

# Identity and Diversity in My Generation

*Compelling Question: In what ways is my generation diverse and why does it matter?*

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-2	3-5	50–60 Minutes	Reading: R1, R7 Writing: W3, W7 Speaking & Listening: SL1
MS	HS		



## Web Related Connections

### Lessons

- [Census Question Controversy](#)
- [Representing the People: Diversity and Elections](#)
- [Teens, Tech, Connect: How Technology Impacts Teenagers' Friendships](#)

### Other Resources

- [Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment](#)
- [Definitions Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#)
- [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)

## Key Words

affluence  
census  
data  
demographic  
diverse  
generation  
geography  
identity  
indicator  
mobility  
plurality  
recession  
representation

## LESSON OVERVIEW

The post-millennial generation, or “Gen Z,” is the most racially diverse generation in U.S. history. According to a Pew Research analysis of Census data, this generation, born between 1997 and 2012, is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation, with 48% identifying as people of color. In early 2019, *The New York Times* did a call-out asking Gen Zers to respond to the question, “What makes you different from your friends?” and asked them to identify themselves however they wanted and to send a self-portrait. In order for the team to collect as many different voices as possible, they reached out to a variety of communities and organizations across the U.S. Within 48 hours, the *Times* received 2,500 submissions and ultimately published nearly 1,000 of them.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about Gen Z, reflect on their identities in order to create self-portraits/quotes that represent themselves and reflect on images and quotes by a wide diversity of this generation.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore the value of diversity while analyzing the demographics of members of Gen Z and their diversity.
- Students will consider their own identities and create self-portraits and quotes that represent their unique identities.
- Students will reflect on Gen Z self-portraits and quotes collected by *The New York Times*.

## MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- [KWL Chart](#) (one for each student)
- “Early Benchmarks Show ‘Post-Millennials’ on Track to Be Most Diverse, Best-Educated Generation Yet” (Pew Center Research, November 15, 2018, [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/11/15/early-benchmarks-show-post-millennials-on-track-to-be-most-diverse-best-educated-generation-yet/](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/11/15/early-benchmarks-show-post-millennials-on-track-to-be-most-diverse-best-educated-generation-yet/), one for each student)
- Gen Z: In Their Own Words (*The New York Times*, [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/us/generation-z.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/us/generation-z.html))
- WiFi, internet, computer, screen or LCD projector

## PROCEDURES



### Information Sharing: My Generation

1. Explain to students that this lesson is about the diversity of Gen Z, which is being described as the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history; it is also a generation that is more comfortable identifying and talking about sexual orientation and gender identity than previous generations.
2. Ask students: *Does anyone know who Gen Z refers to?* Explain that Gen Z refers to the generation born between 1997 and 2012 in the U.S., the generation born after millennials. Based on that, ask for those in the class to raise their hands if they consider themselves to be part of Gen Z.
3. Ask students: *What is identity?* Elicit/explain a definition of **identity** as follows:  
**Identity:** The qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others.
4. Ask students to brainstorm the different categories of identity and create a list on the board/smart board which could include some or all of the following.
 

**Note:** Be mindful that sometimes when people are asked to discuss identity, they focus on the more “comfortable” aspects of identity including personality and hobbies/interests rather than social identity group categories like race and religion. If that happens, ask questions and push students to identify those categories as well.

<input type="radio"/> Race	<input type="radio"/> Ethnicity	<input type="radio"/> Education	<input type="radio"/> Political Affiliation
<input type="radio"/> Gender	<input type="radio"/> Nationality	<input type="radio"/> Immigration Status	<input type="radio"/> Talents, Interests, Hobbies
<input type="radio"/> Gender Identity	<input type="radio"/> Religion	<input type="radio"/> Languages Spoken	<input type="radio"/> Geography: part of country, type of community (e.g., urban, suburb, rural)
<input type="radio"/> Sexual Orientation	<input type="radio"/> Ability/Disability	<input type="radio"/> Culture	
5. Distribute a [KWL Chart](#) to each student and ask: *What do you know about Gen Z? Based on the identity categories we brainstormed, how might you describe Gen Z in terms of diversity?*  
 As students share what they know, record their thoughts on the board/smart board. For each piece of information shared, elicit more from them by asking: *How do you know that? Where did you learn that?* Have students choose some of what is shared to record on their KWL Chart under the first column: “Know.” Explain that as they learn more about Gen Z throughout the course of the lesson, they will complete the KWL (“Know, Want to Know, Learned”) chart which will help them organize what they already know, what they want to know and what they learn throughout the lesson.
6. Ask students: *Based on the identity categories above, is there anything you think you know about Gen Z? What more do you want to know?* Have them fill in category W for “Want to know” based on their questions.



### Reading Activity

1. Distribute a copy of article [“Early Benchmarks Show ‘Post-Millennials’ on Track to Be Most Diverse, Best-Educated Generation Yet”](#) to each student and give them 15 minutes to read silently.
 

**Note:** If time is limited, have students read up until the section, “Post-Millennials more likely to be pursuing college and less likely to be in the workforce.”
2. Engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:
  - What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
  - What surprises you from what you read?
  - What is something you knew or suspected that was confirmed by the article?
  - How does the information in the article resonate (or not) with what you know about Gen Z?
  - Why does the report refer to this generation as “post-millennial” as opposed to “Gen Z?”
  - How is this information relevant or useful?

