

**THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS DIVORCE ON THE CHILD  
PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN NICHOLAS SPARKS' *THE LAST  
SONG* NOVEL (2009): A DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH**



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**By:**

**ENY SETIA NINGRUM**

**A 320 100 288**

**SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA**

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UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA  
FAKULTAS KEGURUAN DAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN  
Jl. A. Yani Tromol Pos 1 - Pabelan Kartasura Telp (0271) 717417, Fax : 715448 Surakarta 57102  
Website: <http://www.ums.ac.id> Email: [ums@ums.ac.id](mailto:ums@ums.ac.id)

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Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini pembimbing skripsi/tugas akhir :

Nama : Dr. M. Thoyibi, M.S.  
NIK : 410  
Nama : Titis Setiabudi, S. Si, M. Hum.  
NIK : 948

Telah membaca dan mencermati naskah artikel publikasi ilmiah, yang merupakan ringkasan skripsi/tugas akhir dari mahasiswa:

Nama : Eny Setia Ningrum  
NIM : A 320 100 288  
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
Judul Skripsi : THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS DIVORCE ON THE CHILD PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN NICHOLAS SPARKS' *THE LAST SONG* NOVEL (2009): A DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH

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Pembimbing I

Pembimbing II

Dr. M. Thoyibi, M.S.  
NIK. 410

Titis Setiabudi, S. Si, M. Hum.  
NIK. 948

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SONG* NOVEL (2009): A DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH**

Eny Setia Ningrum

A320100288

[enysetianingrum@gmail.com](mailto:enysetianingrum@gmail.com)

*Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta*

**ABSTRACT**

*The objectives of the research are to analyze the novel based on the structural elements and to analyze the novel based on developmental psychology approach proposed. This research paper belongs to qualitative research. The result of the research is as follows based on the developmental psychology analysis, it can be concluded that several relationship has a great contribution in shaping one's personality and behavior. The relationship starts with family, friend, and romance relationship. Family relationship is the most influential factor on personal behavior. Those relationship does not always give good influences but sometimes the relationship can give bad influences. The negative and positive influences always follow our life.*

*Keyword: the last song, parents divorce, developmental psychology approach.*

## A. Introduction

*The Last Song* is a novel written by an American author Nicholas Sparks. He was born in Omaha, Nebraska. He is an American bestselling author of love stories. He graduated from the Notre Dame with a degree in finance. This novel is a romance. The book was first published by Grand Central Publishing, on September 2009. This novel has 37 chapters and 463 pages. It takes setting in Wrigsville North Carolina at 21st century.

*The Last Song* is a novel that tells about eighteenth Ronnie Miller from broken home family, her parents divorced and her father moved to Wrigsville Beach North Carolina. She lived with her mother and her brother Jonah in New York. After the parents divorced she became a rebellious teenager.

There is literature review concerning with *The Last Song Novel* by Nicholas Sparks, written by Mahfudho (UMS, 2013) with her research paper entitled *Growth of Veronica Miller's Personality in Julie Anne Robinson's The Last Song Movie (2010): A Psychoanalytic Approach*. In her research, she concluded that the power of love change hatred, misunderstanding causes hatred, and hatred ends in regret along with the growth of Veronica Miller's personality. While in this research, the researcher focuses on the influence of parents divorce by the main character named Ronnie Miller. In this research there are some differences before and after the parents divorce based on perspective, speaking manner, dressing manner, and action manner in the novel. This research is analyzed by using developmental psychology approach.

This main issue of this researcher is the influence of parents divorce by the main character named Ronnie Miller. It is analyzed by using developmental psychology approach. Developmental psychology is a branch of knowledge that focuses on human growth and development the underlying processes of change, the hows and whys of the origins and alternations in

behavior. (Conger, 1979: 15).It is a branch of psychological study concerning with personality of human being.

