NEWS & VIEWS

SYLVIA PLATH AND GEN Z: A GENERATION'S VOICE FOR ANXIETY AND HOPE

In the past few years, there has been a strange culture trend among Generation Z: a strong and general interest in the works of existential and confessional writers such as Sylvia Plath, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Albert Camus, and Friedrich Nietzsche. People used to think that these writers were only for a small group of people or school, but now they're well-known on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Fear, sadness, loneliness, and the search for meaning in a world that is getting stranger all the time are things that young people talk about. There are a lot of people in Generation Z who look up to Sylvia Plath. Her songs and book The Bell Jar are very honest about how hard it is to deal with mental illness, social pressure, and spiritual sadness.

A generation that is more stressed than ever finds comfort in Plath's speech and a way to talk about their problems. They are stressed out about schoolwork, the market, the weather, and social media comparisons. On TikTok, words like #SylviaPlath and #MentalHealth have been seen by a lot of people. People talk about how they feel, read powerful parts of her writing, and make art based on what she wrote. This kind of online interaction turns private problems into group situations where people are open and honest with each other. These days, though, Plath isn't the only one who talks to kids. Kafka wrote about being alone and how pointless rules are. Dostoevsky wrote about feeling pain and being decent. The absurd was what Camus wrote about, and Nietzsche encouraged people to get past their own problems. Every one of these writers understands how Generation Z feels and what they think. Sometimes the world can seem crazy, mean, and too hard to handle. These authors help us make sense of it. Their work is no longer just for academics; it's now part of the cultural debate among young people who want to be themselves and find meaning.

Because Gen Z is surrounded by culture and art, this bond is much stronger. The "sad girl" or "melancholy boy" style is known for its sad graphics, slow music, and willingness to be honest about how you feel. These writers' ideas and images have had a big effect on the style. This form of cultural expression helps teens deal with their problems and understand who they are by letting them connect with other teens who have been through the same things. This means that writing isn't just a way to think; it's also a very important way to stay mentally alive.

But the rise of philosophical writing online also brings up important issues. It's easier for everyone to understand tough ideas and have open conversations about mental health on social media. But it could also turn deep intellectual ideas into trendy words or sentences. People in online groups don't always help people get better and heal; sometimes they make mental illness look cool. People are interested in writers like Sylvia Plath again, which shows that writing can still bring people together across time and society.

Today, like back then, there are many similarities between Plath's time and now. People felt very bad about having a mental illness and didn't know much about it when Plath lived. The things she wrote show how sad and alone she was. Today's teens and young adults have a lot of problems, and being online all the time, worrying about the environment, and feeling pressure from their friends only makes them worse. They are more likely to ask for help and talk about their emotional health, though. Being honest and becoming interested in philosophical writing have given us a good way to move on.

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There is a lot of evidence that shows that Generation Z has a lot of mental health problems. There is a new poll that shows that 46% of Americans in Gen Z have been identified with a mental illness. Most of the time, people felt anxious and sad. Because more than 19% of high school Gen Zers have really thought about killing themselves, this shows how bad the problem is. People are very worried because they compare themselves to others on social media, they don't know what the future holds, and the economy isn't stable. Gen Z uses their phones for over six hours every day. They say 78% of the time that they are hooked on social media, which can make them feel even more alone and not good enough.

Okay, so these worries are real. But there is one good thing: Gen Z cares the most about mental health. The number of people who say they go to therapy has gone up a lot since last year, to over 42%. Self-help methods like writing in a notebook, being aware of their thoughts, and taking breaks from social media are also used by a lot of people. When it comes to their mental health, more than half of Gen Z say they mostly have good days. People are likely learning more about mental health problems and how to deal with them.

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Knowing that great mental pain can happen at the same time as a growing desire for connection and meaning helps us understand the strong link between Plath's work and that of her philosophical peers. Teenagers and young adults may write about feelings that are hard to put into words, and social media gives them a way to say what they're feeling and validate it. Existentialists like Sylvia Plath give us more than just words in the end. They show us the worst parts of being human and also give us hope in some way. Gen Z is using social media to bring these literary voices back to life. They are also changing the way we think about writing and mental health in the modern world. Their interest in these timeless topics shows that even when things are bad, we can still talk about, understand, and go beyond our shared humanity.

About the Author

Tanzeela Jaffar is currently pursuing her MPhil at Quaid-e-Azam University. With over five years of experience as a freelance content writer, she has developed a versatile writing style and a deep interest in a wide range of subjects. Her passion for understanding the world around her fuels her curiosity and commitment to continuous learning, both in academia and in her professional pursuits.