

You are Not Alone, The Power of Text

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October 26th, 2018.

Do you know any stories that reflect your own life? Do you sometimes encounter characters you can relate to deeply? In the novel, *Persepolis*, by *Marjane Satrapi*, she tells the story of her own life during the Persian Revolution. Marjane's life story can help readers put their own life into perspective. The film, *Breakfast Club*, written by John Hughes draws us into the lives of five wildly different adolescents. These teens all share a common experience; they are stuck in detention because of something they have done wrong. Through conversations with each other, they learn something about themselves. Like Marjane, they are on a journey of self-discovery. They face problems like everyone else. In, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by *Stephen Chbosky*, Charlie the protagonist, gives us a lot of insight into the way people react to conflict. Authors use character experiences, dialogue and conflict resolution to teach you more about yourself.

The experiences of characters in novels or films can help put life into perspective. Marjane talks about the oppression women faced when the new regime came into power. While you may be lucky enough to live in a place where you can leave your house without being told to cover up, you might experience a different kind of oppression, such as discrimination against gay and lesbians, or loss of opportunity because of extreme poverty. Hearing Marjane's story can give you hope or remind you that you are not alone. Marjane's fight against religious extremism inspires us to fight our own injustices. In *The Breakfast Club*, we relate to the characters who are "in trouble" at school. Following school rules and what happens when you break these rules is something, all teenagers can relate to. In *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, Charlie experiences isolation because he doesn't know where he fits in. The need to belong and

be accepted is a universal longing that everyone experiences. By relating to the experiences of characters in the story, we learn something about ourselves. We understand that oppression, punishment, and isolation are a part of the human experience.

Dialogue is an essential part of any movie or novel because it is what carries the story in most cases. When a story is built on dialogue between characters, writers have to find a way to progress the story through normal social interactions. In time, through various relationships that form, we learn more about the characters. For example, at first, we think Bender is a juvenile delinquent who cares little about others. He is a bad boy who talks about his destructive home life, living with an abusive parent. His schoolmates feel sorry for him and realize they do not have it so bad. Later we realize he does care about people and he shows a different side of himself to Claire. We learn that most people have secrets and parts of themselves they are afraid to reveal.

Dialogue can also tell you a lot about a character's personality. In *Perks*, Charlie, on multiple occasions cries when he is overwhelmed with emotion whether he is happy, sad, or anxious. When characters speak, are they funny like Patrick? Patrick, Charlie's friend in *Perks* is a wild eccentric guy. He makes a lot of jokes about his own hardships. This tells the reader he disguises the seriousness of his problems and displays them to the world as a joke, instead of seeking help or guidance. Alison, from *The Breakfast Club*, is a basket case who hides behind her black clothes and long dark hair. She does not say a word until she has had a chance to observe her surroundings and the people around her. When you first meet her you think she is weird, but when you get to know her, you learn that it is okay to be weird, quiet or shy. Marjane, in *Persepolis*, is a rebellious teen. She speaks up in class when she does not agree with her

teachers. She is not afraid to express her ideas and often challenges the status quo. We learn that sometimes in life we have to stick up for what we believe in. Though dialogue authors can teach us that people are complex individuals, and that we should not be so quick to judge them.

In life, there will always be conflict. It is how we learn, how we grow and build happy relationships with people. So a piece of text without conflict would be like a day in the life of a rock. Authors use conflict to teach the reader about themselves. Conflict keeps the reader interested until the very end when the moral of the story is revealed. For example, in *The Breakfast Club*, the moral of the story is to not typecast others, because this could limit with whom you talk, make friends or fall in love. At the end of the film, we see the blossoming relationships between Bender and Claire (the criminal and the princess) as well as Andrew and Alison (the jock and the basket case). *Perks of Being a Wallflower* is based on the many conflicts that Charlie faces. Throughout his high school life, he has disagreements with friends and family. The story does not center around just one issue but rather many issues. This gives you a realistic view of life. Charlie and his aunt have a past that you learn about as the story evolves. Helen seems like a lovely caring aunt, with a rough past, but it is not until the very end that you find out she has been molesting Charlie. The story is not really about that particular event but the events leading up to him discovering this. In the end, the reader is left to hope Charlie can get past his trauma. Charlie gives us a lot of insight into the way he reacts to situations both verbally and physically. He tends to lash out physically. Close to the beginning of *Perks*, Charlie fights with a boy who is bullying him. When Patrick and Brad are fighting in the cafeteria Charlie steps in. Driven by his emotions he punches Brad. He is so overcome with adrenalin that he blacks out during the fight. Throughout the novel, we understand that life is not one big problem, but rather a series of challenges and dilemmas that make us stronger and

teach us something about ourselves. Marjane throughout *Persepolis* is faced with an inner conflict. She lives in a country that does not allow her to express herself in the way she would like. Her parent's solution to this is to send her to live in another country. Marjane has to give up a life with her parents in order to live freely. Conflict resolution is what gives stories life. We see ourselves in each conflict and question our notion of right and wrong.

Writers use character experiences, dialogue and conflict resolution to help us learn more about ourselves. Texts provide us with new perspectives needed to help us distinguish between right and wrong. Someone else's story can teach us we are not alone. Feeling sad, helpless or lost are universal experiences. While our life is unique, reading a novel or watching a film can change us, even if it is just for a moment. At the end of a story, we have the chance to reflect on our lives and decide to change things or accept things. Through dialogue, an author can lead us to discover the truth about others and ourselves. Conflict resolution allows us to grow and learn from the mistakes of others. Finding solutions to our problems is essential to living a happy life. This is what every individual strives for in life. To be happy and live life the way they choose.