



Theme of Lost Generation

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Abstract

The Lost Generation was a term used to describe the group of writers and artists who came of age during World War I and the Roaring Twenties, and who felt disillusioned and disconnected from the traditional values of their parents' generation. While the term is often used to refer specifically to this group of artists and writers, it can also be used more broadly to describe a sense of disillusionment and disconnection that can arise in any generation. At its core, the Lost Generation represents a sense of disillusionment and uncertainty about the future. This can manifest in a variety of ways, from a rejection of traditional values and institutions to a sense of alienation from society and a feeling of existential despair. The Lost Generation can also be seen as a reaction to the rapid changes and upheavals of the early 20th century, as people struggled to make sense of a world that seemed to be changing faster than they could keep up with. In a more abstract sense, the Lost Generation can be seen as a metaphor for the human condition. We all experience feelings of disillusionment and uncertainty at some point in our lives, and we all struggle to find meaning and purpose in a world that can seem chaotic and unpredictable. The Lost Generation can also be seen as a reminder of the importance of staying connected to our values and to each other, even in times of upheaval and change.

Keywords: Disillusionment, Alienation, Existential despair, Rejection of tradition, Disconnection Uncertainty, Rapid change

Introduction

The Lost Generation was a term coined by writer Gertrude Stein to describe a group of writers and artists who came of age during World War I and the Roaring Twenties, and who felt disillusioned and disconnected from the traditional values of their parents' generation. This group of artists and writers included names such as Ernest Hemingway, "F. Scott Fitzgerald,



Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound, among others. The Lost Generation is often associated with the expatriate community that lived in Paris during the 1920s, a group that included many of the writers and artists who would later become famous for their work. This community was drawn to Paris in part because of its reputation as a center of artistic and intellectual activity, but also because many of its members felt alienated from American society and culture.

At its core, the Lost Generation represents a sense of disillusionment and uncertainty about the future. This can manifest in a variety of ways, from a rejection of traditional values and institutions to a sense of alienation from society and a feeling of existential despair. The Lost Generation can also be seen as a reaction to the rapid changes and upheavals of the early 20th century, as people struggled to make sense of a world that seemed to be changing faster than they could keep up with. While the term Lost Generation is often used to refer specifically to this group of artists and writers, it can also be used more broadly to describe a sense of disillusionment and disconnection that can arise in any generation. In this sense, the Lost Generation can be seen as a metaphor for the human condition, a reminder of the importance of staying connected to our values and to each other, even in times of upheaval and change. The Lost Generation was not just a literary movement, but a cultural and social phenomenon that reflected the attitudes and experiences of a generation of young people who had come of age during a time of unprecedented upheaval and change. This generation had witnessed the horrors of World War I, the rise of industrialization and mass consumer culture, and the collapse of traditional social hierarchies and values.

The writers and artists of the Lost Generation rejected the ideals of their parents' generation, embracing instead a new kind of modernism that emphasized experimentation, individualism, and a rejection of tradition. They sought to create art that reflected the fragmented and disorienting experience of modern life, using innovative techniques and styles to capture the complexity and ambiguity of the world around them. The Lost Generation also reflected the changing role of women in society, as many female writers and artists began to challenge traditional gender roles and expectations. Women such as Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and Janet Flanner played important roles in the literary and artistic circles of the time, helping to shape the cultural and intellectual landscape of the era. Despite their rejection of tradition and their embrace of modernism, the writers and artists of the Lost Generation were not nihilistic



or cynical. Rather, they saw their work as a way of coming to terms with the challenges and contradictions of modern life, and of finding meaning and purpose in a world that often seemed chaotic and uncertain. Today, the legacy of the Lost Generation lives on in the work of contemporary writers and artists who continue to explore the complexities and contradictions of modern life, and who seek to find new ways of making sense of a world that is constantly changing and evolving. The Lost Generation was characterized by a sense of disillusionment and despair, but also by a spirit of rebellion and experimentation. Many writers and artists of the time were interested in exploring new forms and techniques, and in breaking free from the conventions of traditional art and literature”.

- The Lost Generation was not a monolithic group, but rather a loose collection of writers and artists who shared certain values and experiences. Many of these writers and artists had personal connections to each other, and often collaborated or influenced each other's work.
- The Lost Generation was not limited to American writers and artists, but included a diverse group of individuals from different backgrounds and nationalities. Many members of the Lost Generation were expatriates living in Paris or other European cities, drawn to the cultural and intellectual vibrancy of these places. “The Lost Generation was deeply influenced by the traumatic experiences of World War I, which had a profound impact on the psyche of the era. Many writers and artists of the time were haunted by the horrors of the war, and sought to come to terms with its aftermath through their work. The Lost Generation was also shaped by the cultural and social changes of the Roaring Twenties, a time of great upheaval and transformation in American society. Many writers and artists of the time were interested in exploring the new possibilities and freedoms of this era, while also grappling with its contradictions and complexities. The legacy of the Lost Generation has continued to shape the cultural and intellectual landscape of the 20th and 21st centuries. Many of the themes and techniques explored by writers and artists of the Lost Generation continue to resonate with contemporary audiences, and have had a lasting impact on the development of modern art and literature.

