



BOOK REVIEW OF DAVID LEVITHAN'S *EVERY DAY*

A FINAL PROJECT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement

For S-1 Degree in American Studies

In the English Department, Faculty of Humanities

Diponegoro University

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PRONOUNCEMENT

I state 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 the bibliography.

Semarang, 3rd July 2017

Revina Budiyanti

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

Carry out a random act of kindness with no expectation of reward. Safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you.

(Princess Diana)

Dream big while you sleep and even bigger when you wake.

(Jared Leto)

This final project is dedicated to the writer's beloved parents

BOOK REVIEW OF DAVID LEVITHAN'S *EVERY DAY*

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Semarang, 3rd July 2017

Revina Budiyanti

TABLE OF CONTENT

TITLE	i
PRONOUNCEMENT	ii
MOTTO AND DEDICATION	iii
APPROVAL	iv
VALIDATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENT	viii
1. Introduction of David Levithan's <i>Every Day</i>	1
2. Summary of David Levithan's <i>Every Day</i>	2
3. Review of David Levithan's <i>Every Day</i>	5
4. Conclusion	14
REFERENCES	
APPENDIX	

BOOK REVIEW OF DAVID LEVITHAN'S *EVERY DAY*

1. Introduction

One of the literary works that is written by an author to entertain the readers is novel. Novel is a narrative writing which represents the fictional characters and events in certain settings. Barnet et. al. said: "The stories of novelists and short-story writers, however, are admittedly untrue; they are "fiction", things made up, imagined, manufactured" (2008 : 13). There are so many interesting novels which become bestseller and one of them is *Every Day*.

Every Day is a novel written by an American author David Levithan. It was published in 2012 by Ember in New York and selected as a bestseller novel according to *New York Times*. David Levithan was born in September 7th 1972 in Short Hills, New Jersey. He has written several novels both solo and collaboration. He graduated from Brown University in 1994 and started to write his own first book *Boys Meet Boys* which is LGBT genre book telling about the story of gay teens in the year of 2003. There are also some of his collaboration books such as *Will Grayson will grayson* (in collaboration with John Green) and *Nick & Norah's Infinite Playlist* (in collaboration with Rachel Cohn). Furthermore, his collaboration with Billy Merrell, *The Full Spectrum: A New Generation of Writing About Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Other Identities*, was granted the Lambda Award for Best LGBTQ Children's / Teen Book. Apart from being a novel author, he also works as editorial director at Scholastic and as founding editor of the Push imprint (Levithan : 8).

The purpose of composing this book review is to present to the readers the summary of *Every Day* novel as well as the review about its strengths and weakness. The reason of choosing this novel is the unique story that this novel offers. This novel tells us about a sixteen year old genderless spirit named A who wakes up in a different body and lives different life every day but suddenly has to face some struggles as A falls in love with a girl named Rhiannon. As different life means different story, it is interesting to look at how the characters in the novel are going down that road and overcoming every obstacle in almost every chapter.

2. Summary of David Levithan's *Every Day*

This novel begins with non-physical main character, the so-called free spirit, named A, who wakes up in a different body and leads different life every day. A is actually genderless and A can inhabit either male or female body. A is sixteen years old and the different body A occupies always has the same age as A. Although A changes body every day, A has his own memory and has a special ability to trace the memory of the person A is in. As A realizes that it is almost impossible for A to keep in touch with the same people and for people to recognize A, A always keeps a distance to avoid A's feeling being engaged with others. However, a decisive change suddenly happens to A's life when A meets Rhiannon for the first time.

It all started the morning A wakes up in the body of a boy named Justin whose girlfriend is Rhiannon. A meets Rhiannon at school and starts to talk to her.

By tracing Justin's memory, A discovers that their relationship is kind of rough. Justin is typically cold that Rhiannon often has hard times dealing with it. They decided to ditch the class together and go on a trip to the beach. They spend their time talking freely about themselves. Through this moment, A is attracted by Rhiannon's loving personality that later makes A fall in love.

