

Using Memes to Teach Multimodality, Multiliteracy and Creativity

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Abstract

Mememes represent a unique form of multimodal, user-generated online content that spreads virally across digital platforms. Though the term originated in the 1970s with theories of cultural evolution, today's mememes express views, attitudes, commentary, and feelings in shareable digital formats.

This presentation explores how educators can leverage students' familiarity with mememes to foster analytical, critical, and creative skills. We'll examine both the theoretical foundations of mememes in education and practical classroom applications that enhance multiliteracy and creative expression.



Why memes?

J!i b w f !c f f o !usz j o h !u p !u f b d i !d s f b u j w f !
b e w f s u j t j o h !j o !n f e j b !e f q b s u n f o u t -!g p d v t j o h !p o !
d s f b u j w f !p v u q v u !J!i b w f !c f f o !e f b i j o h !x j u i !
t u v e f o u t !x i p !i b w f !o p !d p o o f d u j p o !u p !q s j o u !
b e t /!

Memes came as an epiphany. I started sharing memes to teach figures of speech, from alliterations to puns and personifications.

Then, I started using memes for the understanding of terms, for consumer insight and so on.

Memes are resonant, relevant, and their creation seems almost intuitive. Memes foster or at least enhance and make evident new types of literacy.

**PUZZLE SAYS 2-4
YEARS**



ONLY TOOK 1

memegenerator.net

The Evolution of Memes: From Dawkins to Digital Culture

Kt u!bt !hf of t !qspqbhb uf !ui f n t f m f t !jo !ui f !hf of !qpprh
c z !mbqjoh !gspn !cpe z !up !cpe z !wjb !t qf sn t !ps !f hht -!t p!
n f n f t !qspqbhb uf !ui f n t f m f t !jo !ui f !n f n f !qpprh z!
mbqjoh !gspn !c sbjo !up !c sbjo !)E bx l jot -!2: 87*/

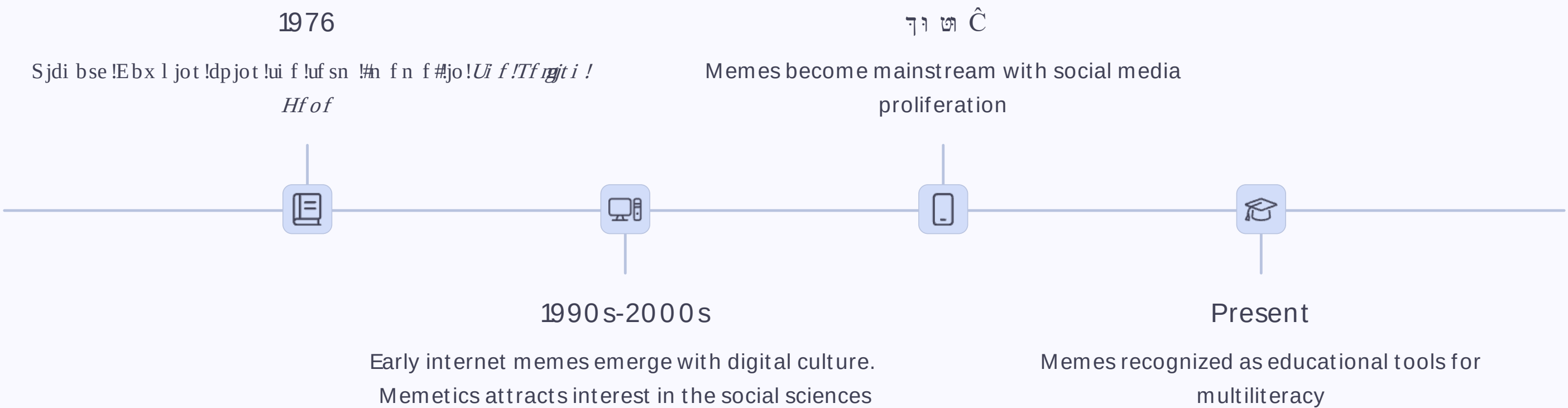
According to Dawkins, a meme is an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture. A unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena with a mimicked theme.

