The Lost Generation

“Listen, Robert, going to another country doesn’t make any difference. I’ve tried all that. You can’t get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. There’s nothing to that.”

The Sun Also Rises, pg. 19
What is the Lost Generation?

- Literally, it is the generation of people born between 1883 and 1900.
- They were disillusioned by World War I.
- Known in Europe as the “1914 Generation” or the Génération au Feu.
- But...
The *Other* Lost Generation

- The phrase was coined by Gertrude Stein (spoken to Hemingway): “You are all a lost generation.”
- Group of American writers in the Post-World War One era who were:
  - Displeased with American social values, sexual and aesthetic conventions, and established morality
  - First fled to cities such as Chicago and San Francisco; then to Paris, London, Madrid, Barcelona, and Rome (in particular, Montparnasse).
  - Disillusioned by World War One.
  - All pioneered new ways of writing, rebelling against the traditional Victorian literary style.
- Included writers such as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, and T.S. Eliot
- Included several painters as well, such as Waldo Peirce.
• Between 1921 and 1924, the number of Americans in Paris grew from 6,000 to 30,000.
• Paris was the prime city in which the “bohemian” Lost Generation chose to wander.
Montparnasse served as the heart of artistic creativity and intellect in Paris after the war.

- Contained many cheap studios, apartments, and was also an area filled with important cafes (Le Dome, La Closerie des Lilas, La Rotonde, and Le Select) and other nightlife.
- Jean Cocteau: “Poverty is a luxury when living in Montparnasse.”
- All of the Lost Generation writers found themselves here at one time or another.
F. Scott Fitzgerald

- Dropped out of Princeton University in 1917 to fight in WWI, but the war ended before he shipped out.
- *This Side of Paradise* was a huge success, defining the “Flapper Generation.”
- Also wrote *The Beautiful and the Damned* and *The Great Gatsby*.
- Was one of the most popular and accomplished writers of the movement.
- Never assumed full expatriate status like the others.
John Dos Passos

- The son of a wealthy Chicago businessman, he traveled the world in 1907 with his private tutor.
- Traveled to France in July of 1917 to operate a volunteer ambulance.
- His first novel, *One Man’s Initiation: 1917*, was published in 1920.
- Grew into an artist as well, painting familiar landscapes such as the Montparnasse Quarter.
- Was interested in Socialism, and wrote many books glorifying Marxist theory.
- His most lasting work is the *U.S.A.* trilogy.
Gertrude Stein

- Originally coined the phrase “The Lost Generation.”
- Moved to Montparnasse in 1902 with her brother Leo.
- Befriended painters such as Matisse and Picasso.
- In the 1920s, her salon attracted many members of the Lost Generation.
- Wrote complicated “Cubist literature,” such as Tender Buttons.
- “Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.”
- Was a borderline fascist and supporter of the Vichy regime.
Thomas Sterns Eliot

- Born in Saint Louis, Missouri, he left to be educated at Oxford, live in Germany, and settle in Britain.
- Spent a great deal of time in Montparnasse in the 1920’s.
- Was the undisputed leader in American (although often classified as English) poetry.
- Notable works include “The Waste Land” and “Four Quartets,” considered by Eliot to be his masterpieces.
Waldo Peirce

- "They'll never call Ernest Hemingway the Waldo Peirce of American writers."
- Looked the part of an artist (fat, hairy, smoking).
- Known as much for his eccentricities as his painting jumping ships and exchanging turtles, never had to work a day in his life)
- Had no set style.
- Joined the American Field Service in 1915.
Ernest Hemingway

- Born in 1899 in Illinois.
- Was badly injured in the Red Cross Ambulance Corp in Italy—used this experience as the basis for *A Farewell to Arms*.
- Became a foreign correspondent in Paris for the *Toronto Star*.
- Wrote with a very brief and to-the-point style.
- Eventually committed suicide in 1961.
- Became the most emblematic of the Lost Generation.
- First major novel was *The Sun Also Rises*...
The Sun Also Rises
So, Let’s Generalize…

- … and say that we really can’t generalize about the Lost Generation.
- Similarities between artists of the time:
  - Disillusioned by WWI.
  - Pioneered new styles of artistic expression through writing.
  - Spent considerable amounts of time outside the United States.
- But the overarching likenesses end there.
  - All expatriates for different reasons.
  - Different considerations of the direction of American culture.
  - Differences in political views.
  - Each led their own, unique life after their period of camaraderie in 1920’s Paris.
- The literature remains important today; these writers truly can lay claim to almost all of the novels which we consider modern classics.
Assignment

- Create a Bubble Map with adjectives related to the “Lost Generation.”
- Create a Tree Map with a list of major authors and artists of this period.
  - Below their names list 3 major pieces of work or points about them.
- Create a Double Bubble Map comparing the attitudes of the “Lost Generation” and the “pre-WWI youngsters,” as they pertain to war, life, and nationalism.