



**BOOK REVIEW OF *THE BEST OF ME*
WRITTEN BY NICHOLAS SPARKS**

A FINAL PROJECT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For S-1 Degree in American Cultural Studies
In the English Department, Faculty of Humanities
Diponegoro University

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**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
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SEMARANG**

2015

PRONOUNCEMENT

I states truthfully that this project is compiled by me without taking the results from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma. In addition, I ascertain that I do not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, 1 July 2015

Yussy Nur Agni W

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

*Life is not always about dream,
take them in the reality.*

(Yussy Nur Agni Wicaksono)

*If we do not change, we do not grow.
If we do not grow, we are not really living.*

(Gail Sheehy)

*Never believe that a few people can not change the world.
For, indeed, that is all who ever have.*

(Margaret Mead)

*This final project is dedicated to
people who always support me in every moment*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praise be to God Almighty, who has given strength and true spirit to this project on “Book Review of the Best of Me Written by Nicholash Sparks” came to a completion. On this occasion, the writer would like to thank all those people who have supported to the completion of this final project.

The deepest gratitude and appreciation is extended to Prof. Dr. Nurdien H.K, M.A. – the writer advisor-who has given his continues guidance, helpful correction, moral support, advise and suggestion, without which it is doubtful that this project cam into completion.

The writer’s deepest thank also goes to the following:

1. Dr. Redyanto Noor, M.Hum., the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.
2. Sukarni Suryaningsih, S.S., M.Hum., the Head of English Department of the Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.
3. All lecturers at English Department, Diponegoro University who have shared their precious knowledge and great experiences.
4. All administrative staffs of the Faculty of Humanities who have helped the writer in completing his study at the Diponegoro University related to the administration necessities.
5. My beloved Father, mother, brother, uncle, aunt, grandfather and grandmother for everything; love, pray, and support.
6. All alumni and my best friends of English Department Class E 2011 who have inspired the writer to complete this final project; Linda, Ruth, Vera, Bogi, Mei, Sandra, Hesti, Zahra, Kahfi, Atha, Novieta, Yusron, Nina, Naufal, Uus, Aldeana, Vindi, Fajar, Zee, Adelland, Bimo, Fajri, Zahro, Tito, Intan, Dewi, and Joy. Especially for Novieta Ronauli Sinaga and Azzahra Noor Hawa Al Hadawiyah who have given me a lot of ideas, suggestion, and support.
7. Bogi Hanni Permana as my special best friend who gives me an idea to make this project.

8. Lana Fitria Saida as my love who always gives me inspiration and spirit in everytime; and accompanies me in every moment.
9. Dolanisti; Aji Putro Wicaksono, Deni Satryo Wibowo, Furiandanu S P, Bogi Hanni P, Lana Fitria Saida, Tika Nuraida, and Suci Rahayu. Thank you for giving me a pleasure when I feel down and stressful.
10. The Great team of KKN Tim 2 Undip Desa Wadas; Yohana Bella Pratiwi, Natasya Cindytya Kartika, Rosyida Kusumawardhany, Dwi Intan Mutiara Biru, Yusri Kurniawati, and Sulaiman. Thanks for supporting, praying, and being the best part of my life and my inspiration.
11. The big family of BEM FIB Undip Kabinet Bersahabat and Kabinet Symphoni.
12. Everyone who has accompanied and supported me in my happy and sad times who cannot be mentioned one by one.

The writer realizes that this final project is still far from perfect. He, therefore, will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this final project better.

Finally, the writer expects that this final project will be useful to the reader who wants to learn something about reviewing a novel and to understand a little bit more about *The Best of Me* written by Nicholas Sparks.

Semarang, 1 July 2015

Yussy Nur Agni Wicaksono

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading a novel is a pleasure way to relax our mind after daily activities, a novel does not only entertain us but also increase our vocabulary. I will make a review novel about love titled *The Best of Me* by Nicholas Sparks. Everybody has been falling in love, sometimes love can make people happy but in the other hand love also makes people sad.

