



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

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

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

Semarang, Maret 2015

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## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

- *Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got backup again. (Nelson Mandela)*
- *If you look at what you have in life, you'll always have more. If you look at what you don't have in life, you'll never have enough" (Oprah Winfrey)*
- *"First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they fight you. Then you win (Mahatma Gandhi)*

*This final project is dedicated to my beloved parents and*

*To everyone who helped me to accomplish this paper.*

*Thank you for supporting me.*

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The writer realizes that this project is still far from perfect. Therefore, the writer will be glad to receive any constructive and recommendation to make this book review better.

Finally, the writer expects that this final project will be useful to the reader who is interested in reading Nicholas Sparks *The Last Song*.

Semarang, Maret 2015

Ari Bayu Nusa Perkasa

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# 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. First time we know about affection that is in family. Family is a place that we can share about everything. Family can make someone feel complete because they get protection and affection.

*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 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**

The following description is taken from <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/l/the-last-song/nicholas-sparks-biography>.

Nicholas Sparks was born on 31 December 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 Sparks married Cathy in 1989. He has five children, Miles, Ryan, Landon, and twins

Lexie and Savannah. Nicholas had tragedy experienced in his family, first about his sister that die caused of cancer, and his father and mother passed away because of an accident.

Nicholas lived in North Carolina, where he continued his prolific writing career. In 1994, Nicholas tried to write the second half a novel, *The Notebook* and he was offered a contract by a young agent. *The Notebook* is one of his best known stories and he got nominated for an ABBY (American Booksellers Book of the Year Award).

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 Rodanthe* in (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 Julliard 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.

Will Blacklee the crew from the aquarium was came to make a cage over the nest to protect it. Will and Ronnie spent the night and slept near the turtle nest, Ronnie felt enjoy beside Will and finally fall in love. They spent the summer together fishing, watching beach volleyball and attending Will's sister wedding. On the other

side, Steve showed to Jonah an art that made of glass for windows in the church and Steve taught him how to made it. The church burnt down before the summer, and Steve was the only person who should be responsible for that incident. Because he was there playing piano with some candles around him, and Steve was under influence of medicine and it made him drowsy. The whole town thinks it was his fault.

In CD store Ronnie met Blaze, they had a little conversation. Ronnie kept asking Blaze what's wrong because she didn't respond and Blaze told Ronnie to stay away from her boyfriend and she didn't want her to be around him. Ronnie was following Blaze out the store and then the alarm rang. The owner of the store investigated her bag, and found two CDs and he told her that the police were already on their way. Steve picks her up in the police station, she said to her father and swore if she did not do it. Steve affirmed that his daughter was innocent and always stood behind her. In the next day the turtles finally hatched, they headed toward to the beach. Ronnie was glad to see that.

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 writer shows much affection from this novel.

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 next is the affections in family members that are the relationship between sister and brother. Ronnie has a little brother whose name is Jonah, even though she has bad attitude like stubborn and rebellious, she still cares and loves her younger brother.

Even though they fight like cats and dogs, she still brings him to the park every weekend. And when he was having troubles in math, she tutored him every night. (2009:9)

From the paragraph above it shows that Ronnie always gives the good attention for Jonah, because she wants Jonah be a good boy and smart. Likewise with Jonah, he always tries to help his sister when she gets trouble, for example when his sister doesn't have money to buy a gown to attend Will sister's wedding. As shown in the quotation below.

"Then why don't you buy a gown?" "Because I don't have any money," she said. "That is easy to fix." It's my bank, I've been saving for a while. All I have to do is beg enough. It's pretty easy to get what I want. "So I really don't need it. And I like Will. He makes you Happy." (2009-119)

From the paragraph above shows that Jonah tries to help his sister and Jonah sincerely gives all his savings for his sister to buy a beautiful gown to attend the wedding. Jonah feels when Will is a good boyfriend for his sister, and he wants his sister look beautiful when attending the wedding.