On the other day, A wakes up in the body of Nathan Daldry. A logs in to Justin's e-mail that A has noted before. A checks the inbox to find that there is a party invitation from Justin's friend, Steve. Hoping to see Rhiannon, A drives to that party. A disguises himself as Steve's cousin to Rhiannon and gets her email. On A's half way back home, A is running out of time and ripped off of Nathan's body right in the middle of the night. In the morning, police officers find Nathan on the side of the road sleeping in his car. He wakes up in confusion and claims that he has been possessed.

On the other hand, A quickly makes a move to Rhiannon by texting her through e-mail. Yet, not long after their first conversation, Rhiannon finally discovers A's disguise. Not only that, a warning e-mail from Nathan suddenly comes up as A recalls that A carelessly left A's own address on Nathan's browsing history. Both of them demand an explanation. A ignores Nathan's mail and prefers to explain to Rhiannon by making an appointment. In their meeting, A who is in the body of a girl named Megan Powell shocks Rhiannon. Rhiannon does not easily believe in A at first until their next meeting which A can finally convince her about A's existence. Since then, they continually talk through e-mail and meet each other. Their relationship is getting closer day by day.

As time goes by, making time for Rhiannon is getting harder for A. The reasons are that A randomly wakes up miles away from her and everyone A wakes up in has their own responsibility in their daily life. Sometimes A wakes up as a twin brother, other times as a gay, a depressed girl, a drug addict, or even an illegal maid. Despite the hardships, their love keeps growing until there comes the time when Rhiannon finally breaks up with Justin and chooses to be with A.

The problem arises when the worried Nathan Daldry keeps insisting A to expose A's identity. After turning him down for several times, A finally opens up A's identity to Nathan. Nathan asks for a help from Reverend Poole before setting a meeting for A which turns out to be a trap to catch A's spirit. Fortunately, A is able to escape.

When A wakes up in the body of Alexander Lin, A believes from Alexander's memory that he can be a good boy for Rhiannon. A invites Rhiannon to go on a date and arranges it like the first time a couple meet at the bookstore. Rhiannon agrees to pretend. They both enjoy their time moving from bookstore to groceries and later to Alexander's favorite place, his tree house. They end the day by lying down together in Alexander's bed. A finally tells Rhiannon that A is going to leave and hoping that Alexander could replace A. As A closes A's eyes, A attempts to put the whole memories of that day to Alexander so that the morning Alexander opens his eyes he will remember them and fall in love with Rhiannon.

The day has passed and A wakes up in the body of a girl named Katie. Instead of doing Katie's routines, A runs away as far as possible hoping to wake up further the next day and end the contact with Rhiannon.

3. Review of David Levithan's *Every Day*

David Levithan's *Every Day* is an interesting novel which has some interesting points to discuss. The review of this novel explains the interesting points which involve strengths and weakness of this novel.

3.1. The Strengths of David Levithan's *Every Day*

The strengths of this novel consist of the theme, the character, the point of view, and the relation between main character, cover, and title. These strengths will be explained in the following discussion.

3.1.1. Theme

Theme plays an important role in a novel as the main idea or the meaning of the story. It conveys the author's thoughts of some issues that are shared to the readers through his or her writing. Some story can contain one or even more themes in it. There are two appealing themes of this novel to discuss and learn. The first theme is about love regardless the appearance. This theme directly points out the love life between two characters, A and Rhiannon. A is told as a character without gender and specific physical appearance as A is a free spirit who changes body every day. When A falls in love with a girl named Rhiannon, both of them are challenged by A's condition. Rhiannon has to cope with the condition that the person she loves changes figure randomly every day. Hence, A cannot give a

normal relationship Rhiannon deserves. Although A's condition is kind of bothersome to Rhiannon, the fact that she still wants to meet A and says that she loves A explain that her love is actually not measured by A's appearance because A's appearance is always changing.

The quotation below shows an e-mail from Rhiannon to A stating that she loves A and wants to see A although she is afraid that the action makes the love in their unusual relationship becomes too important in her life.

I want to see you, but I'm not sure if we should do that. I want to hear about what's going on, but I'm afraid that will only start everything again. I love you – I do – but I'm afraid of making that love too important. Because you're going to leave me, A. We can't deny it. You're always going to leave

R (Levithan, 2012 : 305).

Despite A's fictional condition that becomes the obstacle, the readers can learn that loving someone is not always looking at a person's outer appearance but more importantly is the inside of one's heart.

