

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF LOVE IN THE MOVIE
OF “DEAR JOHN” 2010 BY USING READER
RESPONSE PERSPECTIVE**



Submitted as a Partial Fulfilment of Requirements
For Getting a Bachelor Degree of English Education

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MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
2022**

APPROVAL

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to describes the meanings of love in “Dear John” movie 2010 based on reader perspective and discusses the reader response perspective toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010. In conducting this research, the researcher applied descriptive qualitative study. The research object is the movie of “Dear John” 2010. “Dear John” is a 2010 American romantic war drama film directed by Lasse Hallström, based on the 2006 novel of the same name by Nicholas Sparks. In analyzing the data, the researcher applied data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 2014). This research found the meaning or types of love in “Dear John” movie 2010 based on reader perspective are brotherly love, motherly love, and erotic love. There are three kinds of love concept in “Dear John” 2010, the love to the beloved one, the love to the country, and the love to the family. The reader response perspective toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010 is divided into three categories, positive response, negative responses, and neutral responses.

Keywords: concept of love, Dear John, reader response

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan makna cinta dalam film “Dear John” 2010 berdasarkan perspektif pembaca/ penonton dan membahas perspektif tanggapan pembaca/ penonton terhadap konsep cinta dalam film “Dear John” 2010. Dalam melaksanakan penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan studi kualitatif deskriptif. Objek penelitian adalah film “Dear John” 2010. “Dear John” adalah film drama perang romantis Amerika Serikat tahun 2010 yang disutradarai oleh Lasse Hallström, berdasarkan novel tahun 2006 dengan judul yang sama karya Nicholas Sparks. Dalam menganalisis data, peneliti menerapkan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan (Miles dan Huberman, 2014). Penelitian ini menemukan makna atau jenis cinta dalam film “Dear John” 2010 berdasarkan perspektif pembaca adalah cinta persaudaraan, cinta keibuan, dan cinta erotis. Ada tiga macam konsep cinta dalam “Dear John” 2010, yaitu cinta kepada orang yang dicintai, cinta pada tanah air, dan cinta pada keluarga. Perspektif tanggapan pembaca terhadap konsep cinta dalam film “Dear John” 2010 dibagi menjadi tiga kategori, yaitu tanggapan positif, tanggapan negatif, dan tanggapan netral.

Kata Kunci: konsep cinta, Dear John, respon penonton

1. INTRODUCTION

In the literature, love is also defined in variety of ways, as a relationship, as an attitude, as an experience, and as an emotion (Fehr and Russell 1991). This complex emotion consists of affective experiences with positive valence, for

instance joy, elation, sexual arousal, contentment, delight, a sense of happiness (Fehr 2006). Although positive valence dominates in this group of feelings, negative elements which may appear include anxiety, fear, dissatisfaction, jealousy, hatred, shame or guilt (Sternberg 1986) in Barbara Gawda (2019).

Love theme is found in “*Dear John*” movie, 2010 directed by Lasse Halström and based on the novel by best-selling author Nicholas Sparks, *Dear John* tells the story of John Tyree (Channing Tatum), a young soldier home on leave, and Savannah Curtis (Amanda Seyfried), the idealistic college student he falls in love with during her spring vacation. Internal Conflict of *Dear John* has a theme of a love story. John and Savannah have a burning passion for each other in the movie. Even though John went off into the Army, he had to balance that out and his relationship with Savannah. When John met Savannah, he fell in love with her in two weeks.

As the title implies, “*Dear John*” is a film of romance lost. Set primarily in Charleston, South Carolina, John meets Savannah when she needs a heroic male to assist her. Jumping to her rescue, John reveals himself to be a courageous yet troubled person who captures her attention and eventually her heart. In a whirlwind romance lasting only the two weeks of spring break, John and Savannah soon pledge their undying love and begin a long-distance relationship through hand-written letters. This sets the stage for the predictable angst to come. (<https://www.cinemainfocus.com/movie-reviews/2014/5/15/dear-john>, assessed on September 12, 2020)

The love story in “*Dear John*” movie received many comments or responses from the audiences. The responses of the audience are varying from positive, negative to neutral responses. Discussions of film, from conversations and journalistic reviews to deeply analytic studies of individual films or portions of a film, almost always involve assumptions, implicit or explicit about audience response. In this case, the researcher presents some of the responses of audience toward the love story in *Dear John* movie, as follow.

Positive Response: Brianna, age 14 (USA)

“Dear John is a very interesting love story. I enjoyed this movie a lot. There is one objectionable scene, but you can easily fast forward through it. There are only a few swear words. I almost rated this as Better than Average, and it is if you fast forward through the one scene. I really enjoyed it. I would suggest renting first before you buy it as you should do with every movie”.

