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Study Guide

THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER

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What THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER is about
After the suicide of his only friend, Charlie is in deep crisis. He feels alone and he dreads the 1385 days that are ahead of him at his new high school. But soon after joining the school, he makes contact with Sam and her half brother Patrick. Sam, who is surrounded by rumors of her supposed relationships, and the homosexual Patrick are outsiders, just like Charlie. Because of that they approach him without prejudice and include him in their group. There, Charlie finds appreciation and a feeling of being connected with life. However, things get complicated, when Charlie falls for the attractive Sam, who is already involved with someone.

Stephen Chbosky directs his own book on growing up and dealing with the obstacles of youth as a melancholic and sometimes tragic comedy that captures serious moments as well as amusing ones. As a director he understands how to translate the complicated feelings of his protagonists into images and sounds. Charlie’s letters to an anonymous friend serve as a dramatizing frame and deliver a direct view into Charlie’s mind via voice-over. During the course of the film, the introverted outsider Charlie evolves into a self-confident young man whose path through life becomes a little more stable and he can even start to cope with a traumatic event of his youth: the death of his aunt Helen, who abused him sexually. Fragmented memories of Helen’s and Charlie’s relationship keep blending into the film seamlessly, breaking its chronology. But the whole truth about Charlie’s past is not discovered until the end of the film.

The following work sheets deal with
- the young protagonists, their problems and how they deal with them
- how the feeling of being imprisoned and the desire for freedom and infinity are translated into cinematic images
- how the soundtrack complements and comments on the film’s plot

Publishing information
Publisher: AG Kino – Gilde deutscher Filmkunsttheater
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Photo credits: Capelight
(All the stills are from the Blu-ray of VIELLEICHT LIEBER MORGAN, published in Germany by Capelight. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film’s content, and not as illustrations.)
Title comparison
The film THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER retains the title of Stephen Chbosky’s novel. In Germany, the novel was published under the name VIELLEICHT LIEBER MORGEN and also DAS IST ALSO MEIN LEBEN. Compare the different titles to each other. What expectations do they raise? What themes are they referring to? Afterwards, please discuss which one of the titles fits the film perfectly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vielleicht lieber morgen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Das ist also mein Leben</td>
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</tbody>
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Work in pairs and find an alternative title. Explain, why you chose this one in particular.

In High School
THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER follows Charlie during his first year at high school. Explain the following terms from school life in the USA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freshman</th>
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<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Homecoming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prom Night</td>
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Charlie, Sam and Patrick
Each of the three protagonists has their own problems. Describe, in short, what Charlie, Sam and Patrick have to deal with and how they feel about it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charlie</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Patrick</th>
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Telling a story through images
Image 1 is taken from a scene following a conflict between Patrick and his secret boyfriend Brad, in which Charlie had to intervene. Image 2 shows Sam’s goodbye shortly before leaving for her studies. Which visual element can be found in both images?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Describe the intended meaning of said element and what it tells you about the characters.

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
Heroes
One night, Charlie, Sam and Patrick drive through a tunnel while listening to David Bowie’s „Heroes“. Sam gets up on the loading platform and we see the following images:

1  2
3  4
5  6

Explain the importance and meaning of this scene for the whole film.

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

What is told through images 1, 5 and 6? Write a sentence from Charlie’s point of view, describing his thoughts.

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

5
Describe the images 2, 3 and 4. Pay attention to the perspective we have of Sam and how she appears. Also describe Sam’s feelings in this very moment.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Research the lyrics to David Bowie’s „Heroes“. Translate them into german and select parts that correspond perfectly with THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER. Explain your selections.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

A Mixtape
Which songs would you choose to go along with the story of THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER? In small groups, compose a mixtape of 5 songs and explain why you picked those songs.

1
2
3
4
5

Charlie’s evolution
Illustrate Charlie’s development throughout the film by comparing his character at the beginning and the end. What are his qualities and characteristics? How does he deal with other people? How does he feel about himself, what are his ambitions and what has he achieved at the end of the film?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning of film</th>
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<th>End of film</th>
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