



One Minus One

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The year is 1969, a time of turmoil for the United States—and for thirty-year-old Emily Bean, who, following her devastating divorce, leaves her home in the New Hampshire mountains to work as a teacher in the state's coastal region.

Still in love with her ex-husband, David, Emily struggles to adjust to single life. Women's liberation and the freewheeling sixties had only been on the perimeter of her married life, so even walking into a restaurant alone makes insecure Emily self-conscious.

The men in town are quick to notice an available and attractive young woman with legs made for miniskirts. Emily falls into relationships with two men, one of whom could be her way back to the safe life that she lost.

But in this portrait of a woman on the brink of self-realization, Emily must learn whether or not she can truly recapture the past.

One Minus One Details

Date : Published 1971 by Putnam

ISBN :

Author : Ruth Doan MacDougall

Format : Hardcover

Genre : Fiction, Marriage, Family Law, Divorce

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From Reader Review One Minus One for online ebook

Kate says

I received this free copy from bookbrowse.com and posted a brief review there as well. This novel was originally published in 1971, and was brought back into print by Nancy Pearl in her Book Lust Rediscovery series published by Amazon. It is the story of Emily, newly divorced from her high school sweetheart. She is devastated and has taken a job as a high school teacher which she dislikes. While married she was a writer who was unable to sell any of her work and her husband worked also as a teacher (most of the characters are teachers except for a local morning radio announcer). Emily is very much a character of the time, unable to imagine doing anything that she would actually like as a career and she remains stuck with her choices. The author depicts the 60s very well through descriptions of food, drink and dress and the book is brief which made it worth reading. It is probably closer to 2 1/2 stars.

Megan says

Wow. No wonder legendary librarian Nancy Pearl wanted to help us re-discover this book. This is a story about character and identity with a helping of gender roles thrown in to the mix. It is thoughtful, sad, and completing despite the fact that it is not a book heavy on plot details. Rather it is the emotional journey of a woman faced with the idea that her life will not be what she expected and her struggle to understand herself after her divorce. Well worth a read and a great choice for your book club.

Teri Zipf says

This was my first Nancy Pearl-recommended book. I'm still trying to figure out if I liked it. I kind of find it hard to like anyone who tells you that she wears a size 7 dress and who is also constantly dieting. That would be the main character, Emily, not the author or Nancy Pearl. Also generally irritating are fictional women who are irresistible to men. Also mopers.

The book club questions state that the fundamental problem facing Emily is to choose between her head and her heart. I didn't see it that way, but since Nancy Pearl is undoubtedly much smarter than me, I'll go along with it. It didn't seem like Emily chose either. It seemed more like her choices were move on in life, take control, do something, don't just let people drag you along, or wallow in misery and self pity. At the end it was impossible to tell which choice she had made, but it looked a lot like she was going to wallow.

I guess the book was the opposite of a romance novel, in which she would have discovered her ex husband it be a cad and rode off into the sunset with the guy who's stood by her all along. She didn't do either of those things, which is probably a lot more like real life. She just didn't do anything, which may also be more like real life, but I'm not sure what to make of a novel that leaves its main (and only really fleshed out) character in exactly the same situation she was to begin with, and as far as I could tell, with no more awareness.

And yes, the characters. Emily we get to know well. Her roommate Kaykay is pretty much a cutout with the words "bride-to-be" on it. Her roommate Grace's cutout says "bitter old maid-to-be." So Emily looks at them and can't really settle on either of their roles being what she wants. At least not without David. The other

women; her grandmother, mother, sisters, her roommates sisters--I could keep track of which was which and it didn't seem to matter that much. It would have been easier if she had called mother Mom instead of Lucy and her father Dad instead of Ned. Both those names constantly took me by surprise.

The men, David, Warren, and Cliff are not much more fleshed out than the women. David and Cliff are essentially the same: Perfect English teachers. One doesn't love her any more, the other does. Warren is a sort of cad and not in the story long.

If I were her, I'd ask Cliff for time to make up my mind, which seems reasonable as they've only known each other a few months. I don't think she's going to do that. And I still don't know if I liked the book.

Marti says

One Minus One by Ruth Doan MacDougall is a book that was originally published in 1971 and has recently been republished by Book Lust Rediscoveries. The main character, Emily Bean is recently divorced and out on her own. She has been hired as a teacher for the first time and is struggling to find her way. The conflict within the book is internal within Emily. The action is minimal and the pace slow and reflective. Her pathway to a new start is cluttered with memories and distress at moving on in her life. To me, she is so deeply mired within the past, that I am unsure if she will ever be free of it. The book is broken into three sections each descriptive of current events/relationships within her life and part of her first school year.

