

Sam Owen

To my readers,

If you are reading this, then you must be interested in the culture of the Internet, a veteran to it looking to see how accurate it really is, or a teacher having to grade it. Regardless of the cause, I welcome you to this foreboding world full of trolls and magic. In case you don't already have one, here's a coupon for one free Internet to get you started. Just cut it out and redeem it at your local Internet retailer.



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Origins of the Internet

Before we begin analyzing the Internet sub-culture, we should start at the beginning with the creation of the Internet itself. The idea of an Internet started in the 1960's when people began to consider connecting computers. This led to the military and scientific research project of ARPANET which was a network of computers in the Pentagon designed to share information (www.nethistory.info). Although this experiment was considered a failure, it gave rise to the development of the Internet we know today. Also, Al Gore created the Internet, and if you make him mad, he might just take it back (wikipedia.org, n.d.).



4Chan

Over the years, 4Chan is a website that has gained quite a lot of notoriety and controversy. Essentially, all 4Chan is a website that allows anybody to post anything. The most distinguishing feature of it is that you can do it anonymously. This has lead to "fearlessness" among the community because nobody can hold what you post against you because they don't know who you are. Most people choose to post on /b/ also known as the random board. This board is what has gained 4Chan its reputation. The people who post on /b/ are often referred to as "B-tards" and "anons." Many of the cultural ideas that you may find on the Internet can be traced back to some post on 4Chan. There are also similar websites such as Reddit which is less offensive and a little more mature. Although many of these posts are humorous or clever, many are extremely shocking or offensive, and there is very limited regulation. If it exists, it can be found on /b/. NO EXCEPTIONS. Browse at your own risk.

YouTube

Out of all of these hearths, YouTube has, by far, the most mainstream appeal. Almost everybody in the developed world has been to this widely visited website. I probably don't need to explain this, but YouTube is a website that lets people upload videos on any topic ranging from news to cupcakes. The cultural diffusion on YouTube is fairly unique compared to most other community-driven websites. This has to do with the medium of channels, which are what people post videos too, and how viewers interact with them. Once a channel gains a lot of subscribers, the newest video that is posted can almost be guaranteed to be on the daily or weekly most-viewed list. This is only one way for a video to be spread across a great span. Sometimes, a video will come from seemingly nowhere, posted on some unknown channel, yet it gains views in the millions. Videos like these are described as "viral." Generally, after a viral video, the channel that posted it won't ever have another video with that many views. They can be thought of as just a flash in the pan. Viral videos have very poor production value, and usually just consist of somebody with a camera filming something. The videos that go viral are usually rather stupid, but they always have some form of mass appeal. If you ever get the chance, you might want to take a look at the most viewed lists and see what sort of nonsense gets up there.

Encyclopedia Dramatica (Oh Internet)

Encyclopedia Dramatica can be described as a hub for all forms of trolling, a headquarters for trolls to plan their next strikes. Trolling, which I will describe in detail later, is antagonizing somebody for the sake of a reaction. It also contains many memes, some of them being offensive. Earlier this year, the well known website went down, probably due to lack of funds. It has been replaced with the website Oh Internet, which is a cleaner version of the former website which had been known for its vulgarity.

The Cheezeburger Network

The Cheezeburger Network is the proud conglomeration of many different websites that are all owned by I Can Has Cheezeburger which was started by a single picture. The websites under the control of the network are almost all associated with the phenomena of Internet macros.

Science behind the Spread

The Internet has resulted in the elimination of many cultural barriers that would normally deter the diffusion and spread. As a result, a cultural idea can spread extremely quickly. In fact, the only thing that can slow down the spread of culture over the Internet is that not everything appeals to everyone. This is why I would consider most of the things that spread around on the Internet to be an example of hierarchical diffusion. This is because things such as memes will only appeal to a certain group of people and, therefore, will spread through that specific group. For example, I might find something on the Internet to be hilarious while you might not get it at all. However, in some cases, the spread of a meme can be deemed contagious.

There are a variety of ways for online ideas to spread. Mediums of diffusion include email, forums, message boards, and other websites.

Not all memes become viral. Some die and are forgotten rather quickly. So what makes one viral? The answer is probably how many people it appeals to and how well it is spread. Relatively speaking, memes are usually short-lived. Even the most viral of them seem to get old after a while and are abandoned. But in that lifespan, they can be viewed and spread by hundreds of thousands or even millions. This is the phenomena of the online culture and connectivity.

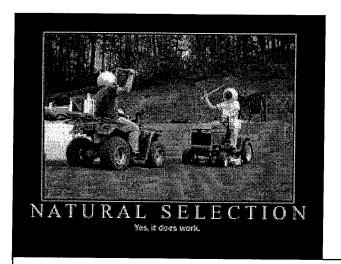
What is a meme?

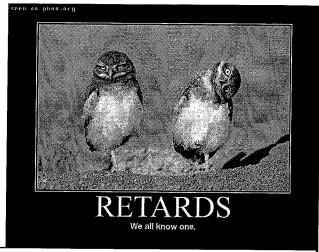
You may have been noticing me repeatedly using the word "meme." The term, meme, was first used by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* which was published in 1976 (www.thedailymeme.com, n.d.). He described it as "a unit of cultural diffusion." This definition still applies today, although with the development of the online sub-culture, it has gained some new meaning. I would define any kind of cultural idea or trait that spreads very quickly and widely as a meme. They are almost like massive inside jokes; to an outsider, they don't make any sense at all. There are an abundant amount of examples of these, both old and new. It would be hopeless to try and explain all of them in a reasonable amount of time, so I will try to stick with the more current or important ones.

