister doesn't have the time to share with him. Grounded in a specific time (the 1991/92 academic year) and place (western Pennsylvania), Charlie, his friends, and family are palpably real. His grandfather is an embarrassing bigot; his new best friend is gay; his sister must resolve her pregnancy without her boyfriends support. Charlie develops from an observant wallflower into his own man of action, and, with the help of a therapist, he begins to face the sexual abuse he had experienced as a child. This report on his life will engage teen readers for years to come. Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA
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Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

Source: Follett Titlewave, NovelistPlus

YALSA Best Books for Young Adults: 2000

YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers: 2000

New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age: 2001