Ruth Doan MacDougall is from New Hampshire as clearly evidenced in this novel. Despite the changing of names, to me many places are clear as to their location. There is a particular pleasure in knowing the places in a work of fiction. Especially, when they are shown in a clear light. (personally I think I waitress at the Pizza Hut on the Miracle Mile, but not during the time of the novel.)

This book was a meandering journey through the internal and external life of Emily Bean. I felt mired down in the depressive nature of the characters with their constant drinking and their nature, like they were just taking up space and following a path set before them. I felt like they were all trying to fill an ideal, but they were unhappy with the ideal. While I completely read the book and did not feel the need to stop reading or become disgusted with the book, I did want the character to move on. I was not bored, but not fascinated either.

I won this book from Bookbrowse and am expected to publish a review.

Natalie says

Well, I spoke too soon. I recently wrote that I had not read a Nancy Pearl Book Lust Rediscovery title that I didn't love. Until now. I didn't like the protagonist very much and could not relate to the choices she made with her life. Hard to root for her, she seemed flat. I enjoyed reading about her roommates more than I enjoyed reading about her!

Tonya says

Short, sweet and to the point! So interesting, I had never heard of this author and then I saw a few being released again, so I jumped at the chance to read it! I love books in this era, especially that show a different point of view from the 60's.

Emily Bean is just a normal lady, after her divorce she takes a job at a high school. Even though she is STILL in love with her ex-husband! But then there are a couple more men that are in love with Emily.

An awesome OOP book to reprint! I am so glad I did. Simple, but fun to read! If you are looking for something really deep, this won't be it, but I enjoyed Emily's dilemmas and was rooting for the best one!! Enjoy!

Karen says

Odd coincidence. I happened to notice this title when I was looking at others by this author. When I went to add it in Good Reads, I noticed a lot of recent adds and learned it was being reprinted as part of Nancy Pearl's Book Lust Rediscoveries series. I hope this helps readers discover--or rediscover--Ruth Doan MacDougall.

The story takes place in 1969 (published 1971) in small-town New Hampshire. Even though I grew up in a larger (but by no means large) town in Massachusetts, this is very much the world I remember growing up in. For example, one character's mother is surprised that he could get a teaching job with "that awful beard," a phrase I remember my mother using. (My dad's version was "never trust a man with facial hair.")

I would recommend this, if nothing else, as a reflection of what the world was like in 1969 for people who weren't love children or hippies or protesters. Their stories have been told many times and in many ways. This is a quieter story.

A says

What I liked about this book was the picture it painted of life in the late 1960s...and life about a woman dealing with divorce, rejoining the working world, relearning life as a singleton in a New England town in the late 1960s. This snapshot made the story worth it for me.

Joanne says

Let me start my saying I loved Ruth Doan McDougall's The Cheerleader back when I was a teen. I re-read it a few years ago and still loved Snowy and her 1950s high school days.

I listened to One Minus One on audiotape. Set the late 1960s in New Hampshire, Emily is recently divorced

from her college sweetheart David. She moves and starts to work as a teacher. Mind you she was educated, but never worked. She pursued her writing while she was married. She quickly starts to drink, hang out and have sex with Warren. Then she connects for co-worker Cliff. You would think she had the life of the gay divorcee, but there looms a ghost from her past – David. Every experience reminds her of David, makes her long for David, truthfully it got a little old. Emily can't move on despite others around her falling in love and moving forward with life.

The end was very open ended. After a “stalking” episode at David’s new home with his pregnant wife and lots of friends, Emily??? Well that’s open to your interpretation.

What I did like was this was of a Nancy Pearl Book Lust of lost books and the intro and thought provoking questions at the end of the audio were really good to ponder.

Jennifer says

There's a certain mood throughout this book that is unique to the era in which it was written. I can't describe it other than the whole novel has a lazy tone to it that is quite unlike more current literature. I didn't care for Emily, the main character, and I can't decide if that's fair. Some of the things I dislike about her are things that are not really character traits, but behaviors engendered by the time she inhabits (the early 1970s). I wanted to try one of Nancy Pearl's Book Lust Rediscovery series, but I'm a little disappointed in this choice.

Monica Williams says

This book is not my usual fare at all, but since Nancy Pearl said it was good and she is one of my library heroes and I gave it a try.

