

AMBITION IN LOVE IN NICHOLAS SPARKS' NOVEL *THE NOTEBOOK*

Jojo Krisman Laowo, Pardi

Faculty of Literature, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia
E-mail: pardi@sastra.uisu.ac.id

Received: 2024-02-20

Accepted: 2024-05-01

Published: 2024-05-15

Abstract

This article examines how the first character by the name of Noah Calhoun in Nicholas Sparks' novel, *The Notebook*, passionately pursues love-driven ambition. Ambition here means having strong determination to achieve personal goals. It is a central theme in the protagonist's journey. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study carefully looks at Noah's various efforts to find love, using ideas from Bridge and Krutus. He sees ambition as a powerful force that drives people to achieve great things. Through this method, the research explores how the protagonist's ambitions in love unfold, showing a deep dive into human hopes and emotions. The study reveals Noah's ambitious actions in his pursuit of Allie. It shows how he writes letters to her, builds their dream home, and works to bring back her memories. Noah's unwavering dedication and determination showcase his strong love, leading to a heartwarming conclusion where love conquers all obstacles. Overall, this research sheds light on the role of ambition in romantic relationships, highlighting Noah's steadfast pursuit of love amidst life's challenges. His resilience reminds us of how ambition can shape our relationships and stories.

Keywords: love; protagonist; romantic relationship

1. Introduction

Ambition is a strong desire to achieve success in life and achieve the great or good things desired. Roy (2011) defines ambition as an ardent desire to attain success in life such as personal advancement, fame, power, rank, or position. It suggests that ambition is a positive driving force which motivates people to be enthusiastic in their life because there are goals they want to attain. A person's ambition cannot be seen in the real world or everyday life but can be seen through depictions in stories such as novels. Novels and old literary works are used to express criticism as well as longing and nostalgia for everything they leave behind in their hometown. As a literary work, novel is a part of human life because basically, literature contains stories about humans, everything related to humans and their environment (Manugeran, et al, 2020). Usually, the author makes ambition as one of the themes in a novel to make the story more interesting. *The Notebook* written by Nicholas Sparks also describes the ambitions of protagonist by the name of Noah Calhoun.

The Notebook, a romantic novel penned by Nicholas Sparks in 1996, introduces readers to the captivating world of Noah Calhoun and Allie Nelson. Born on December 31, 1965, Nicholas Charles Sparks is an esteemed American novelist and screenwriter,

currently residing in North Carolina. His profound passion for literature blossomed in his youth, reading over a hundred books annually by the age of 15, drawing inspiration from renowned authors and their storytelling techniques. *The Notebook* marked Sparks' debut novel, completed in a remarkable six months when he was 28 years old. His narratives, steeped in romanticism, have garnered worldwide acclaim, with all of his novels becoming New York Times Best Sellers and translated into over 50 languages. To date, Sparks' literary works have amassed an astonishing 105 million copies in sales.

The novel revolves around the love story of Noah Calhoun, a modest man, and Allie Nelson. Their journey begins with a chance encounter at a carnival in Seabrook Island, South Carolina, where Noah falls deeply in love with Allie. However, their blossoming romance faces opposition from Allie's disapproving parents, who insist on their immediate separation. Despite the challenges, Noah persists in his devotion, eventually fulfilling his promise to restore their dream home, which serves as a poignant symbol of their love. As years pass, Noah faithfully writes to Allie, unaware that his letters remain unread, concealed by Allie's mother.

The analysis of ambition within the novel stems from the inherent human desire for achievement and fulfillment. Ambition, when pursued with noble intentions, propels individuals towards meaningful goals, embodying a moral lesson in perseverance and altruism.

2. Literature Review

Literary works contain beauty, sense of pleasure, emotion and other feelings to serve the meaning of life (Siregar & Pardi, 2022). Everyone must have ambition. Some people keep working hard to achieve their ambition. Ambition can become positive and negative. It is positive when reaching out a goal or dream without hurting others and negative when taken in a wrong way. Ambition, in some cases, provides skills developments, and self-competencies and at the same time rewards people with honor, money, wealth, power, and fame.

