

## Less Than Zero *by* Rh Value Publishing



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Clay, a freshman at an Eastern college, returns home to Los Angeles for Christmas break, but feels totally disconnected and aimless there, and discovers a seamy world of drugs and prostitution



## Reviews of the *Less Than Zero* *by* Rh Value Publishing

MARK BEN FORD

Though it is true I first read *Less Than Zero* in graduate school at Eastern Illinois University, and dominated conversation to trash the novel, I've read it thrice since, and each time found new things to appreciate and enjoy. In grad school I was appalled by the novel's comparison to J.D. Salinger's *Catcher In The Rye*. Though fiction, I was put off by and could not connect with the behavior of the narrator and characters. Clay and Friends were simply high society brats with easy access to gross amounts of money, liquor and drugs. And the book contains many unsettling scenes, especially for those mostly familiar with classic and conventional literature. A few years ago I read Ellis' short story collection, *The Informers*, a collection he created before *Less Than Zero*, and that honestly helped me understand his voice, themes, and much more. As ugly as *Less Than Zero* gets, the beauty of our narrator, Clay, is that he genuinely feels indifferent to the people and world around him. Clay

is more satirical journalist than extreme '80s party animal. He satirizes the times, his parents, his sisters, and even his friends. And Clay is not heartless; he loves his childhood friend, Julian, and attempts to rescue him from what is best described as male prostitution due to drug addiction. Side notes: I love the italicized vignettes that take us back in time. These vignettes really help us understand and sympathize with Clay. I also adore, and one will find this in all of Ellis' work, unbelievably hefty paragraphs, sentences that never seem to end. Overall, I regret being so critical of *Less Than Zero* years ago. (Of course, in English grad school one reads three or more novels a week. So our reactions are hasty, often forced.) Like the best fiction, classic or contemporary, *Less Than Zero* becomes much, much more upon each visit.

Xlisiahal

If I hadn't read Ellis' work, *American Psycho*, I would have said this is a good first try for a budding writer. Though, seeing the similarities between the two novels -- and there are a fair number -- I'm beginning to wonder if Ellis has very much to say. Granted, the protagonists are sharply different. One's a homicidal maniac; the other is an emotionally distraught drug addict. But each character inhabits the same world, that of wealth and excess, full of shallow people and lack of genuine purpose. And since it is the setting that makes Ellis' novels so striking, I'm a bit disappointed he fails to do more creative exploration. That may not be a fair opinion to render given *Less Than Zero* is the first book Ellis wrote. Regardless, although I find Californian debauchery as titillating as the next man, I couldn't stomach its relentlessness throughout. There is only so much sex, drugs, and rock & roll I can take before my eyes glaze over. Perhaps, that was Ellis' intent. These characters are all supposed to be bored with their fabulous lives. I just wish Ellis didn't take too seriously his ambition to have the reader share in that ennui.

Mora

I have read Ellis' *Glamorama* and was struck by the biting satire and astute social commentary. *Less Than Zero* is the author's first novel published while he was a college student. I had some reservations about the book, but was pleasantly surprised at the quality of the prose and the characters.

The book's protagonist, Clay, and his friends are all upper-class WASP types living in Los Angeles. The story follows clay on his coke-dusted, alcohol fueled adventures on his Christmas break from university. There isn't much of a plot to the book, which works in some respects and doesn't at times. The main 'plot' is the narrator's struggle (if you could call it that) to understand why his friends do the things they do, with regard to their nighttime activities. The only external plot is Clay trying to get in touch with one of his friends to get money back from him.

Ellis does not use his characters' depravity as a crutch. He effectively shows Clay's rationalization of the things he sees. The narration kept me from putting the book down as a jumble of shocking scenes meant only for shock value. *Less Than Zero* is one of the few novels I've read recently that really effected me emotionally. I actually found the book more thematically cohesive than F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* which has a similar concept and was also a first novel.

The lack of a concrete plot may turn off some readers, but the narrator's emotional journey is worth the read. Ellis' astute social commentary shows even in his debut book. I also found that a book written in the 1980s has a many parallels to the college/young adult culture of today. I often found myself laughing in agreement, as many of the chapters in the book could be describing the night life and drug culture at my university, albeit without references to Duran Duran and land line telephones.

Kata

I never read this book, but liked the movie when it came out. So, recently I decided to buy the. Book, I didn't realize how different the book was from the movie. I read it 3 times. I already knew I liked the authors style of writing from reading *American Psycho*. Great book.

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