



# The Mindset Lists of American History: From Typewriters to Text Messages, What Ten Generations of Americans Think Is Normal

*Tom McBride , Ron Nief*

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**Snapshots of the U.S.'s last nine generations—from the creators of the Mindset List media**

**sensation**Just as high school graduates in 1957 couldn't imagine life without zippers, those of 2009 can't imagine having to enter phone booths and deposit coins in order to call someone from the street corner. Every August, the Mindset List highlights the cultural touchstones that have shaped the lives of that year's incoming college class. Now this fascinating book extends the Mindset List approach to dramatize what it was like to grow up for every American generation since 1880, showcasing the remarkable changes in what Americans have considered "normal" about the world around them.

Expands Tom McBride and Ron Nief's popular annual Mindset Lists to explore the mindset of nine generations of Americans, from 1880 to the future high school graduates of 2030

Offers a novel and absorbing way to understand the frame of reference of Americans through history, whether it's the high school grads of 1918, who viewed riding an elevator as a thrill second only to roller coasters, or those of 2009, who have always thought of "friend" as an active verb

Puts a human face on the evolution of historical changes related to technology, the struggle for rights and equality, the calamities of war and depression, and other areas

The annual Mindset List garners extensive media attention, including on *Today*, *The Early Show*, the *NBC Nightly News*, CNN, and Fox as well as in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Time* magazine, and hundreds of international publications

Whatever your own generational mindset, this book will give you an entertaining and important new tool for understanding the unique perspective and experience of Americans over more than a hundred and fifty years.

**The Mindset Lists of American History: From Typewriters to Text Messages, What Ten Generations of Americans Think Is Normal Details**

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# **From Reader Review The Mindset Lists of American History: From Typewriters to Text Messages, What Ten Generations of Americans Think Is Normal for online ebook**

**Dachokie says**

A Book That Gives Some Perspective to the Term "Generation Gap" ...

Generations seem to look at one another through a "grass is always greener" lens, where the current always thinks their parent's and children's' generations has it better of for one reason or another (think of the "I had to walk ten miles in snow to get to school every day" stories). I always thought life was simple for my parents in that I assumed they grew up in a time where people could always get by on less and didn't have as much "stuff" to worry about. Same with my young children ... they have it made because everything in their lives is geared toward instant gratification (where I actually had to GET UP to change the TV channel when I was a kid). With THE MINDSET LISTS O AMERICAN HISTORY, authors Tom McBride and Ron Nief offer some insight on what life was like growing up in America over the past century and clearly illustrates that no generation was void of hardship or perks.

The authors give the reader perspective of what life was for successive generations of Americans every thirteen years. Each chapter represents the year that its "class" members would have graduated from high school (from the "class of 1898" to the "class of 2026"). With this format, virtually every reader has some idea of what their parents and grandparents endured during their childhoods. By introducing a list of 50 "mindsets" at the beginning of each chapter, the reader gets a quick glimpse of what was considered "normal" for a particular generation. These 50 mindsets are then thoroughly broken down and explained in a manner that allows the reader to understand how previous generations came of age throughout the past century, as well as projecting what's in store for the latest crop of newborns (Class of 2026). THE MINDSET LIST puts the various generations in perspective and illustrates how relative they are to one another. Each and every generation has dealt with ups and downs (economic growth/turmoil and war/relative peace), as well as being the beneficiary of technological and sociological advancement. It is amazing to realize that certain aspects of everyday life we take for granted now were once considered life-altering not too long ago (like zippers or ready-made, store bought clothing). If anything, the book allows readers to detach themselves from the present and see life through the eyes of those belonging to older and younger generations (how many of those in the class of 1918 lived through the first airplane flight as well as man landing on the moon). Seeing the progression of these generational mindsets illustrate how each generation's great achievements become the ordinary fabric and/or foundations of future generations (to the class of 1918, a typewriter was no less amazing than an iPad is to the latest generation).

