



The Empathy Of Consummate Love In Devon Daniels' *Meet You In The Middle*

Salsabila Nova Calista¹, Falsyawal Galang Smarandreetha², Laila Nabilatuzzahro Ibrahim³, Rommel Utungga Pasopati^{4*}

^{1 2 3 4} English Literature Program, University of Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia

¹salsabila.novacalista@gmail.com, ²falsyaa1124@gmail.com, ³lailanabilah113@gmail.com, ^{4*}rommel@unitomo.ac.id

Info Artikel

Enter:

March 05, 2024

Accepted:

March 08, 2024

Published:

March 15, 2024

Keywords:

Consummate Love,
Devon Daniels,
Empathy, Meet You in
the Middle

Abstract

This article examines how the novel *Meet You in the Middle* by Devon Daniels portrays the reason for consummate love that causes a long term relationship, which consists of component love of intimacy, passion, and commitment in Triangular Theory of Love by Sternberg. Then, the reason is rooted in interpretation of empathy. Empathy is a physiological reaction that has three components, they are emotional, cognitive, and motivational. It helps people to understand, feel, and care about others, even if it is sometimes hard. The novel tells the story of Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie, who are liberal and conservative Senate staffers, respectively, and who fall in love despite their ideological differences and professional rivalry. The article analyzes how the novel depicts the challenges and benefits of empathizing with a romantic partner who has opposing political views, and how empathy contributes to the development and maintenance of consummate love. Then, it concludes that the novel offers a hopeful and realistic message that consummate love can bridge the political divide, as long as the partners are willing to empathize with each other and respect their differences.

INTRODUCTION

Literature indeed is a powerful tool to evoke empathy and self-reflection in readers, which may in turn foster more loving and compassionate relationships. Empathy is the ability to sense and understand other people's emotions, feelings, and perspectives (Brandt, 2020; Sarmi, et al., 2024). It is often described as putting themselves in someone else's shoes, or feeling what they are feeling. It gives them a way to respond in a way that makes them feel validated and supported. This helps to build trust and strengthen the emotional connection between partners (Brandt, 2020; Wirnoto, et al., 2023). Having this connection is important for keeping a relationship healthy and happy.

Then, for Consummate Love, according to Robert J. Sternberg, consummate love is the ideal type of love that consists of intimacy, passion and commitment (Myers, 2023; Sarmi, et al., 2024). Since empathy has the meaning of having the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person, empathy can be seen as a component of intimacy, which involves emotional closeness and connectedness (Myers, 2023; Wirnoto, et al., 2023). Therefore, empathy can contribute to consummate love by enhancing the intimacy between partners to make the relationship have a long term.

The novel *Meet You in the Middle* by Devon Daniels, published on February 2, 2021, is a romantic comedy with political humor. It is available in print and Google Books formats. The researchers want to examine how the novel *Meet You in the Middle* by Devon Daniels illustrates the concepts of empathy in consummate love, as defined by Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, in the relationship between two political adversaries who become lovers. It shows how love will always endure no matter the obstacles that will come on the way to shape such consummate love (Pasopati, et al., 2022; Whissell, 2023).

Meet You in the Middle is a novel that tells the story of Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie, who are staff members of senators from opposite parties in Washington DC (Daniels, 2021). Through these main characters, Kate and Ben's relationship consists of a combination of components of intimacy, passion, and commitment. The combination of these components forms the consummate love that can be established by both partners. Not only that, love cannot survive just by relying on intimacy, passion, and commitment without any element of reason for the forming of consummate love. They have a hostile relationship, disagreeing on their political beliefs and personalities. Kate finds Ben arrogant and rude, while Ben finds Kate annoying and judgemental (Daniels, 2021; Das, 2023).

