

Research paper on the lost generation

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How many people have reoccurring dreams that they are running but no matter how fast they run there is no escaping what they are running from? many people have this dream and for some people it feels like everyday of their life they are trying to escape from the stress and problems of their life but they just can't especially those involved in war. No matter how much or how little someone was involved in war it always sticks with them and affects them in a way they can never escape. The impact is permanent it leaves a mark on its victims that follows them around no matter how hard they try to hide from it, run from it, face it, or deny it.

The mark left on them will always be there whether it be physically, emotionally, mentally, or all of the above. Once war touches someone, engulfs them, or merely brushes past them it sticks to the person never allowing them to move on and return to the way it used to be before they were put through such an experience; once that happens there's no going back. Ernest Hemingway's writings such as *The Sun Also Rises*, "Soldier's Home", and "In Another Country", reveals to the readers the struggles in which Veterans face after the war. The main characters feel alone in the world because society does not understand them nor do their families. They feel as though that the only other people in the world who can understand them are other war veterans. Brett, Jake, Krebs, and the Narrator from "In Another Country" cannot fit back into society.

Due to the scars they have received from the war they no longer fit into their spot of the puzzle because their puzzle piece had been reshaped and re colored. As a result they started from scratch creating a new picture of society in which their puzzle pieces fit simultaneously together into a puzzle

title that the world knows today as The Lost Generation. The Narrator from Hemingway's short story, "In Another Country" was physically injured in the war and he is considered an out cast not only to the rest of society but to the other young soldiers as well. During the war the Narrator's knee had been injured now he is going through physical therapy in order to correct his knee. The doctors have high hopes for his knee to heal one doctor even inquires about the interests he had before the war.

The narrator tells the doctor he enjoyed football before the war the doctor replies, "You will be able to play football again better than ever" (Hemingway 206). Despite the doctor's hopes like many of the other patients there the narrator is doubtful about this statement. The physical therapy is worked out in a machine to try and bring back the functions of the Narrator's leg such as bending but the machine does not prevail, "But it did not bend yet, and instead it lurched when it came to the bending part" (Hemingway 206). His knee not being able to properly bend back into place the way that it is meant to function symbolizes the fact that no matter how hard society tries they will not be able to bend the narrator himself back into place with all the proper functions. When the narrator finishes his physical therapy he and the other soldiers come together because they are only accepted by each other and no one else understands what they had gone through.

Even if these men had tried to return to society they would not be welcomed because they are not liked or wanted. The soldiers themselves know that they are unwanted without even talking to the people because, "Although, we walk to the Cova through the tough part of town, walking in the dark,

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with the light singing coming out of the wineshops, and sometimes having to walk into the street where the men and women crowd together on the sidewalk so that we would have to jostle them to get by, we felt held together by there being something that had happened that they, the people who disliked us, did not understand” (Hemingway 207-208). Even though these men have nothing in common aside from, “ Having all faced death and survived, the boys are linked in a way that the outsiders cannot understand. This special bond exists between them even though the narrator as an American, is otherwise more of an outsider to the soldiers than the unwounded Italians on the street who despise them. They feel particularly connected at the Cova, where they drink and carouse with local girls” (Galen 1). This bond does not last very long between the Narrator and the other Soldiers because he is an American and that is the only reason the narrator had earned his medals.

The other soldiers now judge him to be a fake and he does not belong to their group either because he had not faced death the way that they had. The injuries that the Narrator had received from the war leaves him disabled limiting him from being able to rejoin society. He is isolated from his old life and from the people he had been able to relate to in his new life rendering him unable to create a stable life for himself in which he can heal. In Hemingway’s “ In Another Country” the Narrator comes to know an Italian Major from the war who is stationed at a machine next to his own. The Major does not trust that the machine will work he also understands that it will not heal him of his other injuries that nothing ever will and he accepts that fact. The Major’s hand had been severely injured during the war like the Narrator

the doctors believe that the machine's will be able to heal his hand if given the right amount of care and time.

