

# **PROTAGONIST'S MOTIVATION IN RACHAEL LIPPINCOTT ET. AL.'S NOVEL *FIVE FEET APART***

**Anggi Anggraini, Sri Wulan**

Faculty of Literature, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara,  
Medan, Indonesia  
e-mail: [anggianggraini1731@gmail.com](mailto:anggianggraini1731@gmail.com)

Received: 2020-07-05

Accepted: 2020-11-23

## **Abstract**

This study aims to reveal the protagonist's motivation in Rachael Lippincott et. al.'s novel *Five Feet Apart*. This study adopts qualitative method to acquire and describe the data about the protagonist's motivations in the novel. The discussion is divided into two sub topics concerned to the aspects of the analysis. There are two aspects of the protagonist's motivation described in the novel. The first aspect is focused on recovery and family's happiness. Then, the second is about the factors which arouse the motivation. It is found in the study that the protagonist's motivation and the factors to arouse the motivation lead to the protagonist's success to recover and return to live with her family together.

**Keywords:** protagonist, motivation, recovery, love

## **1. Introduction**

The story centers on the motivation of the first character of the novel named Stella Grant. Motivation is something that moves people, both physically and mentally to take action in achieving certain goals. Motivation is analyzed for life based on Maslow's theory. Maslow (1943) who says that love is a feeling of affection that is able to influence someone to do something.

The novel explains the love journey between Stella and Will. The influence of love is enormous to motivate someone, especially those who are facing a problem to stay afloat. Love someone should accept all the advantages and disadvantages. However, the feeling of love so much to someone makes us to sacrifice to do anything and support everything for our loved ones.

Feelings of love can support progressive change. Love in positive terms can motivate us to behave or change ourselves better. As in this story, Stella, suffering from cystic fibrosis, always has the support of the people closest to her that she loves for her recovery.

The reason why the topic is chosen because the topic shows that the motivation for healing is based on existing love. It is because the support of the people he loves, such as family, friends, and even his lover who make the spirit to heal even greater. Love enables people to do many things from what cannot be done. Through this story, love can also be said to be a very influential motivation. It also teaches readers not to easily give up doing something. It can be seen from the story that the protagonist was excited again to endure the treatment for her recovery. The existences and supports from the people

around her kept her alive. There is something that we can understand that motivation and struggle can run smoothly and produce good things.

This study covers the motivation which is described in the novel *Five Feet Apart* and the reason why the protagonist gets the motivation. There are two points that are analyzed in this study. There are two aspects of the protagonist's motivation which are described in the novel. The first point is about recovery and family's happiness. Then, the factors which arouse the motivation are because of meeting a man, Will Newman and finally falling in love. In short, these points are discussed in the analysis.

This study is expected to elaborate and establish an understanding about the protagonist's motivation found in the novel. Besides, it is hoped that the readers can take the moral lessons revealed in the study. Good motivation can bring good things in future in life. Finally, it is hoped that the advantages of this study can be taken by the readers.

## **2. Literature Review**

Motivation is a crucial component to recovery because it shows the reasons why we act or behave in a particular way. Often in early recovery, motivation levels are high. There are plans and ideas in place to remain sober.

Elliot et. al. (2000) states that motivation is an internal condition that raises us to action, drives us to achieve certain goals, and makes us interested in certain activities. While, Uno (2007: 23) says that motivation can be interpreted as internal and external encouragement in a person that is indicated by the existence, desires and interests, encouragement and needs, hopes and ideals, appreciation and respect.

Furthermore, Makmun (2003) explains that motivation is a strength, energy or power, or a complex condition and readiness in an individual to move towards a particular goal, whether realized or not realized. Motivation is a movement for a better purpose going forward. Siagian (2010) also verifies that motivation is the impact of a person's interactions with the situation he is facing.

Abraham Maslow (1943) suggests that motivation which human beings have a hierarchy of needs. Namely, all humans act in which way meet basic needs, before moving on to satisfy others, so called higher level needs. Motivation is change in energy characterized by the appearance of felling and preceded by a response to the existence of goals (Sardirman, 2006: 73).

Based on the above distinction, it can be inferred that motivation is a process that explains the intensity, direction, and perseverance of an individual to achieve his goals. Motivation is the reason underlying an action done by an individual. Someone said to have high motivation can be interpreted that the person has a very strong reason to achieve what he wants by doing his current job. Motivation is also often said as enthusiasm. Then, it needs to be understood that there are differences in the use of the term motivation in society. Some interpret motivation as an excuse, and some point out it as passion.