They both secretly find each other attractive, especially Kate secretly loves Ben's green eyes. Ben starts to write letters to Kate, expressing his views on various social issues, hoping to make her see things differently (Daniels, 2021). Kate writes back to him, and they start a letter exchange that slowly turns into a friendship. They find out they have more similarities than they expected, and they begin to flirt with each other. Kate is torn between her feelings for Ben, who is her competitor. Ben reveals his kind side to Kate, who is impressed by his depth. They both learn new things about each

other, and Kate has to face her biggest fear of falling in love with her enemy, Ben (Daniels, 2021; Das, 2023). While political sense used to mix between friends and enemies, what Ben and Kate feel is out of that situation. It is the purity of love that they want to reach (Pasopati, et al., 2022; Whissell, 2023).

The researchers choose this book and theory of their analysis because the writers find it interesting in how Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie have their different political views and backgrounds (Daniels, 2021; Das, 2023). They can also overcome their conflicts and find common ground through love and understanding by exploring the concept of empathy. It then works as a key component of consummate love to make the relationship in the ideal phase and having a long term.

Thus, the researchers analyze how the characters of Kate and Ben develop empathy for each other throughout the story line of this novel, and how this affects their relationship and their personal growth. Therefore, the researchers use examples from the novel by taking dialogues or even narrations from the characters, as to illustrate the benefits and challenges of being an empath in love, and how empaths can balance their own needs and boundaries with their partner's.

METHOD

This research is explored through a qualitative method that examines certain concepts and textual data. The researchers try to analyze how the novel *Meet You in the Middle* illustrates the empathy concept in consummate love of the main characters by focusing the research on the love situation of the relationship between Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie. The aim of this research is to find out the benefits behind the main characters using empathy in consummate love through their relationships which will lead to happy and healthy relationships. By taking a close reading of the entire novel and the dialogues between the main characters. It also provides quotations from the novel and the sources that support the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie's Closeness in *Meet You in the Middle*

Devon Daniels' novel tells mainly about the romantic relationship between Ben Mackenzie and Kate Adam. The relationship, though quite romantic, is based on the differences of political agendas between Republican and Democrat parties in America (Daniels, 2021; Das, 2023). Both of them come from different parties, but as stated in the title of the novel, they could greet each other in the middle by yielding their differences to get involved more in a prolonging relationship. The main idea within their relationship is the ways they accept each other. It indeed is a matter of empathy that they keep building towards various obstacles they may face in advance (Daniels, 2021; Das, 2023). The proof of their romantic yet conflicting relationship is stated in the quotations as follows.

Data 1

I have to admit – the whole thing is pretty entertaining. It's like we're back in high school, passing origami-folded notes during home-room. There's something deliciously old-school about his handwritten missives, even if their contents do make me question my commitment to nonviolent conflict resolution. I'd never admit it out loud, but I've actually started to look forward to his hate mail. Sometimes it's the only fun I have all day. (Chapter 4, Page 30)

Kate enjoys the exchange of letters they have every week. She gets a conservative opinion piece from a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed: *Why Liberals Will Bankrupt the Nation in Their Quest for a Socialist America*. She replies with a collection of tweets mocking the a collection of tweets mocking the Republican Speaker of the House for a picture Ben shared of the current class of House interns on Tuesday (Daniels, 2021). She received an article about *How Wearing Heels can Seriously Impair Workplace Performance* on Wednesday. Then, she responds with *Gigantism in Twenty-First-Century America: A Report* on Thursday (Daniels, 2021). The exchanging information between Ben and Kate brings in good intentions for them to know and even to understand each other better than before.

Data 2

It'll be my business when they're looking for someone to identify you at the morgue. (Chapter 5, Page 43)

Kate does not care about her own safety when she returns home from work at night by herself. Ben worries about her and feels that he should look after her. He gets emotional when he thinks about how Kate ignores the danger, in which he imagines the worst thing that could happen to her by him being busy to answer the people who asked him to identify Kate as the morgue (Daniels, 2021). Ben really cares about Kate, which is quite usual as a friend, but unusual as someone who is in love with the other partner. It is also unique how Ben cares for Kate. He does not say about taking her home

directly. However, by indicating a body in the morgue, Ben would like to say that the safety of Kate is the important thing for him in the sense of empathy.

