



The Lost Generation



- Who actually was formally a part of the so-called **Lost Generation is not yet clearly defined.** There are those who argue that the term refers only to **those writers who lived in Europe between the two World Wars.** While others insist that the term does not pertain only to writers **but also to an entire post-war generation**, “The influence of the Lost Generation has resonated far beyond academic and literary circles in popular films, television series, used-clothing shops, and even theme bars” (Monk 1). **The term was first coined by Gertrude Stein in which she used to describe writers such as Hemingway and Fitzgerald.** The Lost Generation can be adequately described by the following passage:

- The Lost Generation also felt wrenched away from attachment to any region or tradition by the colleges they attended or the cities they flocked to....in claiming for themselves the special charm--to borrow another one of **Fitzgerald's titles--of the beautifully damned**, they named themselves prophets of their age, a role most of them clearly preferred to that of social reformer. **They were by turn sentimental, carefree, fun-loving, stricken, proud, and defiant.** But they realized that the national habit of feeling special meant nothing if it did not include doing something that was special (Berovitch, and Pattell 10).

- The Lost Generation was not so much a particular group of people but instead **a sentiment or feeling. The sense of aimlessness** that comes from **a loss of direction is what made this generation lost.** Although the excess of the 1920s was fun for a while, it was not enough to truly distract people from the reality of their lives and their existence. **Instead, the American Dream of wealth and riches left this generation wanting more. The Lost Generation was the post-war generation. The generation was not restricted to America but also manifested itself in Europe where many rich and privileged Americans resided.**

What exactly does “Lost” mean in the context of the Lost Generation,

- It is critical to take a closer look at the word “Lost”. The word can take on two meanings. First, it can be used to **describe the lack of morality that characterized this post-war generation**, “The lost quality of the Lost Generation referred to its morality; American writers abroad between the World Wars had abandoned their moral bearings once in Europe and estranged themselves from traditional principles” (Monk 4). The mere fact that these writers or experts in general had the need to leave America and pursue life in another country while **abandoning the American principles of honest hardworking and determination is a clear indication that the American Dream had started to fade and decline.**

- **Second, “Lost”** that can be applied to this generation does not revolve so much around the generation’s lack of direction but rather **their newfound freedom**. Some experts argue that this generation was considered Lost by the older generation not because they were aimless but rather because they refused to conform to the norm and values to which so much of the pre-war generation had grown accustomed. In many respects, this also meant the loss of American culture, for instance, **“It also meant a loss of country in a most peculiar sense” (McCormick, 2000:4).**

- The reason why the writers of this era such as **Fitzgerald are often referred to as the voices of the Lost Generation** is because; they had the power to dictate feelings and emotions within the entire generation with their writing alone. This is one of the reasons why Fitzgerald's work was so popular even in his day, **he simply told people what they were feeling**, "The years that bore him up, flattered him and gave him more money than that he dreamed of, simply for telling people that he felt as they did, that something had been done with all the energy stored up and unexpended during the war" (Monk 2). It can be argued that writers who wrote about post-war life were not mere observers of the Lost Generation; they were in fact, **the embodiment of the generation** with all of its setbacks and lures.



Conclusion

- The Modern American literature of the 20s clearly suggests that the concepts of the **American Dream, Jazz Age and Lost Generation are not concepts that can be separated by any means**. Instead, they are all **interconnected concepts** that clearly reveal how far American society fell from the original goal it set out to achieve.