

Objective To improve your reading and listening skills.

Think about it Have you ever received a joke or funny photo from someone? What did you think of it? What jokes or funny images have you sent on to friends? What memes are there from your country?

Exams This reading and listening activity will help prepare you for English exams such as KET and TOEFL.



HAVE YOU SEEN THESE PHOTO MEMES?

By Georgina Kiely

A **meme** is an image, photo or video clip that people **adapt**, then send to their friends and colleagues. If the meme becomes popular, other people do their own versions of it, and then it gets even more popular. Here are five photo memes from 2012.



1 Grumpy cat
The "grumpy cat" meme is

a picture of an angry-looking cat. People write text under the picture that represents the cat's thoughts. Typical comments include, "The best part of waking up is going back to sleep!", "The world will end in 2012? Good!", and, "I had fun once. It was awful."

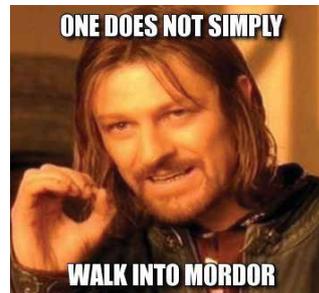
2 The Philoraptor
This meme is a picture of a "velociraptor", a dinosaur from the *Jurassic Park* films. He's got his **claw** under his **chin** in a thoughtful **pose**. The text written around the picture is usually a philosophical question such as, "Is a fly without wings



called a walk?", "What would happen if

said my nose is going to grow?", and, "If you try to **fail** and **succeed**, which have you done?"

3 Boromir
This meme shows a picture of the character Boromir from *The Lord of the Rings* films. The text on the image is based on a quote from the film in which Boromir



says, "One does not simply walk into Mordor." Variations of the meme include, "One does not simply check in to **Mordor**", "One does not simply get off the internet!", or "One does not simply look at only one meme!"



This meme is created with a photo of American gymnast McKayla Maroney. McKayla won a silver medal at the 2012 Olympics, but was disappointed that she hadn't won a gold medal, which is why she **pulled the face**. A photo of her is usually **superimposed** onto a famous image, such as the moon landing or the Mona Lisa painting.



4 Condescending Wonka
This meme is based on an image of the character Willy Wonka from the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. The picture is taken from a scene in the

film in which Willy Wonka (played by Gene Wilder) shows the children one of his sweets, the "Everlasting Gobstopper". The text added to the picture usually consists of a **sarcastic** or **condescending** comment, such as, "Oh, you just **graduated**? You must know everything!", or "Oh, you **post quotes** from philosophers on Facebook? You must be so intellectual!", and "Oh, you're going as a vampire for Halloween? How original!"

Why don't you create a meme? *

GLOSSARY

a meme *n*
an image, photo, video, etc. that people send to one another. These images, photos, videos, etc. are often adapted: text is added, music is added, etc.
to adapt *vb*
if you "adapt" something, you change it in some way
grumpy *adj*
if someone is "grumpy", they're a bit angry
awful *adj*
bad / terrible
a claw *n*
an animal's "claw" is its hand/foot
a chin *n*
the part of your face that's under your mouth
a pose *n*
the way that you stand or sit when someone is taking your photo, etc.
to fail *vb*
if you "fail", you aren't successful – things go badly
to succeed *vb*
if you "succeed", you're successful – things go well
Mordor *n*
an imaginary land in the book *Lord of the Rings*
to pull a face *exp*
if you "pull a face", you show an emotion with your face. For example, if you "pull an angry face", you make yourself look angry
to superimpose *vb*
if image A is "superimposed" on image B, you put image A on image B
sarcastic *adj*
to say the opposite of what you mean in order to make fun of someone. For example, when you say, "that shirt is really nice", but you really mean that you don't like it
condescending *adj*
if A is being "condescending", A is talking to B in a superior way because A thinks he/she is more important than B
to graduate *vb*
to finish your studies at university/college
to post *vb*
to put an image / text on a website
a quote *n*
a phrase or sentence from a book / interview, etc.

Answers on page 44

1 Pre-reading

Look at the pictures of the photo memes. Which ones have you seen before? Why are they popular? Who's in the pictures?

2 Reading I

Read the article once. Which memes do you like / dislike? Why? Which comments on the memes are the funniest?

3 Reading II

Read the article again. Then, write the name of a meme next to each statement.

1. It's a picture of a character from *The Lord of the Rings*.
2. The text represents the cat's thoughts.
3. It's based on an image of a character from the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.
4. It's a picture of a dinosaur from the film *Jurassic Park*.
5. A photo of her is often superimposed onto famous images.