The story is about a 30 year old woman Emily who finds herself divorced and confronting life on her own. She has to learn how to do everything alone, something with which she is not familiar. Like many women who created their identity based on their relationship with a man she falls into a relationship rather quickly with Warren, a radio host. Their relationship soon becomes its own predictable pattern. Emily is going to school to be a teacher because that's what her mother did and while she wanted to be a writer in the past when she was married that desire seems to have left her. Emily's thoughts often go back in time to happier time with her husband David. He may be gone, but he is present in her own mind. Over the holidays Emily gets possession of her grandmother's diaries and starts reading. Honestly her grandmother's life is more interesting than Emily's (which on some level she may realize). Somewhere along the line her relationship with Warren unravels and Emily begins a new chapter moving in with school friends Kaykay and Grace. She also briefly acts on her attraction to Cliff who is the department head at the college. Over time Cliff wears her down and she begins yet another relationship. While out with Cliff she meets David and his pregnant wife and finally breaks down about the divorce. No matter how far she goes or who she ends up with Emily is still haunted by David. Their relationship was such a huge part of her life trying to get past it is nearly impossible.

While the story is set in 1969, it can be easy to forget unless you really pay attention to all the small details. There is something universal about the story. I think most people know someone like Emily, the girl who

defines her whole existence based on her relationship with a guy and when it ends- well on to the next one. Part of me does want to shake her and say maybe there is a reason why things didn't work out. Its 1969, not 1869. You've moved on, moved out, gotten a job, now its time to take some me time and figure out what you want. In a way its not really fair to the guys she dates. They are really just rebounds and I feel bad for Cliff who has true feelings for her. Here's hoping one day Emily finally moves on!

Laura says

2 1/2 stars of 5. Ruth Doan MacDougall wrote one my favorite books ever, *The Cheerleader* and I like the way she writes. This is a story of a woman trying to reassemble her life after a very painful, unexpected divorce. While I do think a lot of the feelings transcend time periods, it felt dated to me and I just didn't connect very much. This is one of Nancy Pearl's Book Lust Rediscoveries so there's a reading guide and other book suggestions.

Shay says

Disclaimer: I received a free review copy of this book at ALA Midwinter 2013

Originally published in 1971, *One Minus One* is a Nancy Pearl Book Lust Rediscovery which has been re-released by Amazon Publishing. A housewife and aspiring writer, thirty-year-old Emily's world is rocked when her husband, David, divorces her to marry the guidance counsellor at the school where he works. Married to David right out of university, Emily never worked as a teacher herself but, determined not to accept alimony from David, she takes a job as an English teacher in Millstead, New Hampshire to support herself. Unhappy with her work as a teacher, and not having written a word since the divorce, Emily struggles to find and define herself separately from David, who she fell in love with when she was fifteen. She begins dating again, first Warren, a local morning radio host, and then Cliff, the head of the English department at the high school. But despite her efforts to move on, Emily can't get past David.

Slow moving in terms of plot, *One Minus One* is a character-centred story that focuses on Emily's struggle to tease out her own personality and separate herself from her past with David. Only once she is alone does she realize how much he defined her. Emily has a quiet, disarming uncertainty which make her sympathetic, even though she could be accused of wallowing in sorrow. She evinces a brave determination to become independent and find her way through situations she never thought she would face. It is easy to feel protective of Emily, and to root for her to come out alright in the end. I wanted to her to find love, and to find herself, all the while worrying that, for Emily, the two goals might not be compatible quite yet.

Set in 1969, this book shows its age in small details; the characters wear bell-bottom pants and earn minuscule salaries by modern standards. It is a portrait of divorce in a particular time, but it retains a strong emotional resonance which ensures that it still remains relevant today. The cliff hanger ending will likely leave some readers unhappy, but the sudden ending shows how much we've come to care about Emily in the space of such a short novel (160 pages). She stayed with me for several days before I was able to make peace with not knowing her fate.

Liz says

This was a Nancy Pearl rediscovery and once again the all knowing librarian led me to a wonderful summer read. I drove through this one in a few days. It was a wonderful study Emily, a women who comes of age in the sixties and seventies. As it was written in 1970, the book does not even attempt to temper Emily's views with insights about women's place in the world that emerge during the 70s and 80s. What you get is a wonderful portrait of a woman dealing with great loss who is groping for a positive way to deal with loss. A great character study.

Barb says

My only disappointment with this book is that I never get to find out how the main character's life went after the book ended. I wanted to keep following her through the grieving process following her divorce and see how she finally came to terms with everything. The characters are beautifully written. There's very little plot, but the characters are so wonderful I didn't really care. I just wanted to follow behind Emily, the main character, forever.
