

**BOOK REVIEW OF *IF I STAY***  
**WRITTEN BY GAYLE FORMAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purposes of writing this review are to give comprehension about the art of loving, the power of music, and to give the explanation about the strengths and the weaknesses in *If I Stay* novel. To develop the comprehension of this review, the writer used library research. Library research is used by collecting the sources through books from library and other sources through internet. Based on the comprehension, the writer found that Mia's family, Mia's boyfriend, and Mia's best friend really love and care to Mia. Besides, music has an important role in Mia's family.

*Keywords: Love, Music, Family*

**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background of the Writing**

Love and music are the part of life that usually become themes of novels. Most of the theme in a novel is about love, either in kids or adults novels. Love in a novel can give the reader deeper understanding about the meaning of what love is. Love is a deep feeling of affection for something; it can affect the good and the bad thing in people's life. Love can control people of doing bad things, but love can bring disaster if people are so fanatic to love something. There are many different types of love; Albert Ellis proposed types of love, such as "conjugal love, parental love, familial love, religious love, love of humanity, love of animals, love of things, self-love, sexual love, obsessive-compulsive love, etc". Albert Ellis devoted an entire book to discussion the types of love, which discuss about the meaning of love. (2002: 3-4)

In life, love affects all aspects both in people's life and in literary works. One of the literary works affected by love is music. Usually music becomes a theme song in film or sometimes becomes a theme of novel. Music is the creation of the muse of people that contains rhythm, harmony, symphony, and lyrics. It can bring good effects, such as giving people mood-booster when they are in bad mood, giving a spirit in people's heart, and giving an inspiration. There are many kinds of music genre, for instance classical music, folk music, ceremonial music, modern music, and so on. Even though there are many kinds of different music in society, but the purpose of all music is the same, that is to reflect and create social conditions – including the factors that either facilitate or impede social change.

*If I Stay* written by Gayle Forman is a novel that tells about the theme of love and the power of music. Mia Hall is seventeen years old, a young country girl from Oregon, USA.

She is a cellist, she has family's love and she has a gorgeous boyfriend who is totally in love with her. She almost has a perfect life but one accident changes everything in her life. The writer chooses this book to give review of the story, the themes about the art of loving, and the power of music in *If I Stay* novel. The writer also wants to give the strength and the weakness of the book.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Writing**

The writer's purposes of the writing are:

1. To give explanation about the art of loving in *If I stay* novel.
2. To give explanation about the power of music in *If I stay* novel.
3. To give explanation about the strengths and the weaknesses of *If I Stay* novel.

### **1.3 Biography of the Author**

Gayle Forman was born on June 05, 1970, is married to Nick and she has two children, Presto and Willa, and she also has one adopted child from Ethiopia, Denbele. She lives in Brooklyn with her family. She was a journalist who specializes in reporting on young people and social-justice issues. She starts working for *Seventeen* magazines by writing the kinds of articles that people never believe that *Seventeen* ran (everything from child soldiers in Sierra Leone to migrant teen farm workers in the U.S). Later on, she become a freelance journalist for publications of magazine like *Details*, *Jane*, *Glamour*, *The Nation*, *Elle*, *Budget Travel*, and *Cosmopolitan*.

In 2002, Gayle and her husband Nick took trip around the world for a whole year. The result of that year is her first book a travel memoir called *You Can't Get There From Here: A Year On the Fringes of a Shrinking World* in 2006. Furthermore, she published her first young adult novel *Sister in Sanity* in 2007, which she based on an article she has written for *Seventeen*. The next book, *If I Stay*, was published in April of 2009 by Dutton. It became *New York Times Bestseller* book and it is published in 30 countries around the world. *If I Stay* will be adapted into movie, starring Chloe Grace Moretz (American Actress). Gayle also wrote a sequel to *If I Stay* called *Where She Went* in 2011.

Gayle is an award-winning author; she wins the 2009 NAIBA Book of the Year and 2010 Indie Choice Honor Award winner for *If I Stay*. She gets other notable literary awards-British Fantasy Award (2010), An ALA/YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers (2010), South Carolina Book Award Nominee for Young Adult Book Award (2011), TAYSHAS High School Reading List (2010), Goodreads Choice Award Nominee for Young Adult Fiction (2009), and Milwaukee Country Teen Book Award Nominee (2010).