Data 3

There's no game. I just take safety seriously. Especially when it comes to stubborn women who insist on ignoring the very real risks they're taking. (Chapter 6, Page 50)

Ben's actions, as described, suggest a genuine concern for Kate's well-being rather than a strategic game plan to harm her. He appears sincerely motivated to help Kate, in which demonstrated cognitive aspects in empathy by trying to understand her emotions and perspective (Daniels, 2021; Luis et al., 2023). Ben knows that Kate is quite stubborn. Instead of saying bad things about her, he warmly warns her by increasing his empathy towards Kate. Then, indeed, what Ben does touches Kate's heart. The risks that Kate takes are important, but Ben does not stop Kate. He wants Kate to be free without him constraining her all the time.

Data 4

How strange that I'm starting to recognize his habits. (Chapter 8, Page 70)

Kate observes Ben's familiar routines of adjusting his tie, a behavior she has become accustomed to see despite finding it peculiar. Meanwhile, Ben, visibly cold towards Marcus while conversing with Kate. Ben's action of adjusting his tie was when he did it on the time Marcus talks to Kate. His action reveals his jealousy towards their closeness (Daniels, 2021). When Kate starts to understand Ben's habits, she becomes more obsessed with Ben in a good way. She starts to understand that what Ben does really makes her happy. She knows that Ben likes her and she does too. Indeed, it starts from understanding, then empathy comes in, then Kate starts to love him. The love keeps growing as Kate always cultivates the relationship with empathies furthermore.

Data 5

He was awful, at first. But he apologized, and I accepted it. (Chapter 9, Page 76)

Tessa confronts Kate after seeing her with Ben, reminding her of Ben's past mistreatment towards her, even from their initial encounter. Despite acknowledging Ben's past behavior as unacceptable, Kate points out that Ben has since apologized for his actions, and she has chosen to forgive him (Daniels, 2021). Kate speaks of forgiveness in this sense. By stating so, she would like to give Ben a second chance. This is also a sense of empathy in which apology is not about such lip service but comes from the deep part of her heart.

Data 6

I really am sorry about your bill. I know how much it meant to you. (Chapter 10, Page 92)

Ben reaches out to Kate, expressing his worry and a desire to comprehend what she is experiencing. He becomes aware of the rejection of the bill that Kate and her team faced from the Republican side and he endeavors to grasp Kate's situation outside of her professional endeavors (Daniels, 2021). It is interesting how Ben from the opposing party gives empathy to Kate. What he means is more than saying sorry. He shows such care that Kate must not be really upset about that. The bill may fail, but their love flourishes more. It is nothing but caused by their understanding towards each other furthermore.

Data 7

You didn't fail. The bill failed. (Chapter 12, Page 115)

Ben attempts to comfort and offer emotional support to Kate during her difficult time, especially as she grapples with feelings of self-blame stemming from the issue of rejecting the bill (Daniels, 2021). Despite Kate's tendency to criticize herself, Ben encourages her not to disparage herself in such a manner. This sentence shows Ben's full support against Kate. The support is true as it is to show his good intention to always be on Kate's side. He will help her in any way, including support that reflects the matter of love in their relationship. Ben would like to say that the bill is only an object. The main important thing then is not the object, but the subject, that is Kate herself.

Data 8

I couldn't stand to be the one to put this look on your face. (Chapter 12, Page 116)

Ben demonstrates a strong sense of empathy towards Kate during her period of struggle, especially as she perceives herself as inadequate and blames herself. It is because Kate leaves by not heeding Ben's earlier advice regarding the rejected bill proposal (Daniels, 2021). The rejection may become such a failure for Kate. However, Ben comes as someone who will always say yes to anything Kate does. It means that Ben would like to make her happy and be there when she faces such sorrowful conditions including the bill's rejection. Ben also impliedly says that Kate must never hesitate to ask for his advice (Daniels, 2021; Das, 2023). Moreover, he will be more than happy when he is needed by Kate.

