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Have you seen this image of actor Sean Bean with the caption that starts “One does not simply . . .”? Where have you seen it? What are some of the versions of it you’ve seen? Where do this image and quote come from? ■

One Does Not Simply Create a Meme . . .

What you are looking at is an Internet meme based on the scene in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy where Prince Boromir tells the group gathered to destroy the ring of

power that “One does not simply walk into Mordor.” This still from the movie has been repeatedly captioned with a variety of comments, including

- “One does not simply catch all the Pokémon”;
- “One does not simply read the terms and conditions”;

- “One does not simply leave a Marvel movie before the end of the credits”; and
- a range of topics not suitable for reprinting in your textbook.

The term *meme* was coined by author Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* to describe a “unit of cultural transmission.”¹ Memes generally take an established cultural “text” (which can actually be words, video, audio, art, or photography) and use it in repeated ways to make some kind of commentary and create a common bond between those who understand it. Among the most popular memes are the “Hitler Finds Out About” video meme using the bunker scene from the German movie *Downfall*. The meme takes an emotional scene from the movie featuring German dialogue and then adds English subtitles to tell a very different humorous story.

Although the owners of the copyrights on the source materials for memes would often like to prevent the use of their content in such parodies, copyright law generally protects the memes as “fair use,” a concept we will talk about more in Chapter 13 on media law.

WHO is the source?

Who came up with the concept of memes? Where do memes come from? Who produces them?

WHAT are they saying?

What is a meme? What do memes tell us about our culture?

WHAT evidence is there?

Follow the video link to the “Hitler Finds Out About” video meme. Watch the original clip from *Downfall* and at least one of the memes based on the clip. How does the meme re-create

and change the meaning of the original clip? How do the creators use the movie about Hitler to comment on contemporary society?

WHAT do you and your friends think about this?

What are your favorite memes? Have you ever taken an established meme and created a new version of it? (For example, your author and this book’s multimedia editor created the “One does not simply walk into Mordor with googly eyes” example shown above.) Do you think that memes violate the rights of the

people who created the original text (cultural material) that the meme is based on?

¹Alexia Tsotsis, “What Is a Meme?” November 11, 2010, techcrunch.com/2010/11/11/share-me/.



Video 10.4: Watch the “Hitler Finds Out About” meme.