Negative Response: Alexxus, age 13 (USA)

“The moviemaking quality was poor—no character development ever took place, and the movie just seemed to drag on and on. I was disappointed, all-in-all. I do NOT recommend this movie”.

Neutral Response: Seana, age 32 (USA)

“Overall, I like this movie alright. I pretty much agree with the reviewer regarding the quality of the script and character depth, as well as the lead actors' execution of the characters. I do think it is unfortunate that sex outside of marriage is portrayed as ok if you really love someone. At least they portrayed the harm that it caused in the relationship, as well. The act of sex is so intimate, and whether you know it or not, binds you emotionally with someone on a whole other level”.

The responses of audience above show that “*Dear John*” movie, 2010 is watched by variety of ages start from teenager to young adult viewer and obtained various responses, negative, positive, and neutral. The opinion given by the viewers or audiences refer to the storyline, scene, characters, quality of the script, and the languages used in the movie. Based on the above background of the research, the researcher is interested to analyze deeper about the concept of love in “*Dear John*” movie 2010 including the types of love and the meaning of love using the audience’s response perspective toward “*Dear John*” movie 2010. Therefore, this research entitled “*An Analysis of the Concept of Love in the Movie of “Dear John” 2010 By Using Reader Response Perspective*”.

2. METHOD

The type and design of this research is a descriptive qualitative research. In this research, the researcher determines that the research object is the movie of “*Dear John*” 2010. “*Dear John*” is a 2010 American romantic war drama film directed

by Lasse Hallström, based on the 2006 novel of the same name by Nicholas Sparks. In this research, the researcher used some techniques of data analysis, namely data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 The Meanings of Love in “Dear John” Movie 2010 Based on Reader Perspective

Based on the analysis of the data, there are 54 reviews or comments about “Dear John” movie 2010 in The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and rottentomatoes.com containing love concept. The reviews or comments then analyzed based on the theory of concept of love. Fromm (1963: 38) states that love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one object of love. There are five objects of love; Brotherly Love, Motherly Love, Erotic Love, Self-Love, and Love of God. After analyzed, found three categories of love in the reviews or comments about “Dear John” movie 2010. They are described as follow:

a) Brotherly Love

Brotherly love stated in the reviews or comments about “Dear John” movie 2010 is to portray John’s love to his nation and his duty as a soldier. A soldier in the U.S. Army has certain responsibilities: a duty to his or her country, a commitment to a squad, a mission in a battle. But sometimes love becomes the real battle and the only thing worth fighting for. This question of a soldier choosing between his country and his woman is at the heart of “Dear John.” There are 8 data from 54 reviews or comments about “Dear John” movie 2010 which describe Brotherly Love in “Dear John” movie 2010, the samples are as follow.

- 1) “..... It depicts the loses we have to go through for greater good. The Soldier represents its loyalty towards the country while in doing that, it costs him his love.....”
- 2) “...Wow its amazing duty and love together humanity i learnt many things the person whom i love is also named john....”

b) Motherly Love

In the reviews or comments about “Dear John” movie 2010, the audiences or reader portrayed the motherly love in “Dear John” movie 2010 in the relationship between John and his father. John was raised by his father, a quiet man who wears white gloves while admiring his coin collection, and cooks chicken every Saturday and lasagna every Sunday. There are 2 data from 54 reviews or comments about “Dear John” movie 2010 which describe Motherly Love in “Dear John” movie 2010, the samples are as follow.

- 1) “.....” Beyond the romance, it also portrays the limitless love a father has for his son despite his inability to show it.....”
- 2) “.....Just the only good think i can describe of this movie is father'love for his child....”

c) Erotic Love

The erotic love described in the reviews or comments about “Dear John” movie 2010 is about the relationship between the main characters in the movie, John and Savannah. The film centers on the years-long love story between John Tyree, a soldier on leave, and Savannah Curtis, a college student, who meet while he is on leave and she is on Spring Break. Their complicated romance plays out through the letters they write one another while he is fighting in Iraq and she is dealing with a terminally ill friend/love interest. There are 46 data from 54 reviews or comments about “Dear John” movie 2010 which show Erotic Love in “Dear John” movie 2010, the samples are as follow.

- 1) “...An excellent movie about true & enduring love”
- 2) “...It's a heart-warming, but sad, love story....”
- 3) “...This movie is too typically romantic and too much of a tearjerker...”
- 4) “...but I am not a cynic and I know that the kind of love that is portrayed in this movie does happen...”
- 5) “.....the movie has almost no politically correct preaching and centers on the love between a quiet, low-key Special Forces soldier and a young woman who is beautiful and tenderhearted...”

3.1.2 The Audience Response Toward the Concept of Love In “Dear John” Movie 2010

In this section, the researcher describes the reader response perspective toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010. The reader response is a criticism of the reader that talks a lot about the reader and the reading experience.