This a biography of Gayle Forman is based on <http://www.gayleforman.com/bio>

## **CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY OF THE BOOK**

*If I Stay* tells about a seventeen years old talented girl named Mia Hall or Mia. At 7:09 am, Mia wakes up on a snowy morning, all the activities are off – school and work are off in the snow day in Oregon. She and her family celebrate their holiday. They are planning to do something in their time off. Mom shows Mia that her boyfriend is in the newspaper. Then Mia reads the newspaper for the news about her boyfriend, Adam. Adam's band (*Shooting Star*) is opening for Bikini concert on the Portland. She is planning to go to their concert that

night, but she supposes to practice her cello with some pianists. She has played cello for almost ten years. She is a passionate and gifted cellist who is rather confident that she will gain her acceptance from Julliard School, based on comment from one of judges.

Mia's family decides to go for ride; they are planning to visit old family friends – Henry and Willow, stop at a bookstore, and then have a dinner with Mia's grandparents. In the car, there is battle for stereo as usual, Mom wants NPR, Dad wants Sinatra, Teddy asks for SpongeBob, and Mia wants classical music station. Beethoven's Cello Sonata No.3 is playing when Mia closes her eyes, and suddenly her life is changed forever. The car is eviscerated after the accident, but the radio is still playing Beethoven. Mia tries to ensure that everything will be okay, and then she sees her father and mother are dead in the car accident. Now, she finds Teddy and calls his name. When she reaches the person in the ditch, she realizes that she is looking at her own bleeding body.

Mia thinks it is just a nightmare, asking herself if she is dead or not. She sees the paramedics arrive on the scene and watches them attend to her body, frantically performing emergency medical care and then transporting her speedily to the emergency room. Mia hears a paramedic report that her parents are dead, but her brother is also being rushed to the ER. She follows her body to an intensive care unit in a big city hospital in Portland. All the while, reflecting on her first date with Adam and how their musical passions that are completely difference can unite them.

Mia's body is lying in a coma in an ICU bed. She is in serious conditions, with a collapsed lung, ruptured spleen, internal bleeding and contusion on her brain. As the doctor work to repair her shattered body, the conscious Mia reminisces about her life and watches her grandparents and other relatives visit her. Mia learns further devastating news about the consequences of the car accident. She also realizes that she has a pivotal decision to make her own life or death choice. With so many overwhelming tragedies and tremendous setbacks, her life will never be remotely the same. Her only hope is her boyfriend (Adam) and her little brother (Teddy) to gain her life again.

She waits Adam to come, and then she sees Adam to see her in hospital. However, Adam is not allowable to see Mia in ICU. Therefore, he decides to sneak in but fail, he is caught by security. Then Adam meets Willow - a nurse in the hospital and a friend of Mia's parents. After seeing Willow in Hospital, Mia realizes that Teddy is dead too. Her body is dropping and then the nurses are leading her body to the operation room. Mia loses her hope and she decides to follow her family too, but her grandparents, her boyfriend, her best friend, and others of her relatives (Uncles, Aunts and Cousins) beg and pray to ask Mia to choose whether she stay or not. However, none of it affects her. She still wants to go with her Mom, Dad, and Teddy in another world – heaven. Adam never surrender, he tries to ensure Mia that she still has a “family” – grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, boyfriend, and best friend. Adam tells a promise to Mia, if she wants to stay and live again, Adam will do whatever she wants – quit the band, go with her to New York. Mia closes her eyes, covers her ears, cannot watch that and cannot hear that. But then, it is no longer Adam that she hears. It is that sound. It is cello's sound. Adam has placed headphones over her lifeless ears and is lying an iPod down on her chest. It is Yo-Yo Ma music, and something inside of her implodes. There is a blinding flash. She feels pain and can feels Adam's hand. It is the first time today she can truly hears Adam with her own body.

## CHAPTER 3 REVIEW OF THE BOOK

### 3.1 Themes of the Book

According to Thrall and Hibbard in *A Handbook to Literature*, theme is “the central or dominating idea in a literary work.” They say that “In poetry, fiction, and drama, it is the abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in person, action, and image in the work” (1960: 486).

#### 3.1.1 The Art of Loving

According to Erich Fromm (1956) in *The Art of Loving*, there are the objects of love theories, which are explained in *The Art of Loving* book. First, love between parents and child – motherly love and fatherly love. **Motherly love** is “bliss, peace; it does not need to be acquired; it does not need to be deserved” and “mother’s love is unconditional – love for the helpless” (1956: 102); mother has the function of making her child feels secure in life, trying to help child growing up, and giving help to child (1956: 112). **Fatherly love** is a conditional love. Father has the function of teaching child and guiding child to solve the problems. “Father’s love should be guided by principles and expectations; it should be patient and tolerant” (1956: 112). **Brotherly love** is “love for all human beings; it is characterized by its very lack of exclusiveness” (1956: 120). **Erotic Love** is two different persons who will become one by love. In erotic love, there is exclusiveness, it means intensely with one person only. Fromm says that “Erotic love excludes the love for the others only in the sense or erotic fusion, full commitment in all aspects of life” (1956: 140). **Self-Love** is you love yourself and you will love everybody as you do yourself. Fromm says “If you love all alike, including yourself, you will love everybody as one person and that person is both God and man. Thus, he is a great and righteous person who loves himself, loves all others equally” (1956: 158). **Love of God** is essentially the same as the belief in God, in God existence, God’s justice, and God’s love. The love of God is an intense feeling of experience of oneness, inseparably linked with the expression of this love in every act of living.