Data 9

Well, I'm sorry I made you feel worse. (Chapter 15, Page 143)

Kate once again expresses remorse to Ben for her actions that led to his anger, particularly after her drunken night (Daniels, 2021). She apologizes to Ben because she questions whether she made a mistake by doing something wrong that refers to sex while she was unconscious or not. Then, Ben feels offended by her question. Therefore, Kate apologizes to him as a sign of reciprocal empathy (Daniels, 2021). Saying sorry for both of them is not merely such an apology. Interestingly, it is a way for them to get closer to each other. It really works since they may have different perceptions, yet apology makes them understand what each other thinks about. By doing so, both Ben and Kate uplifts their level of relationship from merely physical contacts to psychological contacts in which empathy is a medium for them to move forward (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023).

Data 10

Sorry, I'm just trying to wrap my mind around it. You and your mom must have been such an adorable pair. I can't imagine how any man could walk away from that.

(Chapter 19, Page 183)

Ben extends supportive and meaningful emotions towards Kate and her mother. After Kate opened up with Ben by telling him the condition of their parents who had not been together since Kate was little, her father chose another woman besides Kate's mother. Therefore, she has been feeling too sensitive whenever any other people talk about her father (Daniels, 2021). Both Ben and Kate try to get to know each other. When they face something unnecessary, they will negotiate it together. It is shown how they cooperate with each other by not prioritizing one's interest (Daniels, 2021; Das, 2023). They struggle together to reach common goals, that are to enhance their willingness to always love each other.

Data 11

I can't pretend to understand what it must have been like for you, but I think it's pretty incredible you were able to forgive him enough to have a relationship at all.

(Chapter 19, Page 184)

Once again, Ben offers comfort to Kate when she responds with a mere nod and struggles to articulate her feelings, then he only manages to say, "it must be hard to watch him with his new family" (Daniels, 2021). Ben tries to comfort her due to Kate's condition about her father. He does not want Kate to think about it heavily. He wants to free Kate to always depend on him by himself. He would also like to fill a hole in Kate's heart shaped by the leaving of her father. This willingness is a good intention well accepted by Kate later (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023). By stating so, Ben would like to give everything to Kate, including being a father and a man for Kate.

Data 12

He springs from his chair and kneels beside me, pulling me into a hug. (Chapter 19, Page 186)

Ben's actions are driven by witnessing Kate's emotional distress, particularly as her face crumples and she begins to cry while recounting her "daddy issues" story. Ben tries to comfort Kate by doing so (Daniels, 2021). It is unique how they combine both physical and psychological contacts in their relationship. Somehow, physical contact is needed as a direct comfort to another party. Psychological aspects are done to create better situations for themselves. This is needed to show the essence of love that they struggle together (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023). The love is not static in their senses, but always growing alongside their understanding of each other.

Data 13

Ben, I'm so sorry. I can't even imagine what it must have been like for your sister. For your whole family. (Chapter 22, Page 225)

Ben tells the story of her sister who gets raped by another man makes him extremely sad to recall the memories he had been through in the past. He even tells Kate the situation back then of how the lack of evidence Ben's sister got after the incident was reported to the police. Therefore, it makes Ben be possessive to the people he loves when it has to deal with the safety they have to get (Daniels, 2021). Daniels not only shows a weakness or even trauma in Kate's side, but also in Ben's. By stating that, it is understood that the author would like to balance the suffering that both characters have. That condition is also used to show how both's strengths are needed to shape better love. They struggle for consummate love, not only because they have goodwill, but also because they have good intentions to always take care of each other as well.

Empathy as Psychological Support in a Relationship

Empathy is important for individuals, as it helps them to form and maintain relationships and to cope with living in large groups rather than alone (Cherry, 2023; Depow et al., 2021). Empathy has evolved over time and has been based on various concepts, such as (1) understanding what others think and feel, (2) mimicking the gestures or expressions of someone else, (3) imagining the other's emotions, (4) projecting or guessing the other's thoughts or feelings, (5) imagining the other's mental and emotional state, (6) imagining how one would feel and think if one were in the other's situation or (7) experiencing pain when seeing another person suffer (Brandt, 2020; Luis et al., 2023). The seven ideas are reflections of psychological conception from one's own self towards otherness.