Bridge (2010: 04) states that ambition is the desire to make the most of one's potential to achieve something special, which would make a profound difference to one's life and to those of others, whether that is through success, achievement or distinction. It means that, everyone must have a desire to be achieved, the desire to be better in a certain field, for example in a career or studies. This desire can be realized through success or achievement. Success makes a person proud and complacent.

Kurtus (2007) defines that ambition provides inspirations, responsibility and discipline. By having ambition, people do not easily give up. It inspires them to find ways to attain their goal. They become critical and analytical. Ambition also encourages them to dare to take risk for that. It shapes them to be responsible.

Ambition is a desire or passion that is passionate to get what one wants, such as the desire of someone to achieve something great (Moputi & Husain, 2018: 7). According to Murray in Mupoti & Husain (2018: 7), ambition needs are related to the need for achievement and recognition. The need for achievement is often expressed by overcoming obstacles. The need for recognition is met by gaining social status and displaying achievements. Sometimes the ambition needs even involve a need for exhibition or the desire to shock and thrill other people.

Ambition is motivational formation and represents aspiration of a person to be a significant and a recognized personality (Barsukova, Mozgovaya & Krishchenko 2015). In other words, ambition is a desire of a person to improve the status, position in

society, glory and power. Ambition is the force which makes a person move ahead and reach any heights on a promotional and social ladder.

Arvidson & Lyon & Moro (2010) says that there are two types of ambition, extrinsic and intrinsic. Ambition can take the form of extrinsic ambition; goals and desires that are focused on external rewards. For example, a musician who is motivated by extrinsic rewards such as awards, charts, money, and the lure of recognition/fame. Their work is driven by these desires and their success is determined by whether or not they achieve them.

Intrinsic ambition is driven by the desire to obtain something; it is a force from within one's self. Such ambition does not rely on anything outside of the person concerned; in other words such ambition becomes more or less an inborn talent.

3. Research Method

In writing a study, a research method is one of the most important elements that must be resolved (Marini & Pardi, 2022). This study uses qualitative descriptive approach based on Sugiyono's (2009). As stated by Moleong in Siregar, Nasution & Pardi (2022), qualitative method is as a research strategy to produce descriptive data and the research results are in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior. Applying the approach, the researchers focus on the description of every phenomenon existing during the research (Pratiwy, et al, 2023). The approach is used to describe the protagonist's ambition in love found in Nicholas Sparks' novel *The Notebook* as the source of data. Taking note method and quoting methods (Sugiyono, 2009; Sutopo, 2005) are used to select the relevant data to the research problems by selecting information without depending on the the number of information (Pardi & Ardescy, 2022). The data collection techniques is done by comprehending the whole novel and other sources to support the analysis such as books, articles and other related ones (Suhadi, et al, 2023). To validitate the data, triangulation method is used. Data are analyzed using the techniques proposed by Creswell (2013). Data reduction is conducted after all the data collection process to make the data is well-organized based on the types of ambition. After categorizing the data, data interpretation is conducted to answer the research problem.

4. Discussion

According to Harvey (2010: 12) ambition is the instinctual motivation to aspire to things, to make something happen, to have an impact, to count for something in life. Not only in reality but also in a novel, a story of human life exists (Septian & Pardi, 2022). Life is not only full of beautiful things and happy moments but also difficulties (Surbakti & Pardi, 2023). Ambition is an effort and strong determination by person to realize his wishes. When we want something in life, we must do and accept a consequence to get that (Mulia & Pardi, 2020). Ambition can trigger a person's persistence to achieve his desires in any way. Intrinsic as well as extrinsic ambition gives us a drive to keep working, even after a failure.

