Generations: Lullaby with Incendiary Device, The Nazi Patrol, and How It Is That We
By Dante Di Stefano, William Heyen, and H. L. Hix

A Study Guide

Synopsis

*Generations* is the collection of three books by three previous Etruscan authors: *Lullaby with Incendiary Device* by Dante Di Stefano, *The Nazi Patrol* by William Heyen, and *How It Is That We* by H. L. Hix. By combining these books, the pieces become a conversation about life over the course of decades through an exploration of parenthood, politics, war, and the search for meaning in life and death.

Author Bios

**Dante Di Stefano** is the author of *Ill Angels* (Etruscan Press, 2019), and *Love is a Stone Endlessly in Flight* (Brighthorse Books, 2016). His poetry, essays, and reviews have appeared in *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and elsewhere. He is a poetry editor for the *Dialogist*. Along with Maria Isabel Alvarez, he is the co-editor of *Misrepresented People: Poetic Responses to Trump’s America* (NYQ Books, 2018).

**William Heyen** is Professor of English/Poet in Residence Emeritus at the College at Brockport, his undergraduate alma mater. He holds a Ph.D. from Ohio University and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by the State University of New York. Heyen was Senior Fulbright Lecturer in American Literature in Germany, and has won National Endowment for the Arts, Guggenheim, American Academy of Arts & Letters, Pushcart, and other fellowships and awards. His poetry has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper’s*, *Poetry*, *The Atlantic*, and hundreds of other magazines and anthologies including *The Oxford Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*. Heyen edited the first book published by Etruscan Press, *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond*. Among his dozens of other books, *Noise in the Trees: Poems* was an ALA Notable Book of the Year selection; *Crazy Horse in Stillness* won 1997’s Small Press Book Award for Poetry; *Shoah Train* (Etruscan Press, 2003) was a Finalist for the National Book Award; and *A Poetics of Hiroshima* (Etruscan Press, 2008) was a selection of the T.S. Eliot Prize, the Peregrine Smith Award, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Heyen earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin, taught at Kansas City Art Institute, and was an administrator at the Cleveland Institute of Art before accepting his current position as professor in the Philosophy Department and the Creative Writing Program at a university in “one of those square states.” He has been a visiting professor at the University of Texas at Austin and at Shanghai University, and a Fulbright Distinguished Professor at Yonsei University.

**H. L. Hix** has published an anthology, *Wild and Whirling Words: A Poetic Conversation* (2004), and several books of poetry and literary criticism with Etruscan Press, including *As Easy As Lying: Essays on Poetry* (2002); *Shadows of Houses* (2005); *Chromatic* (2006); *God Bless: A Political Poetic Discourse* (2007); *Legible Heavens* (2008); *Incident Light* (2009); *First Fire, Then Birds* (2010); *Lines of Inquiry* (2011); *As Much As, If Not More Than* (2014); *I’m Here to Learn to Dream in Your Language* (2015); *American Anger: An Evidentiary* (2016); *Rain Inscription* (2017); and *Demonstrategy* (2019). In addition to a National Book Award finalist for *Chromatic*, his awards include the T. S. Eliot Prize, the Peregrine Smith Award, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Hix earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin, taught at Kansas City Art Institute, and was an administrator at the Cleveland Institute of Art before accepting his current position as professor in the Philosophy Department and the Creative Writing Program at a university in “one of those square states.” He has been a visiting professor at the University of Texas at Austin and at Shanghai University, and a Fulbright Distinguished Professor at Yonsei University.

Reasons to Include in the Classroom

*Generations* combines unique voices that demonstrate poetic style and lived experiences which are relevant to readers. Delving into this book allows readers to compare and contrast elements such as theme and form to develop or strengthen students’ understanding of approaches to poetry.
Study Questions & Writing Prompts

Lullaby with Incendiary Device

14. Writing Prompt: In “High Water,” the narrator combines the headline from a newspaper with a line from Shakespeare. Find a recent headline and line from a poem which relate, and then write a poem inspired by what you’ve found.

The Nazi Patrol

1. What is the meaning of “Our New Bible: Orchards?”

2. In “The Collaborator,” what is the meaning of the line, “If you read this, I’ve migrated onto a printed page or onto a screen with my redwing collusion.”

3. What is the meaning of “Copper Plate?” How does the second half of the poem relate to the first?

4. In “Carriage,” the author challenges the reader’s understanding of his meaning in the piece. What is the meaning of the author’s story about this factory?

5. In “Boots: Questions of Order at Biarritz, 1940,” what is the question the author is asking Madam Liberty? What answer does he expect she’ll give?

6. Reread “The Collector.” Why do you think this story reminds the author of Germany?

7. In “Hotel,” what does the author want us to understand about history?

8. Reread “Urn Burial.” What is the significance of the line, “if anything / is sacred, it is this / insistent return of the romantic, let us never desire to get over it, /my shipmates.”

9. Reread “Gargoyle.” What is the meaning of the final stanza?

10. What does The Nazi Patrol as a full collection say about war?

11. What does the author say about human nature?

12. How do “Easter Tulips” and “Holocaust Lecture” complement each other?

13. How does The Nazi Patrol weave together stories of different conflicts?
14. **Writing Prompt:** In “Refugee Camp,” the narrator juxtaposes a dire situation with a mundane activity. Write a poem which combines a serious situation with a simple activity.

**How It Is That We**

1. Compare the first and last line of “How long must this disorder continue, to count as chaos?” What do you think the author is trying to communicate via the use of italics in these sentences?

2. **Writing prompt:** Write a poem answering the questions posed in “Calling your silence a protest doesn’t justify it.”

3. What is the author saying about feeling in “By your best estimate, how long between episodes?”

4. Reread “It’s not the urges you do act out that I’m wary of” and reflect on the author’s sense of isolation.

5. Reread “The lesson?” What is the lesson here that the author is trying to convey?

6. How does the last line of “(is bound to?)” speak to the larger theme(s) of *How Is It That We*?

7. **Writing Prompt:** The author invites the audiences to infer things about him in *How Is It That We*. Reflect on the inferences you have made and write a poem about the author.

8. What is the author struggling with in “The light here could not be so bright if the wind were not so cold”?

9. What is the meaning of “The one where they’re all trapped, and turn on each other?” How did the transitions between the emotions of the piece affect you?

10. What does the author want us to feel with the questions in “Once moving toward more movement, now toward none”? Are the questions here answerable?

11. How does the author shift from asking questions about themselves to asking questions about society? How do those internal questions make you feel about the social issues addressed in the text?

12. What is the significance of the final line in “Don’t want to what?”

**Standards for the English Language Arts (compiled by NCTE and IRA)**

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other general.
Standards for the English Language Arts (compiled by NCTE and IRA) (cont’d)

3. (cont’d) texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

5. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

6. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

7. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.