

**MAIN CHARACTER'S EFFORTS TO SURVIVE
IN RACHAEL LIPPINCOTT'S NOVEL *FIVE FEET APART***

A THESIS

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APPENDIXES

Biography of the Author

Rachael Lippincott is the No. 1 New York Times bestselling author of her debut novel *Five Feet Apart*, published on November 20th, 2018, which became a major motion picture directed by Justin Baldoni on March 15, 2019. She was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania on December 5th, 1994. Lippincott, originally attending the University of Pittsburgh for pre-med, changed her major to English Writing, where she took a class called Writing Youth Literature taught by novelist Siobhan Vivian, which changed everything for her. She currently resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she spends her time writing and running a food truck with her partner. She is currently working on her second novel, *All This Time*, set to release on October 6th, 2020.

Summary of the Novel

Five Feet Apart documents the two weeks over which Stella Grant and Will Newman, both cystic fibrosis patients at Saint Grace's Hospital, fall in love amid a physical separation that does not allow them to touch. A regular patient at Saint Grace's since age six, Stella sees the hospital as a second home filled with childhood memories. Will, a new addition to Saint Grace's, has experienced life in hospitals around the world under the controlling nature of his wealthy single mother. A rule-follower, Stella attempts to maintain a rigorous medical routine intended to ensure her survival in the aftermath of her older sister Abby's sudden death. A rule-breaker, Will impatiently awaits his 18th birthday as a beacon of uncharted independence free from the tyranny of monotonous hospital life.

The novel begins with Stella, a popular YouTuber who chronicles her life with cystic fibrosis, readmitted to Saint Grace's for decreasing lung function as she struggles to balance life between her newly divorced parents. She asserts that her parents would collapse under their grief if she died. To ensure her survival, Stella relies on a strict regimen complete with an app she has created for chronic illness patients. On her way to visit her childhood friend Poe, also a cystic fibrosis patient, Stella encounters an unfamiliar patient whose disregard of the hospital rules disgusts her.

The new patient, Will Newman, spots Stella watching him and, out of boredom and attraction, follows her. Stella and Will instantly clash over Stella's disgust with Will's disobedience and Will's mocking of Stella's rigidity. After being chided by the respiratory therapist Barb, who is a close friend of Stella's, for straying from the third floor, Will returns to his room and reflects on his impatience for his upcoming birthday, when he will finally be free from his mother's control, as she constantly moves him to various international hospitals searching for the newest treatment to cure him. Suffering from B. cepacia, a bacterial infection of the lungs, Will has lost his place on the lung transplant list and longs for the freedom to die peacefully outside a hospital. An artist, Will imagines the scene in his head. Curious about Stella, he discovers her YouTube page.

Barb warns Stella about Will's B. cepacia and the deadly consequences of infection. Stella notices a bit of redness on her stomach but ignores it and reconnects with her friend Poe. Meanwhile, Will consumes all of Stella's YouTube videos and, after hearing about the poor results from the clinical trial he is enrolled in, argues with his mother over his desire for independence. Frustrated, Will escapes to the roof. From her bedroom, Stella observes Will about to fall from the roof and rushes

to save him. She discovers Will safe on the roof and, after becoming aggravated at his flippant threats to jump, leaves the roof and sets off the alarm. Will flees before being discovered while an unnerved Stella struggles to stop thinking about Will's refusal to cooperate with his medical treatments.

The next day Stella confronts Will about his rejection of treatment and, eventually, strikes a deal with Will that she will pose for a drawing if Will completes his treatments. Will reluctantly agrees and, upon returning to his room, strikes up a conversation with Poe, who shares how close he and Stella are, which makes Will jealous. Poe clarifies that he is gay, and Will opens up about his B. cepacia infection, which has spread quickly. The next morning Stella enters Will's room carefully and sets up his organizational system to ensure he will complete his treatments. Stella adamantly denies any romantic attraction to Will. After discovering that Will is not following his treatments as faithfully as she would like, Stella demands that they complete their treatments together. As they begin completing their treatments together over video chat, Stella and Will grow closer.

Later, during their workout together, Stella poses for Will's drawing to fulfill her side of their deal. The next day Will presents Stella with the drawing, which features Stella as an angry cartoon doctor. As Stella thanks Will for the drawing, he remarks on a drawing behind her that was drawn by her sister Abby. Stella shuts down the conversation, much to Will's confusion. After investigating Stella's YouTube videos, Will realizes that Abby has not been featured in Stella's videos for over a year. At the gym the next morning, he asks Stella what happened to Abby, and Stella confesses that Abby is dead before abruptly leaving.

Back in her room, Stella contends with the guilt she feels over Abby's death because she could not attend the trip to Arizona at the last minute. Abby died on this

trip while cliff jumping. Stella recalls her failed attempts to keep her parents together after Abby's death and her own grief over losing Abby's comforting presence in her own life. She reaches out to Poe, who calms her. Stella soon finds that her stomach has become infected; Dr. Hamid says she has to have surgery early the next morning.

Distraught over his fight with Stella, Will speaks with Poe in the chapel, where Poe confesses his own struggles as the child of a deportee living on his own. Later that night Will visits Stella, who informs him of her surgery. Seeing Stella's anxiety, Will concocts a plan. Before Stella's surgery, Will surprises and comforts her with both Abby's drawing and the sisters' favorite song. As Will leaves the operation room, Will overhears Barb yelling at Stella's parents for their inability to set aside their differences for Stella. Spotting Will, Barb disciplines him for risking Stella's life. Barb shares the story of a couple just like Stella and Will who died after infecting one another with *B. cepacia*.

