
Writer's Statement about "Kids These Days: An Analysis of the Rhetoric against Youth across Five Generations"

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Diving into English Composition II, I had no idea of the expectations of the class. I just knew that somehow, after a couple of months, I would have written a research paper. At a minimum of nine pages, it would have to be the most lengthy and thoughtful piece I've ever created. However, my intimidation weaned through the course of the class. Professor Richardson guided us, and I soon found that every assignment, every reading, would help me compose this final paper. I began to have faith, that for the first time, I could write something to be proud of.

Choosing a topic was by far the most difficult part of the process. It had to be a topic that would keep me as the researcher interested and engaged. I thought about all the things I like doing and learning about. There's history, television shows, theater, movies, board games. Nothing clicked. I also took into account that it's important to write what you know. No matter how interesting I find astrophysics, no amount of research would help me contribute anything intelligent to the subject. I panicked. I wasn't qualified to write about anything.

My inspiration sprung to me from a news article. It featured a high school teacher whose graduation speech to students centered on telling them they're not special. At first I kind of agreed with the speaker, thinking of all the spoiled brats I know. But then I read the comments on the article, and the general consensus was that Generation Y is the worst generation. Many commentators even provided anecdotal examples of teens that show up late to work, get free cars and iPads from their parents, and demand they get good grades for no work. These were gross generalizations of millions of people, and the passion I felt against these stereotypes is what fueled me to choose this topic. The rhetoric in these comments was ridiculous and fascinating, and I knew I could tie this topic into writing about writing.

The research was fun. I read excerpts from books and research papers on the characteristics of Gen Y versus other generations. I knew what I wanted to do, prove or disprove Gen Y is worse than previous generations, but I didn't know what direction to take. Surveys and polls would be tainted by bias, plus most research on the topic has consisted of surveys. Professor Richardson stressed for us to add to the conversation, and I wasn't sure I could really add anything. All I had was raw data other people have collected and my own opinion.

Weeks passed and deadlines approached. I considered completely scrapping the idea and starting new, but I knew I was onto something. How could I compare what adults thought of the youth of each generation? The same way I found out what adults today think about us: the news. Google News led me to a wealth of articles from 1920 to today using keywords like "kids today,"

“spoiled,” “youth,” “generation,” and “entitled.” I noticed the similarities in the content, no matter what the date was. And, in that thought, I had the essence of my paper.

The aspect I found most surprising in the process was how easy it was to actually sit down and type it. After weeks of research and preparation, it had almost written itself. I dreaded having to take this class, and I wholeheartedly believed this paper would be a mess of half-formed thoughts. As someone who finds writing so painful that forcing me to keep a diary is the best way to punish me, I’m happy to say this paper was a joy to construct.