The condition of empathy is now considered as a complex phenomenon that can be shown in many ways, such as a personal skill, a personality trait, a capability or competence, a reaction or response to the observation of another's experiences, and a social behavior (Brandt, 2020; Luis et al., 2023). Psychological reaction is a part of empathy that emerges from the need to recognize and comprehend the feelings of someone else in order to help them or have a positive relationship with them, such as through collaboration or socialization. However, this reaction can also lead to emotional distress.

Thus, empathy involves three components of emotional (sharing influence with others), cognitive (understanding the subjective state of others from their perspective, and motivational (caring about others) (Luis et al., 2023). Then, empathy becomes the most essential component for a love relationship, in which it means understanding the emotions of others and looking at the world from their perspective, not just saying sorry when they are hurt (Brant, 2020; Clarke, 2023). It is also well noted that empathy is always related to the depth of understanding in which such a reciprocal situation of love happens.

Couples who have empathy can talk better, solve problems faster, and create more trust and closeness (Brant, 2020). On the other hand, empathy is like a bridge that connects two people in a relationship. It allows them to go to their partner's side and see things from their perspective. Moreover, empathy means being able to understand and respect the needs and desires of one's partner, even if they are different from one's own (Brandt, 2020). It creates a safe and supportive environment where both partners feel listened to, appreciated, and connected. By emphasizing empathy, a relationship could also shape more common goals to be reached in the following future (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023).

It also helps them communicate effectively, resolve conflicts easily, and foster a strong bond of trust and intimacy (Brandt, 2020). Furthermore, empathy is the most important element of any loving relationship. It enables partners to build a healthy and happy relationship based on trust, intimacy, and mutual respect. This is the essence of empathy in relationships. It never emphasizes egotistical values, but pushes forward such altruistic deeds to understand the opposing partner.

Empathy and Consummate Love Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie

This section examines how the conversations between Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie in *Meet You in the Middle* reveal the factor that leads to consummate love and a lasting relationship. The factor is based on how they emphasize it through empathy. The aspect is explained further below:

In **Data 1**, the quote shows how empathy relates to motivational aspects (Luis et al., 2023). Motivation is the feeling of caring for others, which can come from inside or outside oneself. In this case, the motivation is mostly from outside, where Ben's action demonstrates his sympathy and kindness for Kate (Daniels, 2021; Messineo et al., 2021). Then, his action can inspire his empathetic actions, resulting in more work, perseverance, and happiness where he wants to ensure Kate's safety by sharing many articles about the dangers of people on the street when they were taking a late night to get home. Ben also indirectly influences the aims and hopes of protecting Kate from bad people, in the situation of returning home late without facing crimes on the street (Daniels, 2021; Messineo et al., 2021).

In **Data 2**, the quote in data 2 shows that Ben has a motivational aspect in empathy, where he shows his understanding and shares Kate's feelings. This is important for how people relate to and act with each other (Daniels, 2021; Messineo et al., 2021). It means that Ben tries to understand Kate's position by being careful of her condition while getting home late without the protective tools on her. Mutual understanding is also a sign of empathy used to uplift one's side regarding each other's understanding towards a certain condition.

Empathy helps people understand others' problems and feelings by imagining themselves in their place. This understanding can trigger different emotions, such as kindness, empathy and even a feeling of responsibility to help (Daniels, 2021; Messineo et al., 2021). In this case, Ben's behavior shows that he has extrinsic motivation in empathy that brings him to care about Kate, which makes him try harder to express his persistent concern for her safety when she returns home late.

