Memes, Network Literacy, and First-Year Composition: 
A Rhetorical Approach Towards Viral Internet Memes

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Abstract

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By
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The emergence and popularity of digital writing spaces and multimodal texts have led to discussions on changing notions of rhetorical practices. However, scholarship has yet to fully address viral internet memes as complex, rhetorical situations. My paper explores internet memes as highly flexible digital texts that are reimagined, recreated and repurposed based on ever-changing cultural variables. As implicit in the discussion of evolutionary biology, a meme must adapt to the conditions of its environment and evolve in order to survive. I argue that when an author composes an internet meme, the author demonstrates a complex understanding of the situational grounds that develop the meme's conditions for reception by the audience. These interactions should be taught to developing writers to prepare them to join and communicate successfully across online composition networks.