Demotivationals

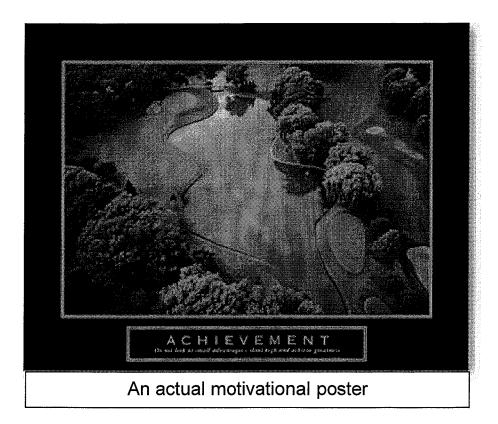
One of the most common formats for memes is in a mock motivational poster called a demotivational. Originally, they were parodies of those posters outlined in black with the caption on the bottom that was meant to inspire those who saw it. Motivational posters were hung in offices, classrooms, and other workplaces to increase the moral of the workers by telling them not to give up, to reach their goals, etc. The original demotivational pictures had a similar picture, but with a depressing or demotivating caption, hence the name. However, before long, they just became another format to add words to a picture. Often, they aren't even

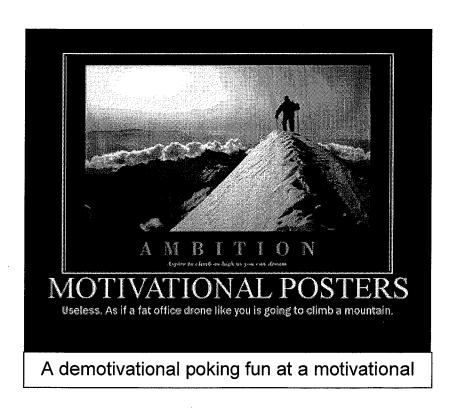
demotivating and somewhat cliché. One of the most useful functions of them is that you can put one inside of another.





Two typical demotivationals



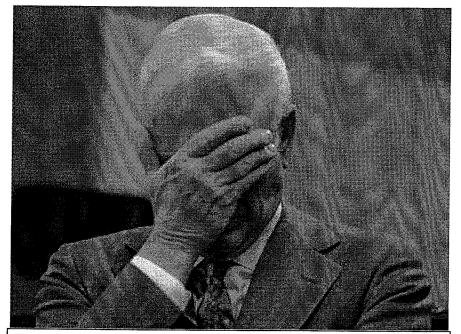


Rick Roll'd



If you've browsed YouTube long enough, this has probably happened to you: A friend sends you a link to a video. You click on it expecting to see the video your friend described. Suddenly, you hear the drum fill that begins Rick Astley's extremely ridiculed song, "Never

Gonna Give You Up." This indicates that you have been tricked using a technique known as Rick Rolling. Although the song was released in 1987, it hadn't got much attention until April 1st, 2008, when YouTube linked all their main page videos to this song. Ever since then, this video has been the primary technique for pranks over YouTube. In meme years, Rick Roll'd is rather old and should be retired, but it's still widely used and recognized although there have been other videos that people claim to be the "new Rick Roll'd." Even the Lyrics are used for pranks.



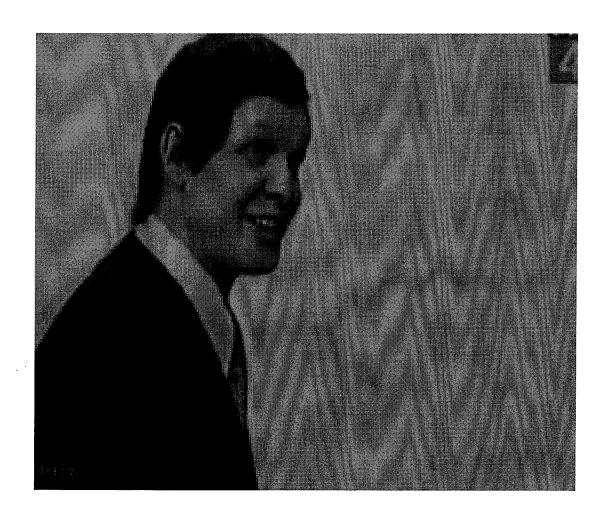
How most people react to being Rick Roll'd



Even Fox News couldn't resist

Mr. Trolololo

Also known as Russian Rick Roll'd, this video and song are often used very similarly to Rick Astley's infamous piece. The song that you hear is actually a wordless version of the song "I'm So Happy to Be Home" by Edward Khil, commonly referred to as Mr. Trolololo. The video is of him poorly lip singing to his own recording. There are many reasons why the people of the Internet found this to be so funny, but the biggest reason has to be the sound he makes. It sounds as if he's saying "lolololololololololol," which makes everybody laugh. Edward Khil was a well-known Soviet singer. Apparently, the reason why there are no words is because the lyrics would have been deemed anti-Soviet and banned anyways. Many have considered this to also be representative to the act of trolling.

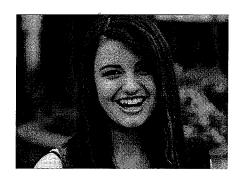




In 2010, Mr. Khil gave an interview to a Russian news agency. Since I am very fluent in Russian (and subtitles), I understood most of it. He didn't seem to be too upset about it. In fact, he didn't really seem to know what was going on. He kept mentioning his fans in Canada...

<u>Friday</u>

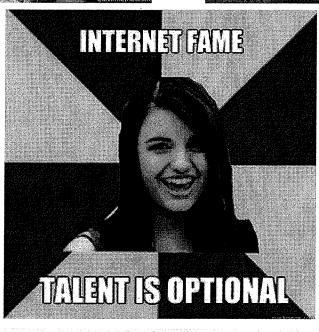
This is a fairly new meme; it's only about a month old. Most of us have seen this video. Two months ago, a thirteen-year-old named Rebecca Black Released a music video that she got to make for her birthday titled "Friday" to YouTube. Although it took a few weeks, the video instantly went viral not because it was good, but because it was so terrible that it was extremely funny. At one point, the video had over 2 million dislikes, but the ratings were soon disabled. It's hard to say what's worse: her clearly autotuned, nasally voice or the extremely shallow and annoying lyrics that are absolutely nonsensical. Many parodies have been made of this with everyone's favorite being "Brock's Dub." This video not only captured the attention of the YouTube community, but many different memes about Rebecca Black appeared on sites like 4Chan and others. Because of all the hatred, the song, "Friday," has been in the iTunes top ten, and Rebecca Black has made a rather large profit. This is a perfect example of Rule 19 of the Internet: The more you hate it, the stronger it becomes.



