

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Book Review of Nicholas Sparks's *The Last Song*

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Abstrak

Novel that became a study in this final project is the last song titled essay writer from United States, Nicholas Sparks. This novel tells the story of love and affection between a daughter and her father who was not good at beginning. The writer uses to read carefully to find the message in the book which contained many elements of learning. Authors describe the theme, the advantages and disadvantages from novel *The Last Song*. This novel have a main theme of father and daughter as well and minor story of teen romance.

The main advantage of this novel on the theme is life that should valuable, trust and confidence, to forgive and be mature, passionate main character especially in music and love. However, not only the theme, but the author used words that are easy to understand, and easy to explain the characters in the novel. The lacked only drawback of the book's appearance does not match with the content of the novel. This is what underlies the writer to review the strengths and the weaknesses of *The Last Song* novel and the reader will get a general overview, and a reference to reader.

Keywords : Family Love, Daughter – Father Relationship, Romance, The Strength, The Weaknesses

INTRODUCTION

Background of Writing

The Last Song Written by Nicholas Sparks is one of popular American fiction novel. However the story and th conflict contained in it has much in common with real life. It explores the aspects of family love and problem between father and his daughter. This is what makes this novel becomes more interesting to read.

Love and affection are the most important things to build an intimate relationship among family members. With those things someone would be able to know how to treat each other well, to solve every problem and to live happily together. Appreciating everything including the very bad things in life to believe will give a something to learn. Life sometimes need a sacrifice, if everyone can see from other perception will be worthy and meaningful. Every family does not always seem perfect or the same as other families, but they have the same purpose to share affection each other.

The novel entitled *The Last Song* written by Nicholas Spark tells about the life of a young girl named Veronica “Ronnie”, who has a bad relationship with her father, Steve. Her

parents get divorced and she has not seen her father for three years. Therefore, she is unexcited when she has to spend the whole summer with her father and her little brother. On her journey, she falls in love with a handsome volleyball player, and she falls in love with music again after her father left the family. After her dad dies, she has changed to become a young lady compared she was in her last summer. Based on those things, the writer wants to review this book *The Last Song*.

The Objectives of Study

- 1.2.1 To describe themes of *The Last Song*.
- 1.2.2 To describe the strength of *The Last Song*
- 1.2.3 To describe the weaknesses of *The Last Song*

Biography of the Author

Nicholas Sparks was born on December 31, 1965, he wrote his first (unpublished) novel while he was sidelined by a sports injury. Then, for the next six months, in June 1994, the author began write a manuscript that would become *The Notebook*. When he finished that novel in early 1995, Nicholas Sparks lived in Greenville, South Carolina. There, he found an agent who found him a publisher. Nicholas Sparks went from being a relative unknown to being a famous writer with a lot of books deals and \$1 million movie rights contract. <thebiographychannel.co.uk/biographies/nicholas-sparks.html>

In 1996, Nicholas Sparks turned to write as a source of comfort. He started by writing a story about a man who writes letters to his deceased wife and sent them out to sea in bottles. Later, the book entitled *Message in a Bottle* was published. This book was inspired by his parents' relationship. In February 1997, Nicholas Sparks sold *Message in a Bottle* to a Hollywood studio. The story was transformed into a film in 1999, and was featured by Kevin Costner and Paul Newman.

Nicholas Sparks has written 16 novels till 2010. He wrote a novel in 2002 ' *A Walk to Remember*, ' *The Note Book* ' in 2004, ' *Nights in Rodanthe* ' in 2008, then in 2010 ' *Dear John* ' and ' *The Last Song* '. His last novel till now ' *The Safe Haven* ' was published on 14th September 2010. His books ' *The Best of Me* ' and also in the list ' *The Safe Haven* ' are made into films and released in 2011. Another one of his book ' *The Lucky One* ' is currently being filmed and will be released some time in 2012. <www.famousauthors.org/nicholas-sparks>

SUMMARY

Veronica “Ronnie” Miller is a 17 years old girl. She has no desire to leave New York City to live in Wrightsville Beach with her 10 years old brother, Jonah. Ronnie's mother was very concerned with her attitude changes that are getting worse. Then, her mother gave her a punishment. During the summer holiday, Ronnie should live with her father in a place far away from New York City, so that she could not spend her summer holiday in the city as usual. Ronnie must spend the summer with Steve her father, meanwhile Ronnie did not speak to him since Steve left his family. From the moment she arrived there in her dad's house, Ronnie always speaks rudely to her father, Steve. She also does her best to avoid him.

After Ronnie's shoplifting arrest, Steve affirms his belief in her innocence and vows to stand behind her. He shows her a family of endangered sea turtles nesting on the beach near their home. Ronnie wants to protect the endangered turtles from the raccoons that often eat their eggs. She sleeps outside to watch the nest. She and Steve call the aquarium the next morning, so someone can install a protective cage.