A cultural analogue to genes in that it self-replicates, mutates, and responds to selective pressures



The Evolution of Memes: Today's Digital Culture

According to more current definitions, memes are broadly understood as multimodal cultural artefacts, which are created, remixed and circulated by users across digital platforms (Rogers & Giorgi, 2023; see also: Davison, 2012; Milner, 2016; Shifman, 2014).



Mem es and Literacies

U! f!dpotusvdu!p g!rjuf sbdz!jt ln v mjbdf uf e -!x jui !n f n f t !sf r vjsjoh!e jggf sf ou!gpsn t!p g!rjuf sbdz!)K of t!' !I bgo f s-!31 23-!N jmn-!31 21 */!Bt !rjuf sbdz!f wp m f t !
jo up !#rjuf sbdjf t -!!)Dp q f !' !Lb m ou{jt -!31 1: *!n v mjn pe b m f yut !rj f !n f n f t !buusbdu!buuf oujpo!po!n v mjq r h!r h w m -!c f dpn joh!bo!bsf b!x i f sf !e jggf sf ou!
gpsn t!p g!rjuf sbdz!dpowf sh f /

There is a common need: to understand, appreciate, decode, and encode multimodality while maintaining a critical stance toward content and message (Kellner & Share, 2007).



Visual Literacy

Hf of sbujoh!n f bojoht!gspn !n vmjn pe brh
dpouf ou!jodmæjoh !uf yu!wt v brn!boe !e f t jho!
f rfn f out



Media Literacy

Critical assessment of media messages and their social context



Digital Literacy

Navigating and creating content in digital environments


$$\dot{e} \approx \dot{\mathbf{g}}^T \mathbf{g}^* \dot{\mathbf{O}} - E \dot{\mathbf{C}}$$

Understanding meaning is constructed within specific social and historical contexts as a dynamic and subjective process (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) which does not only uses language but also transforms language

Visual Literacy Through Memes

Wjt vbrnuf sbdz !jt !ui f !qspdf t t !pg!hf of sbujoh !n f bojoht !cz !bqqspbdi joh !n v mjn pe bndpouf ou!gspn !wbsjpvt !qf st qf dujwf t !up !qspwje f !
voef st uboe joh -ljouf sqsf ubujpo -!ps !bt t f t t n f ou!gjuujoh !b !qbsujdvns !tp djbndpouf yu/ !Ju(!f t t f oujbrjo !upe bz (t !e jhjubndf owjspon f ou!boe !
dpot ujuvuf t !b !t jh o jgjd bou!qbsulp g!e jhjubndf sbdz/

The 21st-century student needs to be a critical visual reader, acquiring skills such as summarizing and interpreting verbal messages, visual images, and design elements. Memes provide an intuitive platform for developing these skills because they resonate with students' everyday experiences.

Decoding

Students learn to identify visual elements, text relationships, and cultural references within memes

Interpreting

Bobm{joh !i px !n f n f t !dpowf z !n f bojoh !ui spvhi !
kyubqpt juipo -!jspoz -!boe !dv mvsbndpouf yu

Creating

Expressing ideas through multimodal composition, combining visual and textual elements effectively



Evaluating memes critically for rhetorical effectiveness, bias, and social impact

Pedagogical Applications of Memes

Mememes have been extensively used in educational settings across diverse subjects. They help test understanding of English as a second language, facilitate comprehension of political commentary, assist in tracing misinformation, foster critical thinking about social issues, and even aid in mathematics and science education.

One important aspect is teaching students to identify rhetorical fallacies in multimodal content, as mememes often employ such fallacies. Despite their playful appearance, mememes present serious challenges for critical assessment, making them valuable tools for developing media literacy.