Some memes that were born from this horrid song:







The Internet's Favorite Mascot

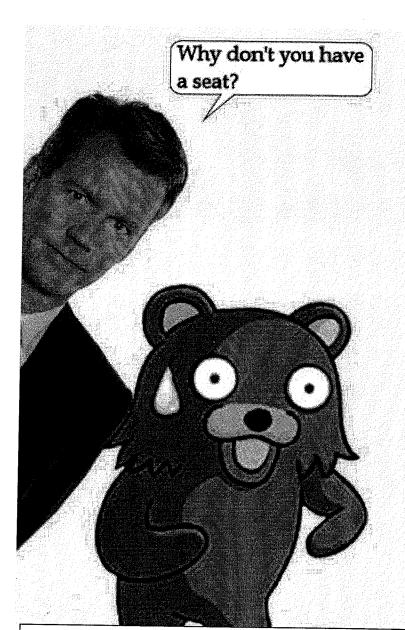
4Chan has been known to be the place of origin of many memes and characters, but the most well-known has to be the notorious Pedobear. It is impossible to discuss the more underground parts of the Internet without mentioning him at least once. If you're familiar with Latin roots, you might notice that the first part of the name means "child." As you probably guessed, this is a pedophile bear. It represents the numerous creeps that inhabit the Internet, searching for prey. Although Pedobear is representative of a serious problem, it has gained much comedic meaning and is usually presented in a light-hearted manner.





A seal often placed over suggestive material





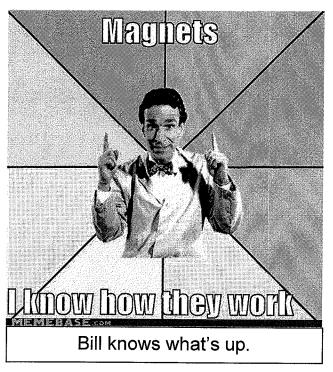
Pedobear and his arch nemesis, Chris Hanson

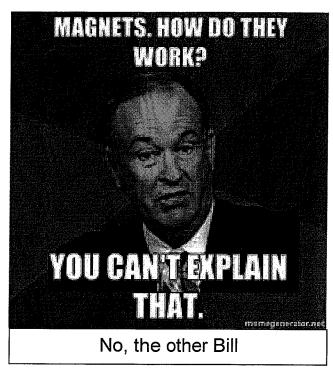
Magnets

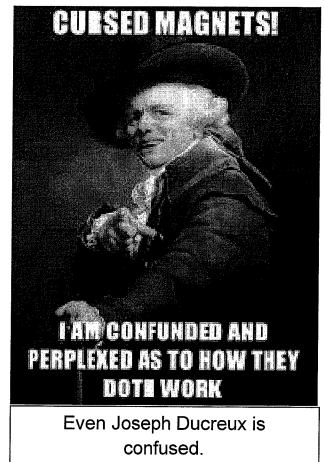
If you're still confused by the title of this book, then this is for you. Like many other memes, this one also came from a heavily ridiculed and disliked song (notice the pattern?). In this case, it's a lyrical reference to Insane Clown Posse's song "Miracles" which is about how magical the world is and how scientists are lying. The lyrics in question are "F*ckin' magnets, how do they work?" This became a giant meme, especially among trolls who often referenced it. There were several other memes that came from the badly written lyrics of this song such as rainbows, longnecked giraffes, and a pelican eating a phone.







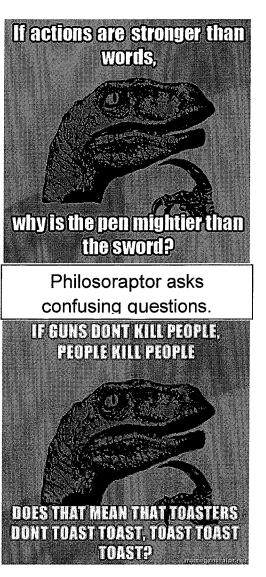


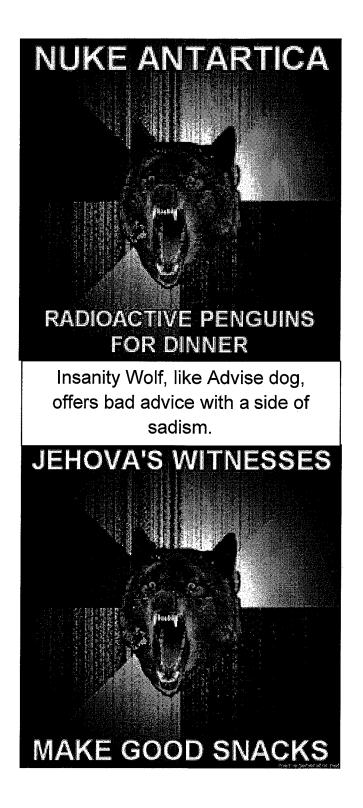


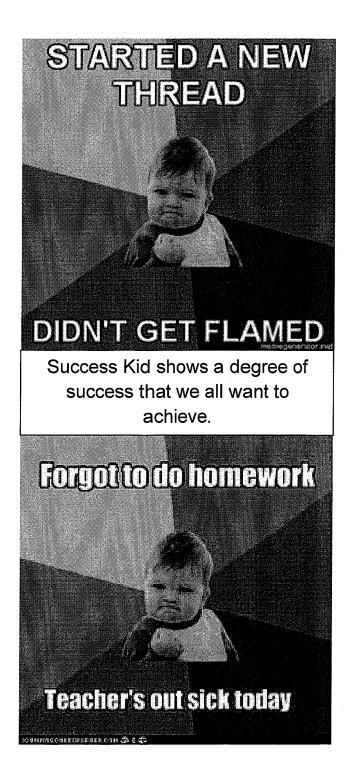
<u>Macros</u>

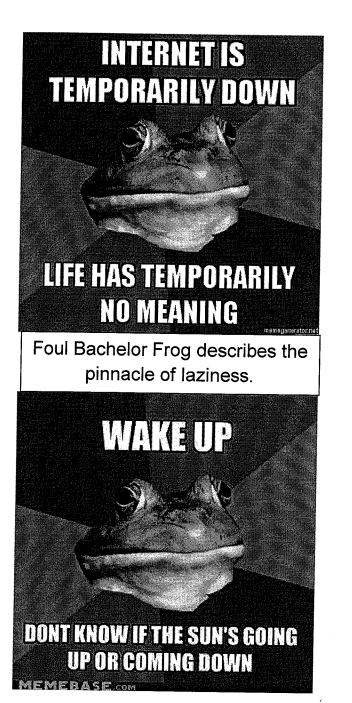
If you've ever seen Philososraptor, Advice Dog, Insanity Wolf, or Success kid, you've noticed that there's an unrelated picture surrounded by a caption. Although the picture stays the same, it is often re-captioned hundreds of times. There is not much to say about these types of pictures, you may see them often, but the meaning is usually self-explanatory, and the origin is unclear. These kinds of macros lack a specific name or categorization, but they can be found in many places. The caption is also written in a special format that gives it a certain flow when read. The best way to explain these is to show examples.

