

Lockdown Week 1 Assignment

1. Read the following article.
2. Answer the questions on the attached Google Form.
3. Open the attached “choose your meme” doc that is attached to this assignment. Paste in a picture of a meme you have seen and found interesting and answer the questions about it.

READING: “The Role of Memes in Teen Culture”

How do you prepare for the coronavirus? By cutting up a few limes.

That’s the message conveyed by a popular internet meme that shows a pair of hands slicing limes. The image and caption — “Me, preparing for the coronavirus” — are a bit subversive: While public health officials worldwide are scrambling to determine how to best treat and contain the virus that has killed hundreds, the meme plays on the name of the beer brand Corona, and suggests there’s no real need to worry.



Internet memes use images to celebrate, mock or satirize current events and popular culture, and they have become a defining part of how teenagers communicate in the digital world. The recent rise of memes seeming to make light of the Wuhan virus or international tensions offer a window into how teens learn about and process world events. Today’s tweens and teens get their news via memes on Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat, while parents, while teachers and grandparents still largely rely on news reports and Facebook and Twitter posts.

As a result, there’s a generational gap between how adults learn about and perceive the news, and how teenagers learn about and react to the same events.

When I learned (on Facebook) that an American drone attack killed Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, the powerful Iranian commander, my stomach dropped. Having been married to a Marine deployed in the gulf war in the 1990s, I know that war is no joke. My sons came home from school that day laughing at World War III memes claiming their generation is ready for war because they’ve been “training” in the video games Fortnite and Call of Duty.

My first impulse was to lecture my sons about the seriousness of war. But lectures almost never change teenagers’ behavior, so I dug deep into meme culture instead. What I found: Kids use memes to express and channel all kinds of emotions, including fear.

Humor as a Coping Strategy

Shortly after the drone strike in the Middle East, “my 14-year-old jokingly said that Iran should just blow up the U.S.A. and get it over with already,” said Tanya Brown, who lives in Ontario, Canada. “His comment caught me so off guard that it made me cry right then and there in front of him.” She added: “We’ve raised our boys to be kind and empathetic to others, so when my son made such a hurtful comment, it really made me sad and angry.”

Making light of a deadly virus or the prospect of war may seem crass or thoughtless, but humor is often a way of coping with something we cannot control, whether it is a comedian joking about having cancer or the “Saturday Night Live” cast lampooning the Trump administration.

Memes can serve as internet culture's ultimate coping mechanism. We flock to each other when we're in crisis and in today's world, we often gather on the internet: We look at our phones and computers for news about how our governments are handling the virus and information about what to do and where to go if we're worried about our health. We also log-on to see which 20-second song bites to wash our hands to and to check if making our own hand sanitizer is the right move. And through remote workdays and quarantines, we stay connected online.

Sources:

"The Role of Memes in Teen Culture,"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/06/well/family/memes-teens-coronavirus-wiii-parents.html>

"What Coronavirus Memes Say About Internet Culture In 2020,"

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/03/9536396/coronavirus-memes-jokes>