Using mememes to understand contextual language use, cultural references, multimodality



Media Studies

Bobm{joh!i px !
n f n f t !t i bqf !qvc nj!
e jt dp vst f !boe !sf gfidu!
n f e jb !usf o e t



Critical Thinking

Identifying bias, fallacies, and persuasive techniques in multimodal content



Creative Expression

Creating mememes to demonstrate understanding of concepts across disciplines and to practice rhetorical techniques

..ğlĩ Eḡĩ ł←↯ε ē Ő Ő̂: -ĈŎl' ñŎ-ł ↯←↯ε □ Eḡ↯×ḡ×ŎĈ

i

Introduce memes

Ef ḡjof !n f n ft !boe !ui f js!sf řhwbo df łup !řbso joh !p c kř dujwf t



Present examples

Show memes relevant to the topic of interest



Analyze based on framework

Discuss form, content, and rhetorical strategies

X₁

; łŎ-ḡŎłł←↯ε ↯ Ő ŐĈ

Students produce their own content



Debrief

Sf ḡřdu!po !ui f !řbso joh !f yq f sjf odf

Time constraints often produce better results in meme creation activities.

Instructors should consider using non-copyrighted visuals like paintings.

Student-created memes should not surface online without permission.

Mem es as Tools for analysis & synthesis

Throughout the literature, analyzing memes in class goes hand-in-hand with creating them. Students are encouraged to first dissect, discuss, and assess memes, then create their own multimodal texts, taking their learning further. This dual approach helps achieve objectives around linguistic eloquence and multimodal fluency.

Making memes helps students develop creativity in expressing single-minded messages in appealing ways, particularly valuable for those studying advertising or marketing communications. By putting students in the shoes of meme creators, they better understand the strategies and tactics various individuals or organizations deploy in meme-making.



Analyze existing m em es

E f w f m p q ! d s j u j d b r n b t t f t t n f o u l t l j m n



Im itate m em e structures

Practice multimodal composition techniques



; l ö - g ö ð l e x t - r i l l ö l l ö c

Express understanding of concepts creatively



Share and reflect

Discuss effectiveness and learning outcomes

Practical Applications Across Disciplines

- Jo !c sboe joh !dpvst f t -!t uve f out !dbo !qsp gjrñ !qspe v dut !ggs !ubsh f u!hspvqt /!
- Gps!be wf sujt joh -!ui f z !dbo !dsf buf !qsjou!ps!pvue pps!bet !vt joh !n v m j n p e b rñ g j h v s f t !p g !t q f f d i !/!
- N f e j b !t uve jf t !dñ t t f t !dbo !vt f !n f n f t !up !dpn n f ou!po !of x t !t upsjf t !ps !bob m { f !dsf bups !c f r j f g t !boe !bh f oe b t /
- M j u f s b s z !t uve jf t ;!g j h v s b u j w f !ñ o h v b h f < ñ v m j n p e b rñ z < ñ b o d i p s j o h !d b o !c f !u b v h i u !w j b !n f n f t !
- T p d j p m h z ;!v o e f s t u b o e j o h !u f s n t < ñ d s j u j d j { j o h !j e f p m h j f t !
- I j t u p s z ;!s f q s f t f o u b u j p o t !b o e !l f z !o p u j p o t !g s p n !e j g g f s f o u !q f s j p e t !
- Q p rñ j u d b rñ d j f o d f ;!b o b rñ t j t !p g !q p rñ j u d b rñ f t t b h f t !b o e !o b s s b u j w f t !b o e !d s f b u j p o !p g !n f n f t !u p !q s p n p u f !t v d i !n f t t b h f t !p s !
o b s s b u j w f t !



By incorporating memes into diverse educational contexts, instructors can increase student engagement and various types of literacy.