In **Data 3**, the quote in data 3 shows cognitive aspects in empathy by trying to understand Kate's emotions and perspective (Luis et al., 2023; Sarmi, et al., 2024). Then, empathy involves comprehending and sharing the emotions of others, often leading to a desire to provide support and assistance (Cherry, 2023). In this scenario, Ben's behavior suggests an effort to understand Kate's feelings and viewpoint, driven by a genuine concern of her welfare (Daniels, 2021; Yugay, 2023).

The way he persuades Kate shows how he tries to make sure of her by being in her shoes of how it has to be dangerous if she keeps being stubborn not wanting to take his care for her (Daniels, 2021; Sarmi, et al., 2024). His action is totally a show of comprehending and sharing the emotions of his sincerity by saying his action does not provide any games that makes her lose.

In **Data 4**, the situation through data 4 illustrates cognitive empathy, or also known as empathic accuracy, which involves comprehending the thoughts and emotions of others (Clarke, 2023; Daniels, 2021). In this context, Kate's growing familiarity with Ben's habits allows her to better understand his preferences and daily actions, enhancing her ability to empathize with his feelings and experiences (Clarke, 2023; Daniels, 2021). The empathy shown by those two characters are never random, but intentional. By stating so, their intention is clear towards each other. It is about love they are implying in mutual actions.

In **Data 5**, The quote in data 5 discusses emotional aspects in empathy, or also known as affective empathy, which involves reacting appropriately to someone else's emotional state. It entails sharing an emotional experience with

another person and truly understanding their feelings (Clarke, 2023; Daniels, 2021). In this situation, Ben demonstrates empathy by recognizing his mistake, feeling remorseful, and taking steps to make amends by apologizing. Conversely, Kate shows empathy by comprehending Ben's regret, and subsequently, she accepts his apology, which can help repair and strengthen their relationship (Clarke, 2023; Daniels, 2021). Her action completely shows his comprehending to Ben that brings her emotional experience.

In **Data 6**, the quote in data 6 underscores a cognitive aspect in empathy, which denotes the ability to comprehend and share the emotions of others, often manifested through expressions of care and support (Luis et al., 2023; Cherry, 2023). The way he says he feels sorry for Kate's bill proves how he wants to share the same emotions as what Kate has felt for her bill and it proves how Ben truly cares and supports her. Not only that, the way he says he knows how much it means to her, he pretends to get on Kate's shoes, in which refers he understands Kate (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023).

In **Data 7**, the quote in data 7 highlights the emotional aspect in empathy, or known as affective empathy, which involves responding with an appropriate emotion to another person's emotional state. It involves sharing an emotional experience with someone else and truly understanding their feelings (Clarke, 2023; Wulandari, et al., 2023). In this situation, Ben demonstrates empathy by recognizing Kate's challenges, expressing care, and attempting to grasp her situation.

This understanding can evoke a range of emotional responses, including compassion, sympathy, and a feeling of responsibility to offer assistance (Clarke, 2023; Wirnoto, et al., 2023). These emotional responses play a crucial role in motivating individuals. In this context, Ben has displayed his compassion and sympathy towards Kate, as well as his determination to alleviate her distress by providing comfort and rejecting any negative thoughts she may have about herself. Therefore, any positive or negative aspect will never disturb any relationship if empathy is prioritized furthermore.

In **Data 8**, the quote in data 8 underscores the emotional aspect in empathy, also known as affective empathy, which involves reacting with an appropriate emotion to another person's mental state. It encompasses sharing an emotional experience with someone else and genuinely understanding their feelings. Within emotional empathy, individuals may also experience discomfort in response to another person's suffering (Clarke, 2023; Daniels, 2021). This discomfort reflects Ben's emotional response as he navigates Kate's situation. The emotion that Ben shows in the quote is the feeling that he cannot face the sadness that Kate has been through by him showing his empathy reaction on his face (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023).

In **Data 9**, the quote in data 9 highlights the cognitive aspect in empathy, also known as empathic accuracy, which involves comprehending the thoughts and emotions of others (Clarke, 2023; Daniels, 2021). It entails grasping another person's thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Wirnoto, et al., 2023; Yugay, 2023). This form of empathy is often characterized by the ability to adopt another's perspective or imagine oneself in their shoes.