## **3. Research Method**

This research adopts qualitative method based on Ravitch et al. (2015) to focus on developing the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological knowledge needed to engage in rigorous and valid research. This introductory text provides practical explanations, exercises, and advice for how to conduct qualitative research.

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1 Protagonist's Motivation**

There are two forms of the protagonist's motivation, i.e. recovery and family's happiness.

#### **4.1.1 Recovery**

In the novel, Stella Grant as the protagonist of the novel is described as the female who leads and has cystic fibrosis. She lives in hospital as a patient. She almost drowns and luckily, she gets a lung transplant. She is very intelligent and often carries the weight of the world on her shoulders. Then, Stella Grant is very caring and changes many people's lives for the better. She has a very friendly, but controlling personality and always does her treatments. It is seen in this quotation:

My computer dings away, messages pouring in one after another. Reading a few, I let the positivity push away all the negativity I felt going into this. "Hang in there, Stella! We love you." "Marry me!" "New lungs can come in at any moment, so I've got to be ready!" I say the worlds like I believe them wholeheartedly. Though after all these years I've learned to not get my hopes up too much. DING! Another message. "I've got CF and you remind me to always stay positive. XOXO. (Lippincott et. al. ,2019: 13)

It shows that the protagonist has the desire to rise from the pain she has suffered for years. She also has a Y – Tube account. She often shares the story about Cystic Fibrosis (CF) with his followers, and she always gives tips and tricks to maintain her health so as not to experience the same thing about her. So, many people are impressed with Stella and her enthusiasm. People always provide support for her to keep her alive.

Actually, Stella almost gives up on her situation. However, many things motivate him to recover and stay alive. One of all who motivates her to recover based on love. Love can change everything. It also can change the impossible thing to be possible, including the recovery of Stella. The spirit and motivation of someone you love can also foster a sense of self – excitement as well.

"I hope her wish comes true," Will says, and I lean my head on the cold glass, glancing over t him. "I hope my life wasn't for nothing," I say, my own wish on those twinkling lights. He gives me a long look. "Your life is everything, Stella. You affect people more than you know." He touches his chest, putting his hand over his heart. "I speak from experience." (Lippincott et. al. ,2019: 189)

The above quotation indicates that Stella wants to get recovery to make the people whom she loves feels happy. She will fight her illness and be willing to wait for the availability of new lungs for her.

#### **4.1.2 Family's Happiness**

The protagonist, Stella, believes that her recovery will make her family much happier. She wants to maintain the integrity of her family which has been separated because of the fight between her father and mother. If she does not recover, she cannot imagine what destruction will happen to her family. Although, she actually has got tired

and enjoyed the illness, but she reassures that she must recover from this situation. It is seen in this quotation:

In all honestly, I like it here. It's been my home away from home since I was six, so I usually don't mind coming. I get my treatments, I take my medicine, I drink my body weight in milk shakes, I get to see Barb and Julie, I leave until my next flare-up. Simple as that. But this time I feel anxious, restless even. Because instead of just waiting to get healthy, I need to get healthy. For my parents' sake. Because they've gone and mess up everything by getting divorced. And after losing each other, they won't be able to handle losing me, too. I know it. (Lippincott et. al. ,2019: 8-9)

In addition, she also remembers the figure of her brother, Abby who has left their family for several years due to illness. Stella loves her brother very much. She regrets her sister's death.

One day, Stella and Will are enjoying the snow and skating on the ice and they are laughing. They do not feel sick. Suddenly, there is a loud cracking sound. The surface of the ice begins to crack underneath and the dark water engulfs Stella Grant.

Then, Stella struggles in the icy water that encloses it while trying to swim to the surface. She regains consciousness, but she feels strange. Stella looks at Abby in front of her. She hugs him and look around in surprise and asks Abby if she is dead. And then, a voice sounds like an echo from a fare. Stella listens well to Will's raspy voice between his short and sharp breath. Stella realizes it turns out that she is under aware. She sees her body a few centimeters away. Abby says that she must stay afloat and continue her life.

Abby smiles wider now, "I need you to live, okay? Live, Stella. For me." She starts to fade and I panic. "No! Don't go!" I say, grabbing on to her. (Lippincott et. al. ,2019: 243)

The quotation shows that the protagonist will fight for her life to recover for the sake of her family's happiness.