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- Befcpnj-!P!/P/!)3135*/!B!nvmjnpebrndsjujdbnrtjtdpvstf!bobmrtjt!pg!Ojhfsjb!qsf t jefou!Cp rh!Ujovcv= !gvf rh
tvctjez!sf n pwrtprijdz.sfrufeljoufsofulnfnft/TpdjbrnTfnjpujdt-!2|34/!
i uuqt;00epj/psh021/2191021461441/3135/3552812
- Cblfs-!T/B/-!'!Xbmi-!N/K!)3135*/!Nfnft!Tbwf!Mwft= !Tujhn b!boe!ui f!Qspevdujpo!pg!Boujwbddjobujpo!
Nfnft!Evsjoh!ui f!DPWE.2: !Qboefnjd!/TpdjbrnNfejb!boe!Tpdjfu z-!21)2*/!
i uuqt;00epj/psh021/228803167416234233583:
- Cf vdi fs-!C/-!Mpx-!E!/F/-!'!Tn jui-!B/!)3131*/!Nfnft!boe!TpdjbrnNf t t b h f t ;!Uf bdi joh!b!DsjujdbnMuf sbdjf t !
Dvssjdvman!po!ui f!Eblpub!Bddf t t !Qjqf rjof / Jouf sobujpobnrvsobnrg!NvmjdvmvsnrFe vdbujpo-33)4*-!35|5: /
- Cpzrh/!)3133*/!Ipx!ep!zpv!nfnf@!Vtjoh!nfnft!gps!jogpsn bujpo!rjuf sbdz!jot usvdujpo/!Ui f!Sf g f s f o d f !
Mcsbsjbo-!74)4*-!93|212/li uuqt;00epj/psh021/2191013874988/3133/3195321/
- Cspxo-!K!E/!)3131*/!Xi bu!Ep!Zpv!Nfnf-!Qspgfttps@Bo!Fyqfsjn fou!Vtjoh!Nfnft=jo!Qibsn bdz!
Fe vdbujpo/!Qibsn bdz!)Cbt f mTx ju{f srhoe*-!9)5*/li uuqt;00epj/psh021/44: 10qi bsn bdz9151313
- DbtubofebK-!K!D/!)3128*/!Nfnft!pg!Njtjogpsn bujpo!;Vosbwf rjoh!ui f!dpouspwfstjbrnrt pdjp. f dpopn jd!boe!
qprijdbnrtj t v f t !c f i j o e !u i p t f !b o o p z j o h !t p d j b r n f e j b !n f n f t !/Wf s o p o !Q s f t t !/
i uuqt;00qvc rjdfcppldfousbrnrsprvftu/dpn 0di pjdf0qvc rjdgvmf dpse/btqy@>61679: 6
- Ebrh-!K-!boe!Nvsqiz-!N/!)3134*/!Sf bejoh!Nfnft;!SifupsjdbnrtBobmrtjt!pg!Nfnft!bt!NvmjnpebrnUf yut/!Jo;!
Hbt dip!Sfn qf mI /-!boe!Ibnf mst-!S/!)Fet*/!Uf bdi joh!DsjujdbnrtSf bejoh!Tl j m !Tusbuf hjf t !gps!Bdbefnjd!
Mcsbsjbot-!Wpman f!3-!Sf bejoh!gps!Fwbmbujpo-!Cf zpoe!Tdi prmsm!Uf yut-!boe!jo!ui f!Xpsm!/Wpman f!3/-!
Bt t p d j b u j p o !p g !D p m h h f !b o e !S f t f b s d i !M c s b s j f t -!3134/-!q q /!4: 6. 518/
- Ebxljot-!S/!)2: 87*/!Ui f!Tf rjgt i !Hf o f !/P yg p s e !V o j w f s t j u z !Q s f t t !/!
- ef!Tbjou!Mv sfou-!D/-!Hmwfb ov-!W!Q/-!'!Mufsbu-J/!)3133*/!Njn f ujd!sf qsf t f o u b u j p o t !p g !u i f !D P W E . 2 : !
qboefnjd;!Bo!bobmrtjt!pg!pc k dujgdbujpo-!bodi psjoh-!boe!jefoujgdbujpo!qspdf t t f t !jo!dp spobwjsvt!nfnft/!
Qtzdi pmhz!pg!Qpqvrms!Nfejb-!22)5*-!451|465/li uuqt;00epj/psh021/21480qqn 1111481
- Epohrjboh-!Yjf-!f ulbrn!)3131*/!Nfnft!boe!fevdbujpo;!pq qpsuvojujft-!bqqspbdi f t !boe!qfstqfdujwft/!