The Best of Me is the latest novel written by Nicholas Spark. It was first published on October 2011 and has become a best seller in *New York Times*. Like in other Spark's works, this novel has a characteristic which can build an emotion of the readers naturally without manipulation and dramatization. The character, plot and the elements of the story are always universal, genuine and interesting. *The Best of Me* tells about how Dawson Cole and Amanda Collier tried to get their love back after such a long separation. We can get a lot of moral value from this novel.

Nicholas Sparks is one of the world's most beloved storytellers. All of his books have been *New York Times* bestsellers, with over 97 million copies sold worldwide, in more than 50 languages, including over 65 million copies in the United States alone (<http://nicholassparks.com/about/> November 11, 2014).

Sparks wrote one of his best-known stories, *The Notebook*, over a period of six months at age 28. It was published in 1996 by Warner Books. He followed with the novels *Message in a Bottle* (1998), *A Walk to Remember* (1999), *The Rescue* (2000), *A Bend in the Road* (2001), *Nights in Rodanthe* (2002), *The Guardian* (2003), *The Wedding* (2003), *True Believer* (2005) and its sequel, *At*

First Sight (2005), *Dear John* (2006), *The Choice* (2007), *The Lucky One* (2008), *The Last Song* (2009), *Safe Haven* (2010) and *The Best of Me* (2011), as well as the 2004 non-fiction memoir *Three Weeks With My Brother*, co-written with his brother Micah. His seventeenth novel, *The Longest Ride*, was published on September 17, 2013 ([http://nicholassparks.com/about/November 11, 2014](http://nicholassparks.com/about/November11)).

Safe Haven, Sparks's eighth film adaptation and on which he served as a producer, opened February 14, 2013, taking top box office honors for Valentine's Day. The ninth film adaptation of one of his novels, *The Best of Me*, will open in October and the tenth, *The Longest Ride*, will open next spring. Along with *The Lucky One*, *Message in a Bottle*, *A Walk to Remember*, *The Notebook*, *Nights in Rodanthe*, *Dear John* and *The Last Song*, adaptations of Nicholas Sparks novels have a cumulative worldwide gross of over three-quarters of a billion dollars ([http://nicholassparks.com/about/November 11, 2014](http://nicholassparks.com/about/November11)).

In 2012, Sparks and his publishing agent and creative partner Theresa Park, launched Nicholas Sparks Productions, with Park as President of Production. A film and television production company, they currently have an overall deal with Warner Brothers Television. Just months after launching the company, Nicholas Sparks Productions set up five television projects, to be developed in collaboration with four different networks: TNT, ABC Family, MTV and Lifetime. The company recently announced the acquisition of Gayle Sayers's life and memoir rights for a feature film to be co-produced with Michael Costigan. Nicholas Sparks Productions, in association with Senator Films, anticipate

moving forward with a local language feature film for the German speaking audience in the near term (<http://nicholassparks.com/about/> November 11, 2014).

Deliverance Creek, which marks Sparks's television producing debut, will premiere as a special two-hour event on Saturday, Sept. 13, 2014 on Lifetime. With an original script written by Melissa Carter and directed by Jon Amiel, *Deliverance Creek* stars Lauren Ambrose. From Nicholas Sparks Productions and Warner Horizon, Melissa Carter, Nicholas Sparks, Theresa Park and Jon Amiel serve Executive Producers (<http://nicholassparks.com/about/> November 11, 2014).

Sparks lives in North Carolina with his family. He contributes to a variety of local and national charities, and is a major contributor to the Creative Writing Program (MFA) at the University of Notre Dame, where he provides scholarships, internships, and a fellowship annually. Along with his wife, he founded The Epiphany School in New Bern, North Carolina. As a former full scholarship athlete (he still holds a track and field record at the University of Notre Dame) he also spent four years coaching track and field athletes at the local public high school. In 2009, the team he coached at New Bern High School set a World Junior Indoor Record in the 4x400 meter, in New York. The record still stands (<http://nicholassparks.com/about/> November 11, 2014).

In 2011, Nicholas and his wife launched the *Nicholas Sparks Foundation*, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to improving cultural and international understanding through global education experiences for students of all ages. Between the foundation, and the personal gifts of Nicholas and Catherine

Sparks, more than \$10 million dollars have been distributed to deserving charities, scholarship programs, and projects. Because Nicholas and Catherine Sparks cover all operational expenses of the foundation, 100% of donations are devoted to programs (<http://nicholassparks.com/about/> November 11, 2014).

