



## Gen Z: Born to Be Digital

*Smartphones. Social media. Virtual reality. Artificial intelligence. Generation Z is the first to be born into a time when that technology existed.*

5 Gen Zers are the first digital natives, born between 1997 and 2012, into a world of vast technological advances and innovations. They are unlike other generations, who either grew up without or came into adulthood during the rise of social media, smartphones and instant accessibility of information.

Students across the country are aware of the ways in which their childhood has been unique from their parents and grandparents. New Jersey native and American University student Emily Carnevale said that Facebook has become the key way for people to join together over ideology.

10 “Gen Z is one of the first groups to grow up with the formations of social media, which has altered the way we think and do everyday things. It has even become a major part of our political engagement,” Carnevale said.

They are finding the world of advanced technology and constant connectivity both helpful and hurtful.

15 Some students, like 19-year-old Mary Liebers of Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, said technological innovations such as YouTube and other digital tools can be beneficial in accessing information, but harmful as a distraction.

“I think (technology) has been a really good tool for doing research, and having all sorts of information at my fingertips has helped me be proactive in my learning in some ways,” Liebers said.

20 “I also think that social media, specifically, has taken away from my education, in that I have spent so much time on it when I could have been doing other, more beneficial things,” she added.

Technology has afforded Gen Zers different learning styles and tools. In August 2018, education publisher Pearson reported that 59% of Gen Zers preferred using YouTube, compared with 55% of millennials, the generation that preceded them. More telling is that only 47% of Gen Z said they preferred learning on paper books, compared with 60% of millennials.

25 Technology is not just changing education and Gen Z. Technology has increased connectivity with the outside world but also increased depression and suicide and changed how Gen Zers perceive themselves. Earlier generations did not have technology that delivered gratification or disappointment as immediately as digital delivery of information does today.

30 Online and social media, for example, have opened up the world for Gen Zers, encouraging them to connect and collaborate with others around the world. But they also allow Gen Zers to shut out the outside world and live within online communities and echo chambers.

“The rapid evolution of how people communicate and interact” informs how new generations behave, said Michael Dimock, president of the Pew Research Center, in an article about defining generations.

35 Depression and suicide rates have increased in the past 10 years across the U.S., and in particular among America’s youth. One factor often attributed to the rise in depression and suicide rates among Gen Zers is their unique connection with technology.

According to the Center for Generational Kinetics, an Austin, Texas-based research firm, 42% of Gen Z — more than any other generation — said social media affects how other people see you. The same percentage of Gen Z also said that social media has a direct impact on how they feel about themselves.



40 “This new generation (Gen Z) is becoming the digital shepherd of a new era in technology adoption and reliance. Their acceptance and usage of technology is likely to be more similar to that of peers in distant countries than grandparents in their own country,” said Jason Dorsey, chief strategy officer of the center, in a study on Gen Z and technology.

45 “What this means to every other generation remains to be seen. But what it means to those interested in generational change is that Gen Z has assumed the millennials’ mantle of the generation to know, understand and engage,” he added.

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**Annotations:**

**I.2 – artificial intelligence:** the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings; **I.4 – vast:** of very great size or proportions; **instant:** happening or coming immediately; **I.10 – to alter:** to change something, usually slightly; **I.15 – beneficial:** helpful, useful, or good; **I.15 – to access:** the ability, right, or permission to approach, enter, speak with, or use; **I.23 – to precede:** to be or go before someone or something in time or space; **I.26 – to perceive:** to become aware of, know, or identify something or someone; **I.27 – gratification:** is the emotional reaction of happiness in response to a fulfillment of a desire or goal; **I.29 – to encourage:** to help someone to feel confident and able to do something, or to give advice to someone to do something; **I.30 – to collaborate:** to work with someone else for a special purpose; **I.31 – to echo chambers:** a situation in which people only hear opinions of one type, or opinions that are similar to their own; **I.35 – to attribute:** to say that (something) is because of (someone or something); **I.41 – reliance:** the state of depending on or trusting in something or someone; **I.41 – peers:** a person of the same age, the same social position, or having the same abilities as other people in a group; **I.44 – to remain:** to stay in the same place or in the same condition; **I.45 – to assume:** to take on or put on (the appearance, form, role, etc. of); **I.45 – mantle:** the responsibilities of an important position or job, especially as given from the person who had the job to the person who replaces them; **I.46 – to engage:** participate or become involved in

**Source:** Seymour, Emily. “Gen Z: Born to Be Digital”. VOA News, August 25, 2019, <[https://www.voanews.com/a/student-union\\_gen-z-born-be-digital/6174519.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/student-union_gen-z-born-be-digital/6174519.html)>, Accessed: November 27,23.

**Assignments: Comprehension – Analysis – Evaluation**

- a) Outline **two advantages** and **two disadvantages** of the world of advanced technology and constant connectivity.
- b) Examine what kind of **language** and **methods** the author uses to convince the readers of the **benefits** and **dangers** of a world of vast technological advances and innovations. Focus on four aspects and give evidence from the text with line numbers.
- c) Based on the information in the text, your prior knowledge discussed in class as well as your own ideas/experiences, discuss the **pros** and **cons** of a school that uses vast technological advances and innovations in a comment. Would you like to go there?