4.1 Sending Letters to Allie

Sending letters to Allie is one way of the protagonist in his ambition to get love in Nicholas Sparks' novel *The Notebook*. This is shown when Allie leaves him but Allie does not reply to any of the letters because Allie's mother has hidden all the letters from Noah so that the letters do not reach Allie's hands.

“Only the summer is over, Allie, not us,” he’d said the morning she left. “We’ll never be over.” But they were. For a reason he didn’t fully understand, the letters he wrote went unanswered.
(Sparks, 1996: 23)

The quotations above illustrate that Noah reassures Allie about his feelings. Noah remains true to Allie even when he does not know if he will ever even see her again. It also shows how strong his ambition is in love because no matter what happens he keeps sending her letters as he does believe that one time his letter will have a response from her. Allie’s parents disapprove of their relationship and force Allie to move with her family to New York. Noah says to Allie that they will never be over. Since then they have been separated. There is no news nor explanation from Allie about their relationship. Allie considers they are already broken up and lives her life well. Noah has no other choice. He tries to write a letter to Allie even though it is never answered. Noah does not care about that and still keeps waiting for Allie. Noah still hopes that Allie will come back to him one day.

He continued to think about Allie, especially at night.

He wrote her once a month but never received a reply. Eventually he wrote a final letter and forced himself to accept the fact that the summer they’d spent with one another was the only thing they’d ever share. Still, though, she stayed with him. Three years after the last letter, he went to Winston-Salem in the hope of finding her.
(Sparks, 1996: 23).

The data above show that Noah is always thinking about Allie. He never changes. Noah’s feelings to Allie make him think about life, imagination, and his dream. Noah never gives up on his ambition. He keeps writing letters to Allie hoping she knows that he always looks for her. Noah writes letters to Allie for approximately three years. All of the letters Noah writes to Allie show his feeling toward her. He convinces Allie about his real feeling and wants Allie to come back to him. Noah writes the last letter. He hopes he will meet Allie again. He goes to Winston Salem to meet Allie, his first love. The data above clearly show that Noah’s ambition is to get his love for Allie. Noah’s way of channeling his ambition is through the letters he sends to Allie over and over without ever giving up. How Noah sends some letters to Allie can also be seen through the quotations below.

Noah smiled softly at her answer but said nothing.

“I’ve thought about you ever since that summer,” she said.

“You have?”

“Why wouldn’t you think so?” She seemed genuinely surprised.

“You never answered my letters.”

“You wrote?”

“Dozens of letters. I wrote you for two years without receiving a single reply.”

She slowly shook her head before lowering her eyes.

“I didn’t know...,” she finally said, quietly, and he knew it must have been her mother, checking the mail, removing the letters without her knowledge. It was what he had always suspected, and he watched as Allie came to the same realization.

“It was wrong of her to do that, Noah, and I’m sorry she did. But try to understand. Once I left, she probably thought it would be easier for me to just let it go. She never understood how much you meant to me, and to be honest, I don’t even know if she ever loved my father the way I loved you. In her mind, she was just trying to protect my feelings, and she probably thought the best way to do that was to hide the letters you sent.”

“That wasn’t her decision to make,” he said quietly. “I know.”
(Sparks, 1996: 41)

The quotations above describe the meeting of Noah and Allie after years of not seeing each other. He never stops admiring Allie. The feeling of love for Allie that can never change makes him keep trying to always be close to Allie. Everything that Noah feels is written in a letter that he sends for Allie. Noah asks why Allie is not answering the letters, but Allie does not know anything about the letters. Then they find out that the letters that Noah write and send are always hidden by her mother. Allie is very disappointed with what her mother has done. Allie tries to give Noah an understanding that her mother's behavior is just to protect her feelings. Finally, the misunderstanding between the two of them is resolved. From the explanations above, it can be concluded that ambition is not always bad. On the good side, by maintaining his ambition and patience, Noah and Allie can finally meet again. How Noah sends some letters to Allie can also be seen in the data below.

