

# Professional Resources

Rob Baxter

## Memos In Digital Culture

Limor Shifman, 2014

ISBN 978-0-262-52543-5

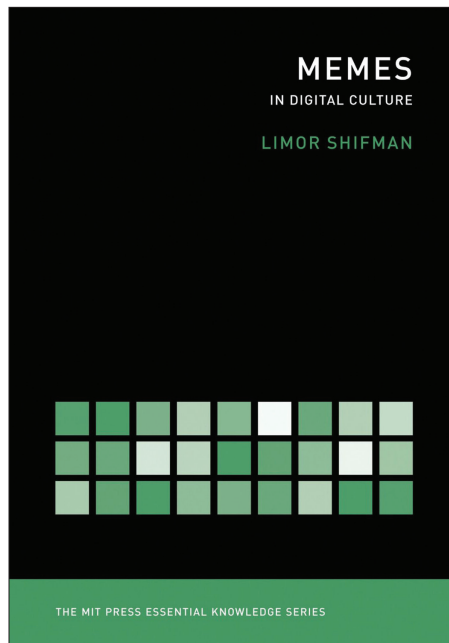
*Highly recommended for primary and secondary educators who wish to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon*

Only entertainment, you say, but what if, according to Limor Shifman, “they” should be taken a bit more seriously? Fine, but first of all, what’s a meme?

Its root goes back to the Greek word *mimēsthai* “to imitate” (think mime), and was coined by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (1976) who explained, “We need a name for the new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation.” It recalls the French word *même* (same), but rhymes with cream.

To get the full visual, stop reading this article, quickly run to your computer and key in [frabz.com/36k6](http://frabz.com/36k6) to see “My Binders Full of Women Exploded,” an Internet meme where Gangnam Style is crossed with Mitt Romney’s 2012 presidential debate blooper about his “binders full of women.”

Shifman contends that “we live in an era driven by a hypermemetic logic (going faster and further), in which almost every major public event sprouts a stream of memes,” and she sets out to prove it in her book. A quick glance might suggest that internet meme are just superficial pop culture, but if looked at more closely, “they play an integral part in some of the defining events of the twenty-first century.” A meme can be useful for understanding digital culture



and is a word that has been adopted in subjects such as anthropology, folklore, linguistics, philosophy, and psychology but, up until now, ignored in the communication field.

Memes existed before the internet in the form of the ubiquitous Second World War “Kilroy Was Here” sketch, for example: a man with two hands clinging to a wall morphing into his nose and upper face who seems to be spying on everyone who sees him.

With the arrival of Web 2.0, however, memes have a larger social impact capable of influencing “the mindsets, social behaviour, and actions of social groups” through Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, and YouTube. They are repackaged, imitated, remixed, re-edited, and traceable in an information era where, apparently, what is valued

most is not really information, but the attention people pay to it.

This pocket-size book, written in academic style, has a glossary, notes, suggestions for further readings, plus topics such as *May the Excessive Force Be With You: Memes as Political Participation*, and *When Internet Memes Go Global*. It’s well worth a “read” and reflection.

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## Masterminds and Wingmen: Helping Our Boys Cope with Schoolyard Power, Locker-Room Tests, Girlfriends, and the New Rules of Boy World

Rosalind Wiseman, 2013

ISBN 978-0-307-98665-8; also available as an e-book and from Random House Audio *A Do-Not-Miss for primary and secondary educators, parents, and beyond*

If ever you’ve wondered about boys’ behaviour, from their sullen silences to their contemptuous eye-rolling, you might find a few answers in Rosalind Wiseman’s book, which covers topics related to boys of all ages.

Just as girls learn certain ways to act from a very young age, boys also pick up certain cues from their families and friends, and often end up with traits the author sums up in her “Act-Like-A-Man Box” (ALMB): being funny, strong, tall, confident, “good with girls,” always relaxed and independent, among others. However, by always trying to live up to a certain superhero image, boys experience tremendous pressure to conform or be an outcast. This is occurring at a time when the ratio of