

# THE STUDY OF JOHN'S HEROISM IN NICHOLAS SPARKS' DEAR JOHN

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**ABSTRACT:** This thesis discusses the types of John's heroism reflected in Nicholas Sparks' *Dear John*. The objective of the study is to describe the types of heroism reflected in John's character. This study has a limitation which only deals with the analysis of heroism reflected to John as the main character in the story. The qualitative research is applied in this study. The analysis uses the sociological approach as it belongs to an extrinsic approach. To perform the present study, the writer applies some theories of heroism that has several types of heroism. They are theory of civil heroism, social heroism, and military heroism. From the analysis, it can be concluded that John does act those three types of heroism which are civil heroism, social heroism, and military heroism that he takes willingly to help for the sake of others. He risks his life to face the danger to help the others, also he will face the danger, injury, pain or even death for his own country. Furthermore, he sacrifices his feeling or even money to help people around him.

**Keywords: sociological approach, heroism, types of heroism**

## INTRODUCTION

Lately, heroism becomes an absorbing topic in the society's discussion. Because heroism may happen anytime, anywhere, in any situation, and is done by anyone. People may become a hero for various reasons and factors. Social factor is one of the most win over factors in dragging someone to be such a hero. For instance, John as the main character in *Dear John* being a hero because of the social factors surround him like family, love, environment, politic, etc. If there are no social

influence surround John, he will not be able to do some heroic act.

The word hero comes from Greek origin and Greek mythology. It refers to those who are favored by the gods or has godlike qualities. According to Baumard & Boyer, 2013 (in Kafashan et al, 2016: 37) heroism is an extreme form of prosociality, a category of behavior that involves benefiting another. By means of definition, typical prosociality involves the actor delivering average or expected levels of benefits to other.

Kafashan et al, 2016: 37 stated that heroes as those who incur sacrifice such as risk of injury or death, or significant sacrifices such as money, time, or other forms of personal loss to deliver greater than expected benefits to others. Among many actors who engage in behaviors of a given sacrifice, heroes are those who deliver lot of benefits to others. Those sacrifices are incurred by the hero without certainty or negotiated expectation of payback/future reward. Zimbardo, 2007b (in Franco et al, 2011: 100) divides that heroism has three types. They are civil heroism, social heroism, and military heroism.

Franco et al, 2011: 100-101 explain that civil heroism and military heroism are known as act with physical peril. Their action are usually dramatic, occur rapidly, and are quite free from controversy. Physical risk heroism usually involves some probability of pain, serious injury and moreover death. It is contrast with social heroism.

In social heroism, it does not deal with physical peril but more deal in personal sacrifice in other dimensions of life, including social banishment, financial consequences, long term health problem, and loss of social status. In

general, social heroism is less dramatic, unfold over a much longer time period and recurrently take on in private rather than in public settings.

The phenomena of heroism can be found in one of the most popular novel who had written by Nicholas Sparks. The novel's tittle is Dear John. In *Dear John*, John as the main character, was described as a caharacter who liked to sacrifice his life for his country and other people.

In one event, John tried to help to save a person's property that fell into the sea without thinking first that it would endager his life from being attacted by wild fish there. In another event, it was told that John was moved by the situation due to the 9/11 attack in New York. He was motivated to protect his country from further terrorist attacks.

For this, he sacrificed his personal life including his relationship with a girl since the girl did not want him go again as he had promised before and he reenlisted the army and was charged to go to a war in other countries to run after the terrorists. John has done those 3 types of heroism honestly and straightforward without hope for a payback/reward.

Dealing with the background that has been mentioned above, the writer would like to analyze three types of heroism that has done by John in Nicholas Sparks's *Dear John*.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses descriptive qualitative method which means the researcher makes an interpretation of the data and the data are reported in words rather than numbers (Creswell, 2003: 199). While the sociological approach is applied in this study as it belongs to extrinsic approach which is focuses in the relationship between literature and society.

## **RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The finding shows that John does all those three types of heroism — civil heroism, social heroism and military heroism without hope any payback or reward. He sacrifices willingly for the sake of others and his country.