The doctors question the Major about his hand's process but the major is not optimistic, " You have confidence?" " No," said the major" (Hemingway 207). Even though the major is shown pictures of other hands that had been healed in worse conditions than his own he does not trust the machine he realizes it is a waste of his time and energy to hope for something that is not possible. The Narrator had mentioned, " He had been a very great fencer, and before the war the greatest fencer in Italy" (Hemingway 207). The war seemed to have left the Major an empty shell void of emotions and when he seemed to gather up some form of anger or remorse he froze up back into the stone the forces had trained him to become. This was shown through an argument the narrator and the major had critiques relay, " One day when the Narrator feels as hopeless about his machine about the major does about his, the major, usually poised and soldier-like, suddenly calls the narrator " a stupid impossible disgrace," who he had been " a fool to bother with." Standing upright to calm himself, the major asks the narrator if he is married" (Galen 2).

Later on we learn that the major's wife has just died he tells the narrator the sad news and although, " The narrator feels sick for him, the major remains controlled, saying, " It is difficult. I cannot resign myself." He then begins to cry. Quickly, however, the major stands erect, like a soldier, and fighting back his tears, exits" (Galen 2). As a result of his training the major is unable to truly mourn his own wife. The major blames the war for taking away his last moments with his wife.

He also blames himself for not being able to be there for her in her time of need if he had been there maybe he would have been able to do something in order to cure her. The narrator asks a doctor about the Major's wife, "The doctor says that the major's wife, a young, healthy woman, had died unexpectedly of pneumonia. The major returns three days later, wearing a black band on his sleeve to signify mourning, a symbol which further separates him from the narrator. Large framed photos of healed hands have been hung to offer the major hope. However, the major ignores them; instead, he just stares out the window, knowing the machines cannot cure him of his different kind of injury" (Galen 2). The major has a broken heart that no matter what anyone attempts to do to cure him of his hand he will never fully recover from the loss of his wife.

The war has taken away the function of his hand, his use over his emotions, and the last few moments he would have been able to share with his wife he will never be able to return to the way things used to be before the war. In "Soldier's Home" Hemingway's main character Krebs is unable to fit back into society the way he is expected to. He is conflicted by his want to fit into his childhood hometown but at the same time guilty for going against his new beliefs after being engaged in the war. After the war Krebs returns home and immediately feels out of place because, "The local folk are eager to hear about heroic war exploits, but they do not want the "truth" about the atrocities of the war" (enotes.com 1).

he wishes to please the people but in order to do that he must go against his beliefs and true feelings in order to do that he had to lie. The narrator says, "Krebs found that to be listened to at all he had to lie, and after he had done <https://assignbuster.com/research-paper-on-the-lost-generation/>

this twice he, too, had a reaction against the war and against talking about it” (Hemingway 111). Even in the comfort of his own home he feels out of place. His family has high expectations for their son; especially his mother. He does not wish to displease them but their requests are easier said than done.

Critiques express, “ Like Nick Adams after he returns from the War, Harold Krebs cannot simply take up his old life. He has undergone a fundamental transformation as a result of his exposure to the horrors of the war” (enotes.com 2). His parents wish for him to get a job in order to move on with his life to contribute to society and settle down to create a family of his own. His mother tells him to pray for God’s blessing so that He may guide him through his life. However he cannot pray because he is “-not in His Kingdom.” He no longer believes in God because of the tragedy he had faced in war how could a God do that to his people and offer no means of hope or escape. He no longer knows how to love but he wishes for approval nor does he wish to see his mother in pain. Although Krebs does not believe he prays for his mother’s sake. Krebs had come to the conclusion that he has changed too much where as his hometown has remained the same in every aspect. He realizes that the only way to try and please his family without going against his own morals he must move away and try to create a new life in a different town. As a result of the war Krebs can no longer relate to his family, he has lost all faith, and is unable to love.

In the end he is forced away from what he was familiar to in order to get used to society in a different setting where the expectations of his success

aren't quite as high for him as the people who know him. In the novel *The Sun Also Rises* Hemingway create two dynamic characters, Brett and Jake, who are truly lost. Both characters struggle with love, loss, faith, and being able to let others into their world if they don't truly belong. During the war Brett had lost her one true love when she thought her life could no longer go on she had met Jake in the infirmary where she had worked as a nurse. Unfortunately for both of them Jake was permanently injured during the war leaving him unable to physically love the way they were expected to. The only thing left for Brett to feel is pain.

