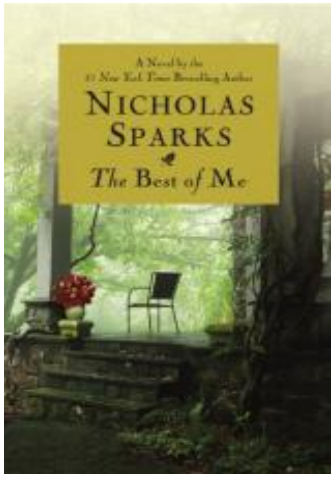
# The Best of Me

by Nicholas Sparks




## About the Book

In the spring of 1984, high school students Amanda Collier and Dawson Cole fell deeply, irrevocably in love. Though they were from opposite sides of the tracks, their love for one another seemed to defy the realities of life in the small town of Oriental, North Carolina. But as the summer of their senior year came to a close, unforeseen events would tear the young couple apart, setting them on radically divergent paths.

Now, 25 years later, Amanda and Dawson are summoned back to Oriental for the funeral of Tuck Hostetler, the mentor who once gave shelter to their high school romance. Neither has lived the life they imagined...and neither can forget the passionate first love that forever changed their lives. As Amanda and Dawson carry out the instructions Tuck left behind for them, they realize that everything they thought they knew --- about Tuck, about themselves, and about the dreams they held dear --- was not as it seemed. Forced to confront painful memories, the two former lovers will discover undeniable truths about the choices they have made. And in the course of a single, searing weekend, they will ask of the living, and the dead: *Can love truly rewrite the past?*

## Discussion Guide

**1.)** Though he was raised in Oriental, North Carolina, Dawson never felt he belonged there. Why not? Have you ever felt like an outsider or a misfit?

**2.)** Tuck is more of a parent to Dawson than his own father. What needs do Dawson and Tuck fulfill for one another?

**3.)** Growing up, Dawson tried to blend in with his family, going so far as to fail classes on purpose. Have you ever sabotaged yourself for the sake of others? Why does Dawson provoke such a strong reaction from his family?

**4.)** When Amanda?s parents threaten not to pay for college, Dawson decides it would be best if they broke up, saying,

?If you love someone, you?re supposed to let them go? (19). Do you agree with him? What would you have done in Dawson?s position?

**5.)** As Amanda learns more about Tuck and Clara?s quiet life together, she concludes that they lived ?in the middle ground, where contentment and love were found in the smallest details of people?s lives? (31). In your opinion, is this kind of life enough, or do people need excitement and passion to be happy? Where do you find contentment in life?

**6.)** Why does Dawson plead guilty in the trial regarding Dr. Bonner?s accident? Do you think his decision makes sense?

**7.)** Why is Amanda angry when she learns that Dawson hasn?t dated anyone in the past 24 years? How would you feel if an ex wasn?t able to move on after your breakup?

**8.)** Though they?ve been apart for more than 20 years, Dawson and Amanda?s feelings for each other are as strong as ever. Why has their love endured over the years? In your experience, is love eternal, or does it grow weaker with time and distance?

**9.)** Why does Dawson have the Bonners followed? Do you think he goes too far?

**10.)** Amanda admits to Dawson that she went to Tuck?s place to be alone after her father died. Why does Tuck?s home hold so much significance for Amanda? Are there any places you feel a strong emotional attachment to?

**11.)** Compare Abee and ted?s motivations throughout the novel. Why is it so important to Ted that he teach Dawson a lesson?

**12.)** Why did Tuck plot to get Dawson and Amanda back together? Why did he wait until he died to do so?

**13.)** In his letter to Dawson, Tuck says that memories are funny thing because, ?sometimes they?re real, but other times they change into what we want them to be? (192). Have you ever realized you were remembering the past differently than it actually happened? Do you think Amanda?s marital problems affected her memories of Dawson?

**14.)** Throughout the novel, Dawson repeatedly makes sacrifices for others. Do you think that he sacrifices too much? In what situations is it fair to put yourself before others?

**15.)** What do you think Amanda learns from her reunion with Dawson? How do you understand her choice at the end of the novel? What would you have done if you were in her shoes?

## 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.

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