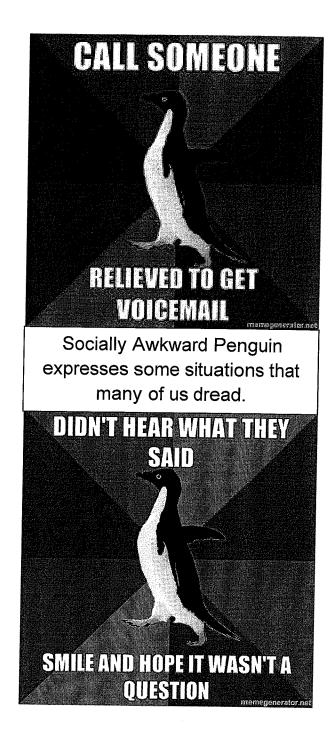


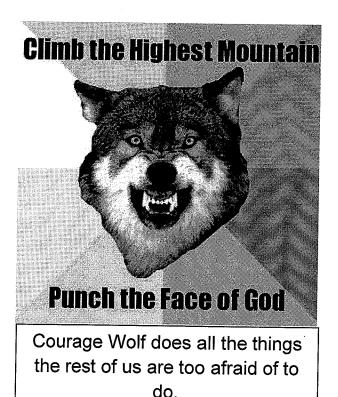


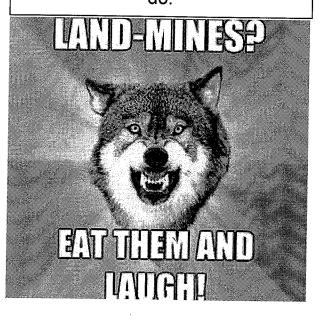


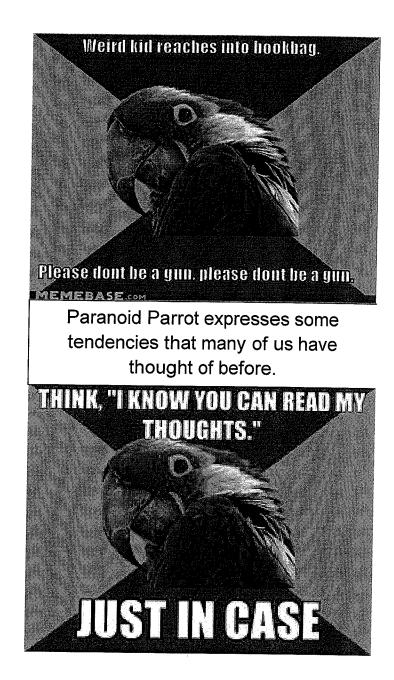








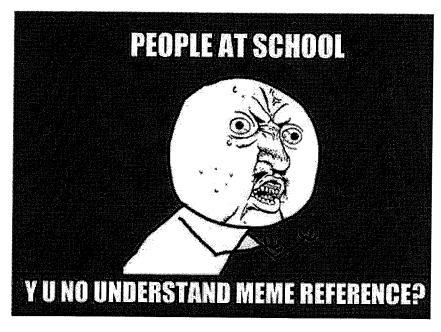




Y U NO Guy

There isn't much to say about this meme. It's a drawing of an angry looking guy asking in shorthand why something is not what you would think it is. It usually pokes fun at an illogical policy or something along those lines.

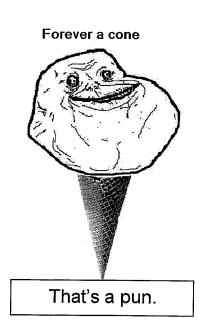




Forever Alone

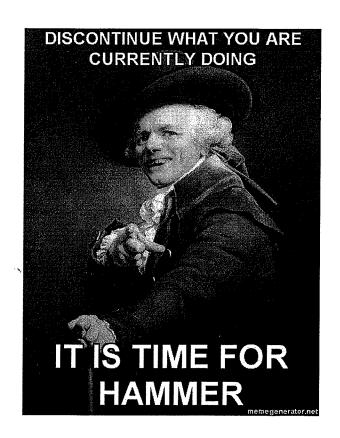
This meme represents the pinnacle of loneliness. It's often used in other memes, especially in conjunction with other memes, especially in comics. It originated as one of the Rage Comic Faces but quickly formed into its own meme. It can still be found in the Rage Comics, though.