When the thunder finally sounded, Noah sighed and turned from her, toward the windows.

“I wish you could have read the letters I wrote you,” he said.
She didn’t speak for a long while.
(Sparks, 1996: 72)

The data above show that when Allie visits Noah for the first time after their separation Noah cannot control his passion for Allie. He wishes that Allie could read the letters he has written to her when Allie leaves him.

His desire to love Allie grows again in his heart. He has deeply fallen in love again to Allie. Noah remains trapped in his feelings in the summertime. It is hard for Noah to stand against his own feeling; he feeling that he keeps for almost ten years to one person only. All of the letters Noah writes to Allie show his feeling towards her. He convinces Allie about his real feeling and wants Allie to come back to him.

4.2 Building Their Dream Home

Champy and Nitin (2008: 233) state ambition is power stuff, capable of propelling a fast rise or a calamitous fall, and those propelled by it are wise to examine their ends as thoroughly as they make use of their means. It means that someone who has the ambition will be increasingly compelled to achieve the goal. An ambition will take a person to develop their plans to be larger.

When Allie is spending the summer in New Bern, Noah takes Allie to a house and promises her to fix it up.

“They spent hours together talking about their dreams--his of seeing the world. Later in the summer he brought her to this house, looked

past the decay, and told her that one day he was going to own it and fix it up.”
(Sparks, 1996: 17).

The quotations above show that Noah has the ambition to achieve his goals. Noah takes Allie to a place, an old house built on the edge of a lake. That house is the place where Noah and Allie spend most of their summer together. He calls it their dream home. Noah loves her so much and promises to build a dream house for the both of them to live in. Noah is also indicated as a person who has great ambition and believes that he will reach his goals.

“I still can't believe it's you. How did you find me?”

She stepped back, trying to compose herself, wiping away the last of her tears.

“I saw the story on the house in the Raleigh paper a couple of weeks ago, and I had to come see you again.”

Noah smiled broadly. “I'm glad you did.”

He stepped back just a bit. “God, you look fantastic. You're even prettier now than you were then.”

She felt the blood in her face. Just like fourteen years ago.

“Thank you. You look great, too.” And he did, no doubt about it. The years had treated him well.

(Sparks 1996: 30).

The data above show the achievements made by Noah due to his ambition. It can be seen that Noah works hard in realizing his dream for a beautiful future house with his love. What Noah has promised before to Allie about their dream house finally comes true. This is a normal ambition as everyone wishes to love and to be loved. To love someone is the absolute right of a person and Noah realizes this. The next quotations still concerning their dream house could be seen below.

“Did you do it yourself?”

He laughed under his breath. “No. I always thought I would when I was young, and I started that way. But it was just too much. It would have taken years, and so I ended up hiring some people.., actually a lot of people. But even with them, it was still a lot of work, and most of the time I didn't stop until past midnight.”

She stopped a few feet from him and leaned against the counter, one leg over the other. She shook her head, amazed at how much he had done.

“It's unbelievable, Noah. How long did the restoration take?” He looked up from the last bag he was unpacking. “Almost a year.”
(Sparks, 1996: 38)

From the evidence above, it shows that Noah is a hard-working man. He manages to build their dream home and reunites with Allie, his first love. It takes about one year to finish the mansion. Allie is very surprised to see the house, it is luxurious. Allie could not stop looking at the view of the house and she even cannot believe that her lover has succeeded in building their dream house.

4.3 Recovering Allie's memory

At the end of their story, it is shown that Allie has got Alzheimer, a progressive disease that destroys memory and other important mental functions. This disease is classified as a very serious disease, even difficult to cure because it attacks the work of the brain system to remember something. The disease has knocked out Allie's memory. Noah continues to tell their love story, in the hope that Allie can remember the sweet times they both have. Recovering Allie's memories can be seen through the following data.

