

Figure 1.1 Who We Were, Who We Are, and Who We Teach

Generation	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Administrators • Parents of Teachers • Parents of Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Administrators • Parents of Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Students • Parents of Students
Years/Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1946-1964 • 77 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1965-1978 • 45 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1979-2000 • 70 million
History: Influential Events & Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents' experience during Depression and WW II • Korean & Vietnam Wars • Television • McCarthy Era • Nuclear Era • Sputnik Era • Rosa Parks/Civil Rights • Rock-n-Roll • JFK, RFK, MLK killed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watergate Scandal • U.S. Hostages in Iran • Computers • Regan Era • AIDS • <i>Nation at Risk</i> • Women's Movement • Lennon killed • Environmental Movement • Fall of Berlin Wall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9/11 attack • Gulf War/Iraq War • Columbine shootings • Oklahoma City bombing • Dot.com Boom/Bust • No Child Left Behind • Internet • Cell phones, pagers • Social networking • Busy, over-planned life
Media: What They Watched, Played, & Used to Communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Leave It to Beaver</i> • Walter Cronkite • Elvis Pressley • 4 TV stations • Radio/Record Albums • Letters • Telephone • Face-to-Face • <i>Monopoly</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brady Bunch</i> • Dan Rather • The Beatles • 4 TV stations; VCR • Radio/Albums/CDs • Letters • Telephone • Face-to-Face • <i>Pacman</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Simpsons</i> • John Stewart & Oprah • Tupac Shakur • 100s of TV stations; DVR • Radio/CDs/iPods/iPhone • Cell phone • Email and texting • Facebook • <i>World of Warcraft</i>
Texts: What They Read in/out of School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> • <i>Lord of the Rings</i> • Newspapers • Comic books • <i>Time, Rolling Stone</i> • <i>Doonesbury</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> • <i>Speak</i> • Newspapers • Chat rooms, forums • <i>WIRED</i> • <i>Dilbert</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> • <i>Harry Potter</i> series • Blogs, wikis, tweets • Facebook/MySpace • Manga/Graphic Novels • <i>Calvin and Hobbes</i>
Heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gandhi • Martin Luther King, Jr. • John F. Kennedy • John Glenn • Malcolm X • Caesar Chavez 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None <p>(Note: I checked several sources; none come up, even in discussions of who such heroes might be.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Jordan • Princess Diana • Mother Teresa • Bill Gates • Christopher Reeves • Barack & Michelle Obama
Core Values and Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimism • Social responsibility • Work • Health, wellness, nature • Personal growth • Personal gratification • Authenticity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reliance • Diversity • Life-work balance • Technology • Pragmatism • Informality • Fun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimism • Social responsibility • Ambition • Morality/Integrity/Ethics • Confidence • Sociability • Diversity
Attitudes: Life & Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live to work • Value rewards other than \$ • Hard-working • Focused on family • Seek flexibility in work • Devoted to company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to live • Value material rewards • Optimistic about personal future but not world • Resist/resent supervision • Fragmented as a group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live to work (but expect reward and recognition) • Value rewards other than \$ • Optimistic • Close to parents • Global awareness

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to equity, justice • Want to make a difference • Collaborative, social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need/resist feedback • Comfortable with change • Effort, commitment vary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-minded about other cultures, sexual prefs • <i>Very</i> social, collaborative
Reaction to Previous Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redefined roles • Left unfulfilling relationships for more satisfying ones • Sought immediate gratification • Bent rules to meet own needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By-pass authority or used it to achieve own end • Avoided attention, labels • Thought: <i>Get a life</i> • Believed politics never the solution; useless • Rejected nostalgia for 1960s, past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate authority and structure • Respect and enjoy their parents and boss • Seek leadership roles because optimistic, confident, ambitious • Embrace nostalgia for past
Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service oriented • Ambitious • Disciplined • Cooperative • Considerate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible • Technoliterate • Independent • Unintimidated by authority • Creative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Optimism • Persistence • Ambition • Ability to multitask • Digital Natives
Liabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid conflict with others • Stress process over product • Oversensitive to criticism • Judgmental of those with different opinions • Self-centered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impatient • Rude, blunt, disrespectful • Inexperienced • Cynical • Discipline (work ethic) • Commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need structure, supervision • Inexperienced • Tend to take on too much • Oversensitive to criticism • Need for approval, praise • Skeptical

Recommendations for Teaching Generation Y Students: What They Need If They Are to Succeed

- Provide “no fault quizzes” and other such non-threatening opportunities to improve score, performance, learning through alternative methods of assessment, additional work, and revision of initial efforts.
- Create a “learning-centered” classroom that accommodates and emphasizes the different learning styles of students in your class.
- Serve as a guide, mentor, or coach; develop a relationship with students to show you know and care about them.
- Make students responsible for their own learning instead of delivering content to them by passive lecturing.
- Set high standards and maintain high expectations by creating demanding, challenging problems for students to solve, then working with them on and providing them examples of how to solve these problems.
- Emphasize effort and attitude, persistence and learning (instead of ability) whenever possible.
- Design experiences that incorporate opportunities to collaborate, create, and simulate with others in class, online.
- Consider text and task selection in light of Gen Y interests, issues, experiences, and strengths.

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Sources: DonTapscott, *Grown Up Digital; Bridging the Generation Gap: How to Get Radio Babies, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers to Work Together And Achieve More* by Linda Gravet, Robin Throckmorton; *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace*, Ron Zemke. Hewlett, Sylvia, Sherbin, Laura, and Sumberg, Karen. “How Gen Y & Boomers Will Reshape Your Agenda.” *Harvard Business Review*. July-Aug 09 (71-76). I am particularly grateful for ideas about teaching Gen Y students found in “Teaching Generation Y—Three Initiatives,” by Susan Eisner in the *Journal of College and Teaching Learning* (2004). Finally, thanks to Jennifer Abrams for her workshop at the 2009 California Teachers of English Conference on teaching and working with different generations.