Those theories are the objects in the *Art of Loving* that appear in the *If I Stay* novel. Motherly Love in this novel is about love between Mia and her mother. Mia feels confused what clothes will be worn by her to go to concert with Adam. She has already changed her clothes six times. Her Mom sees her and then Mom tries to ensure Mia that he is just a guy. Mom suggests Mia to wear something that she feels good in – be herself. The quotation shows below:

“He’s just a guy, Mia,” she said when she saw me getting worked up.

“Just wear something you feel good in,” she suggested (Forman, 2009: 30).

Fatherly Love is about teaching and guiding child to solve the problems. *If I Stay* novel is about Dad and Mia. Dad gives supports and affection to his daughter when Mia feels nervous of her first recital. Dad finds Mia cries in the backstage, and then he says that it will be a shame and he has “a dandy of a recital present for her” that is a Cello, which is “better than flower” (Forman, 2009: 21). However, Mia is still unsure and she compares herself with Dad (former drummer in his band) that he never did something lame as stage fright. Therefore, Dad still gives his support to Mia.

Dad was still smiling but I could tell he had turned serious because he slowed down his speech.

“You don’t. You just work through it. You just hang in there” (Forman, 2009: 23).

Brotherly Love is love for human being – equal. This love also appears in this novel. After the accident, she can see all the things that happen surround her. She sees the people appraise the scene, and then they look away, some of them cry, one woman throws up into the ferns on the side of the road. Mia sees and feels them praying for Mia’s family even though they do not know whom Mia’s family is or what has happened to Mia’s family.

Erotic Love is attraction based on sexual desire. It is involved in romantic and physical attraction. It tells about Mia and Adam relationship. Mia feels so happy and excited when she has a date with Adam. They go to Yo-Yo Ma concert. In the concert, Adam reaches over and grasps Mia’s hand and then Mia squeezes his hand back. After the concert, Adam tells about the reason why he asks Mia to date and he confesses his feeling to Mia. Mia feels very happy because she has the same feeling as Adam’s feeling. This can be seen in the quotation below:

I felt the heat flood my neck and I could sense myself blushing. I stared at my shoes. I knew that Adam was looking at me now with as much certainty as I knew that if I looked up he was going to kiss me. And it took me by surprise how much I wanted to be kissed by him, to realize that I’d memorized the exact shape of his lips, that I’d imagined running my finger down the cleft of his chin (Forman, 2009: 33).

The erotic love is not just a strong feeling – it is a decision, it is a judgment and it is a promise. It also appears in the story of *If I Stay* novel. It is about Mia’s parents. They got married when they were young, but young for their set of friends. They were in the early twenty when they got married. Mom gave birth of Mia when she was twenty-three and Mom and Dad had already been married for a year. The quotation is shown in the paragraph below:

In funny way, Dad was always a bow-tie wearer, always a little more traditional than you might imagine. Because even though he had blue hair and tattoos and wore leather jackets and worked in a record store, he wanted to marry Mom back at a time when the rest of their friends were still having drunken one-night stands. “*Girlfriend* is such a stupid word,” he said. “I couldn’t stand calling her that. so, we had to get married, so I could call her ‘wife’” (Forman, 2009: 69).

The last is Love of God. Love of God is essentially the same as the belief in God, in God’s existence, God’s justice, and God’s love. The love of God is an intense feeling of experience of oneness, inseparably linked with the expression of this love in every act of living. It also appears in the *If I Stay* novel. It happens when Kim (Mia’s best friend) and her mother visit Mia in the ICU. In the ICU, Kim looks so stiff but her mother is so emotional, she cries to see Mia. Shortly after that, Kim leaves the ICU to a small chapel in the hospital basement. In there, Mia sees Kim praying. Mia has never actually seen Kim praying before.