- What impact does the diversity of this generation have on society?
  - What is your overall takeaway from the article?
  - What questions do you still have?
3. After the discussion, have students take out their KWL charts and add 3–5 things they learned from the reading in the L column (“Learned”) and 1–3 questions they still have in the W column (“Want to Know”).

### Our Diversity in Pictures

1. Explain to students that in early 2019, *The New York Times* did a call-out asking Gen Zers to respond to the question, “What makes you different from your friends?” They asked them to identify themselves however they wanted and send a photo self-portrait. Within 48 hours, they received 2,500 submissions and the *Times* published nearly 1,000 of them. Because the team collecting the portraits wanted to include as many different voices as possible, they reached out to Native American communities; diversity offices at colleges with specific efforts made to contact historically black colleges/universities; Muslim communities; and many other organizations.
2. Explain to students that they are going to create a class photo gallery similar to *The New York Times* online exhibit. To do this, have students look on their phones and identify a photo that best expresses and/or represents how they see themselves right now. If they don’t have a photo that best represents them, allow them to take a photo during class or have a classmate take one of them. If there are students who don’t have phones, allow other students to take photos of them.
 

**Note:** If your school or classroom doesn’t allow phones, you can have students do this for homework.
3. After students have selected their photos, explain that they will now do some writing to go along with the photo; explain that their reflection will be shared so they should write something they feel comfortable sharing with the class. Write the following prompts on the board/smart board.
  - How would you describe your identity?
  - What makes you different from your friends or others in school?
  - In what way(s) are you unique?
4. Explain to students that they will do a “quick write” response to the prompts. This means they will have a short amount of time to write; in this case, give students seven minutes to write.
5. After writing, have students turn and talk with someone sitting next to them. Have each of them share their quick write with each other. Next have student selects one or two sentences (or write a new sentence or two based on their quick write) that best captures their thoughts about their identity and what makes them different. Explain that this sentence(s) will be their quote that goes along with their self-portraits. They can enlist the help of their partner (or not) in this process.
6. Next, have students take their self-portraits and using an app that adds text to photos (e.g., Word Swag, Phonto, Canva), have students include (1) their quote and (2) the way they identify themselves, including when they were born, their location and other identifying features such as race, gender identity, religion, sexuality, etc. (e.g., born 2002, Mexican, Female, Bisexual, Orlando, FL).
7. Have students share their self-portraits and quotes with the rest of the class, either by sharing as a presentation one-at-a-time, creating a photo gallery in the class and/or creating an online gallery.
8. After sharing the class photos/quotes, engage students in a brief discussion by asking:
  - What do you notice about the photos/quotes?
  - Are you surprised by anything?
  - What did you learn by doing this?

## Gen Z Diversity in Photos and Quotes

**Note to Teacher:** You can make this a 2-part lesson and instead of showing the images in class as described below, have students look at them for homework in between the two parts of the lesson. It is best if students look at *The New York Times*' images after they have created their own as described in the previous activity. The purpose of doing it this way is to allow for open and creative expression for the students before having them look and read about others.

1. Tell students that they are now going to view self-portraits/quotes of Gen Zers from *The New York Times* online exhibit of photos/quotes. Explain that you are going to show them several images and they can take notes on impressions, words, quotes, images or anything else they want to remember. They should also record vocabulary words or phrases for which they may be unfamiliar (you can have students look these up using a dictionary or ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#)).
2. Project some of the photos, at least 20–25 but ideally more depending on how much time you have. As you project the images, ask students to read aloud the quotes on the images. If you have time and allow smartphones/devices to be used in your classroom, provide the URL of the photo exhibit ([www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/us/generation-z.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/us/generation-z.html)) and have students spend time looking at as many of the images as possible on their own.
3. After viewing the photos, engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:
  - How did it feel to see all these photos and quotes by Gen Zers?
  - What differences did you notice in the photos/quotes?
  - Were there any groups of people that were well represented?
  - What groups were not well represented?
  - What pictures/quotes stood out for you?
  - Were there any photos/quotes that resonated for you?
  - Do you think the selection of photos represents the diversity of Gen Z? Please explain.
  - In what ways was the collection of photos similar to or different from the photos in our class? What do you think this means?
  - From these photos, how would you best characterize the diversity of Gen Z?
  - What is diversity? What is representation? Why are they important in our society today?

## Closing

Have students identify one remaining question they have about diversity/identity and Gen Z. They can add this question to their KWL chart under W ("Want to know") and use it as the foundation for a follow-up research report. As a final closing, have students each state out loud their question with the class.

## ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- ["8 Key Differences between Gen Z and Millennials"](#) (*Huffington Post*, November 5, 2016)
- [Diversity, Division, Discrimination: The State of Young America](#) report (MTV/PRRI, January 10, 2018)
- ["Generation Z Is The Most Racially And Ethnically Diverse Yet"](#) (NPR, November 15, 2018)
- ["Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues"](#) (Pew Research Center, January 17, 2019)
- ["Generation Z: Who They Are, in Their Own Words"](#) (*The New York Times*, March 28, 2019)
- ["Gen Z: New Gender Norms, Fake News, Frugality and The Rise Of Retail's Next Power Generation"](#) (Forbes, October 14, 2018)

- [“How We Gave These Gen Z-ers the Space to Define Themselves”](#) (*The New York Times*, April 2, 2019)
- [“Move Over, Millennials, Here Comes Generation Z”](#) (*The New York Times*, September 18, 2015)

## Common Core Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
R7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
Writing
W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
Language
L1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

## KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) Chart

<b>K</b> now	<b>W</b> ant to Know	<b>L</b> earned