2. SUMMARY OF *THE BEST OF ME*

The Best of Me has two main characters, Dawson Cole and Amanda Collier. They love each other during in Senior High School in Pamlico state. Their love has started since they took the same Chemical class in school laboratory. Dawson has fallen in love to Amanda. He thinks Amanda is amazing for him. Unfortunately, they are separated after the graduation. Amanda continues her study to Duke University while Dawson starts working in Tuck's repair car shop.

Although they love each other, Amanda's parents do not approve the relationship of Amanda and Dawson. They want Amanda to keep herself from Dawson. Her father once asks Dawson to leave Amanda, so does her mother. Amanda is a Collier and Dawson is a Cole. It looks very different to each other, but Amanda does not care about it. However, the disapproval has made Amanda's love towards Dawson becomes stronger.

Dawson has been prisoned for four years because Tuck's truck driven by Dawson crashes Doctor David Bonner. At that time, Doctor Bonner was jogging in the side of the road when the accident happened. His wife, Marylin, who knew the accident was shocked because her husband's death happened so suddenly. After the accident, Maryline really hates Dawson. The accident ruins her life

because she cannot go on living without her husband. Finally, Dawson helps Marilyn's family. He helps Marilyn by giving his salary to her without having known by Maryline. He sends his money by anonymous check.

After Dawson separated with Amanda, he felt alone. His father, Tommy Cole, was a bad person. He always asks Dawson for money. Abee and Ted Gila, his cousins, are also bad people. They often kick and punch Dawson. Tommy Cole, Abee, and Ted treat Dawson badly. Whenever they have a fight, Dawson always wins.

One day, Dawson sees Allan Bonner, the son of Maryline, being tortured by Abee and Ted Gila in Candy's Bar. Dawson helped Allan; but unfortunately, Dawson was shot at his head. The bullet was not giving Dawson to life. Dawson died on Sunday midnight after the last treatment in Regional Medical Center in West Carolina and he is buried in Oriental City, the resting place of Collier's family. He was buried in Collier's family because he was a kind people.

Before Dawson died, he gives his heart to Jared, the first son of Amanda Collier, who is looking for a new heart after the accident. After Jared gets Dawson's heart, he can life normally. He falls in love with Lauren.

Abee and Ted Gila are arrested by police; and Allan Bonner has been seriously injured. After the accident, Maryline becomes aware of Dawson kindness. If Dawson does not help Alan Bonner, he may be dead now. When Maryline comes to the grave of her husband, Doctor Bonner, she also visits Dawson's grave. She puts the same lily flower at the both graves.

Finally, Amanda continues her life with Frank and their children. They could live together happily. Frank is not a drunkard anymore, but he brings happiness to Amanda instead.

3. REVIEW OF *THE BEST OF ME*

3.1. The Strengths of the Novel

3.1.1. Theme

Theme is a complex aspect of literature, one that requires very intentional thinking to discern, it is not likely to elicit the precritical response that the more palpable features do (Guerin, 1992: 16).

The theme of the novel *The Best of Me* is about love and sacrifice between Dawson Cole and Amanda Collier. Amanda and Dawson was a couple when they were in the high school, and they meet again. Unfortunately Amanda has been married and has a children, and this fact makes the relationship between Amanda and Dawson become complicated. It's hard for Amanda to decide whether to stay away from Dawson or back to Dawson and leave her family.

The second one is about sacrifice, Dawson should save Alan Boner when attacked by his brother in a bar, Abee and Ted Gila. Although he knows that he is going to die because of the shot in his head, but he gives his heart to Jared.

This theme is appropriate with the title of the novel, *The Best of Me*, which means even he should die he will give his best to the person he loves.

3.1.2. Character

Kennedy (1991: 47) said that a character is presumably an imagined person who inhabits a story – although that simple definition may admit to a few exceptions.

The characters on the novel *The Best of Me* are as the following.

