

**BOOK REVIEW OF *THE LAST SONG*
WRITTEN BY NICHOLAS SPARKS**

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Abstract

Literature such as novel is one of human works, presents some character's struggle in several circumstances. In which influences and entertain the reader. The purpose of The Last Song written by Nicholas Sparks review are explains the theme and the struggle of the main character as the strength of the novel, and the weakness. Based on the review, the novel has theme about the affection for God, Family members, friends, and nature. Affection is something beautiful. Someone is getting affection to get happiness. This novel has the struggle of a main character that is a struggle from father to reconcile his relationship with his daughter. On the other hand, the weakness from this novel is about the song finished by main character, the readers may be disappointed with the ending from this novel. There is no detail or description about the lyrics and intonation about that song. The Last Song is a suitable novel read by people who wants to struggle and to have affection in daily life. It reminds the readers of the truly important things in life and gives the readers a look at love, joy, peace, patience and kindness.

Keywords: struggle of life, affection, the strength and the weakness.

Abstrak

Karya literatur seperti novel merupakan salah satu hasil karya manusia, yang menampilkan beberapa perjuangan tokoh dalam beberapa keadaan. Yang mempengaruhi dan menghibur para pembaca. Tujuan dari novel *The Last Song* yang ditulis oleh Nicholas Sparks menjelaskan tentang tema dan perjuangan dari tokoh utama sebagai kelebihan dari novel, dan kelemahan dari novel. Berdasarkan tinjauan, novel ini memiliki tema tentang kasih sayang untuk Tuhan, anggota keluarga, teman dan alam. Kasih sayang merupakan sesuatu yang indah. Seseorang yang mendapatkan kasih sayang akan mendapatkan kebahagiaan. Novel ini memiliki perjuangan dari tokoh utama, yaitu perjuangan dari seorang ayah untuk memperbaiki hubungan dengan anak perempuannya. Disisi lain, kelemahan dari novel ini yaitu tentang lagu yang diselesaikan oleh tokoh utama, pembaca mungkin akan kecewa dengan akhir dari cerita novel ini. Karena dalam novel ini tidak dijelaskan tentang lirik, nada dan intonasi tentang lagu yang dimainkan. *The Last Song* adalah novel yang pantas untuk dibaca oleh orang-orang yang ingin tentang perjuangan dan memiliki kasih sayang dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Ini mengingatkan pembaca tentang hal terpenting dalam hidup dan memberikan kepada para pembaca tentang cinta, kesenangan, kedamaian, kesabaran dan kebaikan.

Kata kunci : perjuangan hidup, kasih sayang, kekuatan, dan kelemahan

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Literature such as novel is one of human works. Nowadays, novels are dominated by romantic stories. By reading the novel, the reader can understand about story and meaning inside it. According to Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature*, literature cannot be 'studied' at all. We can only read, enjoy, and appreciate it. Overall, we can only accumulate all kinds of information about literature (1948:15). Literature works can become a lesson in life. There are many aspects in life that is discussed in literary work. One of them is affection. Affection is something beautiful. Someone is getting affection to get happiness. Someone has the various kinds of affection such as affection for God, with family members and friends and affection for the nature.

The Last Song by Nicholas Sparks shows a story of a stubborn and rebellious girl, Veronica Miller or Ronnie has not talked to her father since after her parents divorced. She kept angry until three years especially with her father. Ronnie's mother decides for Ronnie and her younger brother to spend the summer in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina with her father. Ronnie's mother believes that they can restore the relationship to be better.

I am interested to review this novel because the background of the story emphasizes about the struggle of the main character and affection as the important points. *The Last Song* as The New York Times Bestselling Novel must have something that attracts the readers to read it. The writer chooses this novel because *The Last Song* has good things that could be taken. It gives the readers a look at affection, joy, peace, patience and kindness.

1.2 Purposes of Study

1. To explain the strength of the novel through the analysis of the theme and the struggle of the main character of the *The Last Song*.
2. To explain the weakness of the novel of *The Last Song*.

1.3 About Nicholas Sparks and his works

Sparks was born on 31December 1965 in Omaha, Nebraska. He excelled in high school. Nicholas received a full athletic scholarship to Notre Dame but there was an accident to make him cannot continue. At the same time, he wrote his first novel, *The Passing*, which was never published. He decided to continue to study in Notre Dame in finance business. He graduated Magna Cum laude from the Notre Dame in 1988. That same year, Nicholas wrote his second novel, *The Royal Murders* which also remains unpublished.