Steve not only loves his family, but also loves his God. Steve understands with read the Bible he can feels that God presence was everywhere, at all times around him and Steve always learns something from Bible, like kindness, faithfulness, peace, and love. As shown in the quotation below

“I’ve always enjoyed the Psalms. And I always learn a lot from the letters of Paul. I’ve read it so many times and I always learn something new.” I kept this Bible by my bed, and I read through parts of it once or twice a week.”(2009-163)

Affection is not only to God and family, but also to friend. During the summer Ronnie has a new friend whose name was Blaze. After the incident at CD store, Ronnie is looking for Blaze to asks something and wants the explanation from Blaze. And they meets near the pier. It shown in the quotation below:

“Hi Blaze, “she said. Blaze said nothing. “I know you probably don’t want to talk to me. “Why did you put those things in my bag? Blaze squinted up her. “I was mad at you. Because it was obvious he liked you. “My mom’s going to marry her boyfriend. After she told me, we got in this really big fight and she kicked me out the house. She changed the locks and everything. (2009-117)

After hearing the explanation from Blaze, Ronnie can feels what she feels. Because they have the similarities in their lives, divorce, anger, and rebellion, and they were no longer at the same at all. When Ronnie could respond and tries to help, Blaze starts to walk off. It shown in the quotation below.



Hey, Blaze,” she called out. Blaze slowly turned around. “If you ever need something to eat or place to stay, you know where I live”. (2009-118)

From the paragraph above it shows Ronnie tries to help and cheer up Blaze to forget her problem and the good things from Ronnie is that she doesn't have a revenge for Blaze after what Blaze has done for her at CD store and Ronnie still cares to help when Blaze needs something. Ronnie knows when Blaze never gets the affection from her parents, so she tries to give the affection as a friend.

The other affection can happen not only between people with people but also people with nature and animal. For example when Steve shows a turtle nest to Ronnie and Jonah in the edge of the beach. It shown in the quotation below:

“They are beautiful creatures, but anyway they are endangered, the raccoons will eat every single one of the eggs and i don't want the raccoons to get the nest before they hatch. I'm going to leave a message with the aquarium. Hopefully, they will send someone tomorrow with a special cage that will keep the critters out (2009-48)

“Ronnie stared at the nest. ‘I don't want anything to happen to the turtle eggs tonight.’ He wasn't comfortable with the idea of Ronnie sleeping outside, but she was clearly determined and he admired her impulse to protect the nest. (2009-49)

The two paragraphs above explain that Steve shows the turtles nest to his children. He explains that they are extinct and endangered animal and then Steve calls the aquarium crew to make a special cage to protect the nest from the raccoon. After hearing that statement from her father about the turtles it makes Ronnie become sad and interested to protect the nest. But Ronnie can't wait the aquarium crew until the next day and decided to sleep near the nest to protect them from the raccoons that

often eat their eggs. Steve and Ronnie do this because they don't want the turtles extinct from this beautiful world and they try the best to keep the turtles from the extinction. Finally what they do to keep the turtles nest from the raccoons is successful, as shown in the quotation below:

“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. Affection can change every people to be better, with affection we can feel 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 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. As shown in paragraph below between the conversation Ronnie’s mother with Ronnie.

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. Every Ronnie always ignored him, Steve tries another way with send the letter for his daughter.

Nineteen letters, all of them sent by her dad, all of them ignored and unopened by her. (2009:163)

From the paragraph above it shows that Steve trying to use letter to get communication with his daughter, same as before she always ignored and did not read the letter. When Steve knows his children's will come in this summer to visit him, Steve tries to use this opportunity to reconcile the relation with Ronnie and to get closer with Jonah. Before the summer comes, Steve prepares all of it as shown in the paragraph below:

“He was so nervous. Because of how much he wanted to spend time with his daughter, and wanted everything to go well. How much he missed her, or how much he really loves Ronnie and Jonah. He was literally counting the days. He spent hours cleaning the house and putting sheets on the beds. He wanted the two of you have a summer to remember, and he wanted to be part of that. That is what he needed this summer.” (2009-149)

The paragraph above shows that Steve hopes his children could be comfortable and can enjoy time with him. Steve is waiting this moment to spend the summer together, because he really loves his children and hopes could be the happiest summer to remember for him.