“ Oh Darling, I've been so miserable” (Hemingway 24). Brett can no longer feel anything it has gotten to the point that she has made herself so numb that she needs to create pain for other people in order to feel for herself anymore. Brett cannot have the men that she truly loves so she does not allow herself to feel. Therefore she does not allow the people who want her to have her emotionally and sometimes physically, including Jake; “ The two take a cab ride through the streets of Paris, but when he tries to kiss her, Brett turns away, explaining that she cannot go through “ that hell again” (Galen 1-2). She toys with men's minds and allows them to have her physically but she makes no commitment to them. At one point one of the men she has played with became so emotionally distraught by her that, “ He said Brett was a sadist” (Hemingway 166).

Although this is only a theory it is never mentioned in the book that Brett is intentionally causing these men pain or if she is truly trying to move on with her life and she is just too afraid to allow herself to become hurt again. Brett does feel guilt for sleeping around so much that she constantly feels that

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she, “ Must clean myself” because she is dirty and bathing reassures her of her innocent presence (Hemingway 74). Brett is truly lost and has no direction in life. She is unable to love and to keep a steady relationship nor does she have a job that she receives a steady flow of income from. The war destroyed all of her hopes and dreams for the future and she must carry that loss with her wherever she goes.

Jake, The main character of *The Sun Also Rises* searches for some sort of relief to the fact that his injuries leaves him incapable to love someone. He doubts his beliefs in God and cannot accept the people from the outside world. When he was first injured he went to seek the help and guidance of the church but, “ The Catholic Church had an awfully good way of handling all that” (Hemingway 31”. Jake learns to resent the church because they are unable to give him a straight answer and have no real advice for him aside from the fact that he’ll get used to his loss and learn to cope with it. Although this was true he did not entirely give up on his faith.

He goes into a church to pray and catches himself when he realizes that he is praying for selfish things and he thinks to himself, “ I was a little ashamed, and regretted that I was such a rotten Catholic, but realized there was nothing that I could do about it” (Hemingway 97). Jake doesn’t understand how if there was a God how could he turn a blind eye to all of the people who had suffered from the war. He thinks if there was a God then why did I find and fall in love with Brett? If there is a God then why was I injured during the war? If there was a God then why was there a war in the first place? These are all questions that cannot be answered and make Jake doubt that there is a God in the first place. Along with the rest of the lost generation the

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Characters in this novel all love to drink. They Drink in order to become numb to forget about their worries and their cares.

Jake and his friends arrive at a hotel and they don't inquire the price of the rooms rather they ask, " Is the wine included" (Hemingway 110). To them there is nothing to fear as long as there is alcohol there to blind them from the pain and dangers of the world. Jake is originally an American but after the war he chooses to remain in Europe because, " You're an ex patriot. You've lost touch with your soil" (Hemingway 115). This expresses that Jake no longer belongs to America because he doesn't understand how to fit back into the society there.

America was physically untouched by the war therefor it could not adjust to the ex patriots who had returned home to it. The lost Generation was not accepted back into their homes properly because they no longer belonged there, as a result the lost generation did not react well to outsiders trying to make friends with them. One man tried to belong to the group of ex patriots but he did not realize that he was unwelcomed by them until someone had confronted him about it, " Do you think you belong among us?" (Hemingway 177). Even if society had wished for these men and women to come back into their world The Lost Generation themselves did not take the offer kindly. The Lost Generation had come to realize their fate they know where they belong and they know the place of society. The war had destroyed them, " They both know that this is the end of the line for them, and that each will spend the years ahead drifting without purpose" (Galen 3).

Brett and Jake came to accept their fate and came to understand that even after creating their own world there was really no point to it and there was no going back to what they used to have. The Lost Generation was a misunderstood group of people who were unable to fit back into their old roles in society. They had become shadows of what they used to be and did not know how to return to what they had because most of what they had had been taken away from them. All of them had suffered from some sort of loss that they will never be able to regain. They carry their pain and the weight of the world on their shoulders because that is the only thing the war had left them with. Their physical, emotional, and mental pain and loss is all that they have left to remind them of the war.

They were no longer accepted because they were misunderstood so society had banished them to create a new begging and just as society abandoned them they had made society an outcast to them. This has been beautifully illustrated through Ernest Hemingway's Works of "In Another Country", "Soldier's Home", and *The Sun Also Rises*. His characters were victims of war, society, and themselves amounting to nothing aside from being lost.