The second theme is about the struggle in life. As it is told that the character A is the one who lives somebody else's life every day, every chapter of this novel shows many kinds of different struggles that A has to live. One of them is the day when A is in the body of an illegal maid named Valeria. Living the life of a maid has A to work hard to earn money for living. Together with the other maids, A is dropped to people's houses and forced to do chores from one house to another. "After two hours, we are done with the house. I think that will be it, but there are four more houses after that" (Levithan, 2012 : 180). After a full day of working, A gets to go home. The hard work left A feeling sore and exhausted but

that is the consequence of A's life. A has to struggle to go through the day of someone's life before A can finally go home and head to sleep waiting for another day of another struggle to come.

Another example is in a chapter of the day that A struggles inside the body of a depressed girl named Kelsea who tries to commit suicide. A feels that Kelsea's mind is in a dark place. There are scars on her body and her room is messy. A finds out that Kelsea has listed the ways to kill herself in her journal. In the end of the journal, it is written that the deadline is six days.

The quotation below shows that A attempts to save Kelsea from hurting herself because A realizes that the body A inhabits is in danger.

There's no threat in the present – I am in control of the body, and as long as I am in control of the body, I will not allow it to hurt itself. But I will not be in control six days from now. I know I'm not supposed to interfere. It is Kelsea's life, not mine (Levithan, 2012 : 127).

Although not every chapter in this novel presents some painful situation but the bad ones can bring the readers in mind that not every teenage life is as smooth as just going to school, playing, and doing homework at home. Some teenagers are struggling with some serious issues and they are in need of help.

The struggles also comes from A's relationship with Rhiannon. Since A is not the same person who lives in the same place every day, A has to struggle to meet her. One of the examples is when A wakes up as metalhead teen named Michael. Michael lives two hours away from Rhiannon. Michael has no driving license and there is no chance he could drive his parents' car or take a bus to meet Rhiannon. Instead of giving up, A decides to take a walk.

The quotation below shows that A does not care about whatever shape of body A is in and how far the distance is, A insists to meet Rhiannon.

School isn't out yet when I get there, having walked about a mile from the center of town. Again, nobody stops me, even though I'm a big, hairy, sweaty guy in a Metallica T-shirts storming up the steps (Levithan, 2012:244).

From what character A has gone through in the story, the readers can learn that to live is to struggle. People need to struggle to keep living. Even a relationship needs struggle to keep it going. Struggle is a part of life that one cannot avoid.

3.1.2. Character

The second strength of this novel is character and the characterization. Character is an important element in a story because the story goes along the development of its characters. An author can create so many characters but there is only one character who becomes the central of the story. There are several characters in *Every Day* and A stands as the main one. Being dominant in the story makes A take most of the readers' attention. As the spotlight, this main character's actions and thoughts upon its complicated life are described vividly by the author, giving a strong feeling that steals the readers' sympathy. The actions and thoughts portrayed in the story indicate this character's traits which have something to be learned for the readers.

A is described as a free spirit who wanders from one body to another and lives different person's life every day. A is able to trace the memories of a person A inhabits from inside the body. Being given this ability, A lives by

impersonating the habit of a person he is in to avoid any suspicion. A has no possession of anything. The parents, friends, houses, and other properties are not A's but they belong to the person A used to live. Being put into someone else's body randomly means that A has to survive in every different situation. A has ever lived a good life in a day but A has also ever been to the troublesome one. Sometimes A wakes up in a healthy body but sometimes A does not.

The quotation below shows that A has learned from A's experience that A has to respect whatever bodies A is put into.

It's hard being in the body of someone you don't like, because you still have to respect it. I've harmed people's lives in the past, and I've found that every time I slip up, it haunts me. So I try to be careful (Levithan, 2012 : 2).

If A harms someone the guilt will haunt A. Consequently, A holds the responsibility to take care of it as long as A lives in it.

A cannot see the things over time but A has seen a lot within the body. Being forced to live different lives makes A's life full of experiences and struggles. The moves have been happening since A was a kid until now A is sixteen years old. The quotation below shows that A has to make peace with A's own life because A cannot do anything to stop the spirit from moving.

Eventually I came to peace with it. I had to. I realized that this was my life, and there was nothing I could do about it. I couldn't fight the tide, so I decided to float along (Levithan, 2012 : 106).