Stella wakes up from surgery and attempts to thank Will for his support. After Will does not return her calls or show up to a meeting she arranges between the two of them, Stella learns about Barb's lecture to Will from Poe. Stella goes to Will's room to confront him, but he refuses to change his mind for fear that he will kill her. Poe agrees with Barb and Will, leading to a fight between him and Stella. They reconcile the next day.

Will receives an envelope from Stella under his door and a link to Stella's latest YouTube video. In the video Stella challenges the medically mandated six feet of distance she and Will must maintain at all times; in Stella's version, she changes the mandate to five feet of distance in an act of defiance against the rules that keep them separate. They arrange to meet later that evening.

On their first date that night, the night before Will's birthday, Stella and Will maintain five feet distance and divulge personal truths, ranging from Will's father abandoning him to their views of the afterlife. The date ends hours later, after they receive a notice from Poe that Barb is searching for them. They narrowly escape Barb's notice. On his birthday, Will fights with his mother, whom he accuses of not knowing him. His mother storms off. He instantly regrets his accusations upon seeing his mother's thoughtful gift of an original cartoon print he adores. He realizes he has misconceived his mother's care for him as control. Both Stella and his friend Jason say they cannot see him on his birthday, making Will sad.

Later that afternoon Will discovers a scavenger hunt created by Stella that leads him to a surprise party Stella planned with their friends. The party is eventually broken up by an angry Barb, who escorts them back to their rooms and threatens Will with a transfer to another hospital. Just as Stella is about to fall asleep later that night, she hears alarms from Poe's room and discovers that he has stopped breathing. Poe is pronounced dead shortly after. Will attempts to comfort Stella, but she pushes him away. She later escapes to the roof and observes Will leaving the hospital.

Upset over Stella's rejection of him and Barb's threats to transfer him, Will waits in the lobby for his Uber when he encounters Stella through the hospital's glass doors. She beckons him outside and convinces Will to follow her to a park two miles away. Will reluctantly agrees, and they take multiple breaks on their trek to the park. As they skate around a frozen pond, Stella reads one of the many messages coming to her phone. She sees that the messages are Barb informing her of a lung transplant in the next three hours. Without informing Will, Stella decides to forego the lung transplant in favor of spending any time she can with him. Will soon receives the same messages on his phone from his mother and attempts to convince Stella to

agree to the transplant. As they passionately discuss Stella's transplant, Stella falls into the frozen pond and begins to drown.

Stella struggles to breathe and, feeling a hand rescuing her, reunites with her sister Abby from the afterlife. Stella observes Will trying to resuscitate her as Abby begs Stella to choose life. Will collapses from exhaustion. Stella wakes up in the hospital, calls out for Will, and informs her parents that she does not want the lung transplant. She expresses her desire to be with Will and knows that she and Will cannot be together if she has the transplant. Will begs Stella to accept the transplant and asks her to think about what she will gain from it. Stella finally agrees after thinking about Abby's final request for her to live.

Stella tests negative for B. cepacia, a fear after Will administered CPR to her. Meanwhile, Will draws out scenes from their memories together in the waiting room and plans a surprise for Stella. This surprise will be his final goodbye. Stella wakes from recovery and is presented with a sketchbook of Will's drawings. He says goodbye to her from the window and asks her to close his eyes as he walks away forever.

Eight months later, as Will and Stella wait separately for their respective planes to Brazil and Italy, Stella approaches Will. She is healthier and does not carry an oxygen tank with her, while Will looks weaker. Without speaking, Stella moves one foot closer to Will, making the distance between them only five feet apart.

Characters in the Novel

Stella Grant

A high school senior living with cystic fibrosis and one of the protagonists of the novel. Diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at the age of six, Stella is extremely rules-oriented and strict about her regimen to keep herself healthy to qualify for a lung transplant. While realistic and sardonic about her illness, Stella is willing to do whatever it takes to stay alive for as long as possible, especially since her parents divorced after the death of her sister Abby. Stella knows how to code and built an app to set custom reminders for people living with chronic illnesses. Despite her initial dislike of Will and the dangers of being physically near him, Stella falls in love with Will.

Will Newman

A teenager living with cystic fibrosis and one of the protagonists of the novel. Will has a fatal complication called B. cepacia and has been receiving experimental treatments all over the world for the past eight months in spite of his objections. Will believes that since his death is inevitable, he should not spend what time he has left cooped up in a hospital. Will has dreams to travel the world and is a cartoonist.

Poe

A teenager living with cystic fibrosis and Stella's best friend. Poe and Stella met in the hospital as children and have supported each other ever since. Because Poe's parents were deported to Colombia, Poe is a ward of the state until he turns eighteen. Poe has dreams of being a chef and enjoys skateboarding and soccer.

Barb

A nurse who works on the floor where Stella, Will, and Poe are staying. Barb is extremely protective of Stella and very strict about the rules of the hospital and therefore the greatest foil to Stella and Will's relationship.

Julie

A nurse on the floor where Stella, Will, and Poe are staying. Julie is younger than Barb and is pregnant with her first child.

Stella's parents

Divorced at the beginning of the novel after losing Stella's sister Abby. Stella views her parents as very fragile and doesn't want them to worry about her. They eventually realize they need to support Stella and get back together.

Dr. Hamid

The doctor of Stella, Will, and Poe. Dr. Hamid pronounces Poe's death and later performs Stella's lung transplant. Dr. Hamid does not oversee her patients' daily behaviors as closely as Barb.

Camila

A friend of Stella's from school. Camila visits Stella in the hospital before the senior trip to Cabo. She attends Will's birthday party and helps Will plan his goodbye to Stella. Camila travels with Stella to Rome at the end of the novel.

Mya

A friend of Stella's from school. Mya visits Stella in the hospital before the senior trip to Cabo. Along with Camila, she attends Will's birthday party and helps Will plan his goodbye to Stella. Mya travels with Camila and Stella to Rome at the end of the novel.