“So once again , just as I do every Day, I begin to read the notebook aloud, so that she can hear it, in the hope that the miracle that has come to dominate my life will once again prevail. And maybe, just maybe, it will.”
(Sparks, 1996: 13)

The data above show that Noah goes to Allie because he wants to tell her a story from the book he has brought with him. At first Allie does not want to hear it, but on input from the nurse, she agrees to hear it. Noah tells that this is the story of Noah, Allie, and Fin. However, Allie does not remember and she is just trying to listen. Noah's persistence and patience in restoring Allie's memories are seen here; he reads out all the memories they have done when they are young. With the full series, Noah keeps trying and believes that Allie will get better soon. He hopes, someone who has enjoyed, strength, and passion in his life will soon remember their beautiful memories. Noah never gives up accompanying Allie to live her life. He always takes care of Allie, and never leaves her alone. He never stops reading the notebook for Allie that contains their love stories. His love never dies and always grows everlasting in his soul and heart. Recovering Allie's memories can also be seen from the quotations below.

I have read to her this morning, as I do every morning, because it is something I must do. Not for duty--although I suppose a case could be made for this but for another, more romantic, reason. I wish I could explain it more fully right now, but it's still early, and talking about romance isn't really possible before lunch anymore, at least not for me. (Sparks, 1996: 90)

The quotations above depict Noah's unwavering dedication to preserving memories, as he faithfully revisits different verses each day to aid Allie's condition. Allie's affliction transcends simplicity, presenting as a grave and unpredictable illness that erases her recollections, including those of their shared love story. With the passage of time, Allie's memory steadily deteriorates, yet Noah remains resolute. Motivated by the belief that frequent reminders of their past can spark memory restoration in Alzheimer's patients, he pens *The Notebook* to immortalize their romance. Completing the book, he persists in visiting the nursing home daily, recounting their tale in hopes of reviving Allie's lost memories, his conviction unwavering.

But this is where the similarity ends. This is why Allie is considered a miracle, because sometimes, just sometimes, after I read to her, her condition isn't so bad. There is no explanation for this. “It's impossible,” the doctors say. “She must not have Alzheimer's.” But she does. On most days and every morning there can be no doubt. On this there is agreement “But why, then, is her condition different?

Why does she sometimes change after I read? I tell the doctors the reason--I know it in my heart, but I am not believed.”
(Sparks, 1996: 106)

Noah has his own ways to make Allie recover her memories. Noah and the doctor distrust Allie's condition. Noah tells the doctor that he is sure that Allie could be recovered, though the doctor seems to be pessimistic. Noah reads the story of their love journey to Allie every day and at the very beginning, Allie does not recognize him. Noah never gives up, he also believes in the power of love. He deeply loves Allie with all the consequences. He is unable to get another woman. His heart has already been tied strongly to Allie.

5. Conclusion

Through an analysis of the protagonist's pursuit of love in Nicholas Sparks' *The Notebook*, three key avenues to achieving ambition emerge: sending letters to Allie, building their dream home, and restoring Allie's memory. The protagonist communicates with Allie through letters during their physical separation, displaying a desire to maintain their connection. Additionally, he demonstrates his commitment to their shared future by presenting a house in need of repair, symbolizing their dreams together. Lastly, as Allie faces memory loss in old age, the protagonist tirelessly endeavors to help her remember their shared history. Despite facing obstacles such as Allie's parents' disapproval, the protagonist persists in his efforts. His perseverance ultimately leads to success, as he not only rekindles their love but also witnesses Allie's memory restoration. This journey underscores the protagonist's unwavering determination and the enduring power of love, triumphing over adversity.