By understanding the character of A, it is impressive how the character has been shaped into a tough and wise person to finally accept the character's complicated life. At this point, the readers can learn about the acceptance in life.

A's life brings challenges and everyone's life does too, even though in so many different kinds of challenges. Complaining and resisting will not change life any better and these actions will only violate the peace of mind, making life more miserable. Furthermore, A's condition has also made A to be a wise person who learns from mistakes and respects anything that has been given.

3.1.3. Point of View

The next strength of *Every Day* is its point of view. Point of view is about the way that the author allows the readers to see the story. It can be the first-person, second-person, or the third-person. In this novel, David Levithan applies the first-person point of view which is taken from the main character's point of view. This means that the readers are allowed to see the story from A's perspective.

This first-person perspective actually helps accentuate the main character and the story itself in this novel with its advantages. This point of view gives direct connection from the main character to the readers. This intimacy is created as the readers are able to see inside A's mind and feel A's feeling. The thoughts and emotions are delivered directly without being transferred through a distance of other point of view. It makes the readers feel as if they are directly taken deep down to A's life and given more of the emotional impact as can be seen from the quotation below:

I am not a part of this...and that is why I'm crying. Because I'm not a part of this, and will never be a part of something like this. I've known this for a while, but you can know something for years without it really hitting

you. Now it's hitting me. I will never have a family to grieve for me. I will never have people feel about me the way they feel about Marc's grandfather. I will not leave the trail of memories that he's left. No one will ever have known me for what I've done. If I die, there will be no body to mark me, no funeral to attend, no burial. If I die, there will be nobody but Rhiannon who will ever know I've been here (Levithan, 2012 : 268).

The quotation above shows how A's feeling about a funeral along with the thoughts inside A's mind. The way the feeling and thoughts are told directly takes the readers closer to the character and makes the readers feel how it feels to be in A's side. Besides, the intimacy created by this point of view gives the impression that A is believable to the readers. It means that this point of view enables the readers to feel that they are being told a story right from the main-trusted source that is experiencing the events. Furthermore, the first-person point of view lets the readers to identify A's traits. When A narrates the story, the readers stick with A a lot of time and witness how A develops from what A acts and says. It is proved by the previous explanation about A's character as the strength of the novel in which the writer are able to identify A's traits as a wise and tough person in facing A's complicated life.

Thus, the first-person point of view here is the strength of this novel because it makes the readers feel like they are going deep into the main character's own life and sense how the main character's feeling. The fear, courage, despair, hopes, love, and hatred are revealed directly to the readers.

3.1.4. The Relation between Main Character, Cover, and Title

There is a relation between main character, cover, and title of *Every Day*. The main character of this novel is given the name of only one letter, A. The use

of A as the name of *Every Day*'s main character has hidden meaning. There are two possibilities of the reference of A as the main character's name in this novel. First, the letter A can refer to A as in the first letter of the word "anonym". Anonym means that the character's name is unknown. As the use of name in a character of a story can be attached to another person's identity, gender, ethnic group, or social background, the author seems to prevent the readers from unconsciously attaching the character's name to those matters. A is described as a genderless free spirit who hops into different body every day. Since the main character is a genderless spirit, this character's name should not be assumed to a specific gender. Hence, A as a name is clueless for the readers. The readers cannot tell the gender of *Every Day*'s main character looking by its name.

Second, the use of the letter A as the name of the main character can also refer to A as in the front letter of "anima" and "animus". Anima and animus are the archetype in which human communicates with the collective unconscious mind.

Since the anima is an archetype that is found in men, it is reasonable to suppose that an equivalent archetype must be present in women; for just as the man is compensated by a feminine element, so woman is compensated by a masculine one (Jung, 1959 : 14).

The quotation above shows that anima is the inner feminine personality in men while animus is the inner masculine personality in women. Hence, A as the name of *Every Day*'s main character can be referred to the feminine element and the masculine one. Since A is described as a spirit who can inhabit male or female body, A can be a male in one day and female on the other day. A can be feminine

element and masculine element. Once again, A cannot be referred to a specific gender whether A is actually female or male. Yet, A can be both.

