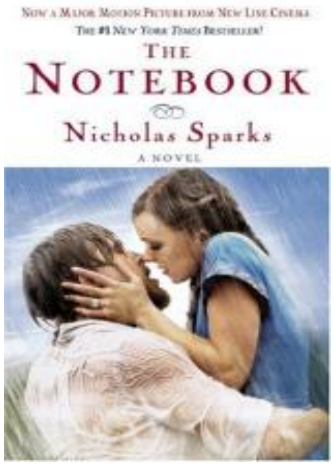
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The Notebook

by Nicholas Sparks



About the Book

The Notebook is an achingly tender story about the enduring power of love, a story of miracles that will stay with you forever. Set amid the austere beauty of coastal North Carolina in 1946, **The Notebook** begins with the story of Noah Calhoun, a rural Southerner returned home from World War II. Noah, thirty-one, is restoring a plantation home to its former glory, and he is haunted by images of the beautiful girl he met fourteen years earlier, a girl he loved like no other. Unable to find her, yet unwilling to forget the summer they spent together, Noah is content to live with only memories. . . until she unexpectedly returns to his town to see him once again.

Allie Nelson, twenty-nine, is now engaged to another man, but realizes that the original passion she felt for Noah has not dimmed with the passage of time. Still, the obstacles that once ended their previous relationship remain, and the gulf between their worlds is too vast to ignore. With her impending marriage only weeks away, Allie is forced to confront her hopes and dreams for the future, a future that only she can shape.

Like a puzzle within a puzzle, the story of Noah and Allie is just beginning. As it unfolds, their tale miraculously becomes something different, with much higher stakes. The result is a deeply moving portrait of love itself, the tender moments, and fundamental changes that affect us all. Shining with a beauty that is rarely found in current literature, **The Notebook** establishes Nicholas Sparks as a classic storyteller with a unique insight into the only emotion that really matters.

Discussion Guide

1. At one point in the novel Gus says to Noah, "My daddy used to tell me 'the first time you fall in love it changes your life forever, and no matter how hard you try, the feelin' never goes away. This girl you been tellin' me about was your first love. And no matter what you do, she'll stay with you forever." Do you think this is true? Can you remember your first love?

2. The restored house Noah lives in plays an integral role in the novel. In fact, an article about the restoration is what draws Allie back to New Bern. What do you think the house represents? What does this say about the importance of place? Does Noah restore anything else in the novel?

3. When Allie decides to come down to see Noah "one last time," do you think she wanted to see him just to say good-bye, or was she secretly hoping to fall in love with him again? Was it right for Allie, who had already agreed to marry Lon, to make this visit? Would your answer be different if she were already married?

4. When asked by her mother, Allie claims to be in love with both Noah and Lon. Do you think this is true? While it is possible to love more than one person equally, is it possible to be in love with two people at the same time?

5. Allie's mother regrets having hid Noah's letters to Allie for so many years. Why does Allie's mother change her mind, especially when Allie's wedding is less than three weeks away? Can you understand Allie's mother's motivation for hiding the letters in the first place? As a parent, wasn't she responsible for watching out for her daughter?

6. Were you at all surprised when it is revealed that Allie had decided to marry Noah, or was there never any question in your mind?

7. Noah and Allie's love for each other at the end of the novel seems as pure and as powerful as it was in the beginning. Is it possible for the intensity of first love to last that long? Is it unrealistic to expect it to?

8. Although he's not in the best shape himself, Noah goes to Allie's bedside and reads "The Notebook" to her every day. As a result, Allie is in much better shape than the other Alzheimer's patients. Do you think this is plausible? Is her stable health a result of her hearing the story of her life every day, or are greater forces at work? What does Noah's devotion suggest about marriage? About the nature of love itself?

9. The letters Noah and Allie write to each other, the poems they share, "The Notebook" Noah reads to Allie every day are all integral parts of this novel. And during World War II, a book of poetry actually saves Noah's life. What does this suggest about the power of the written word? Why is this power such an important part of **The Notebook**?

10. The Notebook has been a best-seller not only in America, but also around the world. Why do you think this is? What is it about the book that speaks to such a broad range of people?

Author Bio

Nicholas Sparks is the author of 23 books, all of which have been *New York Times* bestsellers. His books have been published across more than 50 languages with over 150 million copies sold worldwide, and 11 have been adapted into films. He is also the founder of the Nicholas Sparks Foundation, a nonprofit committed to improving cultural and

international understanding through global education experiences. He lives in North Carolina.

Critical Praise

"A more romantic testament to love's enduring miracle than Robert James Waller's **The Bridges of Madison County**."

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