

The Word Root *gen*

In “Closing the Gap: Why We Need to Reconnect the Young and the Old,” Mary Pipher uses the word *generations* to refer to the length of time between the births of parents and the births of their children.

The word *generations* is made from the word root *gen*, which means either “birth” or “kind.” A **word root** contains the main meaning of a word, but it can’t stand by itself. By adding prefixes and suffixes to a word root, new words are made. Some words formed from the word root *gen* relate to the meaning of “birth,” and others relate to the meaning of “kind.”

gen meaning “birth”

gen meaning “kind”

generate to bring into being	general involving only the main features rather than details
genesis the coming into being of something; the origin	genus a group of related plants or animals ranking below a family and above a species
regenerate to give new life to	genre a particular type or class of literary, musical, or artistic composition

Read each sentence below. Then fill in the blank with the word from the box that best completes each sentence.

- The _____ of the idea came to Erin while she was walking in the woods.
- My favorite _____ of literature is poetry.
- Although lions and tigers are separate species, they belong to the same _____, called *Panthera*.
- The cheerleaders were finally able to _____ some enthusiasm from the crowd.
- The student could give only a _____ description of the accident.
- The principal hoped the changes would _____ school spirit.

Challenge

Look up these words in the dictionary: *generic*, *engender*, *indigenous*, and *heterogeneous*. On a separate piece of paper, define each word and use it in a sentence. Then determine whether each word relates to the meaning “birth” or “kind.”