The aquarium send volunteer named Will, the volleyball player who spilled soda on Ronnie's shirt. Will and Ronnie spent the rest of the summer together and then they fall in love. They go fishing, care for the turtles, and spent time with her father and Jonah. They also attended Will's sister's wedding at his family's estate. The obstacle in their relationship is Will's disapproving mother. Ronnie passes Steve's church one day and hears him playing a song that he was written.

Ronnie has a moment of joy and satisfaction, seeing such a moving sight with Will, Jonah and her father. A moment later, blood covers Steve's face. He says he needs to go to the hospital, and he finally revealed that he has terminal cancer. He had asked the kids to spend the summer with him so he could say goodbye. Jonah insists that he, Will, and Ronnie should complete Steve's stained glass window. The summer is ended. Jonah tearfully returns home, and Will prepare to leave for his first semester of college. In her grief, Ronnie breaks up with Will.

Now she is 18 years old, she decides to stay with her father to care for him during his final months. As Steve's condition deteriorates, Ronnie and he search fervently for God's presence and His peace. Ronnie secretly finishes the song that was written by her father. When he is rushed to the hospital, Ronnie prays for a miracle. Steve wakes up and asks her to take him home. She plays the song for him there, and he realizes that God's presence has been with him all along. After he dies, Ronnie returns to New York, and then Will appears and surprises her. He is transferred to a school in the area. So they can be together.

REVIEW OF THE BOOK

Theme

Theme is the most important part of novel. It can showing up the major story and the minor story. The theme of *The Last Song* written by Nicholas Sparks is about daughter –

father relationship and romance story between Will and Veronica, both of them are influential on making a dramatic story in this novel.

3.1.1 Daughter – Father Relationship

The major theme of “*The Last Song*” is about the betterment of daughter and father’s psychological bond. It starts with Steve who leaves his family after the divorce. His daughter, Veronica, has a mental shock. She hates her father after all. Then, in the summer holiday, Veronica spends time together with her father at his house. Their relationship ruins before gets better. This problem is very common among people with such a problem.

Veronica “Ronnie” Miller gains respect for her father throughout the novel. “In a lifetime of mistakes, you two are the greatest things that have ever happened to me” (Sparks, 2010:86). That statement shows that even though Steven kids do not treat him well, they are still precious to him. It is clear that the novel shows love that brings both happiness and pain, when everything seems to be working out the way people want. It is no matter how deep the apparent ending is, there is always a problem which promises the happiness.

3.1.2 Romance

The minor theme of this novel “*The Last Song*” is romance, romance story starts with Veronica who meets Will unintentionally at the beach. Since then, Veronica and Will have a special relationship. Like other love couples, they also have some problems that end to break up, but their feelings are stronger, so they try to solve the problem together and fix their relationship again.

The Strength of *The Last Song*

A novel has a strength to be showed up. In this novel of *The Last Song* written by Nicholas Sparks, the writer aims to showing up the strengths of the novel from each part from this novel. Strong theme is a good foundation of a story in a novel.

3.2.1 Interesting Themes

Every novel has it’s own theme. The theme of *The Last Song* writtten by Nicholas Sparks it’s interesting to be reviewed about precious life values, trust and faithfulness, forgiving each other, and passion on lve and music. The writer aims to shows the interesting theme on this novel that can be a reference to reader.

32.1.1 Precious Life Values

The first strength of the book *The Last Song*” about precious life values. *The Last Song* contains several life values that could teach readers through the story. Starting with Veronica she knows that her father has been suffering from cancer disease. The moment they get closer is when Veronica accompanies her father at hospital, she realizes that her

father does not have much time left with her. Veronica appreciates the last moments of togetherness with her father “He had advanced cancer, and there was no known cure. He would be dead within the year “(Sparks,2010:148). Based on this sentence, readers can learn that Veronica’s father, Steve, has been diagnosed with cancer and only has a couple of month to live. He keeps his illness in a secret and puts his wants and needs of his children ahead of his own. Therefore, they spend the rest of time with love. Steve teaches that life is valuable to his children especially to Veronica, she should not spend her life meaningless, because no one knows when life ends.

3.2.1.2 Trust and Faithfulness

The second strength of the novel is the interesting theme of trust and faithfulness. It starts with Veronica has a new friend named Blaze, their friendship causes Veronica to be arrested due to shoplifting case. However, based on the huge affection that Steve gives to Veronica, he believes that his daughter is innocent, she will not do such a thing. Steve says to Ronnie “I think you're a terrific young lady. I never want you to forget how proud I am of you “(Sparks, 2010:143). Based on this quotation, Veronica has grown as an individual and has developed a better relationship with her father for these couples of months. Veronica will forever love her father and forget what happens in the past when their last relationship is in ruins. Veronica is able to learn from her father’s words and becomes a more mature girl.

