

Allison's Book Corner April 2020

The Longest Ride by Nicholas Sparks
(Grand Central Publishing, 2013)

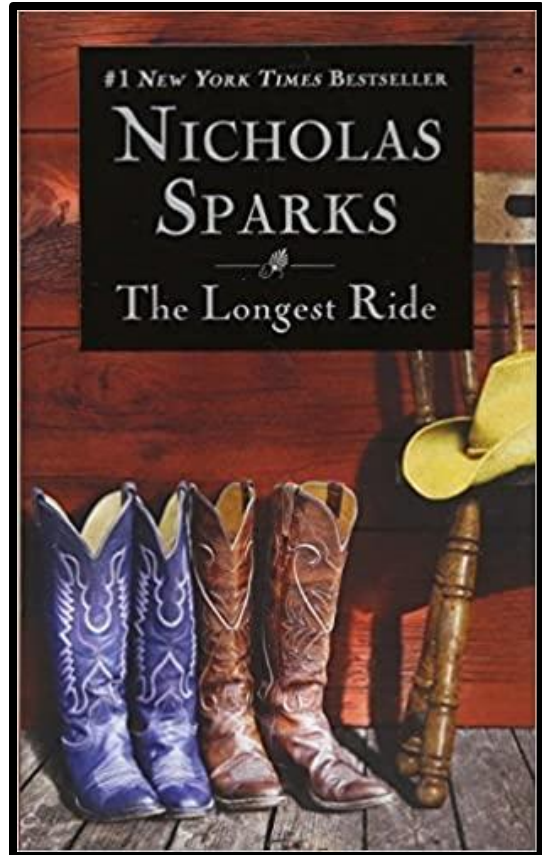
The Longest Ride Motion Picture
(20th Century Fox, 2015)

This is not the review I originally planned to write before our world went crazy. But now more than ever, many of us need comfort from what we are reading. A book that will bring us some peace or we need to re-read something we have read before. Here I am giving you a two-for-one deal. A book and a movie while you are stuck in the house.

This is one of the few times that I will urge readers to also see the movie that is based upon the book. Both are wonderful and you will enjoy them in either order. I actually accidentally saw the movie first and without that experience, I never would have downloaded the book to my phone.

This is a warning: please do not read any further if you are not a fan of Sparks's novel *The Notebook* or the famous movie based on it. They are both classics, in my opinion. I am not alone in this thinking - and finally Nicholas Sparks has given us another book equal to the excellence of *The Notebook*.

The Longest Ride has been a bit overlooked. Make no mistake - it was a bestseller and the movie did well at the box office. However, it is not talked about as much as *The Notebook*, and I am here to tell you that it should be. If you have already read this book and saw the movie a few years ago, I urge you to read it and watch it again. I promise you will learn something different now.



Here we have two couples at different periods of time in our history. Nicholas Sparks takes us from World War II in North Carolina to present day. It is also very appealing that Sparks includes the culture of New York and New Jersey as well. We are comforted in this novel by places that may be familiar, but we are also intrigued to learn something new. Professional bull riding is not something I have ever given great consideration. Remember the mechanical bull craze during the '80s with John Travolta? Yes, that was the last time I thought about it, too.

Sparks brings it back with the character Luke on the bull riding circuit. Apparently, there are men all around the United States training for this circuit. They want a chance to ride or to kill themselves trying. Luke is no exception. Bull riding is his life.

It is the unique way Sparks brings the couple Ira and Ruth from the past and the current young couple Luke and Sophia together that makes this novel so special. The entwining of these two stories is extremely well written and very believable.

Most surprisingly, the movie is just as good as the book; a rarity, as many of you know. The book gives us more detail, but the film is very special and does not lose the true heart of the novel. Besides all of the main characters being easy on the eyes, they are also very good actors. The legendary Alan Alda as older Ira is perfect casting. And once again we have the familiar. I could easily relate to Sophia the college student on campus. If I could return to that time in my life, believe me, I would. Sweet Ira and Ruth. I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood and I knew many young men named Ira. My point is that there is something here every reader can relate to. Most of all, we can all relate to wanting to be loved and accepted for who we are. Someone recently told me that we all need something to do, something to love, and something to look forward to in this life.

Sparks succeeds in taking us on "The Longest Ride" not with a mushy sappy, story, but with a REALISTIC one. And this reality is a place we all want to visit right now. It's a beautiful reality that is virus-free.