Based on the critical response data, “Dear John” movie 2010 received mixed negative reviews from critics, with some praising the casting, but many dismissing its characters and writing as generic. Meta critic, which assigns a weighted average score from film critics' reviews, reports a rating of 43% based on 34 reviews. On Rotten Tomatoes, it holds a "rotten" 29% with an average score of 4.4/10. The self-critical film (which could be called the self-reflective film plus a didactic intent, content, and effect), critiques society and itself by exposing, the truths behind social appearances, and the physical materiality and social function of film, including itself as film.

In a response to literature, the readers/ audiences share their thoughts about a work of literature. They may focus on the characters, plot, or the theme of the story. They can also include details from the book to support their opinion. Write the words reflect, respond, and reaction on the board. The findings on the reader response perspective toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010 here is divided into three categories, positive response, negative responses, and neutral responses.

a) Positive Responses

Positive comments do come from authentic fans. Positive comments are usually overlooked, especially when they are just regular compliments. However, referrals, good testimonials, and success stories should not be ignored. Based on the data taken from The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and rottentomatoes.com, the samples of positive responses of the reader toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010 is as follow.

- 1)”An excellent movie about true & enduring love.....”
- 2)”This is one of my favorite movies. It's a heart-warming, but sad, love story. I liked the two lead characters very much.....”

- 3)”One of my favorites. So good that I re-watched it a couple of times.....”
- 4)”I absolutely love this love story of John and Savannah this is so heart touching story of two lovers they are madly in love with each other. This will make you very emotional as they get apart when John has to go back and Savannah has to go back to her school.....”
- 5)”This movie is the definition of first love. We have a couple who fall in love in a matter of two weeks, and throughout the years they are still madly in love.....”

The above data are some of the positive responses of the readers toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010. The positive comments mainly stated that the love story in the movie is romantic and shares a good love life story, a typical of great long distance love story.

b) Negative Responses

Negative responses or review is a feedback that tends to dampen a process by applying the output against the initial conditions (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/negative>). Based on the data taken from The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and rottentomatoes.com, the samples of negative responses of the reader toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010 is as follow.

- 1)”Rest this movie is totally time waste as compared to other awesome works of Sparks. This movie's got weak story line. Story just shifts from one level to another.....”
- 2) “.....its a nice love story i agree but the music in not good enough to engage audience. It just a good romantic movie to watch...”
- 3) “.....I didn't like the ending as John didn't marry Savannah in the end. But their love story was really awesome.”
- 4) “The main character John has a very bland personality and isn't the greatest guy. Their relationship was not the healthiest as he always thought Savannah was perfect and too good for him. It is a formulaic rom-com...”
- 5)”Absolutely dreadful "romance"”

Based on some negative responses toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010 above, it can be seen that the love story in the movie is mainly a bad romantic drama with sad ending.

c) Neutral Responses

Aside from positive and negative responses, there are also some neutral responses given by the reader toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010. Neutral means not expressing an opinion or taking actions that support either side in a disagreement or war. The samples of neutral responses found are as follow.

- 1)It depicts the loses we have to go through for greater good. The Soldier represents its loyalty towards the country while in doing that, it costs him his love.”
- 2) “.....I believe Tatum as John and Seyfried as Savannah. The chemistry may not always be there, but for a Nicholas Spark's movie, it real enough”
- 3) ...”one of best films i have seen which shows the value of true love and what its all about. True love never dies”.
- 4) “This one has a sad and cool love story containing sacrifices and heart warming scenes”

Some neutral responses of the readers do not judge the typical love story in “Dear John” movie 2010 but rather describing the love story inside it.

3.2 Discussion

In this section, the discussion of the findings is presented. This discussion also divided into two sections in accordance to the findings. The discussion in detail is as follow.

The first finding shows that the meaning or types of love found in “Dear John” movie 2010 based on reader perspective are brotherly love, motherly love, and erotic love. There are three kinds of love concept in “Dear John” 2010, the love to the beloved one, the love to the country, and the love to the family. Based on the 2006 book of the same name by best-selling author Nicholas Sparks, “Dear John” is the love story of Savannah (Amanda Seyfried), an idealistic, religious college student, and John (Channing Tatum), a rebellious soldier. The two seemingly opposite adolescents take part in a whirlwind, two-week romance in South Carolina during the overlap of John’s leave and Savannah’s spring break. Their love is tested when John returns to the army to finish his tour.

The lovers attempt to remain close despite the distance by writing a series of love letters to one another. Sharing intimate details and promises of life after the army, John and Savannah desperately cling to their love and the past they share.

But when the World Trade Center collapses and talk of a war in Iraq follows, John must make the difficult choice between being with the person he loves and fulfilling his responsibility as a soldier.