## **4.2 The Factors to Arouse the Protagonist's Motivation**

There are two factors to arouse the protagonist's motivation, they are meeting a Man, Will Newman and falling in love.

### **4.2.1 Meeting a Man**

Stella is a teenager who have cystic fibrosis, a chronic genetic disorder that affects the lungs and limits a person's ability to breathe over time. Stella has been suffering from CF for long time, so she often goes in and out of this hospital. One of the perks of coming here for more than a decade is that she knows the hospital just as well as she knows the house, she grows up in. Every winding corridor, or hidden staircase, or secret shortcut is explored over and over again.

But before I can open the double doors, a room door swings open next to me, and I turn my head in surprise to see the profile of a tall, thin boy I've never seen before. He's standing in the doorway of room 315, holding a sketchbook in one hand and a charcoal pencil in the other, a white hospital bracelet like mine wrapped around his wrist. (Lippincott et. al. ,2019: 22)

Will's dark chocolate brown hair is perfectly unruly, like he just pops out of a Teen Vogue and landing smack in the middle of Saint Grace's Hospital. His eyes are a deep blue, the corners crinkling as he talks. But it is his smile that catches her eye more than anything else. It is charming and it has a magnetic warmth to it.

He is so cute. Stella's lung function feels like it drops another 10 percent. It is a good thing that the mask is covering half her face because Stella does not plan for cute guys on the floor this hospital stay. Stella shifts slightly to the left and sees that Will's grinning at the couple she sees coming into the hospital earlier.

Stella watches as the girl unzips the duffel bag. She holds to show him blankets. It is gross. Will lets his friends do it in his room like it is a motel. Stella grimaces and resumes walking down the hallway to the exit doors, putting as much space as possible between me and whatever scheme is going on in there.

Will squints down the hallway to see the door swinging shut behind the girl that Will saw moving into a room down the hall earlier today, her scuffed white Converse disappearing into the other side. Stella has been by herself, lugging a duffel big enough for about three fully grown adults, but she actually looks kind of hot. It is not every day to see a remotely attractive girl hanging around a hospital, no more than five doors down from Will's room.

Pushing through the doors, Will sees Stella making her way across the gray tile floor, wave and chat just about everyone as she goes, like she is putting on her own personal Thanksgiving Day Parade. Stella steps onto the large glass elevator, overlooking the east lobby, just past a large, decked-out Christmas tree they must've put up early this morning, long before the Thanksgiving leftovers were even eaten.

Will watches her hands reach up to fix her face mask while Stella leans over to press a button, the door closes slowly. Will starts climbing the open stairs by the elevator, trying not to run into anyone as he watches it chug steadily to the fifth floor. He runs up the stairs as fast as his lungs will carry him, managing to get to the fifth floor with enough time to go into a serious coughing fit and to recover before Stella exits the elevator and disappears around a corner. Will rubs his chest, clearing his throat and following her own a couple of hallways and onto the wide, glass-encased bridge leading to the next building.

Actually, Stella stops short under a set of double doors reading *East Entrance: Neonatal Intensive Care Unit* and peeks inside before she pushes them open. Will opens the door and sliding inside the dimly little hallway. Will smiles as he watches Stella for a second. He cannot help but stare at her reflection, everything beyond the glass blurring as he looks at her. Stella is prettier close up with her long eyelashes and her full eyebrows. She even makes a face mask look good.

When Will clears his throat gets Stella's attention. Her eyes meet Will in the reflection of the glass. They get surprised at first, and then almost immediately change something to resemble disgusting. Will tries to start the conversation with Stella.

"I saw you moving into your room. Gonna be here awhile?" She doesn't say anything. If it wasn't for the grimace, I'd think she didn't even hear me. "Oh, I get it. I'm so good looking you can't even string a sentence together." That annoys her enough to get a response. "Shouldn't you be procuring rooms for your 'guests'?" she snaps, turning to face me as she angrily pulls her face mask off. (Lippincott et. al. ,2019: 27)

Stella takes Will off guard for a second, and he laughs because he gets surprised by how up-front she is. That really pisses her off.