## **B. Research Method**

The type of this research is qualitative research. Thus, the researcher does not need statistic to collect, to analyze and to interpret the data. It is library research while the data sources are using literary data. There are two sources that are needed to do this research. The primary data source is the novel *The Last Song*, and the secondary data sources are the other books and other sources that support the analysis. In collecting data, the researcher does some steps are: reading repeatedly the book, determining the character that will be analyzed, underlying the important parts in both primary and secondary data, classifying and determining the relevant data, taking notes from the material and some other resources related to the novel. The technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis based on developmental psychology approach. Focus will be on the influence of parents divorce on the child personality development in Nicholas Sparks' *The Last Song* novel.

## **C. Research Findings and Discussion**

After analyzing *The Last Song* novel, the researcher found some research findings. The research findings will be discussed below .

### **1. Findings**

There are four influences of parents divorce in this novel. The influence of parents divorce in this novel can be seen from the perspective, speaking manner, dressing manner, and acting manner.

#### **a. Before The Parents Divorce**

##### **1) Perspective**

In this novel, the perspective about the parents and people around her was not mentioned explicitly. Basically the perspective of Ronnie before the parents divorce was good. Ronnie views her father and mother as the parents who know the best for their children. It can

be seen when her father taught her piano and composed original music together. And Ronnie can enter in Juilliard university without examination.

“... she’d been consumed by the desire not only to play, but to compose original music with her father. She was good, too. Very good, actually, and because of her father’s connection to Juilliard, the administration and teachers there were well aware of her ability.” (TLS, 2009: 12)

## 2) Speaking manner

Speaking manner of Ronnie also was not mentioned explicitly in the novel. But after reading the novel, it can be seen that speaking manner of Ronnie was polite, simple, and she gave good response to the others.

“I know he heard you, sweetheart. And I know it was beautiful.” Ronnie gave herself over to her mother’s embrace, resting her head on her chest as she used to do when she was a child.” (TLS, 2009: 448)

## 3) Dressing manner

Dressing manner of Ronnie also was not mentioned explicitly. Basically dressing manner of Ronnie in this story was simple, casual, and elegant. It can be shown when she came to Will’s sister wedding.

“The dress-there weren’t all that many good choices despite the number of stores she’d visited-featured a deep V-neck and black sequins, a far cry from anything she’d ever imagined wearing.” (TLS, 2009: 299)

## 4) Action Manner

### a) She has a talent for playing piano

Before her parents were divorced Ronnie usually plays piano with her father. Her father taught her since she was a kid. They did not only play piano but also composed the songs. Because of her talent, she can enter the Juilliard University without test.

“She’d been consumed by the desire not only to play, but to compose original music with her father.” (TLS, 2009: 12)

b) Care

Ronnie is a girl who cares, but was not mentioned explicitly. It can be shown when she also took care of her father when he was sick.

“I know what he did and I’m sorry he hurt you, but this is about my dad. He’s sick and he needs my help, and I’m going to be here for him. I don’t care that he had an affair, I don’t care that he left us. But I do care about him.” (TLS, 2009: 400)

b. After The Parents Divorce

1) Perspective

The beginning of parents divorced:

a) Blaming her father

Ronnie thinks that her father makes mistake that he decides to divorce and her father moved to Wrihsville Beach North Carolina.

“That’s not my fault. He’s the one who left.” (TLS, 2009: 10)

“Three years ago, he and Kim decided to divorce; less than twelve months later, the tour dates began drying up, until they finally ended completely. Last year, he’d moved back here, to the town where he’d grown up, a place he never thought he’d see again.” (TLS, 2009: 16)

b) Ignoring her father

In summer holiday, Ronnie and her brother Jonah sent her mother to spend summer with her father. After three years her parents divorced and moved to Wrihsville Beach North Carolina, every time her father comes to New York to see Ronnie and Jonah, Ronnie ignores him and prefers to hang out with her friends.

