\*clip of different laughters\*

You’ve seen them before. You’ve laughed at them. You’ve shared them. And perhaps you’ve even made some. Memes are taking the world by storm, but where did they come from? And where are they going?

\*Insert clip from video of description here\*

Memes are compositions made of photos and clever sayings. They often mimic or mock the human experience. Contrary to popular belief, they are not a new cultural phenomenon. The word is rooted in Greek, and it means “that which is imitated.” The term was originally coined by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene* to explanation how media is used to spread cultural information. The concept of the meme was proposed by Mike Godwin in 1993 They began to pop up on social media around 2001. Since then, millions upon millions have been shared across the world. They have emerged as the internet has evolved, and they continue to grow more popular. The word meme is becoming more frequently searched for than the word Jesus (Forbes). So, what makes them so popular?

\*Insert clip from video of popularity here\*

Memes were created as a new form of communication. Their popularity is linked to the ways that large groups of people can relate to their simple yet clever messages. They bring people together. Memes are also easy to share, making them an inexpensive way to spread information quickly.

The first modern meme was arguably a photo of a bunny. The bunny had a pancake on its head. The words read, “I have no idea what you’re saying, so here’s a bunny with a pancake on its head.” In 2002, peanut butter jelly time made its debut. Then, in 2003, a photo of an owl popped up on social media with the words O RLY? Only, in this meme, the words are misspelled on purpose to convey a sarcastic sense of humor. This kind of humor is not uncommon in memes.

Given their popularity and continued growth, memes are here to stay. They have become such a fundamental part of our communication. However, we have yet to account for the influence they have and still dismiss memes as trivial bits of culture. But Memes have the potential to shape culture. In fact, several memes, including the Harambe meme and the “Damn Daniel” meme have already promoted productive conversations on controversial topics. What started as a joke turned into something impactful, such as raising awareness of societal issues like keeping wild animals in captivity. (Medium)

\*Insert video clip here\*

This kind of influence is what we can expect to see in the future. The potential is truly endless. As with anything, memes can be used for spreading good, constructive messages, and they can also be used for negative purposes. With heightened awareness and careful use, we can learn to recognize the power of these sharable bits of culture.

Sources

<https://worldhistoryproject.org/topics/internet-memes/page/2>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_meme>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/07/19/more-than-a-trend-meme-marketing-is-here-to-stay/#717855a82487>

<https://medium.com/rta902/are-memes-the-future-of-social-change-ceb24792218d>