“ Ha! It was you lurking in the hall.” “I don’t lurk,” she fires back. “ You followed me her.” (Lippincott et. al. , 2019: 28)

One day, Stella sees Will from the window of her room. Will is standing right on the edge of the rooftop. Stella directly opens the door to the stairwell, buttoning her jacket as she books it up the steps to the roof. Stella’s heart is pounding so loud in her ears. She can barely hear her footsteps underneath her as she runs up the steps. Wheezing, Stella makes it past the fifth floor, and she stops just a moment to catch her breath, her sweaty palms grabbing at the cool metal railing. Stella peers up the stairwell to the top floor, her head spinning, and sore throat burning. She does not even have time to grab her portable oxygen. She force herself to keep climbing.

Finally the door to the roof is in sight. She hesitates, looking from the alarm to the door and back again. But why does she not go off when Will opens it. Then Stella sees it. The door is propped open with a wallet, and Stella pushes through it as quickly as she can, making sure the dollar bill stays securely in place over the switch. She stops dead, catching a real breath for the first time in forty-eight stairs. Looking across the roof, she is relieved to see Will’s move a safe distance away from the edge and has not fallen to his death. Will turns to look Stella as she wheezes, a surprised expression on his face. Stella pulls her red scarf closer as the cold air bites at her face an neck, looking down to see if his wallet is still wedged in the door before storming over to him.

In all her years here, she has never been on the roof. Shivering, she pulls my jacket tighter, wrapping her arms around her body as she moves her eyes back to Will. Stella asks him, genuinely wondering what would possess someone with defective lungs to take a trip onto the roof in the dead of winter.

He snorts, rolling his eyes. “That treatment crap is what stops us from being down there and actually living.” My blood begins to boil. “Do you even know how lucky you are to be in this drug trial? But you just take it for granted. A spoiled, privileged brat.” (Lippincott et.al., 2019: 64-65)

The quotation verifies that Will is almost frustrated because of undergoing continuous treatment. He wants to live freely like the people out there who do not suffer from diseases like him. But, Stella says that she is fortunate to be able to take a drug trial. It is certainly very useful for healing. Stella assures Will that she does not think she wants to die in a silly way and provides motivation to stay alive.

#### **4.2.2 Falling in Love**

Stella and Will meet in the corridor of the hospital. They are both receiving treatment, and they instantly feel a connection. Stella begins to feel differently about Will because they often meet. They look interested to each other especially when they stare at each other like someone is pulling them close without distance. When one of them makes words of praise, one of them feels happy and valuable. It is seen in this quotation:

I’m too thin, too scarred, too. . . I meet my hazel eyes in the mirror. Why would Will want to draw me? His voice echoes in my had, calling me beautiful. Beautiful. It makes my heart flip in a way it shouldn’t. (Lippincott et. al ,2019: 87)

Even though they like each other, they are not permitted to get within five feet of one another. Though they want to be able to touch, patients with cystic fibrosis must keep their distance from each other in order to avoid cross contamination.

My heart thumps loudly in my chest this words, and the warm way he's looking at me. "They're really nice eyes." He says a second later, a faint red creeping onto his cheeks. He looks down, scribbling away and clearing his throat. "I mean to, like, draw." I bite on my lower lip to hide my smile. For the first time I feel the weight of every single inch, every millimeter, of the six feet between us. I pull my sweatshirt closer to my body, looking away at the pile of yoga mats in the corner, trying to ignore the fact that open space? It will always be there. (Lippincott et. al., 2019: 107)

Stella lives her days more energetically since Will's presence. They provide mutual support to keep the spirit undergoing treatment. They also do not forget to pay attention to each other in order to maintain their health. Whatever things that affect their healing then do it, as in the novel that Stella is getting for a new lung. Stella feels worried about that. She thinks that the new lungs will not suit her. Then, she also says that a new lung will only last a few years into the future, after which it will return to this treatment and so on. However, encouragement and support from Will that makes Stella successfully perform operation for her new lungs. But, Stella and Will still have a defined distance so that they can keep live with each other. After Stella has managed to get her lungs, Will not want to make Stella hurt. Then, he must leave and stay away from Stella, because of his condition which still has an infectious disease. It is seen in this quotation:

He presses harder too, his voice shaking as he continues. "The only thing I want is to be with you. But I need for you to be safe. Safe from me." He fights to continue, tears streaming down his face. "I don't want to leave you, but I love you too much to stay." He laughs through his tears, shaking his head. "God, the freakin' movies were right." He leans his head against the window where my hand rests. I can feel it, even through the glass. I can feel him. "I will love you forever," he says, looking up so we're face-to-face, the both of us silently seeing the same pain in each other's eyes. My heart slowly cracks under the new scar. (Lippincott et. al., 2019: 264)

Tears stream down Stella's face as she feels Will walk away, much farther than the five feet that they agree on. That is always between them. Stella opens her eyes slowly, some part of her still hopes he will be on the other side of the glass. But all she sees the twinkling lights in the courtyard and a town car in the distance, disappearing into the night.