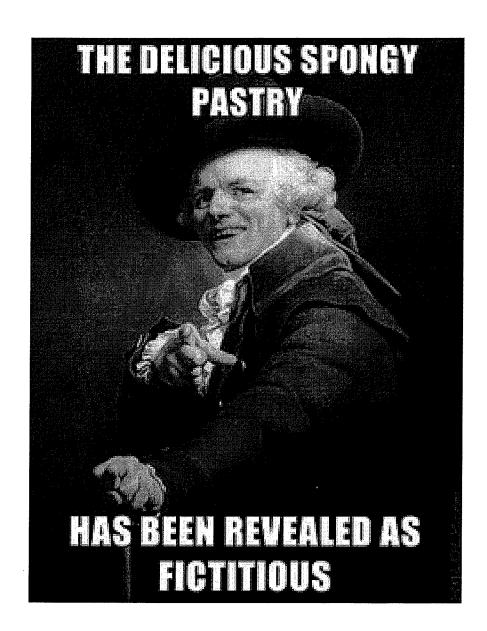




Joseph Ducreux

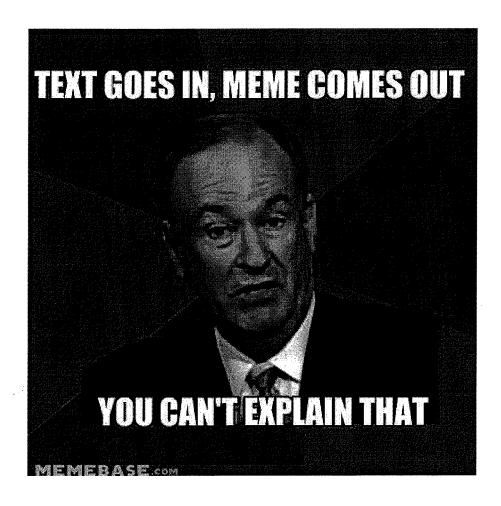
Joseph Ducreux was a French artist in the late 1700's known for his unorthodox style of painting. In about 1793, he painted a self-portrait that would become a meme over 200 years later. To the creators of the meme, the sly grin reminded them of the rappers of modern day. The caption consists of a well-known pop culture reference translated in old English, even though the painting was of a French man. What's interesting about these memes is that they present a challenge for the viewer to retranslate the text and then remember where it came from. Here are some examples:

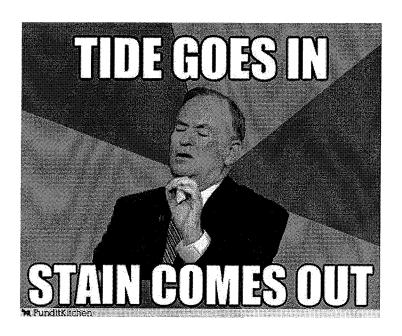


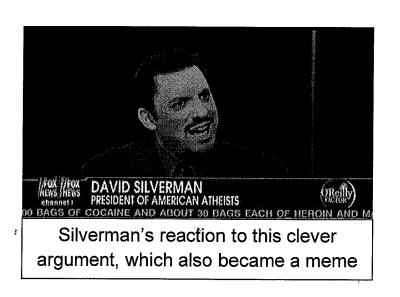


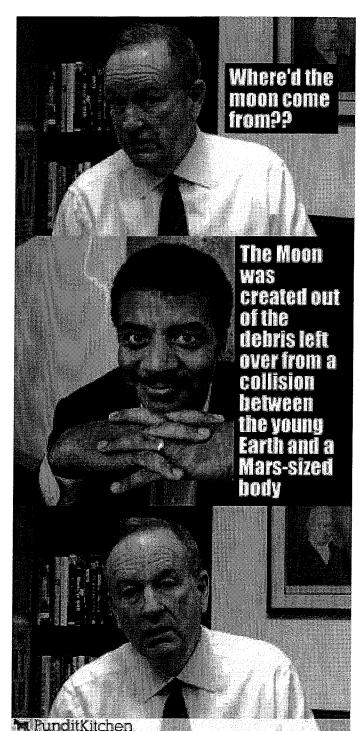
Bill O'Reilly

During an argument/interview with David Silverman, the president of the American Atheists, Bill O'Reilly famously quoted, "Tide goes in, tide goes out. Never a miscommunication. **You** can't explain that." The joke is that obviously, that can be very easily explained using science. Of course this got the Internet's attention, especially from site like Reddit, and it was quickly made into a meme. Things only got better (or worse) when O'Reilly tried to defend his flawed logic by using even more flawed logic. This only made him look more ignorant and generated even more memes.



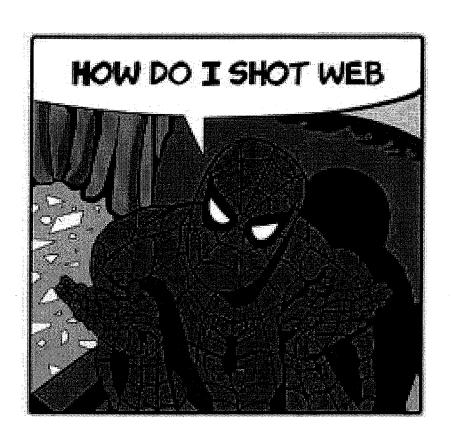


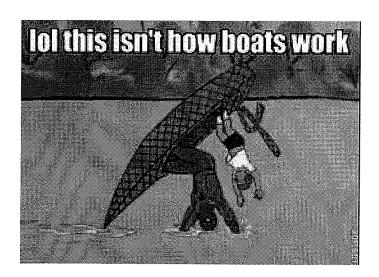


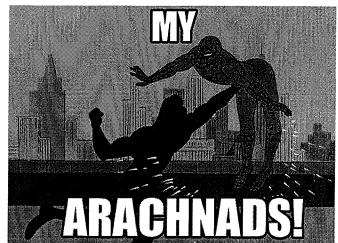


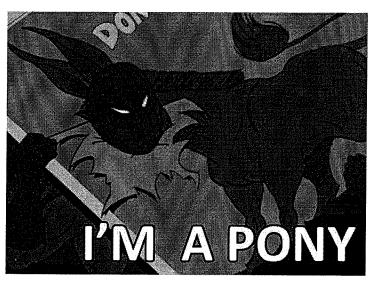
60's Spiderman

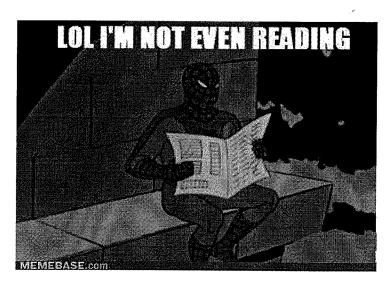
Recently, there has been an explosion of Spider Man memes on sites like 4Chan and others, including entire threads dedicated to captioning the old cartoon. The origins of this meme are in a cartoon that was remembered for its bad animations and voice acting (www.knowyourmeme.com, n.d.). Although it was a moderate meme a couple of years ago, it wasn't until January of this year that it became popular. Personally, this is one of my favorite memes, although I'm not sure why. Like other memes, it's funny, but you can't explain why.