At the first day, Ronnie is unhappy about this home and decides to spend the night to visit the Wrightsville Beach Seafood Festival to entertain herself. Steve invites Jonah to find Ronnie to come home, because Steve sees his daughter heading toward the festival.

Ronnie searched for Blaze, wondering where she'd gone. In her place stood Jonah. “Just go away, okay?” “I can't. Dad's looking for you. I think he wants you to come home early. “Where is he?” “He stopped to go to the bathroom, but he should be here any minute.” “Tell him you didn't see me.” (2009-15)

The paragraph above shows that Jonah meets his sister and told her that their father is looking for her and asks her to come home early. But Ronnie doesn't care and told Jonah to go away. Jonah leaves Ronnie and goes back to his father and tell him that he doesn't see Ronnie and they decide to go home. When Ronnie does not arrive yet at home from the festival, Steve tries to call cops to find his daughter and asks the cops to bring her home. Finally the cops find Ronnie at the pier and persuade Ronnie to go home. When Ronnie arrives home, she asks to her father how could her father do something like this. As shown in the paragraph below.

“You sent the cops after me?” Her dad said nothing. “why would you do something like that?” she demanded. “how could you do something like that?” He said nothing. “what is it? You did not want me to have fun? You did not trust me? You did not get the fact that i do not want to be here? I hate being here! Don't you get that? And I hate you, too!” (2009:27)

From the paragraph above it shows the dialogue between Ronnie and Steve. Ronnie asks her father what is the problem about her, until her father calls cops and bring her go home. Ronnie feels that she does not do anything wrong during spend the night at the festival. Steve does that because this is the first day for Ronnie in Wrightsville beach, as a father he is very apprehensive when Ronnie gets lost and wants his daughter goes home safely.

The next struggle from Steve is when he picks his daughter up at the police station, after Ronnie is accused of stealing two CD's music. At home Ronnie tells her father when she does not do it, and Steve asserts to his daughter he still trusts Ronnie as shown this line: *“I believe you”*. He said (2009-47). After hearing that statement,

Ronnie asks something to her father, why he still believe her. As shown in the quotation below.

“Dad can I ask you something?”Anything. “why did you say you believed me? “because I trust you.”Ronnie felt sick to her stomach. “Have you told Mom yet?” Steve shook his head. “No. I didn’t that because I love you.” (2009:48)

From the paragraph above, it shows when Steve still believes and trusts his daughter from that problem. Steve knows Ronnie’s history and she has previously been arrested before in New York. But it doesn’t matter for Steve, the love from Steve for Ronnie is never ending, because he really loves his daughter and the pressing from words “I love you” and “I trust you” can proof all of it.

Another struggle from Steve for Ronnie is when he tries to play the piano music in the morning in front of Ronnie. With this way Steve hopes to remain what they usually do in the past, like sing a song together, when Steve taught Ronnie how to play piano, and hopes that Ronnie would want to play piano again. As shown in the paragraph below.

“i don’t like this little game you’re playing.” He seemed confused. “what game?” “this! Playing the piano every minute I’m here! I don’t care how much you want me to play! I’m never going to play the piano again! Especially for you!” (2009:30)

From the paragraph above it shows that Steve tries to play the piano music with the purpose that he wants his daughter to play piano again in front of him like they usually do together in the past and Steve hopes Ronnie can cancel her decision to rejects the scholarship from Julliard School and accept the scholarship. Steve not only

as a father but also Ronnie's piano teacher, he feels if his daughter has a good talent in music, and he doesn't want the talent from Ronnie disappears. With her good talent Ronnie get scholarship from Julliard School, but Ronnie rejects her acceptance into Julliard School because of him.

### **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 shown in the paragraph below.

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. As shown in paragraph below:

“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 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.

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