Essentially, individuals can envision what it might be like to be in that person's situation, leading to a deeper understanding of their experience (Clarke, 2023; Wulandari, et al., 2023). In this scenario, Kate acknowledges the possibility that her actions may have caused harm or distress to Ben. By recognizing this impact and offering an apology, Kate demonstrates that she has reflected on her past perspective regarding Ben and understands the position she wrongfully placed him in. This is a part where empathy is not only about knowing, but also identifying that later will shape further deeds of deeper understanding (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023).

In **Data 10**, the quote in data 10 emphasizes the cognitive aspect in empathy, which involves grasping the mental and emotional state of another individual and comprehending their thoughts and feelings in a particular circumstance (Cherry, 2023; Wulandari, et al., 2023). Through the quote in data 10 is completely seen how Ben acknowledges Kate's history and has understood her thoughts and feelings. Therefore, Ben says if he does not imagine how Kate's father could walk away from Kate and her mother for another woman. As it forms, Ben tries to comfort Kate and her mother to not feel hurt. Through this expression, Ben demonstrates an understanding of Kate's emotions and her situation regarding following intentional empathy (Pasopati, et al., 2022; Whissell, 2023).

In **Data 11**, the quote in data 11 underscores the emotional aspect in empathy, also referred to as affective empathy, which involves sharing and participating in another person's emotions and experiences (Indeed.com, 2022; Sarmi, et al., 2024). In this situation, Ben's actions demonstrate an acknowledgment of his own feelings and an expression of admiration for Kate's capacity to forgive. Furthermore, Ben's response indicates his effort to actively engage in Kate's emotional experience. This reaction from Kate highlights the impact of Ben's empathetic approach (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023). It is also worth noting that empathy serves as a potent tool for fostering connection and understanding within relationships.

In **Data 12**, the quote in data 12 underscores the motivation aspect in empathy, which involves physically mirroring the emotions of another person (Cherry, 2023; Oktafiani, et al., 2023). In this situation, Ben finds it challenging to articulate his own feelings in response to Kate's experience. Instead, he chooses to demonstrate his understanding, sympathy, and respect for Kate's struggles by pulling her into his embrace. This physical gesture conveys Ben's empathy towards Kate's situation.

In **Data 13**, quoted in data 13 highlights the emotional empathy, which involves understanding the emotions of another person and responding appropriately. This emotional understanding can evoke feelings of concern for the other person's well-being or personal distress (Cherry, 2023; Fadiyah, et al., 2023). For instance, experiencing sadness upon witnessing someone else's sadness demonstrates emotional empathy. In this situation, Kate demonstrates her empathy by expressing concern and understanding towards Mackenzie's experiences. Her ability to empathize with what Ben went

through illustrates emotional empathy, as Kate acknowledges the pain and suffering that Ben endured all this time (Daniels, 2021; Ro'is & Wulandari, 2023).

Furthermore, when Kate and Ben are attached to each other, they experience the emotional aspect of influencing each other, the cognitive aspect of learning from their different views, and the motivational aspect of caring for each other by being empathy (Daniels, 2021; Wulandari, et al., 2023). Therefore, by portraying a realistic and humorous scenario of cross-party romance, the novel offers a hopeful message that love can overcome political opposition and division.

CONCLUSION

Meet You in the Middle by Devon Daniels is a novel that explores the challenges and rewards of falling in love with someone who has opposing political views. The main characters of this novel are Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie, who are liberal and conservative Senate staffers who engage in a heated rivalry that turns into a passionate romance. Moreover, this novel illustrates how empathy in consummate love can help bridge the gap between ideological differences and foster a deeper connection and understanding between Kate Adam and Ben Mackenzie. Kate and Ben can foresee their relationship by being aware and supportive of each other, nurturing and enhancing their connection, respecting and trusting each other. Those are matters of empathy between their relationship.