While the mindset lists of past generations are presented as entertaining and thought-provoking Americana history lessons, an occasional whiff of political opinion taints some of the mindset lists and their explanatory text. For example, I found the book's depiction of the class of 1983 as somewhat suffering under the rule of Reagan a bit off-base. As a member of the class of 1984, the Reagan years represented booming optimism for most everyone I knew in high-school and college ... we no longer feared the threat of the Soviet Union/nuclear war and future opportunity seemed limitless if desire and a little elbow-grease were applied. Additionally, the projected mindset list for the class of 2026 combines some bizarre speculation with a little wishful thinking on behalf of the authors. Somehow environmental issues will dominate the youngest generation's mindset list, even though as the book was being written, the world was steaming toward economic melt-down and maybe even another global war is in the horizon. The books final chapter presents

the authors' somewhat sincere rationale/excuse for the bombastic predictions of the class of 2026's mindset list, but I don't buy it.

THE MINDSET LIST is an entertaining read with an added dose of nostalgia. For some, the book may explain our parents are so "square" and for others, it may offer reasonable justification for grandma or grandpa's weirdness. While THE MINDSET LIST may still make some people believe life was better in the past or that future generations will have it made; I think most may find themselves realizing the grass is greener right where they are at.

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## **Kyle says**

When the mindset list started coming out in 1998 it explained the current graduating High School seniors with a list of culture references that they could relate to. Ever since people have checked in each year to see how the 18 year old people of today see the world.

This book uses mindset lists to explain the attitudes and behavior of ten different american generations, starting with children born in 1880 and ending with children born in 2008. With each generation you see how the world has changed but also how it has stayed the same. With each generation there is new technology, whether that is the internet or zippers, that the older generation disapproves of.

The authors did a wonderful job of making american history accessible though snapshots of what the children of the time saw in the world.

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## **Lucy says**

Every generation has facts and objects that it takes for granted. This book covers much of that in 18-year leaps, as for each high school graduating class, starting with the class of 1898.

Chapters are: 1898 (Women have always ridden bicycles), 1918 (Rum has always been demonic), 1931 (They've always been spoiled by zippers), 1944 (The Shadow has always known), 1957 (Fluoride has always been controversial), 1970 (Magazines have always been MAD), 1983 (There has always been the Grateful Dead), 1996 (Michelangelo has always been a turtle), 2009 (They've never dialed a telephone), 2026 (They've never needed a key for anything). The last chapter is of course speculative.

For most people these years won't hit their high school graduating class, but they should recognize a lot of the items from both before and after their year, not to mention stuff that came before and during their lifetimes. Some things will be a surprise even to those who lived through these years.

Highly recommended for anyone who is interested in history or pop culture. If you're not, you should be and you might get more interested by reading this book. When did the stuff you take for granted actually begin. One surprising fact from 1918. As students, the members of this class have always been immersed in the temperance movement's teachings, since every state has mandated that several hours a week be devoted to Scientific Temperance Instruction, and in some states the birthday of Women's Christian Temperance Union founder Frances Willard was even observed with a school holiday.

Beloit College began this and is keeping it up. For the most recent (high school class of 2018), see <http://www.aei.org/publication/beloit...>

This is the last year it will be affiliated with Beloit College, but it will continue in the future at [themindsetlist.com](http://themindsetlist.com) or at a new institutional home.

Among the items of this list: They are the first class born in the new millennium.

- They have always been able to refer to Wikipedia.
  - A visit to a bank has been a rare event.
  - "You've got mail" would sound as ancient to them as "number, please" would have sounded to their parents.
  - Films have always been distributed on the Internet.
  - Mass market books have always been available exclusively as Ebooks.
  - People loudly conversing with themselves in public are no longer thought to be talking to imaginary friends.
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## **Connie says**

I confess that I am one of many in academia who look forward to the annual Mindset List. This year, I noticed that the authors had decided to expand upon their research and publish a book. I like history. I like pop culture. I like the sociology and weaving of the two together-- plus, I work with college students (mostly first and second year students) so I can find direct parallels at work. You don't have to read this one cover to cover. You can jump to the chapters/cohorts you are interested in, so it's not a "heavy" read or significant time commitment. I good and interesting book you can pick up and put down as you have time or want a diversion.

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## **Alicia says**

Every August I eagerly await the release of the Beloit College Mindset List. Working in Student Affairs, it's always nice to get a glimpse into the mindset of the incoming Freshman class. When I heard that the list had turned into a book, I was excited to see the list expanded.

The book takes generations who would have graduated HS in 1898, 1918, 1931, 1944, 1957, 1970, 1983, 1996, 2009, and looks at the events that have shaped their generation both before they were born as well as they grew up. We always joke with students and our younger relatives about "how easy" the current generation has it and this book is an interesting historical perspective on that idea. For the average reader, it traces back to their Grand/great grandparents generation to the future and offers insights on the cultural norms experiences.