References

- Arvidson, M., Lyon, F., McKay, S. & Moro, D. (2010). *The Ambitions and Challenges of SROI (Social Return On Investment)*. Briefing Paper 49. University of Southampton University of Birmingham. Social Research. <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/tsrc/working-papers/briefing-paper-49.pdf>.
- Barsukova, O. V., N, Mozgovaya, N. & Krishchenko, P. E. (2015). The students' representations of ambition, personal space and trust. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 6(6). p.1-9. Doi: <http://www.doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n6s1p290>.
- Bridge, R. (2010). *Ambition: Why It's Good to Want More and How to Get It*. New York: Capstone.
- Champy, J. & Nitin, N. (2008). *The Arc of Ambition: Defining the Paths of Achievement*. New York: Basic Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*. California: SAGE Publications. Inc.
- Harvey, D. (2010). *Rescuing Ambition*. Illinois: Crossway
- Kurtus, R. (2007). *Ambition is the Drive for Success*. Retrieved from <http://www.school-for-champions.Com/character/ambition.htm>.
- Manugeran, M, Suhadi, J & Pardi, P. (2020). Literature as a medium of exposing social problem through thomas grays elegy written in a country churchyard. *Journal of Language and Literature*. 20(2). 150-158.

- Marini, F. & Pardi. (2022). Moral values in justin zackham's movie script the bucket list. *Journal of Language*, 4(1), 119-129.
- Moputi, R. & Husain, D. (2018). An ambition analysis represented by the main character in perfume: the story of a murderer. *British: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris*. Vol 7, No.1. p.1-13.
- Mulia, T. R. & Pardi, P. (2020). Woman's strength in eka kurniawan's novel beauty is a wound. *Journal of Language*, 2(1), 52-67. <https://doi.org/10.30743/jol.v2i1.2491>
- Nasution, I, Pardi, P, Manugeran, M, Hidayati, H, Pratiwy, D & Wulan, S. (2023). *Minangkabaunese Tradition of Out-Migration (Merantau) in Indonesia: Hamka's Novels on Reality*. *World Journal of English Language*, Vol. 13, No. 6. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n6p119>
- Pardi & Ardescy, Y. N. (2022). Protagonist's loyalty in sidney sheldon's novel tell me your dreams. *Journal of Language*, 4(2), 298-303. <https://doi.org/10.30743/jol.v4i2.5992>.
- Pratiwy, D., Swastiwi, A.W., Manugeran, M., Pardi & Asnani. (2023). Ideology in marine ritual discourse of acehnese speech community. *Jurnal Arbitrer*, 10(4). <https://arbitrer.fib.unand.ac.id/index.php/arbitrer/article/view/407/235>
- Roy, S. (2011). *The Psychology of Ambition*. <http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Psychology-of-Ambition&id=1393654>.
- Septian, D. & Pardi. (2022). Kinds of friendship in james dashner's novel the death cure. *Journal of Language*, 4 (1), 142-147
- Siregar, R. A., Nasution, I & Pardi. (2022). Utilization of hand puppets from used socks and let's read application as learning media to improve students' story - telling skills. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(4), 6071-6080 <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i4.2488>
- Siregar, R. A., Nasution, I. & Pardi, P. (2022). Local Wisdom of The Parsidangan Stone Legend at Huta Siallagan Samosir: A Literary Tourism Perspective. *Language Literacy: Journal of Language, Literature and Language Teaching*, 6(1), 177-188. <https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v6i1.5249>
- Sparks, N. (1996). *The Notebook*. New York: Hachette Book Group, Inc.
- Sugiyono. (2009). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Suhadi, M. F., Pardi, Manugeran, M., Zein, T. T. & Pratiwy, D. (2023). Existential feminism in andrea hirata's novel pandang bulan and cinta di dalam gelas. *Eralingua: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Asing dan Sastra*, 7(2).
- Surbakti, L. Z. J. & Pardi. (2023). Struggle in dave pelzer's novel the lost boy. *Journal of Language*, 5 (1), 185-191.
- Sutopo, H. B. (2005). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Surakarta: Sebelas Maret.