In civil heroism, eventhough John is a soldier, he also a part of a society when he receives the break that his commander offers him and go back to his hometown. He is concerned about the

environmental conditions around. He helps everything as long as he could. Even he is willingly to sacrifice for the sake of others despite the pain, injury, and death. Like John does in this story. He helps people who are in suffer as long as he could.

Whoever he is, if someone who needs a help one he must gives a help, so John does it as quoted “. . . I hit the water, went under, and popped to the surface. Four faces stared down at me from the railing. Pink shirt was definitely annoyed. “Where is it?” I shouted up at them. “Right over there!” the brunette shouted. “I think I can still see it. It’s going down. . . .” (Sparks, 2006: 11).

As if candle give on light, it willingly to burn up for enlighten the dark. A hero should not be those who fight in the action field. Hero is not necessarily those who buys up the medals in a multinational sport event. It is enough to have a dedication and high concern against the fellow can be a hero too.

Even though the object that falls into the sea does not belong to John and John does not know who the owner of the object, John still helps and saves it, as stated “It wasn’t any of my business, I

knew. But all I could think as I leapt to my feet and rushed toward the edge of the pier was, Oh, what the hell. . . .” (Sparks, 2006: 11).

Without any second thinking, John is eager to jump into the water to find that bag. John does not care about the danger that he will get. Like one friend of the owner’s bag says that maybe there will be a shark in the sea, as stated “Don’t be dumb. It’s gone,” pink shirt declared, putting his hand on hers to stop her. “It’s too dangerous to jump. There might be sharks down there. It’s just a purse. I’ll buy you a new one.” (Sparks, 2006: 11). For John, helping others is the most important thing above his salvation. John only knows that he gives priority for safety of others.

John is really aware that his life might be end up right at that moment when he decides to take his action. He willingly putting his own life on danger for the sake of others who John barely knows.

Although John knows that saving it means he will face with physical risk, injury, pain, even death, he still saves anything that he thinks should be helped. He is neither a famous hero nor a superhero as well as in fiction. He is just

an ordinary man who is able to change other people's live became remarkable by caring about others before himself.

It is a natural calling if the owner of the bag and her friends feel guilty because of John is sacrificing his life to save her bag. However John does nothing because that is the duty of human being to help one another.

The owner of the bag and her friends want to reward John for their gratitude about John's heroic action that saved her bag a while ago “Hey, maybe he wants a reward,” pink shirt broke in, his voice loud. She glanced at him, then back at me. “Do you want a reward?” “No.” I waved a hand. “Just glad to help.” “I always knew chivalry wasn’t dead,” she proclaimed. (Sparks, 2006: 12).

However, John refuses it. He does not want to take anything for granted. He helps her sincerely and does not hope for a payback. Helping the others who are in suffer is a must for every human being. No matter whoever we are, if there is someone who need helps, we must help them certainly eventhough it might be faced a danger.

Not only John does help others with a physical peril, but John also helps others by giving up his feeling and his wealth for the sake of others, not to mention his lover. It is called social heroism. John has made a decision that he will regret for the rest of his life, but John always accepts it patiently and steadfastly. In the story, John has a lover named Savannah Lyn Curtiss who was the owner of the bag that fell on the sea that John rescued in the subchapter of civil heroism.

Due to John's assigning in Germany, their relationship is tied by a long distance relationship. This condition forces them to send letter to each other. It is the only way to make them keep in touch. As the time passes by, letters from Savannah are not delivered routinely like it usually was. God's creation of no one can predict His destiny as well as human being.

John and Savannah are convinced they will marry and will live happily ever after, but the things written in God's destiny do not always meet expectations. John is only created to keep and make Savannah happy, through the last letter of Savannah "You're a hero and a gentleman, you're kind and honest, but

more than that, you're the first man I ever truly loved. And no matter what the future brings, you always will be, and I know that my life is better for it. I'm so sorry." (Sparks, 2006: 84)

Savannah's heart is attracted to the man who had been comforting her for as long as John is not around. Eventually Savannah begins to fall in love with that man and Savannah can not stand the uncertainty of time from John. John can do nothing and let her do whatever she what deserves.