Nicholas has written 17 books and eight of his novels made into movies. In 1999, *Message in a Bottle* became the first of Nicholas novels to be released as a movie, it is followed by *A Walk to Remember* which was released in (2002), *The Notebook* in (2004), *Nights in Rodanthein* (2008), *Dear John* in (2010), *The Last Song* in (2010), *The Lucky One* in (2012), and the last movie taken from his novel is *Safe Haven* in (2012).

2 SUMMARY

The main character of the story was Veronica “Ronnie” Miller who was 17 years old girl, Ronnie is a rebellious and stubborn teenager that is struggling to find herself. Ronnie and her younger brother Jonah lived in New York with their mother. After their parents divorced, her father Steve Miller lived in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. Steve was a teacher in Juilliard School. The decision from Steve Miller to leave his family without explanation made Ronnie very angry, until she refused the scholarship from Juilliard School, decided to stop playing piano and she never spoke with her father for almost three years.

During the summer Ronnie’s mother Kim, took Ronnie and Jonah to spend the summer holiday with her father. After hearing that idea Ronnie was unhappy and was so angry. But Jonah was very happy to hear that idea because he would live and spend the summer with his father. Kim, Ronnie and Jonah arrived in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina where Steve lived. Steve said hello for Ronnie, but she did not said anything and didn’t care about to him. Steve was still patient and kind with her.

Ronnie was unhappy about this home, especially when she looked the piano in a small alcove of the small living room of the beachside bungalow. Ronnie spent much time away from the house to entertain herself and went to the beach to see a Carnival. Ronnie had a new friend whose name was Blaze, they had the same problem about her parents. One day Ronnie’s father showed a nest of turtle egg to Ronnie and Jonah in the edge of the beach. He said that raccoon always eat those eggs, Ronnie became interested to protect the nest from the raccoon and she decided to call the aquarium crew to made the protective cage.

On a dark night in August, Steve walked to the beach, when suddenly he was coughing up blood and needed to go to the hospital. Ronnie was at the same room with her father and when her father told everything about his cancer, she began to cry hard. Day by day Ronnie's father felt better, and could go home. Ronnie helped her father when he needed help, and made a good quality time with him. Ronnie finished the song that she and her father did before and played it. Soon after that her father died and Ronnie returned to New York, where she applied to Juilliard School to study there.

3 REVIEW

3.1 The Strengths of the novels

In this review, the writer presents the strength of *The Last Song* included the analysis of the theme and the struggle of the main character.

3.1.1 The theme

Theme is the main idea which constructs a literary work. According to Kenny in Nurgiyantoro *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi* (1995:67) "*Tema (Theme) adalah makna yang terkandung dalam sebuah cerita.* The themes of *The Last Song* are affection.

3.1.1.1 Affection

Affection is very important part to express your loves from that people to other people, by verbal, sacrifice, and action. The meaning of affection that is how we can do the best and to give the happiness for other people that we loves and affection not only for sweetheart but also relationship with God, family members, friend and nature.

The first is affection from Steve for his family's when he is being treated at the hospital because of cancer. Steve is almost an ideal father, even though he is dying.

I will always love you, and I will always love Jonah. I will always love your mother, and she will always have my respect. She is the giver of the two greatest gifts I've ever received, and she is been a wonderful mother. (2009-164)

From paragraph above shows that Steve gives the affections with verbal and saying "I love you" more than one, Steve loves his family more than life itself, he feels that Ronnie and Jonah always been the greatest blessings in his life and no father has ever been as blessed as him.

The other affection can happen not only between people with people but also people with nature and animal.

"The turtles are climbing over each other to get out of the hole, and then they hit the sand and head toward the water in this little crablike parade. It's amazing." (2009-67)

From the paragraph above it shows that Steve, Ronnie and Jonah have a moment of joy and satisfaction, because this is the first time for Ronnie and Jonah to see the amazing moment like this and what they do for the turtles to keep them away from the raccoons and extinction was successful. The writer shows much affection from this novel. Affection can change every people to be better, with affection we can feels the peace, love, kindness and patience.

3.1.2. The Struggle of the Main Character

In *The Last Song* the author Nicholas Sparks writes beautifully a story about the struggle of the main character. Steve Miller knows his daughter is disappointed when her parents divorced. For this reason, Ronnie stopped playing a piano, refused the scholarship from Julliard School and has not spoken to her father for three years and Steve wants a chance to ease her pain in this summer holiday. According *Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary* (2008: 441) struggle as "try hard to do something". Even though Steve's sufferings about cancer and wondering what to

do with the little time he had remaining, Steve still shows unconditional loves and affection for Ronnie to reconcile the relationship to be better.

