

# American psycho book to movie essay

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



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American Psycho Novel and Movie Comparison After the release of Bret Easton Ellis' American Psycho, and the critical response that soon followed, many would believe that a film version of such a creatively gruesome novel would be an impossible task to undertake. The extended seemingly endless descriptions, stream of conscious narrative, countless scenes of grotesque violence, and not to mention a literary ban in both Germany and Australia are just a few reasons why so many believed a movie could never exist.

However in the spring of 2000, director Mary Harron defied the odds and transformed this controversial work from hardcover to the big screen. Remarkably a huge success, the film captures the weaving, often-satirical, themes of the book, while staying true to the not so hidden horrors of a 1980's New York yuppie turned serial killer Patrick Bateman. Where the book gave readers the eyes and insight of a warped Patrick Bateman, the movie displayed a more outward perspective, balancing the darkly comical with hints of insanity that built toward the unraveling of this American Psycho.

Some may argue that serial killers are born with the inevitable urge to murder, while others believe these actions are a direct result of environmental culturing. The character of Patrick Bateman would justly cause anyone to question this notion. In the film, Mr. Batman, ingeniously portrayed by Christian Bale, begins the film with a seemingly levelheaded temperament. This illusion is short lived however and is broken when a scene, mirroring that of the second chapter of the book, shows Bateman's obsessively thorough morning routine.

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The film quite accurately depicts the various products and processes that were read as lists upon lists of description within the novel. Another point in which Mary Harron illustrates the maddening obsessive tendencies of Bateman occurs during the often one-sided dialogues about his favorite musical artists. Full chapters of the novel are dedicated these shallow ramblings that send readers into an almost absorbed state of psychosis.

Although the film could not hold this exact effect, many of these lines were straight from the novel, except for the Phil Collins references, and were stated under a comical tone that stayed true to the satirical nature of the work. Each of these scenes shows the progression of a Patrick Bateman that has become less of a human and more a product of society. The greatest difference from book to film lies in the scenes of abundant violence.

Although the film had to alter certain portions to receive an “ R” not “ NC-17” rating, the movie, even with the old cuts in place, would still not even scratch the surface of the horror and revolting actions found within the novel. Events like the killing of an innocent child at a zoo, the pieces of body left in his Hell’s Kitchen apartment, cannibalism, and other more disgusting ways of torturing women were not visually placed in the movie.

Nevertheless many of them were hinted at throughout which allowed audiences to imagine the terrifying acts that Bateman partook in themselves, actors the ability to play with dialogue, and readers to notice the inner most references to scenes from the book. Not all violence and gore was left to the imagination however, but were subtly shown for example by a scrape on a women’s back or by the image of a severed head tucked away

inside of Bateman's fridge until the climax where shots of former bodies are exposed during a chase seen with a women desperately trying to escape.

All of the shots are creatively angled to show just enough violence to make you feel the impact of the act while crafting an air of tension that increases until he cracks. The progression of Patrick Bateman's mental dysfunction and the unreliability of the main characters perspective, hit its peak at the end of the film. Surreal scenes of confusion and dialogue began to cloud the interactions that Bateman had with those around him. A growing sense of urgency in his demeanor countered by the cold glare of the other characters gave a perfect bridge to the theme of the novel.

Now that we see Bateman shocked that his sick acts have gone with out consequence, the audience begins to question whether or not his horrid acts are only mere imagination. The end of the book, and most of the novel, give readers the assumption that these acts must be too extreme to have actually happened. The conclusion of the film lets the wall reliability crash down with the realization that you may have just glimpsed into the mind of the main character. Just like in the book, audiences grasp that Bateman may just simply be more psychotic than first perceived.

The unraveling of his sophistication being the first sign brings question to the events that occurred and further notions of insanity. Although much of the story may have been in the mind of Patrick Bateman, the ideas and fantasies that were birthed their and why they came about, are the root of what both Bret Easton Ellis and Mary Harron are trying to being to question. Was it instilled in a man to have these desires, or was it a society that brought him to it?