Eventhough John cannot have Savannah again and has let her married with other man, John still help her willingly. Tim, Savannah's husband suffers from melanoma — a skin cancer. Tim will get his suffers going away if he gets a better hospital that have intensive care and extra hozpitalization. Because John knows that Savannah does not have enough many to move Tim to better hospital, so John helps Savannah's finance secretly. He takes the responsibility of Tim's surgical treatment's cost.

John calls coin dealer that he knows to sell his father's favorite coins ""Yes," I said to the coin dealer, "actually there is. I want to sell my dad's

coin collection, and I need the money as quickly as you can get it to me.”” (Sparks, 2006: 119).

John sells all his father's collection coins so that he could help Savannah who is in position that needs a lot of money for Tim's treatment cost. John wishes that his father in the peaceful other world does not angry with what John has done because John does his best to help others.

John's lawyer does about what John asked to. John asks him to deposit it in the account that has been set up for Tim's treatment and to keep say nothing to anyone in town “It was important not to let Savannah know what I'd done. In any marriage, there's room for only two people.” (Sparks, 2006: 119). John is happy to know that Tim's treatment has been successful than even the doctor hopes and that now Tim is technically in remission.

John feels happy knowing that Tim has fight his cancer patiently. That is John's desire all this time, he wants to see them both happy. John wants her to be happy. His effort is not vain “I'd come because I needed to know that I'd made the right choice in selling the coins for Tim's treatment, that I'd done the right

thing in never contacting her again, and from where I sat, I knew that I had.” (Sparks, 2006: 119).

John's feeling about Savannah will never change and he cannot believe that theirs does not go on forever. But, no matter how painful the choices that John faces, he puts other's happiness on the first place than himself. That is what true love really means and helping others sincerely is a must.

Military heroism can be assume that it will make some meaning for some heroic act that takes place in real combat to protect beloved country, against the enemies, save the citizen, and so on. Nevertheless, not only is it in real combat, but it is also in real danger situations / places. Not all people can do some act like that. It is special people who enlist to this profession. It has been their duties that will face pain, injury, even death to willingly help for the sake of others and defend their country, like the main character did in this story that is John Tyree. John is US Army, it is his duty to sacrifice for the sake of others and his country.

The 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 or known as the 9/11 attacks has been known well in people all around the

world at that time. The attacks that had been caused nearly 3,000 people loss their life ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the\\_september\\_11th\\_terrorist\\_attacks](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_september_11th_terrorist_attacks)), 19 hijackers take control of four commercial passenger jets flying out of airports on the east coast of the United States.

It is the United States' direct involvement in the Middle East region in deployment of large-scale armed forces occurred since October 2001, after the 9/11 attacks. The United States begin a campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan that point toward for overthrowing Taliban power that accused of protecting Osama bin Laden, the Al-Qaeda's leader. United States thinks that he is the power of behind the scene of 9/11 attacks.

Then their next vision is to Iraq. The invasion of Iraq is deemed to be an extension of the war on terror to overthrowing Saddam Hussein from Iraq because he is also considered to be involved behind the scenario of tragedy in 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 (9/11) along with Osama bin Laden. United States point out that Al-Qaeda and Saddam work together in 9/11 attacks. Annihilation toward the terrorist still continue.

Whenever, John must always be ready for all his military commander's command. Make properly plan constructed to defend and provide the best for his country.

Learn the strategy of war is the important thing before going to war, for example to learn how the topography of the area so that we prettily know how the area is look like so the strategy of war appropriate with what we have planned.

The war is begin, the Iraqi army for the most part is nowhere to be seen, which only increase the tension to John. Here and there, John willingly fight as hard as possible to fighting against the enemies "Soldier were tense. I didnt sleep for three days." (Sparks, 2006: 81). As long as John in the battlefield, he is not sleep cause he must always stay up so that everything still keep in safe around him and not letting the enemies win over.