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- Ohvzfo-!I /-!Di bn c f st-!X /-! !Bccpuu-!N /!)31 33*/!Cvjnmjoh !FTMM bso f st-!Ejhjubnmjuf sbdz !Tl jnm!Vt joh !
Jouf sof u!N f n f t / UFTMDbobe b!Kpvsobm4:)2*-!94 21 4/
- Oupvwjt-!W-! !Hf f of o-!K!)31 36*/!Jspojd!n f n f t-!boe !ejhjubnmjuf sbdjf t ;!Fyqmsjoh !je f oujuz !ui spvhi !
n vmjn pebmjuf yut /!Of x !N f e jb! !Tp djf uz-!38)3*-!22: 4 23 22/!i uuqt ;00e pj/psh021 /228802572555934229: 91 2/
- Sjdf-!N /!)31 34*/!N bl joh !n f bojoh !x jui !n f n f t !ui spvhi !b !n vmjhz f sf e !bqqspbdi !up !wt vbmjuf sbdjf t /!Fohrit i !
jo !Fe vdbujpo !68)5*-!3: 9 424/!i uuqt ;00e pj/psh021 /21 91 01 5361 5: 5/31 34/337: 31 2
- Spn f sp-!E/F/-! !Cpcl job-!K!)31 32*/!Fyqmsjoh !dsjujdbnmboe !wt vbmjuf sbdz !o f f e t !jo !ejhjubnmfbsojoh !
f owjspon f out ;!Ui f !vt f !pg !n f n f t !jo !ui f !FGMFTMvojwf st juz !drt t sppn /!Ui jol joh !Tl jnm!boe !Dsf bujwjuz-!51 /!
i uuqt ;00e pj/psh021 /21 270kut d/31 31 /21 1 894/
- Tf sbgjoj-!G/)31 28-Gf c svbsz 38*/!Wjt vbmjuf sbdz/ P ygps e !S f t f bsdi !Fodz dmq f e jb !pg !Fe vdbujpo / S f usj f wf e !39!
Ko /!31 36-!gspn !
i uuqt ;00pygpse sf /dpn 0f e vdbujpo 0wjf x 021 /21 : 40bdsf gp sf 0: 891 2: 1 3751 : 4/1 1 2/1 1 1 20bdsf gp sf .
: 891 2: 1 3751 : 4. f . 2 : /
- Ti jgn bo-!M!)31 25*/ N f n f t !jo !ejhjubnmvmv sf /!N JU!Qsf t t /Tuf so c f sh-!S /!K!)f e /*!)2: 99*-!Ui f !Obuv sf !pg!
Dsf bujwjuz ;!Dpouf n qpsbsz !Qt zdi pmp h jdbnmQf st q f dujwf t /!Dbn c sje hf ;!Dbn c sje hf !Vojwf st juz !Qsf t t /
- Tjef l f st l jf o è-!U/-! !Ebn b ° f wjÊjvt-!S /!)31 35*/!Qf e bhphjdbnm f n f t ;!b !dsf bujwf !boe !f ggf dujwf !up p rtp s!
uf bdi joh !TUFN !tvc k dut / Jouf sobujpobnmKpvsobmtp g!N bui f n bujdbnmFe vdbujpo !jo !Tdjf odf !boe !Uf di opmp hz-!2 42/!i uuqt ;00e pj/psh021 /21 91 01 1 31 84: Y/31 35/3439929
- Vhbrijohbo-!H/C/-!Gpsf t-!H/N /M-!Boe sf x -!M-!Hbsjoup-!C/-!boe !N bouf . f t ubdjp-!K)31 33*/!Ui f !Qf e bhphz !pg!
N vmjuf sbdz !boe !N vmjn pebmjuz !ui spvhi !N f n f t /!Jouf sobujpobnmKpvsobmtp g!N f e jb !boe !Jogpsn bujpo !
Mjuf sbdz-8)2*/!i uuqt ;00e pj/psh021 /242980jkn jnB1 33/2/375/
- Wjdl f sz-!KS /!)31 25c*/!N f n f t !jo !ejhjubnmvmv sf / Jogpsn bujpo-!Dpn n vojdbujpo! !Tp djf uz-29)23*-!2561 2562/!
i uuqt ;00e pj/psh021 /21 91 0247: 229 Y/31 25/: 8: 328

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