3.1.2.1. Dawson Cole

Dawson Cole is helpful. David Bonner who died after being accidentally hit by the truck that Dawson drove, made Bonner's wife, Maryline, angry and hates Dawson. Even it was an accident and Dawson has asked for an apology to Maryline, she insisted to refuse it. Then Dawson has an initiative to help Maryline's family by secretly sending her a money.

“He sometimes felt guilty about having the Bonners followed, but he had to know whether he'd been able to make even the smallest positive difference in their lives. That's all he'd wanted since the night of the accident, and it was the reason he'd been sending checks monthly for the past two decades, almost always through anonymous offshore bank accounts. He was, after all, responsible for the greatest loss their family had experienced, and as he ran the quiet streets he knew he was willing to do whatever he could to make amends” (Sparks, 2011: 85).

Dawson Cole is also helps Alan Boner. Alan Boner was a son of Maryline. He lost his father because the accident caused by Dawson. Dawson saved Alan Boner from riot when they were in the bar. At that time there was a riot in the bar in Tidewater caused by Ted and Abee Cole. In that riot Alan Boner was badly hurt, but he was saved after immediately taken to the hospital. Unfortunately Dawson was shot in his head after he fought with Ted and Abee Cole, and finally he died. “Dawson was helping Alan Bonner out of the bar when Ted managed to fire off a last round. Dawson was shot” (Sparks, 2011: 321).

After that accident Maryline started to realize that Dawson was a good person and tried to help her family as a responsibility act after he accidentally hit her husband. After that, Maryline often came to Dawson's grave and prayed for him and gave the grave a lily flower.

The last, Dawson Cole helps Jared. Before Dawson died, he was still able to donate his heart to Jared, Amanda's first child. Dawson known that Jared need a new heart after an accident.

“Dawson, she knew, had saved Alan's life—but in the end, he'd saved Jared's as well. And for her that meant... everything. *I gave you the best of me*, he'd told her once, and with every beat of her son's heart, she knew he'd done exactly that” (Sparks, 2011: 333).

From the quotation above we know that Dawson not only did he save Alan in the bar incident but also Jared by giving his heart to Jared. In the perspective of the writer, this is the true meaning of the novel's title “*The Best of Me*”. Dawson has given his best to another person, and he even died to give his best.

3.1.2.2. Amanda Collier

Amanda is a generous woman, when her son, Jared, got an accident, she really worried about the condition of her son and she always stayed in the hospital to take care of her son. “The thought was like a physical blow, and she vowed that she would stay with him now for as long as he needed her” (Sparks, 2001: 295).

Amanda is also a faithful and patient woman, even she ever falls in love with Dawson and finds her love again after a few years, she never leaves Frank, her husband, even Frank is a drunkard. “As difficult as those months had been, Amanda could never bring herself to take the final step of filing for divorce” (Sparks, 2011: 327).

3.1.2.3. Tuck Hostler

Tuck is Dawson's bestfriend. He makes Dawson meet Amanda again after a long time. Tuck planned to make Dawson and Amanda reunite in the garage that is also a workshop where Dawson works. "It took a few seconds before she grasped what Dawson had already figured out—that Tuck had obviously planned this little reunion all along" (Sparks, 2011: 56).

Beside, Tuck is also loyal to his wife, Clara. After his wife died he proved his loyalty by still keeping the house where they had lived together. Before Tuck died he wrote a letter for Dawson and Amanda. In his letter, Tuck said that the love between Dawson and Amanda is similiar with his love to Clara. "I'd made her a promise, you see. And nothing, not even going down in the Pacific, was enough to stop me from keeping it" (Sparks, 2011: 188).

Tuck is also a generous man. He worked not only to make some money but also to help people. It is proved when Tuck repairing Morgan Tanner's car. "A few weeks later, when I finally came back to pick up my car, he didn't charge me near what I thought he would, and I was amazed at his work" (Sparks, 2011: 120).

3.1.2.4. Jared

Jared is a loving son to his parents. He is swift and fast in action. While still at 5.15 a.m, he was called by his father, Roger, to pick him up at Janapada Club because his father was drunk, so Jared is going there soon. "Instead, he promised to be there in about twenty minutes. Getting out of bed, he threw on the shorts and T-shirt he'd been wearing earlier, then slid into his flip-flops" (Sparks, 2011: 258).