Eight months later, Stella returns to a better life. Her family life has improved. Her father and mother reunite and live in the same house with her. Stella wants to change her plans. She takes a deep breath at her words, her lungs effortlessly expanding and contracting. It is still so wonderful; she can hardly believe it. These past eight months have been bittersweet to say the least. Her new lungs are amazing, the physical pain of the surgery gradually giving way to a whole new life. Like her new lungs, it has not fixed everything that is broken. The loss of Abby is a pain she does not think she will ever fully

get over. Some part of me will never get over Will. And that is okay. It is seen in this quotation:

The pain remind me that they were here, that I'm alive. Thanks to Will I have so much more life to live. So much more time. A side from his love, it was the greatest gift I could ever receive. And I can't believe now that I almost didn't take it. (Lippincott et. al. ,2019: 274)

The quotation above shows that love can change everything. The motivation can also be obtained from loved ones. The support of the people we love, such as family, friends, and even his lover who makes the spirit to heal even greater. Love enables people to do many things. Through this story, love can also be said to be a very influential motivation.

From the analysis of the protagonist's motivation in the novel *Five Feet Apart*, there are some findings which can be presented. The protagonist of the novel motivates herself because she has Fibrosis Cystic which makes her come in and out of the hospital. She must always be separated from anyone who might be able to transmit the infection. The first reason of her motivation is because she wants to get recovery and to motivate others to keep their spirits up for every illness to get well too. The second reason is that she wants to make their families happy because from Stella's illness, her parents are gone and messed up everything by getting divorced. As for the factors to arouse the protagonist's motivation is because she meets someone and makes them fall in love. The first factors to arouse the protagonist's motivation is that her meeting with Will Newman has a strong motivation for her recovery. Stella and Will are able to control themselves and want to follow a series of treatments that they must undergo. The other factor to arouse the protagonist's motivation is because Will also has the same disease which makes them have to be separated by a distance of one half meters. But finally, they fall in love.

## 5. Conclusion

After the protagonist's motivation in Lippincott et. al.'s novel entitled *Five Feet Apart* is analyzed, some points can be concluded. The protagonist's motivation is caused by two reasons. The first reason is recovery and the second is family's happiness. These reasons push the protagonist's motivation for her illness, Cystic Fibrosis. Then, there are two factors to arouse the protagonist's motivation. The first is meeting *Will Newman*. It makes them realize that recovery is important, so they motivate each other. The second is falling in love. It seems that love can change everything. A strong sense of love can make them become supporters of each other and survive. Finally, the above protagonist's motivation and the factors to arouse his motivation lead to her success to recover and return to live with her family together.

## References

- Baldick, Chris. (2001). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford Paperback Reference). Oxford: Oxford University.
- Beckson, Karl and Ganz, Arthur. (1990). *Literary Term: A dictionary* (Paperback). London: Ande Deutsch, Ltd.
- Elliot, et. al. (2000). *Educational Psychology: Effective Learning*, 3rd Edition. United States: MC Graw Hill Companies.
- Encyclopedia Britannica. (April 2016). Protagonist- Literature. <https://www.britannica.com/art/protagonist>. (September 2019).



- Hamzah, B. Uno. (2007). *Teori Motivasi dan Pengukurannya*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Makmun, Abin Syamsuddin. (2003). *Psikologi Pendidikan*. Bandung: Rosda Karya Remaja.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). *Theory of Human Motivation*. New York: Journal of Humanistic Psychology.
- Rachael Lippincott, et. al. (2018). *Five Feet Apart*. United States: Official Publisher Page.
- Ravitch, Sharon M. (2015). *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*. New York: SAGE Publications.
- Saldana, J. and Omasta, M. (2017). *Qualitative Research: Analyzing Life*. New York: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Sardirman, A. M. (2006). *Interaksi dan Motivasi Belajar Mengajar*. Yogyakarta: Rajawali Pers.
- Siagian, Sondang. (2010). *Teori Motivasi dan Aplikasinya*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Wiley, John. (2010). *Webster's New Worlds College Dictionary*. Ohio: Wiley Publishing, Inc.