As expected, this book offers a very broad generalization. Some of the items on list (those that have always been dead for example) won't change, but some of the generalizations depend on class, socioeconomic status and location. For me, reading about my parents generation (graduated around 1970) was not as realistic as what they experienced in their very small, segregated town (or at least what I've been told and seen). My only other complaint is rather personal and trivial but I felt like I personally didn't have a place in the book-- 80's babies (of which I am) were ignored. Too young for the class of 96 and too old for the class of 2009. Anyway-- that my personal comment that didn't really effect my enjoyment of this book and the historical perspective it offered. While certainly not as in-depth as *Generations* by Strauss and Howe, this book offers a quick informative and entertaining overview of the history of the mindset of people today.

Now I just have to wait until August to learn about the mindset of the class of 2016.

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## **Maria says**

First one should understand that when reading this book they are talking about graduating high school classes of the year, not college or people being born in that year. This was really informative book. I found myself saying "I have no clue what they are talking about" so I would have to ask others around me. When it came to my generation I totally understood what everything was. I could not read the class of 2026 because it seemed like a negative chapter of America's future. I logged on to their website and they go into greater detail there. I think I will keep up with this mindset list just to see how far it goes.

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## **Kathryn Bashaar says**

This book was good light reading, an entertaining look at what different generations of Americans have thought of as normal life. I certainly identified with the chapter closest to my high-school graduation year, and the chapters closest to my children and my parents.

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## **Steve says**

My wife picked up the Mindset lists for me as a Christmas (2012) present. She sorta hit the nail on the head on this one. It's definitely up my alley marrying pop-culture, politics and history. This is an interesting idea. I wouldn't say the execution is as successful as the idea however. Essentially, the Mindset lists are about 50 items that are normal to a generation, as represented by a high school class. What that class experienced growing up and how those forces acted upon their actions and behaviors. Think "I love the 80's" without the comedians. The book, looked at one graduating high school class every 13 years, starting backwards from 2009. So 1996 was included, which just so happens to be my graduating class. Within that structure, it looks at things that are the norm or new and how their processing differs from the earlier generations. For instance, for classes in the 1930's (I'm guessing here, I don't remember what year) – zippers were commonplace. It's hard for them to imagine life without them or even care to for that matter since they are the norm. However, for earlier generations pre-zippers they are new, fantastic or possibly troublesome as a sign of the laziness of the youth depending on who you talk to.

In that context, the list of 50 items was interesting to see how "normal" changed from 1905 to 1918 to 1931 to 1944 to 1957 to 1970 to 1983 to 1996 to 2009 and even speculation to the class of 2026 (my kid's generation-apparently they will never handle cash or use keys). After listing the items, there was a 10-15 page description of the items in a narrative form.

Nuts and bolts – the book is interesting for the content and value of the changing viewpoints. But it's not as valuable as a book. I found it boring. The lists were interesting. I probably didn't need the narrative to go with it. Or maybe I needed a narrative that differentiated a little bit more. I found the 10-15 pages was highly repetitive and with the exception of a few items, there was nothing new to be learned that I couldn't gather from the lists. What I mean is, as a novice student of history, there were only about 4 or 5 items from each list that I didn't understand/remember. The narrative was semi-helpful in expounding on those, but in most cases I still found myself on Google trying to understand what was meant. In the end, this wasn't a straight read. I'd read one section, then go on and read something else. I don't think I could read this straight

through. And if you don't like history, I'm not sure I'd find it remotely entertaining. It's just not written well enough to be engaging. Here's the more perplexing part for me. Of all the sections, the one I struggled with the most was 1996. This is my graduating class, my experiences. Yet, I couldn't relate to about half of the detail. Some of the writing made me think of the aughts (which didn't make sense since it's supposed to be my childhood) but would then come back to comment how that thought process related to the 80's. I'm fully aware that I was not conscience of the world until about 1987 or so, hence anything occurring prior to then would only have some peripheral meaning. However, considering the history of the earlier classes that made sense to me, I shouldn't have been confused by my own era. It made me question what an earlier class would think based on reading their section.