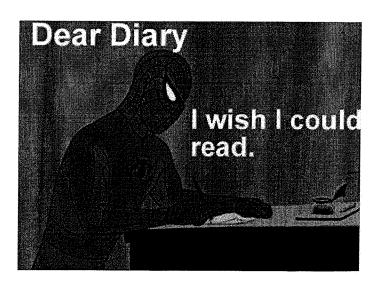






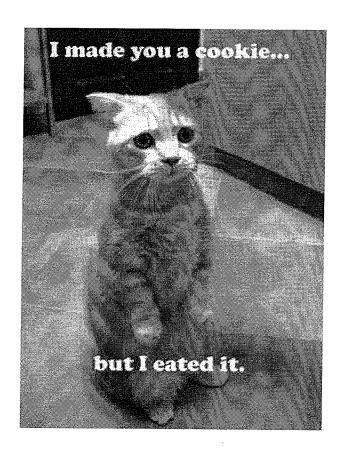


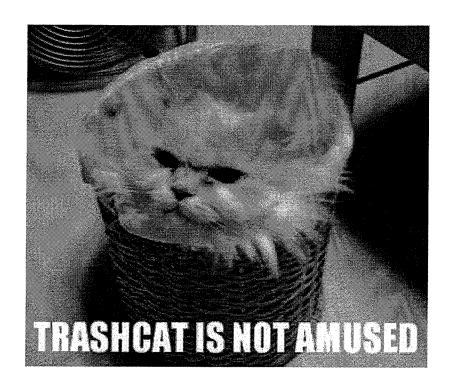


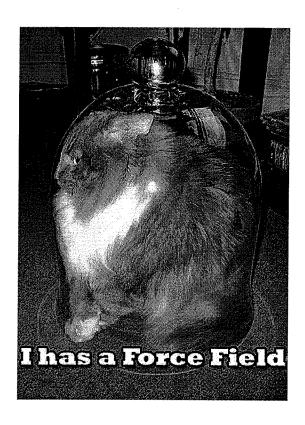


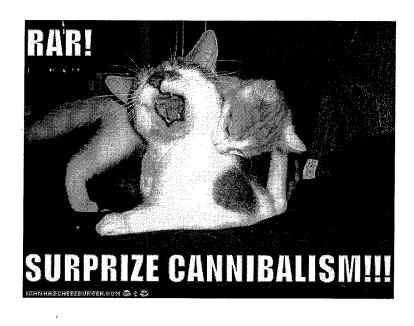
Lolcats

I dread the day when we'll have to explain to the next generation what a LOLcat was. In case you did not know, a LOLcat was a picture of a house cat surrounded by some ridiculous, intentionally misspelled (in order to make it seem like a cat typed it) caption. It is quite appalling. In my humble opinion, it is a disgrace to human ingenuity and grammar (mostly grammar). Despite this, it is one of the biggest memes of all time.



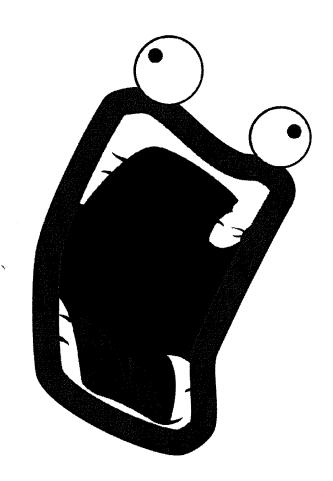


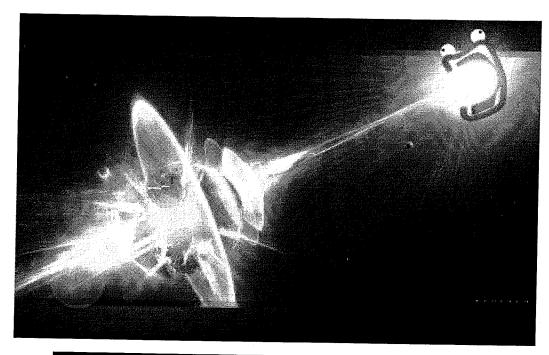


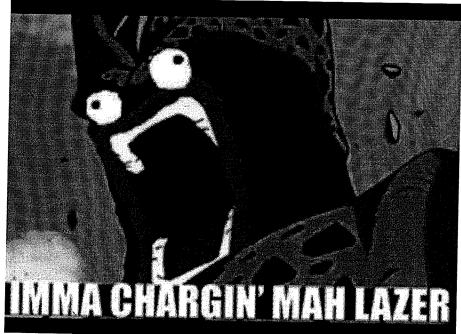


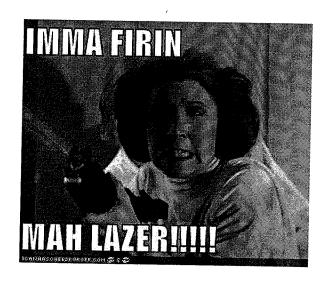
Lazar Face

This is primarily a meme with origins in YouTube. It has, however, diffused to many other locations on the inter-webs. More commonly called Shoop da Whoop, the lazar face is a universal symbol of total destruction in an awesome spectacle signaled by the phrase, "IMA FIRIN' MAH LAZAR." It is said that the lazar, once fully charged, cannot be stopped. Although as an independent meme, the lazar face has mostly retired, it is still often implemented into other memes, often subtly.



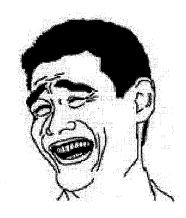


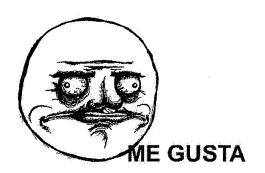


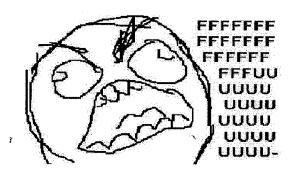


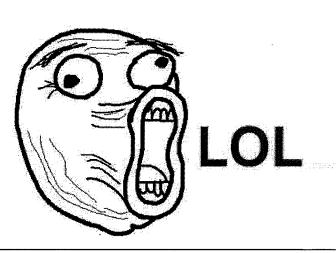
Rage Comics

A Rage Comic is a comic strip that uses pictures to represent emotions presented in everyday situations. The pictures often look hand drawn but are universally recognized. The pictures, which usually have a sketch-like quality, often become memes of their own.