This finding of the meaning or types of love found in “Dear John” movie 2010 based on reader perspective is in line with Erich Fromm’s Theory of Love says that “[Love](#) is not primarily a relationship to a specific person, it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one “object” of love” Fromm 46). Fromm’s theory is different compared to Freud because Freud saw love and sex as a animal instinct as part of human nature.

Fromm sees love as something that humanizes men and women, love is a special characteristic that we as humans use to fill the feelings of being lonely, and it’s a positive outcome of individuals wanting to join with others. As his theory continues, Fromm describe characteristics that are different in the qualities of love within the different types of love which are motherly love, Brotherly love, Erotic love, immature love, mature love, self-love, and the love of God. Here, brotherly love, motherly love, and erotic love are reflected in “Dear John” movie 2010 where the love concept inserted in the movie are the love to the beloved one, the love to the country, and the love to the family.

By analyzing “Dear John” movie 2010, a quadruple framework of attraction, resonance or connection, trust, and respect are found to explain the meaning of love. The framework is used to explain how love grows and dies and to describe brand love, romantic love, and parental love. This finding has contributed to the research conducted by Putri (2017) who analyze the meaning of love in Dear John novel through the content and found three components of love: intimacy, passion, and decision or commitment.

The second finding shows the reader response perspective toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010 that divided into three categories, positive response, negative responses, and neutral responses. Discussions of film, from conversations and journalistic reviews to deeply analytic studies of individual films or portions of a film, almost always involve assumptions, implicit or explicit

about audience or readers response. Even the most formalistic or stylistic analysis, which assumes it is operating only on an aesthetic level, or which assumes it is “purely descriptive” begins to make implicit concepts of audience response part of its analysis once it moves to any degree of generalization. To take a simple example, to label a film, or film segment, “comic” is to make an assumption about its effect on the audience.

Based on this finding of reader response perspective toward the concept of love in “Dear John” movie 2010, it can be assumed that the concept of love in “Dear John” 2010 has attract many reactions from the viewer, especially on the relationship between John and Savannah. *Dear John* is a movie adaptation of an extremely moving novel of the same name about young love beleaguered by complications. The relationship between the two lead characters is focused on bittersweet loss, but is softened by the sweet manifestation of the actors in a way that feels like triumph to the audiences. “Dear John” traditionally refers to the kind of letter written by a girl to a boy when she wants to break up and, therefore, the plot line of the movie is not all surprising.

From this research finding, it can be assumed that reader response toward film or movie is the way viewers make meaning based on what they bring in to the theater: their filmic knowledge, cultural knowledge, political affiliations, religious predications, socioeconomic standing, and their shared societal experiences with other viewers. And perhaps most importantly, the viewer constructs meaning from how the images are presented to them. Based on these essential characteristics, the viewers then engage in “conversation” with the film. This continuous conversation takes place during the course of the film, makes turns during the course of the film, changes viewer expectations at times, solidifies previously held positions, and ends in a final interpretive mode.

As put forward by Wolfgang Iser, in his book entitled “The Act of Reading”, the reader's opinion can be influenced by two things, the first is the reader's opinion which is influenced by the text he reads (1978:21). Second, the reader's opinion can be influenced by the experience that the reader has experienced to realize that experience into the value-form of the literary work they read.

This findings of this study add to some findings of previous studies, it relates to the reader perspective and responses. Pervez (2015), *Film Audience Research* provides powerful and useful insights into all filmmakers. While developing a film, filmmakers can use the information collected to make more reliable film pitches, development packages, equity offering, crowd-funding, and film distribution.

Reader-response is not merely a method of literary criticism, it has attained the status of empirical investigation for written or verbal data (Andringa, 1990), psychological and cognitive domains (Goodblatt, 2001), consumer research (Scot, 1994), and film reception (Shull, 1987). Kuiken and Miall's (2001) work on numerically aided phenomenology is a technical support illustrating how to conduct a readers-response analysis systematically.

Pitturo (2008) sees Reader-response theories include several different critical perspectives and include different underlying forms and philosophical grounding in both film and literature. In addition, some have specific practical frameworks and others are purely theoretical. The catch-all term of "reader-response" in literature can be broken down further into transactional theories, reception theories, and reader-response theories.

4. CONCLUSION

This research finds two conclusions based on the analysis. The first conclusion is the meaning or types of love found in "Dear John" movie 2010 based on reader perspective that are divided into three, brotherly love, motherly love, and erotic love. There are three kinds of love concept in "Dear John" 2010, the love to the beloved one, the love to the country, and the love to the family.

Second finding shows the reader response perspective toward the concept of love in "Dear John" movie 2010 that divided into three categories, positive response, negative responses, and neutral responses. Based on this finding, it can be assumed that the concept of love in "Dear John" 2010 has attract many reactions from the viewer, especially on the relationship between John and Savannah.

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