In the end, I believe there are several issues here. One...the items are geared in an 18 year framework and while the societal influences of the time certain frame life (the depression vs. the suburban movement), kids are still kids. Would my life have differed if I was born in '27 instead of '77?? – certainly. And in some cases this is pertinent. However, the supposed political ineptness of Jimmy Carter had virtually no influence on me or my thinking. Neither did anything outside of the sphere of mom and dad for much of that first decade (until 1987 when I claimed Ollie North stole my missing recorder and gave it to the contras). In that context, it feels cheapened. If it doesn't work for me, it won't work for others. There should be some groundwork of the socio-economic conditions, but the other items I think need to be taken in account for the self-awareness of the class members for a true Anthropologic ideal. You are simply addressing items that have no context for those born in that era. For the class of the '96, focusing the Clinton years, Bush Sr. and the tail end of Reagan. This context was more on 1980-1984. Secondly, there is a too big a gap. For my father, born in 1946 and the class of '64, to relate to 1957 or 1970 is difficult. I would argue, this would be better done, taken in 5-6 year steps instead of the 13 years provided and focus on the events of ages 12-18, instead of birth to 18. The previous generation would assist in providing the earlier groundwork necessary for that level of context. Lastly, and likely most importantly, the book reads a little like an astrological report. The statements can be associated with anyone, but also no one at the same time. They are, necessarily, general and while certain things will certainly apply, it does not create a great cross section. What's normal for me growing up in suburban north Jersey will vary greatly from someone growing up in Detroit. You simply can't conquer this regionally, but it cheapens the data when the context is made to fit into a box or the narrative loses its value by using terms like "could have."

Overall, the book was semi-entertaining and interesting. But I think I would have been more apt to pick it up in a book store, peruse the lists (not the narratives) and put the book back on the shelves. The amusement would be there, without the time commitment. On that note, I'm not sure I'd recommend other than having on hand as a cocktail party conversation piece....

Source, as mentioned above, was a gift from the wife for Christmas 2012. I'm not sure where she got it...

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## **Douglas says**

I love NPR for book recommendations. So many great books this summer! So this title caught my attention because it was written from the College of Beloit which I went to July of 2010 for a summer retreat on leadership sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association-which my church St. John's UU in Clifton is part of.

Anyway, it is basically a every 13 year listing of each generations milestones, iconic interests and general



Americana. It starts with the generation before the turn of the century and goes until the proposed future of the class of 2030. It's organized by generations of high school graduates. Graduating in 1988 I fell between the listing for the class of 1983 and the class of 1996. I think I identified with the class of 1983 a little more...yay..another reason to feel older! LOL!

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### **Gary Land says**

This was an interesting and both lighthearted and sobering read. The book basically looks at each high school graduating class, every thirteen years since about 1880. The authors examine the cultural world that each class entered and the changes that took place during their lives. What comes through in this work is that students have little knowledge of the past and pretty much assume that things were always the way they are familiar with. Although the authors maintain a light tone, it is quite apparent that society is increasingly unstable and the future is uncertain. Children today are unlikely to achieve as good a life as their parents. This is a useful read though should not be regarded as scholarly.

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### **Betsy Murphy says**

all I can say is Wow ! love these type of books .

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### **Stephanie says**

I really enjoyed this book but when I got to the chapter about my class it didn't really fit what I thought to be true about my class. Granted my experience is not the majority but it made me really wonder about how other generations would feel about their chapter. Also, the last chapter just felt a little too farfetched - you never know but after my chapter not gelling right the last chapter felt utterly false. In short, towards the end of the book you could really tell that it was "adults/older people" writing the book with not as much, if any, help from the generation they were seeking to profile. In that regard it was really interesting to see what people felt my generation was oblivious of and just how wrong they were.

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### **Sydney Young says**

Very interesting way to get insight into everyone in your life. If you enjoy those email lists that go around, you'll enjoy this. If you are employed in any venue of public service, you should read this book. I've noticed as a lawyer that generations do respond differently and have different expectations. I try to meet them where they are, and I think that what I gained from this book will be helpful in this goal. This is probably also a must have reference book for any writer or historian. The only reason I didn't rate it higher is because I recognize the impossibility of a general summation of the mainstream influences on anyone's life.

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### **Heather Layne says**

Neat! America sure does change drastically and quickly! Each chapter advanced by 13 years, and each chapter was like a whole new world!

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**Sue says**

Excessive use of "always," I don't agree with a lot of this stuff. It's a good idea but it's missing a lot.

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