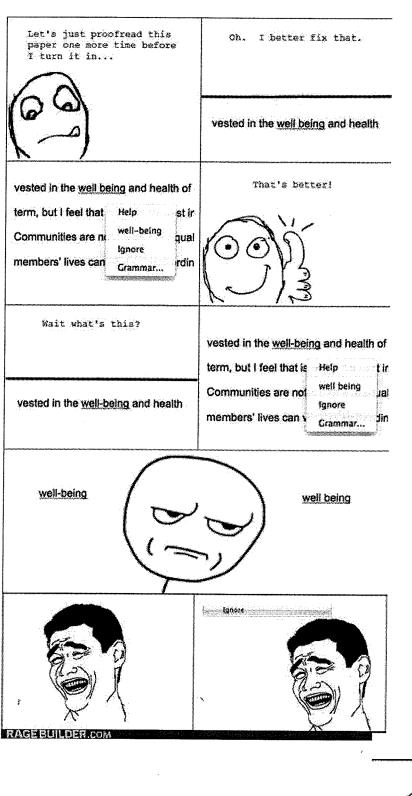


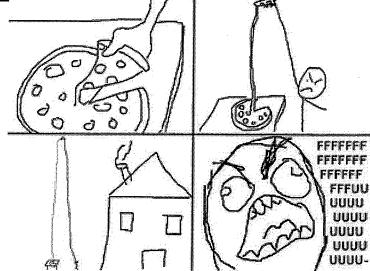






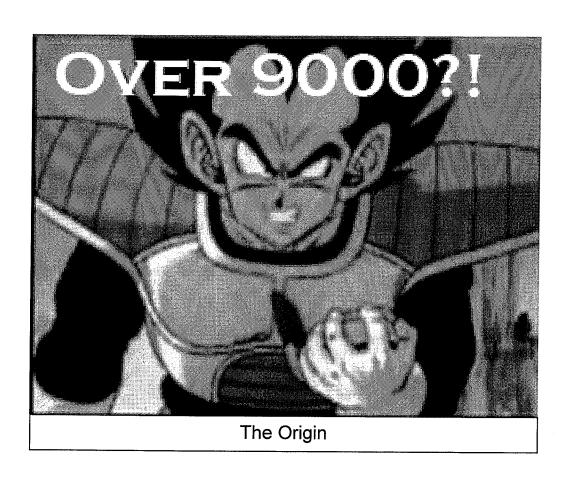
Some of the faces that are used





Over 9,000

In the Internet community, the number 9,000 is generally regarded as the threshold for ultimate power. Anything above it is considered to be extremely powerful beyond all reason. The origin is in the animated T.V. series, *Dragon Ball Z.* The meme originated when one character exclaimed in great rage that the power level of his adversary is over 9,000. The meme became well known on YouTube and spread from there. Now, you can find references to the legendary number all over the Internet



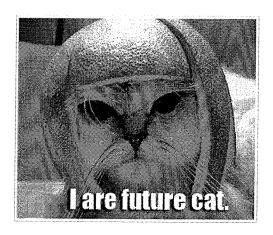




Dead Memes

As I stated earlier, memes usually have relatively short lifespans. Many don't even last a year before being almost completely forgotten. The cause of this would either be a lack of new ideas or decreased relevance. Even though no more of these memes are being made, they still have a place burned into or minds. Who could forget classics such as Banana Phone, This is Sparta, and the cat with a lime on its head. There is always the chance that one of these could somehow make a comeback.

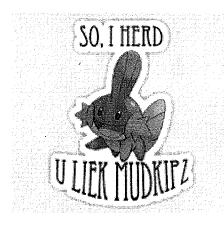






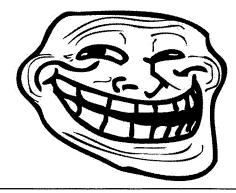






Trolling

What is trolling? Trolling is a way of life. To reiterate my previous definition, trolling on the Internet is posting something off-topic or sensitive in order to get a reaction. It has evolved from simple jokes among friends to massive schemes against corporations. A few years ago, trolls hacked into the Epilepsy website and inserted several flashing images. Another time, they plagued a MySpace memorial page with jokes about the kid who committed suicide. Even mainstream media had to pay attention to this phenomenon. The New York times released a 7 page article about trolls. Trolls are everywhere on the Internet. If you're not trolling, you're being trolled.



The face that often represents trolling.

<u>Anonymous</u>

It is indeed ironic for "Anonymous" to be a title for people to identify themselves with. You have probably heard of this group before. They have been known for several very large and successful attacks. Recently, they were responsible for the crash of the entire Play Station Network. Anons, as they are often called, primarily inhabit 4Chan and other Chans. Other times, they hacked into the Time Magazine personality of the year award to display the founder of 4Chan, moot, on top, and they've hacked the Wesboro Baptist Chuch's website and posted a message. Anonymous is, and has been for some time, the top trolling community on the Internet. They work together to form something like a super-organism, capable of disrupting even the most powerful of websites such as YouTube and Twitter. Many of the things that they do are just for fun, but they've shown that they have a serious side.



I own a horse.

One of the first was a joke on the popular chat website, Omegle. The rule was that if someone typed the phrase, "I own a horse," then it was customary for the other person to disconnect from the chat. It wasn't usually that simple, though. The numerous trolls found several clever ways to indirectly reference their nonexistent horses, such as spelling it out using the first letter of ever line that they type. The fact that it was a widespread, understood, concept is what made it a meme. Here is an example:

Stranger: hi

You: Hello

Stranger: asl?

You: I own a horse.

Your conversational partner has disconnected.

Mormons and Magnets

One of the most common implementations of the magnets meme was to ask multiple help chat websites how magnets work. The most targeted was, by far, the Mormon missionary chat. Many people would enter the online chat room and instead of asking a sincere question about religion, ask about magnets and how they work. In most cases the missionaries would just end the chat. As with the "I own a horse" gig, trolls found many clever ways to deliver the message. People also asked off topic questions that often compared the Book of Mormon to J.R.R. Tolkein's masterpiece, the Lord of the Rings. Questions often went along these lines:

You: I have a question about the book of Mormon.

Missionary: What is it?

You: Why did they walk the Ring to Mordor instead of riding the giant eagle?

Missionary: Do you have any sincere questions related to religion that we can discuss?

You: Yes.

You: How do magnets work?

The chat session has ended.