The social generational cohort known as The Lost Generation in the Western world was comprised of people who were in their early adulthood during World War I. People born



between the years 1883 and 1900 are often considered to be members of this generation. The term is also particularly used to refer to a group of American expatriate writers living in Paris during the 1920s. Gertrude Stein is credited with coining the term, and it was subsequently popularised by Ernest Hemingway, who used it in the epigraph for his 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*: You are all a lost generation. Lost in this context refers to the disoriented, wandering, directionless spirit of many of the war's survivors in the early postwar period. In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, Western members of the Lost Generation grew up in societies which were more literate, consumerist and media-saturated than ever before, but which also tended to maintain strictly conservative social values. The young men of the generation were conscripted in large numbers to serve in the military during the First World War, a conflict that was frequently regarded as the defining moment in the lives of their age group. Young women also contributed to and were affected by the War, and in its aftermath gained greater freedoms politically and in other areas of life. The Spanish flu epidemic had a heavy toll on the Lost Generation, who became the driving force behind many cultural shifts, notably in big cities during the period that was later dubbed the Roaring Twenties. The Lost Generation was also very susceptible to the pandemic.

Later, they experienced the economic effects of the Great Depression and often saw their own sons leave for the battlefields of the Second World War. In the developed world, they tended to reach retirement and average life expectancy during the decades after the conflict, but some significantly outlived the norm. The last surviving person who was known to have been born during the 19th century was Nabi Tajima, who died in 2018.

World War I, originally called the Great War, resulted in more than nine million deaths. The official starting point was the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. On the other hand, this event was merely the spark that lit a tinder box consisting of overbuilt armies, imperial tensions, and complex alliances, which resulted in the creation of two opposing political forces in Europe: the Allies and the Central Powers. The Great War became a war of attrition due to the use of trench warfare, in which both sides dug elaborate trenches where they could shelter from the enemy's artillery fire. The trench would be protected by barbed wire. In between the trenches ran No Man's Land, and soldiers sent over the top would have to climb up and traverse a significant expanse unprotected



from the enemy's weapons in order to reach their opponents and assault. Such a charge usually would gain a side only a small stretch of land, if any, and would result in many deaths. Chemical attacks had not yet been banned; Wilfred Owen's poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est' describes the experience of facing a gas attack.

While living in the trenches, conditions were deplorable. Disease was rife: Trench foot, in which soldiers suffered from gangrene and fungus as a result of wet, muddy conditions; Trench fever, which included conjunctivitis, rashes, and headaches”; and Trench mouth, or acute necrotizing ulcerative gingivitis. At least two million deaths in the trenches resulted from disease before the Treaty of Versailles ended the war on 28 June 1919.

In the aftermath of the war there arose a group of young persons known as the Lost Generation. The term was coined from something Gertrude Stein witnessed the owner of a garage saying to his young employee, which Hemingway later used as an epigraph to his novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926): You are all a lost generation. This accusation referred to the lack of purpose or drive that resulted from the horrifying disillusionment felt by those individuals who had grown up and lived through the war, and who were then in their twenties and thirties at the time. Having seen pointless death on such a huge scale, many lost faith in traditional values like courage, patriotism, and masculinity. “Some in turn became aimless, reckless, and focused on material wealth, unable to believe in abstract ideals.

In literature, the Lost Generation refers to a group of writers and poets who were men and women of this period. All were American, but several members emigrated to Europe. The most famous members were Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and T. S. Eliot.

Common themes in works of literature by members of the Lost Generation include:

Decadence Think about the extravagant parties that James Gatsby throws in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, or the ones that the characters in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tales of the Jazz Age* throw. Think back to the aimless travelling, drinking, and parties that the expatriates in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Moveable Feast* engage in. With ideals shattered so thoroughly by the war, for many, hedonism was the result.



Lost Generation writers revealed the sordid nature of the shallow, frivolous lives of the young and independently wealthy in the aftermath of the war.

Gender roles and Impotence - Faced with the destruction of the chivalric notions of warfare as a glamorous calling for a young man, a serious blow was dealt to traditional gender roles and images of masculinity. In *The Sun Also Rises*, the narrator, Jake, literally is impotent as a result of a war wound, and instead it is his female love Brett who acts the man, manipulating sexual partners and taking charge of their lives. Think also of T. S. Eliot's poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, and Prufrock's unwillingness to express his love to the anonymous receiver.

Idealised past - Rather than face the horrors of warfare, many worked to create an idealised but unattainable image of the past, a glossy image with no bearing in reality. The best example is in *Gatsby's* idealisation of Daisy, his inability to see her as she truly is, and the closing lines to the novel after all its death and disappointment:

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eludes us then, but that's no matter- to-morrow we will run faster, stretch our arms farther...
And one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

Conclusion

The Lost Generation represents a group of writers and artists who came of age during a time of profound upheaval and change in the early 20th century. They were characterized by a sense of disillusionment and alienation, but also by a spirit of rebellion and experimentation. They rejected the ideals of their parents' generation, embracing instead a new kind of modernism that emphasized innovation, individualism, and a rejection of tradition. The writers and artists of the Lost Generation were deeply influenced by the traumatic experiences of World War I, which had a profound impact on the psyche of the era. They were also shaped by the cultural and social changes of the Roaring Twenties, a time of great upheaval and transformation in American society. Many writers and artists of the time were interested in exploring the new possibilities and freedoms of this era, while also grappling with its contradictions and complexities. Despite their sense of disillusionment and despair, the writers and artists of the



Lost Generation were not nihilistic or cynical. Rather, they saw their work as a way of coming to terms with the challenges and contradictions of modern life, and of finding meaning and purpose in a world that often seemed chaotic and uncertain. The legacy of the Lost Generation has continued to shape the cultural and intellectual landscape of the 20th and 21st centuries. Many of the themes and techniques explored by writers and artists of the Lost Generation continue to resonate with contemporary audiences, and have had a lasting impact on the development of modern art and literature”. The Lost Generation can be seen as a reminder of the importance of staying connected to our values and to each other, even in times of upheaval and change, and as a testament to the enduring power of art to help us make sense of the world around us.

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