3.1.2.1 Steve persistence in showing his love for his daughter

Nicholas Sparks creates Steve Miller become interesting character and it seems to be real. Steve lives alone after his marriage ended, and never meets with his children, Ronnie and Jonah almost for three years.

He was forty eight years old. His marriage had ended, his daughter avoided him, and his son growing up without him. Last year, he would move back here, to the town where he would grown up, a place he never thought he would see again. Now he was about to spend the summer with his children, Ronnie and Jonnah” (2009:6)

From the paragraph above, it shows that Nicholas Sparks describes Steve as a character in details. He shows that Steve lives alone after his marriage was ended and has a bad relation with his daughter after his divorce. Steve knows about this bad situation and he try to visit his daughter in New York to reconcile the relationship.

Every time he came to New York to see you and Jonah, you always ignored him and hung out with your friends. “I don’t want to see or talk to him,” Ronnie said. Your father is a good man and he loves you. (2009:4)

Every chance Steve visit Ronnie in New York she always ignored him, Steve know his daughter still angry and disappointed about his decision to leaving the family without explanation and moved to North Carolina.

3.1.2.2 Steve struggle to endure the pain of cancer

Steve didn’t want his daughter to know about his cancer, he tries doing anything even though he feels sick. Steve still hides his cancer, because he wants his children not to worry about his real condition and he hopes his children have nice summer. It would be the summer filled with lies.

As he played, he coughed once, then again, before stopping the song. He coughed some more. "Dad?" she cried. "Are you okay?" "I'm okay," he said.

His voice weak. There is so much dust in here, it happens every time.

The paragraph above shows that when Steve plays piano in Church with his daughter, Ronnie feels if her father looks little pale, and worried about the condition from her father. But Steve still hides his real conditions and tells his daughter if he coughed because of the dust around the piano.

On a dark night in August, when the cancer start to attack, it makes Steve being treated at the hospital and thinking it is time to stop lying and it is time to tell the truth to Ronnie. As shown in paragraph below.

"I'm sorry sweetheart" "I know I should have told you, but I wanted a normal summer, and I wanted you to have a normal summer. I just wanted to get know my daughter again. (2009-145)

The paragraph above shows that during the summer holiday Steve still hides his cancer, because he wants his children not to worry about his real condition and finally tells the truth, because he hopes his children have nice summer and they can spend the summer holiday with happiness. After hearing the truth from his father it makes Ronnie remembers that she has never been talking with her father for almost three years, stop playing piano with him and she remembers the first day she arrives at his house with the anger, and she begins to cry hard after thinking about all that. During the summer Ronnie sees all the struggles from her father, she realizes that Steve is a good father for her and she always gets protection and affection from him every day. And finally Ronnie changes her attitudes from rebellious teen and stubborn to become a good daughter for her father and spend the summer together happily. After her father died because of cancer, Ronnie decides to accept again the scholarship and studies in Julliard School.

3.2 The weakness of the novel

Although *The Last Song* has a number of the strengths, some of the strengths also become the weakness. The weakness from this novel is about the song finished by Ronnie, the readers may be disappointed with the ending from this novel.

“I finished your song,” she said. “our last song. And I want to play it for you.” (2009:175)

“For the first time in months, he knew his questions had answer. As he listened to the song that Ronnie had finished, the song that Ronnie had perfected. And now as his daughter played their song, the last song they would ever share.” (2009:176)

Two paragraphs above it shows after Ronnie finished the song and played it in front of her father there is no detail or description about the lyrics and intonation about that song. It makes the readers curious about the song that Ronnie played in the *The Last Song*.

4 CONCLUSION

The Last Song is one of Nicholas Sparks bestseller novels fiction and has strength and weakness that makes this novel interesting to read. *The Last Song* is a novel that tells the story about the struggle and affection in this novel as the important points.

The struggle from *The Last Song* becomes the strength value to this novel. The author gives the readers a new look about the struggle from a father to reconcile the relationship with his daughter. The theme also becomes the strength value. All people can be better with affection as long as we have the right people, especially family. This novel is about affection of all kinds, affection with God, affection with nature, affection between family members, and even affection between friends.

The Last Song is a suitable novel read by people who want to struggle and to have affection in daily life. It reminds the readers of the truly important things in life and gives the readers a look at love, joy, peace, patience and kindness.

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