REFERENCES

- Brandt, A. (2020). *The Secret to a Happy Relationship Is Empathy*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindfulness/202003/the-secret-happy-relationship-is-empathy>
- Brant, A. (2020). *The Secret to a Happy Relationship Is Empathy*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindfulness/202003/the-secret-happy-relationship-is-empathy>
- Cherry, K. (2023). *What is Empathy*. Verywellmind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-empathy-2795562>
- Clarke, J. (2023). *Cognitive Empathy vs. Emotional Empathy*. Verywellmind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/cognitive-and-emotional-empathy-4582389>
- Daniels, D. (2021). *Meet You in the Middle*.
- Das, R. J. (2023). Love and Politics: Some Existing Views. In *Contradictions of Capitalist Society and Culture* (pp. 8-25). Brill.
- Depow, G. J., Francis, Z., & Inzlicht, M. (2021). The Experience of Empathy in Everyday Life. *Psychological Science*, 32(8), 1198–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797621995202>
- Fadiyah, L., Wulandari, L., Pujimahanani, C., & Pasopati, R. U. (2023). The Emprises of Gaia Hypothesis as Shown on the Film Maleficent. *Jurnal Multidisiplin Dehasen (MUDE)*, 2(2), 215-224.
- Indeed.com. (2022). *Cognitive vs. Emotional Empathy: Definition and 5 Key Differences*. Indeed. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/cognitive-vs-emotional-empathy>
- Luis, E. O., Martínez, M., Akrivou, K., Scalzo, G., Aoiz, M., & Orón Semper, J. V. (2023). The role of empathy in shared intentionality: Contributions from Inter-Processual Self theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14(March), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1079950>
- Messineo, L., Seta, L., & Allegra, M. (2021). *The relationship between empathy and altruistic motivations in nursing studies: a multi-method study*. BMC Nursing. <https://bmcnurs.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12912-021-00620-4>
- Myers, E. (2023). *Sternberg's Triangular Theory And The 8 Types Of Love*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/types-of-love-we-experience.html>
- Oktafiani, A. P., Ibrahim, L. N., & Pasopati, R. U. (2023). THE COMPLEXITIES OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS AS REFLECTED IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S THE KILLERS. *TANDA: Jurnal Kajian Budaya, Bahasa dan Sastra (e-ISSN: 2797-0477)*, 3(01), 29-41.
- Pasopati, R. U., Listyaningsih, L., & Wulandari, S. (2022). THE TRANSFORMATION OF DESPAIR TO HOPE AS ASSERTED ON RYUNOSUKE AKUTAGAWA'S SHIRO. *Jurnal Ilmiah Bina Bahasa*, 15(1), 1-14.
- Ro'is, S., & Wulandari, R. S. (2023). Sternberg's Triangular Love Theory Within Romeo and Juliet. *SALIEN: English Language, Literature, and Education*, 3(1).
- Sarmi, N. N., Rahmansyah, M. I., Ramadhani, A. N. H., Zahra, S., & Pasopati, R. U. (2024). The Representations of Self-Love in Justin Bieber's Love Yourself. *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature*, 3(3), 252-262.
- Whissell, C. (2023). Emotion and Romantic Love. In *Engaging with Emotion* (pp. 231-246). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Wirnoto, Y. A. A., Surensa, K., Wijaya, S. M., Sarmi, N. N., & Pasopati, R. U. (2023). Succorance in Promotion of Psychological Well-Being. In *Proceedings of International Seminar Enrichment of Career by Knowledge of Language and Literature* (Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 210-224).
- Wulandari, L., Fadiyah, L., Budianto, S., & Pasopati, R. (2023). The Semiotic Analysis Meaning Of Love In Last Night On Earth BY Green Day. *Jurnal Adijaya Multidisiplin*, 1(01), 248-255.
- Yugay, I. (2023). *Why Cognitive Empathy Is Your Secret Weapon for Stronger Bonds*. Mindvalley. <https://blog.mindvalley.com/cognitive-empathy/>.