“Yes, but you haven’t taken his calls. And every time he came to New York to see you and Jonah, you ignored him and hung out with your friends.” (TLS, 2009: 11)

The ending of parents divorced:

a) Good father

However after that she knew her father was diagnosed stomach cancer, she starts to be aware that her father is a good man and good father. Her father always gives the best love for her eventhough Ronnie's attitude is not good.

“She didn't want that to happen to her dad. She didn't want him forgotten in a matter of weeks – he was a good man, a good father, and he deserved more than that.” (TLS, 2009: 374)

b) Wise father

Steve Miller always believes to her children although they have mistakes.

“She's not on her way to being profiled on *America's Most Wanted*. She made a mistake. And she's always had a good heart.”

“So you believe her?”

He sifted through his feelings about the incident, as he had a dozen times since Kim had first told him. “Yeah,” he said. “I believe her.” (TLS, 2009: 24)

2) Speaking manner

The beginning of parents divorced:

a) Using rude words

When Ronnie talks to her father, she uses rude words to show that she does not like her father.

“Hi, sweetie. It's good to see you.”

When Ronnie didn't answer, Kim scowled at her.

“Don't be rude. Your father's talking to you. Say something.” Ronnie crossed her arms. “All right. How about this? I'm not going to play the piano for you.” (TLS, 2009: 20)

“I don't want to see or talk to him,” Ronnie said.” (TLS, 2009: 11)



b) Speaking loudly and barking out

Ronnie usually speaks loudly and barks out to someone especially her father. It can be shown when her father played the piano and Ronnie was in badmood at the moment.

Abruptly, her dad stopped playing.

“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 not for you!” (TLS, 2009: 74)

c) Ignoring or refusing

When she is talking to other people, especially her father, she prefers to ignore and does not give responds.

“Hi, sweetie. It’s good to see you.”

When Ronnie didn’t answer, Kim scowled at her.”  
(TLS, 2009: 20)

The ending of parents divorced:

a) Built communication with her father

After Ronnie knew that her father was diagnosed stomach cancer, her attitude step by step started changing better toward her father. They talk to each other again and their relationship is going better.

“You have stomach cancer,” the doctor said. He took a long breath. “And from the scans, it’s metastasized to your pancreas and lungs.” His voice was neutral, but not unkind. “I’m sure you have a lot of questions, but let me start by saying it’s not good.” (TLS, 2009: 359)

“Can you forgive me?”

“Of course I forgive you,” she said, and it was then she began cry. She leaned toward him, resting her head on his chest, and noticed how thin he’d become without her even being aware of it. She could feel the sharp outline of the bones in his chest, and she suddenly realized that he had been wasting away for months. It broke her heart to know she hadn’t been paying attention; she’d been so

caught up in her own life that she hadn't even noticed."  
(TLS, 2009: 367)

3) Dressing manner

a) Gothic Style

Dressing manner which is used by Ronnie is like as Gothic style. It can be shown by Ronnie's dressing manner.

"You saw the way she was dressed, right? And her hair and that god-awful mascara?" (TLS, 2009: 23)

b) Easy going

Dressing manner which is used by Ronnie is easy going, as the all-American girl. It can be shown by Ronnie's dressing manner.

"Gone was the all-American girl he remembered, and in her place was a young woman with a purple streak in her long brown hair, black fingernail polish, and dark clothing." (TLS, 2009: 20)

4) Action Manner

The beginning of parents divorced:

a) Rebellious

After her parents divorced, she became a rebellious teenager. Since she was kid, Ronnie has music talent especially piano. She really loves piano. Ronnie usually goes to music festival with her father. But after her parents divorced, she never played piano again.

"Ronnie hated the piano and swore she'd never play again..." (TLS, 2009: 12)

"I'm not going to play the piano for you." (TLS, 2009: 20)

b) Shoplifting

Since her parents was divorced and her father chose to move on Wighsville Beach North Carolina, Ronnie lived with her mother and her young brother Jonah in New York.