The Iraqi war or known as Operation Iraqi Freedom code has its purpose to disarm Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, make Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism to get

end, and make Iraqis set free “Deeper in Iraq, skirmishes began to break out, and it was then I learned the first law associated with Operation Iraqi Freedom: Civilians and enemies often looked exactly alike. Shots would ring out, we’d attack, and there were times we weren’t even sure who we were shooting at.” (Sparks, 2006: 81)

United States declare that they are fighting in Iraq to liberate their country and the world from a brutal dictator which can be a threat for regional peace, stability and democracy. In real combat, indeed civilians and enemies are even look alike. Sometimes enemies is undercover become civilians so that the soldier do not recognise them. Like John does, he does not know who he is shooting at and does not where the bullet will touch up. He just knows what his duty and defend himself to stay live.

Bombs, missiles, and mortars like becomes his toy everyday when he still in the battlefield. He willingly still defend his country even face pain, injury, even the death. For the purpose of United States army should make Iraqis free, John make sure he and his squad move from house to house to help clear the area from the enemy.

The situation where the battlefield take place is not surprised with the scattered not alive body, everything getting burn and damage, and smoke in everywhere. Both of stronghold push and pull fighting against each other, John and his squad try his best to save the citizens.

U.S. forces operate in the air, on land, and on the sea area. The land area is the most complex of the other area because it addresses humanity; its cultures, ethnicities, religions, and politics. The situation in the war zone always intense, bombs everywhere, the sound is so loud that John could not hear himself screaming, but John keep make a gesture with his finger to give the direction to his squad to move from the floor to the wall to the ceiling.

Chips of plaster, brick, and wood are flying as the interior is decimated “When we finally stopped firing, I was sure that no one could have survived, but I threw another grenade into an opening that led to the crawl space just to make sure, and we braced outside for the explosion.” (Sparks, 2006: 81)

Besides the soldier know with their patriotic through the country, they also respect their friendship and help each other when they do war. John wraps



Tony's hand to give the strength and they will always be beside each other. John tries to make sure if his squad is fine even though they are not probably because they feel collapse. Then, John gives the direction to go back to their barrack.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the result of the data, social factor is one of the most powerful factors in dragging John to do act such a hero. He is risk taker that willingly to help for the sake of others and for his own country even so he will face danger, pain, injury, death, time, money, moreover loss. He has done act of three kinds of heroism, they are civil heroism, social heroism, and military heroism.

John is a soldier, but he also a part of a society and being a civilian if he receives the break that his commander offers him and go back to his hometown. He does kind of help that called civil heroism. John jumps into the water eagerly when he sees one of the college student's bag fall into the sea.

He does not care about the danger that he will get and what he will face like pain, injury moreover death. Because in the sea, maybe there will be a shark that

will come so suddenly. Nevertheless, he does not know who the owner of the bag is, he willingly help them and swim deep into the water so that he can get that bag. John feels glad when he knows the owner of the bag is satisfied that she gets the bag back. John refuses the pay back when the owner wants to give him a reward cause John thinks that human being must help each other.

John does not only help others with physical affairs, but John also help others by giving up his feeling and his wealth for the sake of others that called social heroism. Even though he knows that Savannah married to another man, John still keeps build friend relationship between them. And John also willingly gives much money from the will from his father to Tim, Savannah's husband.

He asks his lawyer to deposit it under the account of Tim's name to help his surgical treatment's cost cause Tim is hospitalized because of his melanoma, a skin cancer. John asks his lawyer not to tell anyone in the town especially to Savannah. He wants to see them both happy, John wants her to be happy cause she deserves it. Selling his father's will that is his collection coins for Tim's treatment, and say good bye to Savannah

and never contact her again are John's best choice that he did.

John is a member of the US Army. It is his duty to sacrifice for the sake of his country. It is called military heroism. He defends his country from terrorism in all cost. It begins with 9/11 attacks that United States responds that the attack caused by terrorists. United States send John and his squad to Middle East to campaign against the terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq to overthrowing Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein as the scenario behind 9/11 attacks.

The situation in the war zone is always intense, he does not know who he is shooting at, cause enemies and civilian are even look alike. He only knows what his duty and defends himself to stay alive. John takes the risk for his life to execute his duty. Even John knows it may cause his life face the pain, injury, even death. He still keeps doing his best to protect his country.

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