Yahoo! Answers

When seeking guidance for a difficult situation or just looking for an answer to a question, many people would visit Yahoo! Answers, hoping that somebody would care enough to help them. Many times, this was not the case. Trolls would often exploit these people when they were vulnerable which was hilarious if I do say so. The fake answers given would often be clever, completely made up, or extremely demotivating. Trolls would often ask ridiculous questions on order to get a few good reactions.



Resolved Question

Show majorother a

What is the meaning of the dot Indian women wear on their forehead between their eyes?

4 (00% 000

Fregori Atsura



Best Answer - Chosen by Voters

Here is the true meaning.

Check. Spelling It is part of the downy tradition.

On the worlding day the husband scratches off the dot to see if he won a convenience store or a motel.

4 years are

50% 4 Votes

THE ART OF TROLLING COM



Open Question

Show me another »

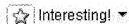
How do I best troll yahoo answers?

Chief_Ir...

8 hours ago - 4 days left to answer.



Report Abuse







Answers (2)

Show: All Answers



, ៤៧ Timberwolf TOF ONTRIBUTOR

I think you probably just did.







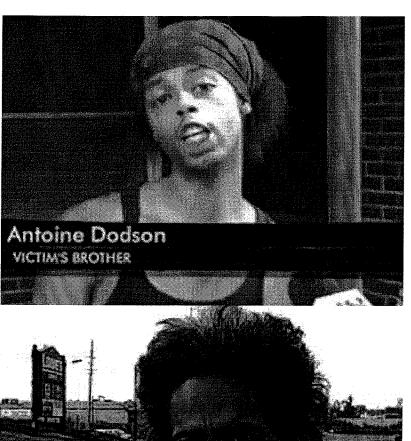
Report Abuse

The YouTube Community

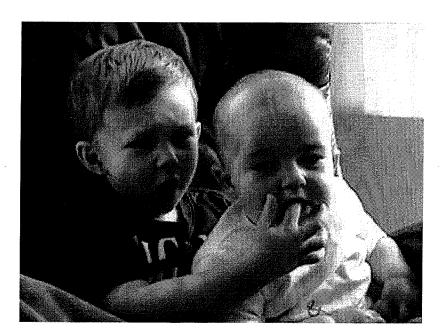
It is hard to group the YouTube community as a single culture since it is so diverse. Instead, there are many sub communities formed around specific categories of videos, such as the YouTube gaming community. However, most people on YouTube do not really fall into a specific category. The kind of just float around and might just watch the featured videos for the day. They could be described as casual users. Although they don't contribute much per person, they are mainly responsible for the spread of viral videos because with many other situations, the mob has the most control through numbers.

Viral Videos

What makes a video viral? It doesn't seem that quality is a deciding factor. They somehow have some kind of mass appeal that is usually unintentional. A viral video is a special type of meme. The reason for that is that it can usually give rise to many other memes if it can fit the criteria. Many of the largest memes originated from very widely viewed videos including many of those previously listed. However, many YouTube videos don't expand beyond their hearth. An example would be the video "Charlie Bit My Finger. Again!" Although this is currently the most viewed video on YouTube, it never subsequently gave rise to other memes. This might be because of the type of appeal it gives. The audience that creates the memes probably are not attracted by the subject of a baby biting a kid's finger. One reason is that there really isn't anything to work with or exploit for the sake of humor. The other would be its very mainstream view base which is what it mainly appeals to. In general, the subculture of the Internet dislikes mainstream culture. In a way, they are hipsters that they enjoy making fun of so much.





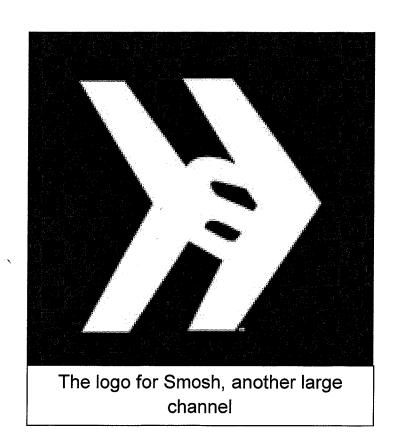


Large Channels

Videos that gain millions of view don't always come from the blue. Most of them come from well-established channels that have hundreds of thousands of subscribers. When you subscribe to a channel, it makes it easier to view that channel's uploads. With a copious amount of subscribers, getting a video on the daily most viewed list isn't that much of a challenge. Many of the people who accomplish this are regarded as celebrities in the YouTube community, but that is usually the extent of their acclamation. Outside of YouTube and the website that some of the larger celebrities have dedicated to them, nobody cares.



How did this tool get so many subscribers?



The Internet Sub-culture and Mainstream Society

As I stated earlier, the people who inhabit the Internet generally disapprove of most things that are mainstream. Despite this, the two may be merging. Already, we've seen Internet memes appear in normal culture such as the "All your base are belong to us" meme appear in numerous advertisements among other things back in 2001. With the increased connectivity and amount of people using the Internet, it is hard for anything to remain completely underground. Perhaps the veterans of the Internet will be turned away by this. One of the biggest joys of the Internet culture is that not everybody knows about it, and it remains somewhat exclusive to those who dedicate time to understanding it. It is always disappointing to see a specialized, reserved sub-culture fall to the mob.

Where Does This All Lead?

This sub-culture already bears a resemblance to another counterculture movement: Punk. Both remained mostly underground and avoided the mainstream. The punk movement was fairly short lived for the most part. This brings up the question, "What will happen the Internet's culture?" At the moment it seems to be as strong as ever, but it is becoming more available. The punk movement could be described as a "phase" in America's culture, fueled by the angry youth. Eventually, the majority of that youth grew up and moved on leaving only a few behind. Although punk still exists, it's not nearly as prominent as it was 30 years ago. However, I doubt that this will be how the Internet sub-culture ends. It is already noted that it has been fusing with mainstream society. Integration could be the ultimate downfall. It is very likely that the once little understood aspects of internet memes and trolls could just be part of normal life for normal people, completely eliminating the need for a classification or category, effectively "killing" the separate sub-culture. What will the veterans of the Internet do? There is a possibility that this might not happen at all. Only time will tell. Is this just another movement that will die out before long, or is it here to stay?

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