After long time lived with her mother, Ronnie's attitude changed being shoplifting.

“She admitted to stealing the bracelet last year, but this time, she said she was buying a bunch of stuff at the drugstore and couldn't hold it all, so she tucked the lipstick in her pocket.” (TLS, 2009: 24)

The ending of parents divorced:

a) The relationship with her father was fine

Day by day the relationship with her father was better. It began when she knew her father was diagnosed stomach cancer. Ronnie played the piano again when funeral her father and she took last song which was written by her father before die, however this last song did not yet finish but Ronnie finally could finish the song entitled “For Ronnie”.

“Can you forgive me?”

“Of course I forgive you,” she said, and it was then she began cry. She leaned toward him, resting her head on his chest, and noticed how thin he'd become without her even being aware of it. She could feel the sharp outline of the bones in his chest, and she suddenly realized that he had been wasting away for months. It broke her heart to know she hadn't been paying attention; she'd been so caught up in her own life that she hadn't even noticed.” (TLS, 2009: 367)

“He thought about it. “I suppose I'd like to see the window completed. And finish the song I started. I still think there's something . . . special there.” (TLS, 2009: 370)

b) Care and mature girl

She became a care and mature girl. When her father did medication in hospital. Ronnie always took care of her father. She also took care of her young brother Jonah. This condition make Ronniemore mature and aware of her mistakes because of the hatredof her father.

“I know what he did and I’m sorry he hurt you, but this is about my dad. He’s sick and he needs my help, and I’m going to be here for him. I don’t care that he had an affair, I don’t care that he left us. But I do care about him.” (TLS, 2009: 400)

“She wanted to stand beside the boy she loved, her puppy family by her side.” (TLS, 2009: 375)

#### **D. Discussion**

Ronnie Miller was eighteen years old girl who lived in broken home. She lived with her mother and her younger brother Jonah. Her environment gives color in her personality, particularly on her psychological development. Steve Miller is her father, he is a pianist, musician and composer. Her father is one of teacher in Juilliard. Since Ronnie was kid, she has a talent of playing piano. One of the teacher in Juilliard was very aware of her talent. One day, when she was graduated from high school, she entered to Juilliard University without examination because of her talent. Her parents guidance made Ronnie became a good child. But after her parents divorced Ronnie became a rebellious girl. She hated her father, she did not talk to her father and she never played piano again.

Before her parents divorced as childhood, Ronnie has music talent especially piano. She really loves piano. Ronnie usually goes to music festival with her father. In summer, she was sent by her mother to spend her time with her father at Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. When she was spending summer time, she met Will, a beach volleyball player that influenced her life.

Warren in Theory of Literature concluded that Psychology of literature has four meanings: the psychological study of the writer, the study of the creative process, the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, and the effects of literature upon its readers. (Wellek and Warren, 1948: 75). This study is included in the study of psychological types and laws present works of literature. Sparks creates

Ronnie as major character to illustrate psychological phenomenon as a personality who is changed her behavior because of her parents divorced. She changed her behavior from a rebellious girl into mature girl. In the beginning, she is a good girl who cares about her parents, her young brother Jonah, and her environment. Then all of her attitudes changed into a girl who did not care to everyone in her environment. She gets negative and positive reinforcement from her environment and she gets responds all well.

Based on the description above, the researcher concludes that the influence of parents divorce makes her personality change. Every parents divorce gives different influence to their children personality. In this novel, the most influential in shaping her personality is her father Steve Miller.

#### **E. Conclusion**

After analyzing *The Last Song* novel, the conclusion is based on the developmental psychology analysis, it can be concluded that several relationship has a great contribution in shaping one's personality and behavior. The relationship starts with family, friend, and romance relationship. Family relationship is the most influential factor on personal behavior. Those relationship does not always give good influences but sometimes the relationship can give bad influences. The negative and positive influences always follow our life.

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