### **3.1.2 The Power of Music**

All kinds of music are now available twenty-four hours a day, at the touch of a switch. Music is very powerful medium. In some societies, music is used to control those in power. It is powerful at the level of the social group because it facilitates communication, which goes beyond words, induces shared emotional reaction and supports the development of group identity. Music is also powerful at the individual level because it can induce multiple responses – physiological, movement, mood, emotional, cognitive and behavioral. Music can also alleviate the boredom of tedious tasks and create environment appropriate for particular social events. The easy availability of music in everyday life is encouraging individuals to use music to optimize their sense of well being. Music can influence their behavior in ways which are beyond their conscious awareness

According to Hallam “Music has powerful therapeutic effects, which can be achieved through listening or active music making - can promote relaxation, alleviate anxiety and pain, promote appropriate behavior in - vulnerable groups and enhance the quality of life of those who are beyond medical help” (2004: 2). Hallam also says that Music can play an important part in enhancing human development in the early years. Active involvement in music making in children may increase self-esteem and promote the development of a range of social and transferable skills (2004: 2).

This novel tells some aspects of The Power of Music. The first is about inducing multiple responses – physiological, movement, mood, emotional, cognitive and behavioral. When Mia hears Beethoven’s Cello Sonata no.3, she feels peaceful. The sound of music can bring good mood for Mia. It shows in the quotation below:

...we turn to the classical station. I hear the first few bars of Beethoven’s Cello Sonata no. 3, which was the very piece I was supposed to be working on this afternoon. It feels like some kind of cosmic coincidence. I concentrate on the notes, imagining myself playing, feeling grateful for this chance to practice, happy to be in a warm car with my sonata and my family. I close my eyes (Forman, 2009: 12-13).

This novel also tells about the power of music that can make Mia to compromise with *Shooting Star* – Adam’s band which is the opposite kind of music that she likes to listen and play. Mia likes classical music and Adam likes pop music: emo-core. Moreover, Mia loves to play Cello and Adam loves to play guitar. The quotation is shown below:

...I want the classical music station, but recognizing that I’m the only classical fan in the family, I am willing to compromise with Shooting Star (Forman, 2009: 11).

Music can create a love attraction between man and woman. It shows in *If I Stay* novel. Adam has been watching Mia’s practices in the music wing for several months. Adam asks Mia to go to Yo-Yo Ma concert. He tells Mia that he gets the tickets from a friend of the family, but the truth is he buys those tickets by his money from work as pizza delivery for two weeks. He knows that Mia is the fan of Yo-Yo Ma. After watching the concert, Mia knows the truth about the tickets when Adam tells the truth to Mia. He also tells the reason why he falls in love with Mia. He says:

“I’ve never seen anyone get as into music as you do. It’s why I like to watch you practice. You get the cutest crease in your forehead, right there,” Adam said, touching me above the bridge of my nose. “I’m obsessed with music and even I don’t get transported like you do” (Forman, 2009: 33).

Music can promote relaxation, alleviate anxiety, and pain. It is shown in *If I Stay* novel when Mom gives a birth of Teddy at the birthing centre. First, when the midwife leads Mom inside the room, she screams profanities. Mom asks for music to play, and then Dad turn music on. After the music is playing, Mom feels better and she can give a birth, as can be seen below:

... Mom screamed. “Melvins. Earth. Now!”  
... then he popped a CD of the loudest, churningest, guitar-heaviest music I’d ever heard. It made all the fast-paced punk songs Dad normally listened to sound like harp music. This music was primal and that seemed to make Mom feel better. She started making those low guttural noises (Forman, 2009: 129).

This novel tells about the power of music that can bring happiness in the togetherness of family and close friends. Last summer, Mia hosted an accidental Labor Day party at her house. It had been a busy season for Mia and all people, so Mia's parents decided a small party that was attended by family and close friends. They were having barbeque, playing around, catching fireworks, roasting marshmallows, and then musical instruments appear:

Dad's snare drum from the house, Henry's guitar from his car, Adam's spare guitar from my room. Everyone jamming together, singing songs..., Teddy was dancing around..., I remember watching it all and getting that tickling in my chest and thinking to myself: *This is what happiness feels like* (Forman, 2009: 188).

The most importance of the power of music is it can be used as a therapeutic treatment to brain damage. *If I Stay* novel tells how the music can bring Mia back from coma. Adam puts headphones over her lifeless ears and playing Yo-Yo Ma - *Andante co poco e moto rubato*: "The low piano plays almost as if in warning. In comes the cello, like a heart bleeding. And it's like something inside of me implodes" (Forman, 2009: 194).