3.2.1.3 Forgiving Each Other

The third strength of the novel is the interesting theme of forgiving each other. When Veronica starts to hate her father after he leaves, she finally finds out that her father has a cancer disease. In the end, Veronica feels guilty that she is always cruel toward her father, while her father always shows his love to his children. His love melts up Veronica’s heart to open and forgive all of her father’s mistakes in the past. Forgiving each other is all about releasing emotion toward others positively and forgets the bad before. It needs to be mature and calm heart. ”His words seared her, his forgiveness more than she could bear. I’m so sorry, Daddy...” (Sparks,2010:162). Based on this sentence, finally, Veronica has forgiven the past and says words that she shows resentfully to her dad. She realizes not to be angry anymore and becomes more mature than she was in the past.

3.2.1.4 Passion on Love and Music

The fourth strength of the novel is the interesting theme of passion on love and music. Veronica has a great talent on music. She starts to fall in love with music since her father has been a piano teacher in Juilliard music school. He teaches her how to play a piano. She proves that love and music are her passion this time. However one day, when her parents get divorced and her father leaves her, she is totally damaged that she loses all of her respects to her father. She hates her father a lot and the music as well. When her relationship with her father gets better, she realizes that she always loves her father and music for her life. Based on the title *The Last Song*, readers know what it is exactly about. “No matter how bright your star became, I never cared about the music half as much as I

cared about you as a daughter. “ (Sparks, 2010:180). Through his words and actions, Steve demonstrates love to his children, most significantly to Veronica. That is another meaning of love for him. He uses music because he composes one song, the last song that he cannot play it later because he passes away faster and gives to Veronica to play it then. He wants Veronica back to what she used to be, loving to play a piano.

3.2.2 Using Simple Words

The fifth strength of the novel is using simple words. The author’s word choice strengthens the story in *The Last Song*, his writing is different from most authors. He is not very formal at all, and writes in a way that everybody talks every day. This novel is easy to read, especially readers who comprehend a few English vocabularies. It is because the author chooses to use simple words and common terms.

Ronnie continued to stare at the pile

of photos, seeing nothing at all. “I was

wrong, Mom. And I don’t know what to

do now.”

“You mean about your dad?”

“About everything.”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

When Ronnie didn’t answer, her

mom crossed the room and sat beside her.

“Sometimes it helps if you talk.

You’ve been so quiet these last couple of

days.”For an instant, Ronnie (Sparks,2010:2)

3.2.3 Easy – to – Explain Characters

The sixth strength of the novel is easy – to – explain characters. The style of this book is narrative and it is written in third-person omniscient. The author uses more than one character to tell the story. He writes a chapter by using the name of the main characters. Because of this, he is able to tell the story from multiple points of view. This helps readers get an understanding of the background of the story and know the thoughts of more than one character, making the story well rounded.

The Weaknesses of *The Last Song*

Although this novel has many strengths, it also has a weakness. However the weaknesses from *The Last Song* written by Nicholas Sparks are not omitted the greatness of the story itself. It is not about bad story nor inappropriate diction, just one weakness that the writer want to showing up.

3.3.1. Novel Cover

The cover of this novel is not so bad. However it is not suitable with the story inside because the author focuses on relationship between dad and his daughter. This novel has a picture cover of the beach, the novel should use a picture of a family members, so it can make a sense and more touching for readers to understand when the first time readers look at the cover of the novel.

3.4 Personal Opinion

Based on the writer's personal point of view, *The Last Song* is more than an interesting story. It contains important things that someone should learn, such as problem in life. Based on the story, readers know that this book is characteristically strong, simple, and easy to understand because this book has the name of the main character in each chapter before the story begins, so it is easy for readers to understand who is in the story. This book makes readers know that everyone should appreciate life. The author is inspiring to readers that this book exists in real life. Readers can get a happy ending if everyone can find it. Even when Steve as Ronnie's dad dies, this fact makes a different perception of happy ending because the author blows readers' emotion by writing the story about relationship between dad and her daughter get better. The author gives readers a chance to think twice that it is exactly happy ending, the main character, Veronica has changed to be a more mature young lady. This book brings a message and lesson about love and life.

CONCLUSION

The Last Song is one of the novels written by Nicholas Sparks. This novel causes an effect not only in literary but in real life. Nicholas Sparks as the author of this book successfully gives readers other perspective of life lessons, especially about family and love. The meaning of love is not just relationship between boys and girls, but Nicholas Sparks choose to show that the most powerful love is from parents to their children. This book takes readers through a journey of all these different emotions. Nicholas Sparks has this ability to get the heart of relationship and bring out the complexities.

This novel tells about relationship between daughter and her father which firstly is in ruins and get better at the end of story with another story about teenagers' love between Veronica and Will. The strength of the novel is the interesting themes about a valuable time which gives lessons to readers for not wasting a precious life. Then, trusting family

members even in hard situation, even there are always problems in family members if they can forgive each other. The main character has a talent on playing a piano, she plays the last song a love song that her father gives to her before he dies. The author uses simple word and explains the character with the name of the main character in each chapter that makes readers easy to understand this novel. The only weakness is the novel cover which is not suitable with the title of this novel, but it does not diminish the strength of the novel.

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