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# The Consequences of The First World War and The Formation Of The “Lost Generation” Phenomenon

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the consequences of the First World War and the resulting emergence of the phenomenon known as the “Lost Generation.” The war affected not only political and economic spheres but also had a profound impact on human psychology and social consciousness. The article explores how the concept of the “Lost Generation” took shape through literature, art, and social attitudes, shedding light on the worldview and outlook on life of this generation. It highlights post-war societal changes within a historical and cultural context.

**Keywords:** First World War, Lost Generation, trauma, human psyche, war consequences, modernism, society.

**Introduction:** The First World War, which lasted from 1914 to 1918, was a global conflict and one of the most devastating wars in history, involving many of the world’s major powers. The causes of the war were complex and multifaceted, stemming from a combination of political, economic, and social factors that contributed to the outbreak of hostilities. Likewise, the consequences of the war were extensive and significantly influenced the course of history. For decades, the major European powers had been engaged in an arms race, amassing military strength and weaponry. This militaristic mindset created an unstable environment with a high probability of conflict.

On July 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, arrived in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, to observe military exercises. This was not just a casual visit. July 28 was a day of mourning for

the Serbs, and holding military exercises near Serbia's borders on that particular day was a clear provocation. Such an act enraged Serbian nationalist circles.

The First World War, which broke out in the early 20th century, left a deep mark on the entire course of human history. Millions were killed, wounded, or psychologically scarred. The war not only played out on battlefields but also triggered destructive shifts in societal consciousness. It was during this period that the phenomenon of the "Lost Generation" emerged. This article examines the nature of this phenomenon, the factors that shaped it, and its impact on literature and social life.

War has long been one of the leading themes in world literature and art. In oral folklore—especially epic works like *Gorogly*, *Alpomish*, *Manas*, *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, and *Kalevala*—war is a central theme across various peoples and time periods. In the field of global literary studies, such works are often categorized under the term "war literature." According to a German literary terminology dictionary, war literature is defined as literature in which war constitutes the main event and theme.

Russian literary scholar O. Pokhlyenkov notes that the term "war literature" lacks a clear and precise definition in both foreign and Russian sources. According to him, the term is only defined in relation to World War II in the *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. The protagonists of war-themed literature in Western literary tradition are often referred to as the "Lost Generation."

Among Western authors of the 20th century, the German writer Erich Maria Remarque stands out for his powerful depiction of the Lost Generation. Just before graduating from school, he was conscripted into the war and spent fifty days on the battlefield. His debut novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, originally published under the title *My Youth, Gone Without a Trace*, brought him worldwide fame.

In 1928, the circulation of the German newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* began to surge rapidly due to the serialization of this novel, authored by the then-unknown Remarque. The German public was captivated by the realistic portrayal of the tragedy of the Lost Generation—youths who, like themselves, were forced to shoot at fellow adolescents. The novel vividly depicts the war and its aftermath with stark honesty.

## MAIN PART

The soldiers who directly participated in the war suffered great psychological trauma from combat operations, death, injury, and a constant atmosphere

of fear. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) became widespread and was reflected in the works of many writers and artists. Mental distress, a sense of emptiness, aimlessness, and the collapse of values became the dominant themes in the lives of representatives of the "Lost Generation." The protagonists of works dealing with the theme of war in Western literature were called the "Lost Generation." In the 20th-century Western literature, the German writer Erich Maria Remarque most profoundly and extensively portrayed this theme. He was conscripted just before graduating from school and served on the battlefield for fifty days. His debut novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which made him world-famous, was initially translated and published under the title *My Lost Youth*. In 1928, the circulation of the German newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* increased significantly due to the serialization of Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, authored by a then-unknown writer. The German public read the novel with great interest, as it realistically depicted the tragedy of a "Lost Generation"—youths forced to fire on peers like themselves. The novel candidly illustrated the realities of war and its aftermath. Millions of people, especially young men who had barely begun to live, were dying or returning maimed in vain, while newspaper headlines continued to state: "All Quiet on the Western Front."

In the epigraph to his debut novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Remarque captures the essence of its artistic and ideological message:

"This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped its shells, were destroyed by the war."

The phrase "Lost Generation" was first used by American writer Gertrude Stein and popularized by Ernest Hemingway. The term refers to a generation that came of age during World War I but lost its hopes, psychological stability, and trust in life because of the war. Writers like Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Erich Maria Remarque were part of this generation. In Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises*, the characters seek comfort and meaning in various things. The novel's epigraph includes Gertrude Stein's words: "You are all a lost generation." Since then, the phrase began to be used as a literary term.

The war affected every layer of society: patriarchal systems weakened, and women entered the labor market actively during wartime. However, instead of stability in the postwar period, society faced psychological and moral decline. Political radicalism,

economic crises, and social mistrust intensified in many countries.

The phenomenon of the “Lost Generation” is not just a literary term but a powerful concept that reflects the socio-psychological condition of a historical generation. Through this phenomenon, we analyze the inner experiences of people after the war, social instability, and the collapse of values. Art and literature became the primary fields that deeply expressed this psychological transformation. Works such as Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* and Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* vividly depict these conditions.

In Uzbek oral and written literature, the theme of war is represented in prose works like *The Sun Won’t Darken* (Oybek), *The Years in Uniform* (Shuhrat), *Master Asror* (A. Qahhor), *When Trouble Befalls a Man* (O. Yoqubov), *The Horizon* (S. Ahmad), *Time in My Fate* (A. Muxtor), *Between Two Doors, Lives Lived in Dreams*, *The War’s Last Victim* (O. Hoshimov), *The Saintly Human* (R. Fayziy), *People of War* (N. Eshonqul), *My Dear, Smile*, *The First Day of War*, *Tell Me When the War Ends So I Can Return* (Q. Norqobil), *The Continuation of War*, *The Color of Death*, *The Cry Across the River* (N. Jaloliddin), and *Afghanistan—My Lament* (Abdugʻafur Iskandar). These also appear in poetry, especially in the works of Gʻafur Gʻulom and Zulfiya, showcasing all the horrors and disasters inflicted on humanity. Among these works, there are both conceptually and artistically weaker pieces as well as highly mature literary examples.

Professor U. Oʻljaboyev, who conducted research on war literature, noted: “The depiction of war scenes and the exploration of the emotional and spiritual world of people who lived during this time differ fundamentally between those who began their literary careers during the war and those whose childhood coincided with it.” The difference lies mainly in the aesthetic principles—some works overly portray the enemy as weak, glorify local soldiers excessively, or give undue emphasis to the hegemony of the Communist Party. In contrast, talented writers focus on the inner world and unparalleled heroism of ordinary soldiers at the front lines.

Although some authors in 21st-century Uzbek literature have addressed the theme of war, poetry has almost ceased to tackle it. In this regard, the collection *Great 75* by Salim Ashur, which gathers poems about war, marked a new development for literary enthusiasts. Though the poems depict scenes of war and its aftermath similar to 20th-century works, their imagery and expressive style feature significant innovation.

## Conclusion

The First World War was one of the most horrifying tragedies in human history—it not only claimed the lives of millions but also profoundly transformed the moral, psychological, and cultural fabric of society. The “Lost Generation” phenomenon echoes these transformations, and through the attitudes of this generation toward life, society, and the future, we can grasp the deep consequences of war. Studying this phenomenon remains relevant today in understanding the impact of modern wars and conflicts on humanity. Its causes lie in a complex network of political, economic, and social factors, while its consequences have continued to be reflected over the following years. The lessons learned from the First World War still shape efforts to resolve international relations and conflicts to this day.

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