### 3.2 The Strengths and The Weaknesses

There are some strengths of *If I Stay* novel:

1. This novel gives the reader more comprehension about Love. Love is not only between man and woman that have attraction each other, but love is also among family and nature. This novel tells some objects of the theories of love in *The Art of Loving* – Motherly love, Fatherly Love, Brotherly Love, Erotic Love, and Love of God.
2. This novel gives the reader more comprehension about the Power of Music. From the story, the reader can learn and know how music can bring good effects in people life. Music plays important role in life, without music life will be boring.

There are some weaknesses of *If I Stay* novel:

1. This novel is written by first person point of view. Mia becomes the main character and the story is written from her point of view, so the themes are only told by Mia.
2. The end of story is confusing and makes the readers ask what will happen after Mia wakes up from coma. The author just ends the story until Mia is back from the coma.

### 3.3 Personal Opinion

For the writer, *If I Stay* is a good story that gives the meaning of love from family and friends. There are some implicit messages in the story that suggests people to respect and love their parents, siblings, relatives and friends before losing them. Gayle Forman is also telling about hope. She tells us not to give up in life although there is only a little hope that you have. Forman has great writing skill; she can evolve the entire events that happen in the story to be told just in one day. She writes the stories in details description and introduces some medical words – *BP (Blood Pressure)*, *DOA (Dead on Arrival)*, *CAT scan (Computed Tomography or CT Scan)*. This book is good to read.

### 3.4 Book Cover

#### 3.4.1 Cover Picture of *If I Stay* Novel


  
Photo by Laura Heckman

*gayle forman* is an award-winning author and journalist whose articles have appeared in numerous publications, including *Seventeen*, *Cosmopolitan*, *The Nation*, and *Elle*. She lives in Brooklyn with her family.

Visit her on the web at  
[www.gayleforman.com](http://www.gayleforman.com)



"GRACEFUL, imaginative, and haunting, *If I Stay* is both a page-turner and a gentle, satisfying read."  
 —PATRICIA MCCORMICK,  
 National Book Award Finalist for *Sold*

★ "COMPELLING and highly textured.... Laced with insight, good humor, and wonder.... Mia's story will engage readers willing to suspend their disbelief that the future can be seen in the present."  
 —BOOKLIST, starred review

Dutton

\$16.99 USA  
 \$21.00 CAN

"Just listen," Adam says with a voice that sounds like shrapnel.  
 I open my eyes wide now. I sit up as much as I can. And I listen.  
 "Stay," he says.  
 Choices. Seventeen-year-old Mia is faced with some tough ones. Stay true to her first love—music—even if it means losing her boyfriend and leaving her family and friends behind?  
 Then, one February morning, Mia goes for a drive with her family, and in an instant, everything changes. Suddenly, all the choices are gone, except one. And it's the only one that matters.  
*If I Stay* is a heartachingly beautiful book about the power of love, the true meaning of family, and the choices we all make.

[www.ifistay.com](http://www.ifistay.com)  
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### 3.4.2 Analysis of Book Cover

The color of the cover is light blue. It is describing the accident that happens in the morning on snowy day. The title and the color of the book cover are related to each other, which means after the accident that makes Mia's family (Dad, Mom, and Teddy) died in the morning, so there are choices for Mia to stay or not. Light blue represents the tragic accident in the morning on the snow day and related to the title – *If I Stay* in order to choose staying or not. Moreover, the meaning of the dried branch and red flower in the cover is representing a hope. Even though the branch has already dried, but there is still flower that appears from dried branch. Dried branch and flower are describing Mia's story. Although her lovely Dad, Mom and Teddy have died and left her alone, she still has a hope – Adam's Love, best friend's love, and other relatives' love to *stay*.

The writer of this project agrees with the comments by Patricia and Booklist in the back cover of the novel *If I Stay* that this story is wrapped in page-turner. The reader will be flowed by the story that is dramatic and imaginative with good humor and wonder. The reader will see the dilemmas and choices that are faced by Mia, and the reader can feel the problems that appear in this novel. This novel can draw you to feel the situation and condition that happen in the story.

## CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION

According to *Wikipedia*, *If I Stay* is “one of Gayle Forman's bestseller books, which wins many awards, such as Indie Choice Honor Award in 2010 and become The New York Times Bestseller” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GayleForman>). This novel is telling about seventeen years old Mia that must survive from coma. She faces a dilemma that forces her to choose to stay or not. The story brings deep emotion for the reader; the reader can be flowed by the story and the memory that is told by Mia.

In this book, it shows how love is as the important thing to survive. Even though she has lost her parents and her little brother, but she still has love of her grandparents, her lover, and her best friend. Music also has an important role in this novel; it can bring Mia back from coma.

*If I Stay* is really recommended for the reader who is losing hope. Since this novel brings the meaning of life to find a hope in life.

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