

the memeing of life

A retrospective on our favorite Internet fads

Meme: an idea, belief, or pattern of behavior that spreads throughout a culture either vertically by cultural inheritance or horizontally by cultural acquisition.

Easy to define and hard to understand, a meme used to be what happened when a joke went viral. However, much like parasites, they have latched onto every aspect of our lives. Memes no longer have to just be funny; they have to be provocative, ironic or fill your heart with profound despair for the folly of humanity.

Most memes, while extremely popular for a couple days, simply don't have the staying power to remain in a world where everyone refreshes their screens every five minutes. One of the truest joys in life is watching companies desperately try to connect to younger demographics by appropriating a meme for an ad campaign. The problem is, memes move so fast that while American Airlines may tweet about "The Dress" ("white and gold, black and blue? we only have eyes for the sky"), it would be almost impossible for them to be able to produce an actual ad before the meme died.

And die they do. Certain memes (like "Left Shark," or "Iggy Free-styles") skyrocket to popularity and dominate the Internet for a few days, only to completely disappear. Other memes (such as "bruh,"

"Pepe the sad frog," or "YASSS GAGA YASSS") have managed to cement themselves so deeply in our minds that they stop being just memes, and start becoming a part of our everyday vocabulary. "Doge" originated as a meme, and now it's a household term. Tell anyone you are hungry, and there is a significant likelihood that they will answer "Hi Hungry, I'm Dad." All memes are utterly erratic and spontaneous. It is impossible to guess the next meme or predict which will last. Memes are uncontrollable. Memes are volatile. Memes have become their own meme.

"Ironically memeing" has also become an epidemic, in which an individual feigns a love of memes and unendingly repeats his or her personal favorites to annoyed friends. Eventually, the individual realizes that they have not been ironically memeing, but that they truly adored memes the whole time. This article in itself is ironic memeing! In February, one of the most popular google searches was "how to inform a friend they are memeing too hard." Is a "meme" a verb? A noun? It can even transform itself into an adjective.

The core reason for a meme's popularity is that everyone can relate to memes on some level. Most teenagers know the pain hidden inside "tfw no gf." Anyone bogged down with soul-sucking schoolwork can understand "Grumpy Cat" on an emotional level. All high schoolers know exactly what to do when the bae's parents aren't home. Our shared love of memes creates a heightened sense of community on the Internet. These aren't just any memes, they're *our* memes. Adults don't understand the hilarity of the revival of the Little Einsteins' theme song. Memes belong to us the way — at our age — most things don't. They can break your heart and shatter your spirit, but they will never be able to take your dank memes.

—Sophia Ho