3.1.2.5. Evelyn

Evelyn is Amanda's mother. She is very sad to see the family of Amanda who are mourning because of the accident that occurred on Jared, his grandson. Therefore Evelyn tried to comfort her. "Stepping back to inspect the group, she asked, "Now, who needs something to eat?" (Sparks, 2011: 304).

In addition, she is also a caring mother. Everyday she saw Amanda accompanied Jared at the hospital that Amanda looks very pale and exhausted. "Although the thought of food made her feel almost nauseated, her mother personally supervised Amanda's eating of a sandwich in silence" (Sparks, 2011: 307). In the next statement, she also said, "We both know that you function much better after you've eaten and had a cup of coffee" (Sparks, 2011: 311).

3.2. The Weaknesses of the Novel

3.2.1. Plot

Plot is the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed (Perrine, 1988: 41).

Plots used in the novel *The Best of Me* is a mixed plot that could make the reader confused if the reader does not read it carefully. Nicholash Spark tells about his life in present, but he also recounted what happened in 1997, when he was still working at the finery for 14 years, which was destroyed by *Hurricane of Ivanren* which almost killed him. Then he also tells the love story experienced by Dawson at his high school in the spring period in 1984, and eventually back again

in an age where he is now and meet again with Amanda after being apart for 20 years with the fact that Amanda has now been married and became a mother.

3.2.2. Word Choice and Figurative Language

In the great novels, surely the authors choose the words or proper dictions and also use a figurative language to beautify them. But, as the reader who is not native of the language, sometimes the figurative language or diction even makes the reader difficult to interpret even they are different from what was intended by the author.

Figures of speech are broadly defined as a way of saying one thing in terms of something else (Meyer, 1990: 561), and Diction is their choice of words (1990: 522).

In the novel *The Best of Me* that I read also contained the words and figurative language that are difficult for me to understand. For examples, “Dawson felt his breath catch as his heart hammered in his chest” (Sparks, 2011: 48). In the quotation above, the words “breath catch”, Dawson is in a condition of nervous, so it makes irregular breathing and heart palpitations. It happened at Dawson when he saw a stranger who does not know him to be around him and Dawson even thought that it was just his hallucinations.

“The sky was a deep, velvety purple and the stars were already ablaze. Beyond Dawson’s figure, the creek was a black ribbon and the treetops were beginning to glow silver with the slowly rising moon” (Sparks, 2011: 68). In the sentence of “the creek was a black ribbon”, it as a parable that "the river like a black ribbon" with another meaning of the river that looks beautiful illustrated

with black ribbon. In the figurative language we know the comparison of metaphor.

And the last example is: “The breeze picked up, whispering to him that his time with her was running out, and he started toward the lobby, drained by the knowledge and wishing with all his heart that things could somehow be different” (Sparks, 2011: 161). In this sentence, I take the words of "drained by the knowledge". Most readers will surely be confused to interpret these words, "drained by the knowledge", means that Dawson is tired with what he is thinking. It is about Amanda, a girl who has been become the most his lovely girl and now she has a husband and children. After a long time they have not met, they reunited in a different state and Dawson is now very hard to split up again and again in the actual reality.

4. CONCLUSION

Nicholas Sparks is a successful American novelist with a hallmark of his novels that he always writes about love story. The latest novel he written titled *The Best of Me* which became a *New York Times* best seller and has been translated into various languages.

The Best of Me gives many examples to make our lives better. It is proved by the moral values that we can learn from the main characters, namely Dawson Cole and Amanda Collier. We can find love, struggle and sacrifice in the novel. This novel also provides the answers to the reader that nothing is impossible in love because of differences in social class and time have split their love until they finally reunited in a state that has been different.

In conclusion, *The Best of Me* is a great novel and suitable for teenagers who like romance. Although *The Best of Me* is quite thick and has a rather difficult language to understand, this novel is able to motivate the reader to each other and provide the best care to others about the meaning of an unconditional sacrifice.

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