
A generation gap?

WORKSHEET A

Liam (16)

Young people aren't treated fairly by the media. Every day there's something negative in the papers about people my age – stuff like antisocial behavior, or drugs, or fights between gangs. The media create the idea that young people don't have enough respect for other members of society, and that all they care about is having a good time. Well, all I know is that my friends aren't like that.

New technology is one of the things that makes it harder for the different generations to understand each other. Things like social networking sites are an everyday part of my life, but they're a mystery to a lot of people my parents' age. Little things like that add to a sense of separation.

John (59)

Lots of people my age seem to think today's teenagers are a waste of space, but I tell them they're looking at the past through rose-colored glasses. They say young people today are more individualistic, or even selfish, than in the past, and that their sense of right and wrong isn't as strong as that of older people. There might be a little bit of truth in that, but in general I think the differences are exaggerated. I know I don't look at my own kids, who are 19 and 23, and wish they were more like I was at their age.

One thing that worries me slightly, though, is the possibility that kids today don't appreciate how lucky they are. They have a lot more money to spend than they did 50 years ago, and more choices available to them, but I don't think they're happier than we were.

Mary (85)

Of course there's a gap between people my age and the younger generations. People of my age experienced a world war, and many of us can remember poverty of a kind that hardly exists these days, at least in the United States. That really shapes your outlook on life. Most young people growing up today have never known hardship, so they're less likely to appreciate what they have.

I'm sure youngsters' behavior hasn't got worse in every way, but I do think some of them lack respect for authority. They don't have enough discipline. My granddaughter is a teacher, and tells me awful stories about some of the children in her school. In my day it would have been unthinkable to behave like they do, or even to use the foul language they do – we would have had our mouths washed out with soap, and rightly so.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Here are some simple definitions for words that appear in the text on Worksheet A. Find the words they refer to and fill in the blanks.

1. If you **___ k** at something through **r ___ -c _____ g _____ s** (idiom), you consider it to be better than it really is.
2. **___ v ___ y** (noun): a situation in which someone does not have enough money to pay for their basic needs
3. **___ ia** (noun): radio, television, newspapers, the internet, and magazines, considered as a group
4. A person who is **_ n _____ c** (adjective) believes that what individual people want is more important than what society or the government wants.
5. **_ i _** (noun – informal): child or, sometimes, teenager or young adult
6. If you **_ p _____ te** (verb) something, or a situation, you understand its true nature. You would realize, for example, how good or important it is.
7. **a ___ or ___** (noun): the people and institutions in society that have the power to tell other people what to do (e.g. the police, and teachers)
8. **un _____ able** (adjective): impossible to imagine
9. **s ___** (noun): a substance that you use with water to wash your body or an object. It can be a liquid, but is usually a solid piece called a bar.
10. **y _____ er** (noun – informal): child or young person. (In Britain this is a word used mainly by old people.)
11. **_____ soc ___** (adjective): showing a lack of care for other people or for society in general
12. **h ___ sh ___** (noun): a situation in which life is very difficult
13. A **s _____ l _ etw _____ s ___** (noun), such as Facebook or MySpace, allows you to communicate with friends and make new friends.
14. **___ look** (noun): your general attitude towards things
15. **a w _____ of s _____** (idiom): an insulting way of referring to someone or something that is completely useless

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

Decide for which of the three people (Liam, John, Mary) the following statements are true.

1. They mention other people of a similar age to themselves.
2. They mention economic changes.
3. They mention an idea other people have about young people, which they don't (or don't entirely) agree with.

Exercise 3

Decide whether the following statements are true (*T*) or false (*F*), or if the text doesn't determine (*D*).

1. Liam thinks his friends are similar to the young people who are often written about in the newspapers.
2. Mary thinks life is harder for young people today than it was when she was growing up.
3. John totally disagrees with the idea that young people are more individualistic or selfish than they used to be.
4. Liam tries to avoid reading newspapers.
5. John has a more positive opinion of young people than some other people of his age.
6. From what her granddaughter tells her, Mary thinks schoolchildren today behave worse than they did when she was in school.
7. None of the three people gives an example of how young people today behave *better* than they did in the past.
8. Liam regularly uses social networking websites.

Exercise 4

Answer the questions below.

1. What is the idea about young people that John thinks there might be "a little bit of truth" in?
2. In what way does Liam think technology can add to a sense of separation between the generations?
3. What does John not wish?
4. There is a similarity between something Mary says about young people and, according to Liam, an idea the media have about young people. What is it?