Hereafter, the main character can be related to the cover of *Every Day*. The cover of the novel displays a boy and a girl floating between clouds. The boy and the girl in the cover represent the body that A inhabits which can be female or male body. The bodies that float between clouds can be interpreted that there is no exact sex of A as A is only a spirit that flies from one body to another. A can be a male and a female and it depends on the body A is put into. In addition, the cover is dominated by pale yellow color and the gradation of black with white font color of the title. The yellow color has meaning of cheerfulness or happiness, while the dark color has meaning of sadness or sorrow. It means that along with the happiness that sometimes comes to A's life, there is a sadness which reminds the readers to the fact that A's life is not normal because A changes body every day.

It is then related to the title of the novel which is *Every Day*. *Every Day* emphasizes the changing body of A that happens every day which can be male or female. Every day is a different body, different life, and different challenge to A. Nevertheless, every day A is in love with the same girl, Rhiannon.

Hence, by digging the meaning of the main character's name, the cover, and the title, the relation of each of these points can be discovered. How the main character, the cover, and the title are related to each other is something unique of this novel which becomes the strength of this novel.

3.2. The Weakness of *Every Day*

The weakness of this novel lays on the ending of this story. The story is ended by A running away with the body A inhabits after leaving Rhiannon to a boy named Alexander Lin whom A considers as a good one to replace A. The runaway is A's attempt to break the contact with Rhiannon. This action A takes to sacrifice A's own feeling and run away deserves appreciation because it is both a wise and a hard decision in a relationship to let go of someone for the sake of his or her own good when the couple are still in love with each other.

Unfortunately, the last chapter is told shortly with no further explanation about the life of both Rhiannon and A. It leads the readers to question whether A manages to wake up further by running away or not and whether Rhiannon successfully let Alexander Lin into her life or reject him to search for A. The ending seems to be intentionally left for the readers to make up their own imagination.

The indefinite ending is less satisfying. However, this kind of ending is something that makes this novel both interesting and disappointing. It depends on the readers' preferences.

4. Conclusion

Every Day is a young adult romance novel by David Levithan. It was published in 2012 by Ember in New York and became *New York Times* bestselling novel. This novel tells about love story between Rhiannon and A, a

genderless free spirit who wakes up in different body and lives a new life every day.

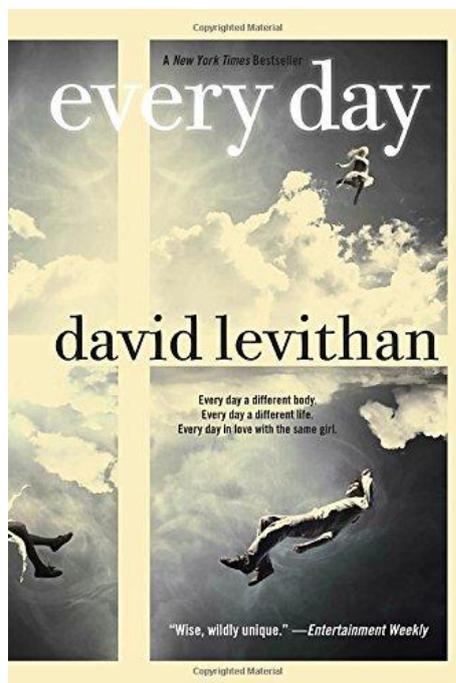
This novel presents interesting themes, character, point of view, and the relation between the main character, the cover, and the title as its strengths. The themes of this novel are 'love regardless appearance' and 'the struggles of life'. Both of these themes convey good messages that love is not always about looking at physical appearance but more importantly the inside of one's heart and that to live is to struggle. As the main character of this novel, A will impress the readers about how this character becomes tough and wise in dealing with the character's complicated life. The readers can learn from this character about accepting life as it is and learning from mistakes as well as respecting anything given in life. The other strength is this novel's first-person point of view which takes the readers to step into the character's life deeply and feel this character's feeling. How the meaning of the main character's name, the cover, and the title are related to each other is also the uniqueness of this novel that becomes its strength. However, the indefinite ending of this novel may become a letdown for some readers.

Lastly, David Levithan's *Every Day* is recommended for those who like reading romance novel and searching for the unique one. The heartrending story and the good messages that it carries makes this novel worth reading.

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APPENDIX



This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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