

Paris's appeal to the lost generation essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



The Lost Generation refers specifically to the group of American expatriate writers associated with 1920s Paris. It is a term used to refer to the generation that came of age during World War I.

Ernest Hemingway is said to be the most distinguished author of this group of writers having first used the phrase "You are all a lost generation" as the epigraph to his first novel *The Sun Also Rises*. After World War I, when nineteen-year-old Hemingway returned home, his parents did not understand the psychological trauma he had suffered during the war, and they pestered him to continue a normal life by finding a job or going to college. After he married his first wife, he moved to Paris where he joined the group of American expatriates that would be known as the Lost Generation. His books *A Moveable Feast* and *The Sun Also Rises* depict the life and the views he had during his stay in Paris. These texts show the sense of disillusionment with the narrow culture the Lost Generation perceived in America after the Great War.

These texts depict Paris as a place where people can find hope and meaning even after the Great War. It was also a place where young Americans could have a relatively cheap lifestyle while living in high style. The City of Lights had long been famous for its philosophical intrigues and artistic inspiration and it somehow continued to cling to this reputation even after the war. The members of the Lost Generation came to learn new traditions in Paris. As this quote demonstrates, "I wonder where Cohn got the incapacity to enjoy Paris" (Hemingway 49), every aspect of Paris was enjoyable even when the moral decadence was perceived and experienced by all. In this example the character Cohn of *The Sun Also Rises* was not an American expatriate and he

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didn't fight in World War 1. That is why he doesn't understand the traumas the characters go through and how having meaningless sex and drinking heavily can occur around him without any moral effect to the rest of his friends. The postwar period saw the rise of Montparnasse and the Quartier Latin as the center of the city's artistic community.

It was in these pubs and cafes where the culture and debate marked the 1920s. There is never any ending to Paris and the memory of each person who has lived in it differs from that of any other...But this is how Paris was in the early days when we were very poor and very happy" (Hemingway 211). Paris in the 1920s still remained one of the most exciting, sophisticated cities in the world. It was into this vibrant, inspiring foment of idea and innovation that the Lost Generation reached its peak.

The economic and social freedoms attracted many artists both men and women. Here is where the cafe culture took place; where the Americans would go to famous cafes in Paris to write and meet people. An artist could expand himself because this city gave him the appropriate environment of hope and new beginnings to explore it. " But Paris was a very old city and we were young and nothing was simple there..." (Hemingway 58). This quote represents the possibilities that Paris could bring to the artists. Nothing was simple and it meant that anything could happen whether it was good or bad but that also offered a sense of hope. However, this depiction of hope didn't always represent the reality that these authors lived.

" You can't get away from yourself by moving from one place to another" (Hemingway 34). This quote from *The Sun also Rises* demonstrated that

Paris didn't help to feel the void that was in their life after the postwar, but the fact is that no place could. The emptiness that these writers from the Lost Generation experienced was in their minds and they couldn't escape their minds.

That is why they start to lose themselves in violence, drinking, sex, and drugs. Paris had everything they thought they needed to find themselves again, but unfortunately in the end they lost themselves even more. The destructiveness of sex is depicted in *The Sun also Rises* and gives an example of how the members of the Lost Generation begin to lose themselves.

The notions of morality are blurred and sex is used as a destructive tool that eventually leads to violence. As they struggled with their disillusionment, these authors started to question society as a whole.