

An essay on "less than zero"



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Life is ever-changing, ever-moving in the passive world of today's youth.

This thought came to mind when I was reading Bret Easton Ellis' novel "Less Than Zero". It is a book that speaks of the life of young people in the society these days. This essay aims to describe the elements of textual style, time movement, and the leading character of the novel.

First, the author's style which employs fluidity of spatial location depict the constant changing of ads, videos, scenes, programs and channels on television to which this story resembles. It can be observed that the story jumps from one location to another. Indeed, reading the novel is like watching a television. Just like in this paragraph from the text:

" After leaving Blair I drive down to Wilshire and then onto Santa Monica and then I drive onto Sunset and take Beverly Glen to Mulholland, and then to Sepulveda to Ventura and then I drive through Sherman Oak's to Encino and then into Tarzana and then Woodland Hills. I stop at Sambo's..."

This scene narrates the constant search of Clay, the leading character of the story, for a place where he can find enjoyment and pleasure yet he always ends up feeling empty and frustrated. This characterizes the youth of the 80's and of today. They do a lot of things, go to a lot of places, and meet a lot of people yet they end up with nothing.

The teens in the story spend their time, money and energy in worthless activities such as drinking alcohol, sniffing cocaine, partying, and engaging in sex and more but they do not get anything worthwhile. There is another scene of Clay and Rip tells of the aimlessness of going from one place to

another. It didn't matter if they are getting nowhere as long as they are moving.

Second, the fast and quick time movement of the story illustrates that people come and go. Nothing is permanent in this world and time flies fast. And this is probably the reason why it seems that the novel constantly talks of death. What is worse is that Clay and his friends do not even care. Like the case of the twelve-year old girl who was kidnapped, gang-raped by Rip together with his friends and was found dead the next day. It is such a gory sight yet it seems these teenagers in the story are unaffected.

It can also be observed that together with the change of location is a change of time. Such as these phrases:

“ Blair picks me up from LAX... Nobody's home... I bring Daniel to Blair's party that night...”

These scenes come after each other abruptly. There is no transition. It goes on and on.

Lastly, Clay's character in the story portrays the nihilism and the passivism that characterizes the youth of today. He is the total picture of rich kids who have parents who can give them all the money and material things they want except for the love and time that they need. He narrates the story with passive indifference, probably because of his being constantly stoned with cocaine. He is detached in his feelings towards his family, his girlfriend, his friends and others. He seems not to care about what is happening to them. He sees the death that comes to people and yet he is unconcerned.

However, he has a craving for something deeper. In fact, there are flashback scenes in the story where he remembered his grandparents and aunt. He even went back to Palm Springs where he grew up and he says: " I guess I went there because I want to remember the way things were." This tells of a hidden part of him to get back to the good old days.

In conclusion, the novel is an effective medium of presenting a picture of the younger generation's life, struggles and hopes through the fluidity of spatial location, time movements and the character of Clay. Indeed, this novel " Less Than Zero" shows that the life of a teenager these days constantly changes and moves because of nihilism, passivism and aimlessness.

Works Cited

Ellis, Bret Easton. *Less Than Zero*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc. 1